

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 26 JUNE 2013

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

Members Present:

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	Councillor Ann Jackson
Councillor Helal Abbas	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed	Councillor Dr. Emma Jones
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Rofique U Ahmed	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Shahed Ali	Councillor Md. Maium Miah
Councillor Tim Archer	Councillor Fozol Miah
Councillor Abdul Asad	Councillor M. A. Mukit MBE
Councillor Craig Aston	Councillor Lesley Pavitt
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 Abdal Ullah
Councillor Carli Harper-Penman	Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Sirajul Islam	Councillor Amy Whitelock

The meeting commenced at 7.37 p.m.

The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Lesley Pavitt, in the Chair

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Rania Khan, Shiria Khatun, Ahmed Omer and Kosru Uddin.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests. Councillor Shafiqul Haque declared a personal interest in Question 8.25 as his son was employed in Skillsmatch.

3. MINUTES**RESOLVED**

That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the Council held on 17 April 2013 and the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 22 May 2013 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 HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

No announcements were made at the meeting.

5. TO RECEIVE ANY PETITIONS**5.1 Petition against the closure of the Isle of Dogs Police Station**

The Service Head, Democratic Services informed the meeting that this petition was withdrawn as the lead petitioner had unfortunately had to attend a funeral on the day of the meeting. The petitioners would be offered the opportunity to present the petition to the next meeting.

5.2 Petition against Casinos and Betting Shops in Tower Hamlets

A representative of Kelly Begum addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor, then responded to the petition. He stated that gambling arcades and casinos exploit the hopes of the most vulnerable and he wanted to see their spread limited. Unfortunately, the amount that the Council could do was limited by the Government and the Gambling Commission. However, the Council would do everything it could to prevent the spread of such establishments.

The Council's Statement of Gambling Policy was only recently adopted by full Council and became active on the 27th May 2013. This Policy was developed after much consultation and a good practice guide had been developed for the managers of gambling establishments to protect vulnerable groups and especially young people.

On the matter of casinos the Mayor recently requested that preparations be made for the Council to adopt a "no casino" policy under section 166 of the Gambling Act 2005. A consultation had been undertaken and it was hoped to bring a resolution to the council meeting.

RESOLVED

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

Procedural motion

Councillor Ohid Ahmed **moved**, and Councillor Gulam Robbani **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That Procedure Rule 13.1 be suspended to allow consideration of an emergency motion on casinos as follows:-

‘This meeting notes:

Gambling can have a variety of very negative consequences for the individual concerned and wider society including increased risk of drug misuse, eating disorders, mental ill health and criminality.

An estimated £400 million is spent every year on gambling in Tower Hamlets.

This meeting agrees:

It is in the best interests of residents that dangers of problem gambling are minimized in the borough.

That the granting of licenses for casinos to operate in the borough increases the risk of problem gambling.

That Tower Hamlets adopt a policy of not granting licenses to new casinos to operate in the borough as under Section 166 of the Gambling Act 2005.

While we are bound by statutory gambling laws here is a possibility that we could use Planning and our Commercial leasing arrangements to affect further controls’.”

The Chief Legal Officer’s representative advised the meeting that the adoption of any policy under Section 166 of the Gambling Act as proposed by the motion could only be agreed following consultation. Councillor Ohid Ahmed therefore amended the third paragraph under ‘This meeting agrees’ of the proposed emergency motion to read “That subject to consultation Tower Hamlets adopt a policy of not granting licenses to new casinos to operate in the borough as under Section 166 of the Gambling Act 2005.”

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

[Note: The following Members requested that it be recorded that they had each voted in favour of the procedural motion above:-

Councillors Kabir Ahmed, Ohid Ahmed, Rofique Ahmed, Shahed Ali, Abdul Asad, Lutfu Begum, Alibor Choudhury, Shafiqul Haque, Aminur Khan, Rabina

Khan, Fozol Miah, Harun Miah, Maium Miah, Oliur Rahman and Gulam Robbani]

5.3 Petition regarding benefit cuts and the 'bedroom tax'

Ms Eileen Short addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing, then responded to the petition. She felt that the Government was trying to scapegoat and divide people so that they could make the poor pay for an economic crisis caused by the richest 1% and from which the rich continued to benefit. The Mayor's casebook on related matters had increased by 700%.

Councillor Khan stated that the latest information supplied by the DWP for Tower Hamlets showed 2,796 cases were currently affected by the 'bedroom tax', of which around 2,100 are RP tenants and the remainder council tenants. In addition to the above, there was a total of 768 cases where an exemption to the 'bedroom tax' applied.

Legal advice was being sought on the re-designation of bedrooms and it was not in anyone's interest to make people homeless. The Council had been working closely with the Department of Work and Pensions, Job Centre Plus, Registered Providers and a range of voluntary sector partners to create awareness about the changes in order to prepare those affected.

RESOLVED

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

6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Service Head, Democratic Services reminded the Council that there was a maximum period of 20 minutes for public questions. He advised the meeting that question 6.6 was withdrawn as the questioner had unfortunately had to attend a funeral on the day of the meeting. The questioner would be offered the opportunity to put her question at the next meeting.

6.1 Question from Mr Muhammad Haque, Organiser, the KHOODEELAAR! Campaign in Defence of the Community in the East End of London

What is Tower Hamlets Council's Constitutionally installed and transparently DEMOCRATICALLY active audit procedure for overseeing the conduct of those bodies especially the ones that have been allowed to take over the control of formerly Council-owned and Council controlled Housing stock in the context of the clear and the express undertaking given by LBTH Council to the Community and parts of the Community in the Borough on the relevant

estates affected by the implications of the stock transfer procedures that were put into operation?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Thank you for your question.

The Council transferred over 10,000 properties to 8 Registered Providers (RPs) under the Housing Choice programme. This was to lever £448 million pounds worth of investment into the stock. Promises made under the Housing Choice programme were included in contracts as obligations which are monitored twice annually by the Strategic Housing Team.

The Council is currently collecting information on progress made up until the end of the 2012/13 financial year. A number of RPs have reported that they have completed the contractual obligations. Officers are now establishing an audit process in order to satisfy the Council that the programmes are indeed complete.

As Cabinet Member for Housing I work very closely with tenants to ensure democratic accountability registered providers. For example:

- Residents of Lantern Court on the Isle of Dogs managed by the Guinness Trust were worried about their energy bills possibly caused by the faults in their combined hot water and heating system. Between September 2012 and February 2013 I held 3 resident meetings and worked with residents on the development of Lanterns Court Neighbourhood Agreement and Action Plan.
- After Pheonix Heights TRA held their provider to account to get water charges wrongly included in their service charges refunded I have worked with the TRA, the resgistered provider and Thames Water to ensure all residents' water meters are checked to ensure future water bills from Thames Water are correct.

The Council has a list of Preferred Development Partners building in the borough and is currently producing a Performance Management Framework to raise standards in housing management among Registered Providers working in Tower Hamlets.

The Homes and Communities Agency retains the remit to regulate Registered Providers. The HCA's regulation is around consumer and economic standards which are outlined in its Regulatory Framework.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Muhammad Haque

What traceable evidence is there of what the Council representatives on those bodies dealing with housing stock actually do to represent the Council's interests?

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

Tenants have drawn our attention to the fact that many RPs are changing their Memoranda of Association. It is the tenants who hold them responsible and the best way forward is to ensure Registered Providers have the best possible levels of tenant representatives.

NOTE: During consideration of Public Question 6.1, the Speaker adjourned the meeting at 8.25 p.m., reconvening at 8.41 p.m., due to disruption in the public gallery. The Speaker reminded all present that no unauthorised recording or filming was permitted in the meeting without her express permission.

6.2 Question from Ms Janet Wade

Can the Mayor please tell us why he has still failed to bring forward the amended Open Spaces Strategy to full council, despite Full Council twice passing a motion on 16 May 2012 and 17 April 2013 to limit the number of events in Victoria Park to 6 days each year, prevent the park being used for commercial events on consecutive weekends, set a closing time for events to 10pm and a reduced noise limit for commercial events, and to prevent commercial events being held in Sir John McDougal Gardens, Millwall Park, Island Gardens and the gardens at Trinity Square?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Thank you for your question. In these extremely difficult times, the Mayor's priorities are housing, education, and protecting the most vulnerable from the brutal reforms to the welfare system by the Tories.

Although open spaces are very important to residents' sense of wellbeing, this administration must prioritise putting a roof over people's heads and helping them put food on the table.

The amended Open Spaces Strategy is being drawn up and will be considered in due course.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Ms Janet Wade

Will it contain policies to limit the number of events in Victoria Park, prevent the park being used for commercial events on consecutive weekends, set an earlier closing time for events and a reduced noise limit for commercial events?

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

There will be an extensive consultation process and you are welcome to make your views known through the proper channels and at the appropriate time.

Procedural motion

Following consideration of question 6.2, Councillor Timothy Archer **moved**, and Councillor David Snowdon **seconded**, a procedural motion - "That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied to allow motion 12.10 (Motion regarding Parks and Open Spaces) to be considered as next business."

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

6.3 Question from Mr Steven Barthram

Recently I was pleased to learn that our high streets including Roman Road Market will receive a cash injection of some £355K following your recent budget, to encourage local economic growth. But, Mr Mayor, residents are unaware how an earlier more substantial investment was utilised to regenerate the Roman Road market area. Can you therefore give us a complete breakdown of how the £1.6 million was spent, and will you please undertake a full Mayoral Inquiry into the spending of this vast sum of money?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Thank you for your question Steve. This is a very emotive subject and I have obtained as much information as possible.

The Council tells me that the money has been spent on the following:

- A staggering £1.21m was invested in a number of schemes to regenerate the Roman Road area.
- £153,088k on shop front improvement grants in Roman Road East. Seven businesses received new shop fronts
- £900,000k on transportation, highways and public realm improvements, although paid for by DCLG.

In addition, £158,522k was spent on training and other business support. This comprised:-

- £120,057 for training and support for shopkeepers and market traders, including business coaching, visual merchandising advice, one-to-one training sessions and inward investment promotion across London

- £38,495 for a 'shop local' campaign for the centre to promote and branded Roman Road as a place to shop, delivered in consultation with residents, market traders and shopkeepers

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Steven Barthram

But local residents have seen little or no improvement. Why is this and will the Mayor investigate?

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

I have to stress that the scheme was not agreed under this administration and was led by Councillor Joshua Peck who was on the Steering Group dealing with the matter. I do not know why residents have not seen improvements and I will ensure there is a forensic audit of how the spending was overseen.

6.4 Question from Mr Syed Akamot Ali, Tower Hamlets Traders Business Association UK

Can the Mayor explain why he removed the gangway between stalls in Whitechapel? When will he reinstate the lavatory in Whitechapel Market for stall holders and residents? When will he improve the Whitechapel Market surface and provide decent permanent stall infrastructure?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Thank you for your question.

Whitechapel Market is one of our most successful markets and we are delighted that through High Street 2012, we have been able to put in place a number of improvements for stall holders and for shoppers and visitors. If you go to the market today, you'll see the fruits of that investment already.

The entire area of Whitechapel Market footway was resurfaced in 2011/12 along with new lighting, stall markings and the creation of public spaces.

I know that there has since been a number of utility trenches and Crossrail works which has damaged some of this work. However we always work with contractors to ensure they repair the road surface to the highest possible standard.

Many stallholders felt that the lavatory was a source of anti-social behaviour, street drinking, etc. The original toilet facility was removed to provide more space for the expanding market. We have an arrangement for stallholders to use the Ideas Store facilities pending a review of the facilities for the market but if it is felt there is a need for a lavatory, this will be considered.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Syed Akamot Ali

Why was the gangway removed and why are stall sizes now smaller?

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

Councillors Aminur Khan and Abdul Asad met the market traders and no such concerns were raised at the time. The stall sizes have actually increased, but lack of enforcement previously meant that people had enjoyed larger areas than they were entitled to.

Expiry of time limit

At this point, the Speaker indicated that the time limit for Public Questions had been reached and she apologised to the others present who had submitted questions as these could not now be put. With the exception of question 6.6 which had been withdrawn, written responses would be provided to the remaining questions

[Note: the written answers are appended in Appendix A to these minutes.]

Procedural motion

Following consideration of question 6.4, Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded** a procedural motion –“That Procedure Rule 13.1 be suspended to allow consideration of an urgent motion on the Comprehensive Spending Review as the next item of business.” [Note: the text of the motion is set out below.]

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

Urgent motion: Comprehensive Spending Review

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, a tabled urgent motion on the Comprehensive Spending Review as set out below.

After debate, the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- Britain's economy has flatlined for over two years, with nearly one million young people out of work.

- Under the Tories we have had the slowest recovery for 100 years.
- Prices are still going up faster than wages.
- The IMF have called on the Government to boost infrastructure.
- The next Government is now forecast to inherit borrowing of £96bn in 2015, when George Osborne said it would be just £18bn.
- Instead of coming down, the deficit is set to be the same next year as it was this year and last year. And no growth means the Government is set to borrow £245 billion more than planned.
- Today's Comprehensive Spending Review saw the Government announce further cuts of 2% to local authority budgets in 2015/16.
- Last Sunday 141 Local Authority Leaders united to co-sign a cross-party open letter to the Observer calling for a halt to government cuts to local authority budgets, the Mayor of Tower Hamlets failed to join this call.
- In its first three years the Tory-led Government has spent £5.4 billion less in capital investment when compared to the plans inherited from Labour.
- The Government's decision last year to introduce a Strivers' Tax by cutting the support for 14,000 working families in Tower Hamlets means ordinary people are picking up the bill for the cost of George Osborne's economic failure.
- As a result of measures announced in the Autumn Statement a one earner couple with children will be on average £534 a year worse off by the end of the Parliament.

This Council believes:

- For ordinary people life is getting harder. The Government is failing to turn things around. While the Tories say the economy is healing, for most families it's getting worse with prices rising faster than wages. Britain can't afford to go on like this.
- Today's Spending Review should have been an opportunity to boost jobs and growth now and for the future, which would have been the best way to reduce the scale of the cuts the government plans for public services in 2015-16.
- Cutting taxes by an average of £100,000 for 13,000 people earning over one million pounds shows the misguided priorities of the Conservative led Government.
- David Cameron is more interested in exploiting the challenges the country faces than solving them, dividing the country, between north and south, public and private, and between those who can work and

those who cannot.

- The Government is failing to stand up to the banks, from bonuses to the interest rate scandal. Whilst at the same time standing aside and failing to take action to tackle youth unemployment, with no plan for the forgotten 50% who don't go to university.

This Council further believes:

- Whilst the Council remains opposed to the Government's cuts to local government budgets, the Mayor has a duty to manage the Council's finances efficiently, delivering a balanced budget to ensure long term stability of services for residents;
- The Mayor's budget agreed in March shows that the council will be spending £39m more than it will be receiving in 2015-2016, with £25m of this currently unfunded;
- The unfunded gap in 2016/17 is estimated to be £55m.
- The Mayor's key spending priorities amount to a further £10m that end in 2014/15 and therefore continuing these would require a further £10m of savings on top.

This Council Resolves:

- To condemn the Conservative led Government's failure to get growth into the economy.
- To support Labour's alternative plan marrying iron discipline with a focus on growth and securing a lasting difference for all in our society.
- To call upon the Mayor of Tower Hamlets to set out a sustainable plan to protect the long-term finances of the Council.

Procedural motion

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **moved**, and Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed **seconded**, a procedural motion – "That Procedure Rule 13.1 be suspended to allow consideration of an emergency motion on the use of the Mayor's car as the next item of business." [Note: the text of the motion is set out below.]

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

Urgent motion: Use of the Mayor's Car

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **moved**, and Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed **seconded**, a tabled urgent motion on the use of the Mayor's car, as set out below.

After debate, the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

This Council Notes:

- The Channel 4 Dispatches programme which revealed worrying practices related to the Mayor's use of his Council funded car.
- The East London Advertiser article of the 19th June entitled "Channel 4 Dispatches challenged over its filming of Tower Hamlets mayor" which revealed that the Mayor threatened legal action against Channel 4
- The Mayor and the Council's responsibility to provide best value for money for taxpayers.
- The Mayor's Office response to the allegations in the programme:
 - 1. £71 for a taxi fare of 400m**
In response to a Freedom of Information request that revealed exorbitantly high taxi costs, the Mayor ordered a review of travel arrangements. It is our opinion that the taxi company may be overcharging passengers.
 - 2. Driver waits outside Lutfur's house for 30 minutes (12:55pm)**
The driver has been a salaried member of staff for many years, serving under several successive administrations. The 30 minutes waiting time will not have resulted in any extra cost to the taxpayer.
 - 3. Drives to the Mosque for Friday prayers**
The Mosque is a key community hub. The Mayor regularly goes to Friday prayers after which he is accessible to residents, meets with local residents and discusses their concerns. We have examples of casework raised by the Mayor following this visit.
 - 4. Circles for 1:30 hours**
The driver has been a salaried member of staff for many years, serving under several successive administrations. The 1:30 hours' driving time will not have resulted in any extra cost to the taxpayer. We also believe that the cost of petrol for the time spent "circling" is less than parking charges for the equivalent time.
 - 5. Takes Lutfur to Zaza's grill**
This was a working lunch with local residents and organisations.

6. Double parks in a bus lane

Clearly this is not ideal; however our understanding is that the car was only in the bus lane for a matter of minutes. There is no evidence that this constituted an offence under the Highways Act.

7. Waits for 1:35 hours

The 1:35 hours' driving time will not have resulted in any extra cost to the taxpayer.

8. Waits outside house for 20 minutes

The driver has been a salaried member of staff for many years, serving under several successive administrations. The 1:30 hours' driving time did not result in any extra cost to the taxpayer.

9. Drives Lutfur to the East London Mosque (0.2 miles)

The Mosque is a key community hub. The Mosque is a key community hub. The Mayor regularly goes to Friday prayers after which he is accessible to residents, meets local residents and discusses their concerns. We have examples of casework raised by the Mayor following this visit.

10. Waits outside Mosque for 2 hours and six minutes before leaving (no mention of whether Lutfur goes with)

The driver has been a salaried member of staff for many years, serving under several successive administrations. 2 hours' driving time will not have resulted in any extra cost to the taxpayer. The Mayor also attended the funeral of the mother of a councillor colleague.

11. Saturday, driver "delivered" 2 bundles dry cleaning

The Mayor's wife transferred the dry cleaning from her own car to the Mayor's car the previous night. The driver merely gave the Mayor this dry cleaning.

12. Waits for 28 minutes before taking Lutfur to Battle of Atlantic Memorial

The driver arrived early, taking the Mayor to Trinity Square Gardens, a significant distance from his home."

This Council Believes:

- The questionable usage of the Mayor's car raised in the programme reflects badly upon the borough and damages the reputation of the Council.
- That there are serious concerns raised by the response offered by the Mayor's office including on the following basis:
 - o No taxi should ever have been approved for a 400m journey, especially not with a £71 charge. This shows a failure of auditing within the management of the Mayor's office and a failure of responsibility from the councillor involved.

- In total over the short time period covered by Dispatches the Mayor justified almost 7 hours of wasted employee time by having his driver wait for him.
- The Mayor's justification that there was no cost to the taxpayer is both disingenuous and wrong as paying an officer to wait around for the Mayor is an undeniable waste of public money when that officer could be performing other duties.
- Not only is double parking in a bus lane 'not ideal' it is illegal and a traffic offence. Elected politicians should observe the highest standards and set an example, not flout the rules they expect others to live by.
- The Mayor should not need a driver to take him to a venue 0.2m from his home to the East London Mosque especially when the driver then has to wait for two hours.

This Council further believes:

- That threatening legal action at the cost of the tax payer against Channel 4 not only further undermines the reputation of the borough but also represents another potential waste of tax payer money.

This Council resolves:

- To condemn the Mayor for his wasteful use of tax payer money.
- To ask the 151 officer to review the business case and public value for money discerned from the retention of the Mayor's private car and report back to the next full Council meeting.
- To welcome Labour Mayoral Candidate John Biggs' pledge to do away with the Mayoral car upon his election and redeploy the mayoral driver to other duties.

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor made his report to the Council meeting. As part of his report the Mayor invited the Deputy Mayor to address the Council about the recent award that the Council had received for its work in preparing for the London Olympics 2012.

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

Procedural motion

At this point, Councillor Fozol Miah **moved**, and Councillor Harun Miah **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied to allow motion 12.5 (Motion regarding the rise of Islamophobia) to be considered as next business.”

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

Motion 12.5: Motion regarding the rise of Islamophobia

Councillor Harun Miah **moved**, and Councillor Fozol Miah **seconded** motion 12.5 as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Fozol Miah indicated that he had tabled an amendment to motion 12.5 as set out below. Councillor Harun Miah accepted the amendment and altered his motion accordingly.

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, a tabled amendment to the motion, incorporating the text of motions 12.2, 12.4 and 12.5 (as amended) into a single motion as below.

Councillor Shahed Ali proposed that the existing second bullet point in Councillor Islam’s amendment should become the third point and vice versa. This was accepted by Councillors Islam and Saunders who altered their amendment accordingly.

Councillor Abdul Asad proposed that the first resolution shown in motion 12.5 should be amended to remove the reference to Rushanara Ali, MP and be re-worded: “That all Group Leaders and the Mayor jointly write to the Home Secretary requesting she take steps to ban the EDL march and ensure that our community is fully protected from the EDL and other extremists.” This was accepted by Councillors Sirajul Islam and Rachael Saunders who altered their amendment accordingly.

After debate, Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.10 the question be now put.” The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The amendment as tabled by Councillors Sirajul Islam and Rachael Saunders and subsequently amended as above, was put to the vote and was unanimously **agreed**.

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

RESOLVED**This Council Notes:**

- Offers its sympathies to the family and friends of Lee Rigby. To try to use a warped view of any religion or faith to justify his murder is wrong, and cannot be tolerated.
- Is deeply concerned about attacks on Islamic buildings and threats to the safety of individuals and communities.
- Calls for unity against the EDL, BNP and others who seek to stir up hatred and division. We are at our strongest when we are united, as we must be in the face of this attack in our neighbouring borough of Greenwich.
- Notes the EDL threat to demonstrate in Tower Hamlets on the 26th August 2013 and that the Labour Group immediately wrote to the Mayor and all Group leaders asking them to join with us in opposing the march.
- Notes that John Biggs AM, Labour Group and local MPs have written to the Home Secretary and Borough Commander raising their concerns and asking for support for a ban on any march.
- Supports a ban on the EDL marching through our borough.

This Council also notes:

- Cllr Alibor Choudhury and Cllr Harun Miah's motions on the EDL:

12.4 Motion regarding the EDL

Proposer: Councillor Alibor Choudhury

Seconder: Councillor Kabir Ahmed

This Council agrees:

- There can be no justification for the brutal murder of Drummer Lee Rigby in Woolwich on 22 May. We send our condolences to his family and friends.*
- Racist and fascists are attempting to exploit the actions of a few to whip up racism and direct hatred against all Muslims. Since Woolwich there has been a 700% increase in the numbers of reported Islamophobic incidents, including the burning down of the Islamic Cultural Centre in Muswell Hill.*
- We do not hold Norwegian Christians responsible for the actions of the fascist Anders Breivik, whose 2011 rampage left 77 dead.*
- We do not hold white people collectively responsible for Timothy McVeigh, the US neo-Nazi whose 1995 Oklahoma City bomb killed 168 people, or for*

David Copeland, the former BNP member who planted bombs across London in 1999. Nor should anyone suggest that Britain's Muslims are collectively responsible for the 22 May attack.

· We call on the media and politicians to stop using inflammatory language that feeds the fascists and racists. We must challenge Islamophobia wherever it raises its head.

· We must reject those who want to divide our communities and set them against each other, and stand fast to the ideals of anti-racism, multiculturalism and respect for all.

And:

12.5 Motion regarding The Rise of Islamophobia

Proposer: Councillor Harun Miah

Seconder: Councillor Fozol Miah

This Council notes:

1. There has been a dramatic rise in Islamophobic attacks in London since the murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich

*2. These attacks have included arson attacks on mosques and Islamic schools, the tearing of headscarfs from women, spitting and verbal insults
This Council deplores the murder of Lee Rigby and the Islamophobic attacks that have followed that murder*

3. The EDL had planned to march through Tower Hamlets and Newham this coming Saturday 29th June

4. The Leaders of the EDL now claim that they are merely "walking for charity" but have invited EDL members and supporters to join then on this "walk" and that this "walk" may take them through Tower Hamlets and Newham

This Council believes:

This Council believes that the EDL "walk" is still a march and that the purpose of this march is to incite racial hatred and violence in general and Islamophobia in particular.

This Council asks the Mayor

1. To do all in his power to ensure that the authorities, including the police and the government, deter these Islamophobic attacks and seeks to counter this tide of Islamophobia

2. To declare that the EDL and the BNP continue to be unwelcome in Tower Hamlets as they seek to inflame racial hatred

3. To declare that he will seek to secure a ban against any attempts by racist organisations like the EDL and BNP to march in Tower Hamlets

4. To seek an urgent ban on any attempt by the EDL to march or otherwise parade through Tower Hamlets and Newham this coming Saturday 29th June

This Council resolves:

- That all Group Leaders and the Mayor jointly write to the Home Secretary requesting that she take steps to ban the EDL march and ensure that our community is fully protected from the EDL and other extremists.*
- To work with community organisations, faith groups, local people and the police to maintain calm and safety in our community.*
- To call on the independent Mayor and all councillors to unite against all forms of extremism and racism.*

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

At this point the Service Head, Democratic Services, indicated that, in accordance with the Council's Constitution, the meeting could continue for a further 15 minutes only and would terminate at 10.53 p.m.

8.1 Question from Councillor Mizanaur Choudhury

Referring to Boris Johnson's proposed fire station cuts the Mayor said in East End Life recently, and I quote "its essential that we take every chance to support the campaign against these cuts". Can he then tell the Council why he failed to turn up to the crucial public consultation on fire station closures on the 7th May and why he has consistently missed key London Councils meetings on police and fire station closures?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

The Mayor has made numerous representations against both the police and fire cuts and has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Paul Embury from the Fire Brigades union to condemn Boris' actions.

It seems Cllr Chaudhury needs a lesson in government. These cuts are not the fault of this Mayor, they are the fault of Boris Johnson and the slash and burn Tories.

But instead of attacking those who are responsible, he is trying to lay blame where it does not belong.

If Cllr Chaudhury really wants to best represent his constituents I would suggest he spend a bit more of his time attacking those who are responsible for the cuts instead of covering for them by trying to blame this administration.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Mizanur Chaudhury

The Mayor should be there when it matters and to protect residents from Tory cuts. Labour had held three public meetings against the cuts, why did the Mayor not attend?

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

The Mayor had been campaigning on a number of issues and was already in discussions with the Borough Commanders.

[NOTE: Members' Questions 8.2 to 8.28 were not put as the time limit for the meeting had expired. Written responses were provided to each question and are included in Appendix A to these minutes.]

Procedural motion

Following consideration of Question 8.1, Councillor Carli Harper-Penman **moved**, and Councillor Bill Turner **seconded**, a procedural motion – "That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied to allow motion 12.8 to be considered as next business."

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

Motion 12.8: Motion against Boris Johnson's Tower Hamlets Fire Cuts

Councillor Shahed Ali **moved**, and Councillor Kabir Ahmed **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Carli Harper-Penman **moved**, and Councillor Rajib Ahmed **seconded**, a tabled amendment to the motion as set out below.

After debate, the tabled amendment was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

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

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

1. The deplorable decision by the Mayor of London to proceed with budget cuts that would see Bow fire station closed and the number of fire engines at Whitechapel fire station halved.
2. The plans to close Bow fire station and reduce the number of engines at Whitechapel fire station to one, would remove one geographically important base as well as reducing the borough's fire response teams by almost 25%.
3. Whilst fire call outs across London are reducing Tower Hamlets has by far the highest level of call outs in the capital. Cutting the capacity of two of our fire stations against this backdrop would put lives at risk. The Draft Fifth London Safety Plan states that deprivation is an issue but then proposes closure in an area of high deprivation. This leaves the plan open to questions on the validity and degree of consideration and risk assessment that has gone into the proposals. If the method of assessment has not changed, we believe that questions could be raised as to how the cuts can be justified.
4. If implemented these cuts would mean that response times for some areas of Tower Hamlets would dramatically exceed LFEPA targets with some response times doubling to over 7 minutes. The area served by Bow fire station contains 64 blocks of flats, 20 of which are above 10 stories, and Bow itself suffers from narrow roads and traffic congestion.
5. Areas such as Bow, which will be most affected by the proposed changes, are home to a large number of densely populated tower blocks where fire can spread quickly to other floors trapping residents. Even modestly increased response times to these areas could end in tragedy. There is also a high number of elderly people who reside in Bow, adding further need for quicker response times.
6. Proposed station closures across the border in Newham and Hackney would also have a significant impact should a major incident occur in the borough.

This Council Further Notes:

1. The motion on fire and police station closures proposed by Cllr Abdal Ullah and passed by Council on 23 January this year.
2. The numerous press and community campaigning activities undertaken by Labour councillors, MPs and London Assembly member John Biggs.
3. That Labour MP Rushanara Ali and Labour Assembly Member John Biggs met the Mayor of London on Monday the 17th June to personally lobby his against the cuts to fire stations in Tower Hamlets.

4. The three public consultation meetings held in Tower Hamlets, all of which were arranged, attended, promoted and addressed by Labour councillors.
5. That no independent or Tory councillors nor the Mayor attended the public consultation meeting on the fire service cuts.
6. Labour Group's submission to the LFEPA consultation on the changes to fire services in London.
7. That Labour councillors have consistently campaigned across the community with residents, fire fighters, unions and others against Boris Johnson's fire station cuts.
8. That the Mayor of Tower Hamlets has issued press statements and attended photo ops but has failed to attend the three most important meetings on the fire station closures where he had the opportunity to use his position to make a real difference to fire and police cuts plans:
 - a. The LFEPA public consultation meeting on the 7th May.
 - b. The meeting of the London Councils Leader's Committee on Tuesday 12th February with Deputy Mayor of London for Crime Stephen Greenhalgh,
 - c. The meeting of the London Councils Leader's Committee on Tuesday 13th November with London Fire Authority Chief James Cleverly AM.

This Council believes:

1. That the Mayor of London's plans to shut 17 fire stations and axe 600 jobs will have a devastating impact on fire safety across London and Tower Hamlets.
2. That the plans to close of stations in Bow and Whitechapel, putting residents' safety at risk.
3. That the Mayor of Tower Hamlets has failed to effectively stand up for residents by not attending key high level consultation meetings where he had a personal opportunity to put residents' points to regional decision makers.

This Council resolves:

1. To write to the Mayor of London in formal support of and enclosing a copy of the Labour Group submission to the LFEPA consultation.
2. To condemn the Mayor of Tower Hamlets for failing to attend key consultation meetings at which he could have made a strong case for Tower Hamlets residents directly to the decision makers.

Extension of time limit for the meeting

Councillor Carlo Gibbs **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 15.11.7 the meeting be extended for up to an additional 30 minutes to enable consideration of agenda items 9.1, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 12.6, 12.9 and 12.12.”

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

9. REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES**9.1 Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Anne Jackson, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the municipal year 2012/13, introduced the report documenting the Committee's activities during the past year.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

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

There was no business under this item.

11. OTHER BUSINESS**11.1 Localism Act 2011 Standards Regime: Appointment of 'Independent Person'**

The Council considered the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services on the above matter.

Following debate, Councillor Carlo Gibbs **moved**, and Councillor Abdal Ullah **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.10 the question be now put.”

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

The report recommendations were put to the vote and were **agreed** unanimously by all Councillors present. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

1. That Ms Elizabeth Hall be appointed as the Independent Person with effect from 1st July 2013 for a term of office of three years.
2. That Ms Ezra Zahabi be appointed as the Reserve Independent Person with effect from 1st July 2013 for a term of office of three years.
3. That the remuneration for the Independent Person and Reserve Independent Person be set at the level of £117 for each matter on which they are required to provide advice and for each attendance at a committee meeting or training event that is required in connection with the role, as set out at section 6 to the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services.

11.2 Report of the Executive in accordance with section 20 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules**RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

11.3 Delegation of Powers to the Head of Paid Service - Disciplinary Policy and Procedure for Chief Officers

The Council considered the reference from the Human Resources Committee on the above matter.

Following debate, Councillor Abdal Ullah **moved**, and Councillor Carlo Gibbs **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.10 the question be now put.”

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

The recommendations of the Human Resources Committee were then put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

That the Head of Paid Service be delegated power to exercise the functions of the Chief Executive for the purposes of the agreed Disciplinary Policy and Procedures for Chief Officers.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**12.6 Motion regarding 4 in 10 Campaign for London's Overcrowded Children**

Councillor Abdal Ullah **moved**, and Councillor John Pierce **seconded**, the motion as printed on the agenda, subject to the deletion of the words 'local Labour Party members and' in the 2nd bullet point under 'This Council Resolves'.

Following debate Councillor Abdal Ullah **moved**, and Councillor Carlo Gibbs **seconded**, a procedural motion – "That under Procedure Rule 14.1.10 the question be now put."

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

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

RESOLVED

This Council notes that:

- 391,000 children are estimated to be growing up in overcrowded conditions in London – a quarter of the Capital's children, including tens of thousands living in Tower Hamlets;
- This figure has risen by around 80,000 in the past decade and it set to get worse as the supply of new social housing dries up.
- The Conservative led government has led a sustained attack on social housing, including cutting funding for building and attacking social security.
- Only 134 of the 1,618 applicants for four bedroom social housing in the borough were catered for in 2012, with only 16 of those in properties owned by Tower Hamlets Council directly.
- Research has shown that overcrowding undermines a child's health, education and well-being, damaging their long-term life chances;
- The Mayor of London "Overcrowding Action Plan" sets a target to reduce the number of severely overcrowded households by just 5,500 by 2016;
- Save the Children's 4in10 campaign is calling on the Mayor of London to commit to halve the number of children growing up in overcrowded conditions by 2020.

This Council believes

- The only solution to London's housing crisis is a significant and sustained increase in investment in new social rented housing, including council housing, for overcrowded and homeless families;
- The 4in10 campaign is right to focus political attention on the Mayor of London as his "Action Plan" is an inadequate response and fails to make tackling overcrowding a real political priority.

This Council resolves,

- To support the 4in10 campaign and call on the Mayor of London to make a commitment to halve the number of children in overcrowded homes by 2020;
- To publicise the campaign to residents to help raise public awareness of this problem and pressure on the Mayor of London to act.
- To call on the Independent Mayor of Tower Hamlets to keep his promises to local people, and deliver family sized homes.

12.9 Motion regarding Commercial Events in Victoria Park

Councillor Amy Whitelock **moved**, and Councillor Marc Francis **seconded**, the motion as printed on the agenda.

Following debate Councillor Bill Turner **moved**, and Councillor Abdal Ullah **seconded**, a procedural motion – "That under Procedure Rule 14.1.10 the question be now put."

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

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

RESOLVED

This Council Notes:

1. The motion passed by Council on the 16th May 2012 which resolved to amend the Open Spaces Strategy to include a section on Commercial Events in parks, to reflect the prior decisions of Council, that limits the number of events in Victoria Park to 6 days each year, prevents the park being used for commercial events on consecutive weekends, set a closing time for events to 10pm and a reduced noise limit for commercial events, and prevents commercial events being held in Sir John McDougal Gardens, Millwall Park, Island Gardens and the gardens at Trinity Square;

2. That over 400 local residents signed a petition presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, calling for the number of events to be reduced;
3. That no amended Open Spaces Strategy has been presented to Council even though it is included in the list of policies reserved for Council who have expressed a will to see the policy amended;
4. The serious damage done to the park by last summer's commercial events and the continued degradation of the park during Field Day and AS ONE in May 2013;
5. The Mayor has allowed an increased 50,000 capacity for this year's commercial events, which has resulted in even more of the eastern half of the park being cordoned off from use by the public and damage to the park's fabric and grassed areas for the rest of the summer;
6. More than 400 criminal offences were recorded at Field Day and Lovebox events last year;
7. The Mayor has recently authorised a tendering process to rent out Victoria Park for up to ten events each year in 2014, 2015 and 2016;
8. The London Borough of Hackney recently decided against agreeing a programme of multiple events on Hackney Marshes each summer after a majority of residents there opposed those plans.

This Council Believes:

1. That the Mayor should respect the democratic mandate of the Council and the wishes of residents and bring forward a revised Open Spaces Strategy which reflects the stated position of Council;
2. That the Mayor's failure to do so is clearly designed to circumvent the Council's democratic process and commit this authority to contractual arrangements with commercial companies without proper scrutiny;
3. The Mayor has no mandate to commit LBTH to a contract for the hiring of Victoria Park for commercial events beyond May 2014;
4. LBTH should use the full force of the law to recover any legal costs incurred in renegotiating a three-year contract entered into by the Mayor and Cabinet Members from those authorising it.

This Council Resolves:

1. That the Mayor should immediately suspend the tendering process for commercial events in Victoria Park;

2. The Mayor should authorise meaningful consultation with residents and other stakeholders about the scale of commercial activity within Victoria Park;
3. The Mayor should in the meantime bring forward a renewed Open Spaces Strategy to the next ordinary Council meeting, including within it the amendments set out above, to ensure a more balanced approach to commercial events while the consultation is being carried out.

12.12 Motion regarding Garment Workers

Councillor Rachael Saunders **moved**, and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded**, the motion as printed on the agenda.

After debate, the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

This Council notes the terrible loss of life in the recent factory collapse in Bangladesh. While there may be many underlying reasons for this disaster, and the Government and its agencies in Bangladesh need to continue to investigate and to hold those responsible to account, and while the rapid economic growth in sectors such as the garment industry in Bangladesh is to be welcomed, and is an important providers of wealth and employment, the event also highlights the challenging working conditions of workers in many developing economies.

This Council resolves:

1. To support and encourage closer relationships between local government bodies in the UK and Bangladesh in order that good practice and experience can be shared.
2. To ensure that it follows ethical procurement policies in its contracts, and to support campaign organisations and trade unions that promote ethical procurement and which can help to promote good employment practice and safe working conditions without stifling economic growth.
3. To encourage others, more widely but in particular in our borough, and including in Tower Hamlets schools, to follow ethical procurement guidelines.
4. To congratulate those bodies and individuals in Tower Hamlets and beyond who have helped to raise funds and support to assist those affected by the disaster.

Motions 12.1, 12.3, 12.7, 12.10, 12.11, 12.13, 12.14, 12.15, 12.16, 12.17 and 12.18 were not considered due to the time limit for the meeting being reached.

The meeting ended at 11.15 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

**APPENDIX A – WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PUBLIC AND MEMBERS’
QUESTIONS THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE MEETING**

6.5 Question from Mr Nic Bentley

Could the Mayor of Tower Hamlets tell me what public consultation the council has taken around Thames Water's proposal to use the Highway Business Park, Heckford St as a potential site for a tunnelling site of the Thames Tideway Tunnel?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Thank you for your question.

The Council has worked closely with the local community to ensure that it could make its voice heard during the Thames Water consultation and supported the call for the development alternative schemes with less impact on King Edward Memorial Park.

As a result Thames Water received just over 1500 responses plus a petition with around 10,500 signatures in their second and final consultation.

6.7 Question from Mr Omar Sharif

What is the council doing to address the conduct of councillors during council meetings?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Thank you for your question.

The current Tory government has significantly weakened the Standards regime, which makes it more difficult to hold Councillors to account. I and my colleagues oppose this.

6.8 Question from Mr Yousuf Khan

Is the mayor aware of the work of the Students Rights organisation on university campuses?

Written response by Councillor Oliur Rahman,

Thank you for your question.

The Mayor has not had direct contact with this organisation but is aware of its aims to challenge extremist views on university campuses.

6.9 Question from Mr Abjol Miah

Will the council join me in condemning the abhorrent murder in Woolwich and the subsequent reprisals by the Far Right EDL?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Thank you for your question.

You will be aware that the Mayor, along with community and faith leaders, have issued a joint statement condemning the murder of Lee Rigby. His murder was a shocking, senseless waste of life and I am sure I speak for everyone here in offering our condolences to his family and friends.

Lee Rigby's killing serves as a warning to us about the threat of violent extremists who claim to act in the name of any faith. We must be even more vigilant in our efforts to challenge the influence of such people in our community.

But it also serves as a warning about the threat of English Defence League extremists. Since the terrible events in Woolwich there has been a 700% increase in reported attacks on the Muslim community, including fire bombings of mosques and Islamic centres.

EDL activists have played a disgusting role in whipping up anti-Muslim hatred. As far as I am concerned I see no difference between the hate that comes from the mouth of Anjum Choudhary and the hate that comes from the mouth of Tommy Robinson. They are two sides of the same coin. They are both most happy when communities are most divided.

This administration is committed to ensuring that there is no place for hate within our borough. That's why we are re-double our efforts to work together to ensure community cohesion across our borough.

8.2 Question from Councillor Zara Davis

In the Mayor of London's '2020 Vision' for the city, he cited the City Fringe as an opportunity area. What collaboration between the Council and the Mayor's office has already taken place, and is planned to take place, to develop a cohesive vision and generate jobs in this area?

Written response by Councillor Shafiqul Haque, Cabinet Member for Jobs and Skills

Whilst we of course welcome the identification of the City Fringe as an opportunity area in the Mayor of London's '2020 Vision', we have been working in collaboration with GLA to maximise the potential of this area for many years and will continue to do so.

Let us not forget that a lot of the policies first initiated by Ken Livingston have been implemented by the current Mayor of London in the 2020 Vision for London. Key strands of activity include:

- The Strategic Regeneration Framework ‘convergence’ agenda – with its central aim that by 2030 communities in east London “will have the same social and economic chances as their neighbours across London”. The City Fringe is recognised a key location to achieve this.
- The growth of Tech City - The Council has worked with the GLA and others to embed and support the Tech City agenda, looking at issues such as skills, high speed broadband, and provision of appropriate workspace. This includes working on a Tech City Strategy.
- The Whitechapel Vision, the Council’s master planning initiative for Whitechapel. GLA planners have been supporting Tower Hamlets in developing this work.
- The GLA and Tower Hamlets were successful recently in their joint application to exempt the City Fringe/Tech City area from the government’s new permitted development rights to convert office space to residential. This exemption now provides an important safeguard to protect employment land in the City Fringe.

The volume of development in the City Fringe will generate significant job opportunities. Supporting local people to take up these opportunities is a key priority for the Council, and we will continue to collaborate with the Mayor of London and the GLA on programmes that support this work and maximise the benefits for local Tower Hamlets residents.

It is disappointing that the Vision 2020 didn’t identify any further investment for this important area.

8.3 Question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed

Does the Mayor think it is right that after he urged the Boundary Commission to cut the number of councillors, Tower Hamlets will now have one councillor per 4,417 residents yet Kensington and Chelsea will have only 2,270 per councillor? Why should poorer areas like Tower Hamlets have fewer councillors?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

The Mayor welcomes the Local Government Boundary Commission’s decision to endorse his proposal for a Council size of 45 in Tower Hamlets.

During the consultation on Council size, a variety of submissions were made, ranging from as low as 38 councillors up to the current level of 51.

In the Mayor’s view a modest reduction to 45 will not adversely affect the authority’s ability to represent local residents effectively but will result in financial savings that could benefit improved efficiency and local services.

It is tempting to speculate that Cllr Khales is more worried about his own position and chances of being selected rather than representing the people of the borough.

And of course there was his party's resolute failure to defend the heritage of Banglatown, Lansbury and St Dunstan's. The fact is, they don't care about residents, they're only looking after themselves.

8.4 Question from Councillor Fozol Miah

Could the lead member say what the council is doing to monitor the impact of the bedroom tax on those renting homes in Tower Hamlets and in receipt of benefit?

Written response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

The latest information supplied by the DWP for Tower Hamlets shows 2,796 cases are currently affected by the bedroom tax. We have been working with Tower Hamlet Homes since April 2013 to monitor the impact of the bedroom tax on those renting their council home in Tower Hamlets. We have also been proactive in talking to tenants about these changes and helping to create housing plans to ensure they are able to stay in their homes.

These new "bedroom tax" rules are expected to affect around 700 THH households and the THH Welfare Reform team have completed 548 successful appointments and have worked with families to create individual housing plans in dealing with the tax.

Residents have explored options including whether they are able to meet the shortfall, applying for discretionary housing payment, considering downsizing. We have made it easier for residents to downsize and have placed residents who chose to do so in the highest priority band.

In addition we have made over 100 referrals to advice agencies for further help

8.5 Question from Councillor Motin Uz Zaman

Market stalls are fantastic examples of our community's small businesses and we should be supporting them. Recently I met market traders in Whitechapel who told me you have cut pitch sizes for traders in Whitechapel and across the borough. Why have you done this?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

As you will know we prize our markets extremely highly and invest heavily in their development and improvement.

The Whitechapel market area has seen a total of £2.3m of targeted investment in the public realm directly benefiting the Market and surrounding local economy between 2010 and 2012.

Whitechapel Market is growing and thriving thanks to this investment.

The Councillor is wrong to accuse us of reducing the size of market pitches in Whitechapel. None of the market pitches have been made smaller prior to the improvement works, the majority of pitch sizes were 3.05m in depth by 2.29m wide, which was changed to 3.5m in depth by 2.57m making them 2 square metres larger not smaller. Indeed there are a number of pitches in the East of the market that are even bigger still.

8.6 Question from Councillor David Snowdon

How much has been spent over the past year within the Mayor's Office on Communications and Marketing related activities?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

All communications and marketing expenditure by the council promotes the whole of the council, the interests of residents and businesses in Tower Hamlets.

8.7 Question from Councillor Denise Jones

At our last ordinary meeting the Council passed a motion asking among other things for the Mayor to investigate the status of the investment made by Tower Hamlets in the Women's Library building and to recognise the building as a community asset. We have since learnt that London Metropolitan University have appointed architects to redesign the interior of the Women's Library so that they can use it as lecture space. Can the Mayor update the Council on what action he and his officers have taken since the Council motion in April?

Written response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet member for Culture

Council officers have investigated the title documents, in particular the transfer agreements relating to the sale of the property. These documents have produced no evidence of restrictions on the future use of the property.

The building has been added to the Council's List of Assets of Community Value. However, the listing only affects a disposal of the property – it does not restrict the freehold owners ability to change the use of, refurbish, redesign or redevelop the building. The freeholder is entitled to carry out these alterations, subject to obtaining relevant planning consents where necessary.

I am very happy to write a letter to the university highlighting the community's concerns and asking for them to reconsider and I'm sure that Cllr Jones and her colleagues will be very happy to sign it with me.

8.8 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

Is the Mayor aware that the Far Right EDL are planning to march in Tower Hamlets in August, and what steps has he taken to ensure that these extremists do not come to our borough?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

The Mayor is aware of the EDL's intention to march through our borough in August and is very concerned. Their message of hate and division is not welcomed in Tower Hamlets.

The Mayor and I have met with community, faith and business leaders and partner agencies to reassure residents that everything possible is being done to prevent the racist and islamophobic message of the EDL coming to our borough, targeting communities and stoking up fear and tension.

The Mayor has already written to the Home Secretary and the Borough Police Commander with his concerns, urging the Home Secretary to ban the EDL like she did back in 2011, when the EDL attempted to march through Tower Hamlets. The Home Secretary has replied to the Mayor also expressing her concerns that the EDL's message of hate is not conducive to harmonious community relations and she is monitoring the situation very closely.

However, Cllr Miah, I must add the irresponsible and highly inflammatory press statements, distorting facts about our housing programme, by John Biggs and the Tower Hamlets Labour Group simply panders to the narrative of the EDL and encourages this vile group to come to Tower Hamlets.

What's worse is that the last time they tried to march on the borough, our Labour colleagues were cowering at home instead of standing up to fight for our diverse and tolerant community.

8.9 Question from Councillor Amy Whitelock

Local residents from the Longnor Estate have been raising concerns via their Tenants and Residents Association and through councillors about cars

speeding round the corner from Bancroft road, which is a dangerous blindspot and suffers increased congestion from both Queen Mary University and Mile End Hospital. Can the Mayor please advise what traffic calming and road safety measures are under consideration for the Longnor Estate, given the high number of families and pensioners living in the area, in response to these concerns?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Officers reviewed this location in 2011 following issues raised by the Longnor Estate Residents Association and met the Chairperson on site which lead to the introduction of double yellow lines to improve visibility at the junction of Moody Street and Longnor Road.

The accident data available to the Council indicate that this is not an accident problem area, there are no personal injury accidents currently showing for the last 3 years against latest available data (to Dec 2012).

Nevertheless, given your continuing concern, I will instruct officers to carry out further investigations.

8.10 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

How many staff are employed in the Communications and Marketing Team at Tower Hamlets Council?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

There are 26 full time equivalent staff within the Communications Service which includes the East End Life editorial and advertising team, Tower Design and the media team.

8.11 Question from Councillor John Pierce

How much has the Mayor spent on the road works/changes on Bethnal Green Road near the junctions of Chilton Street and St Matthew's Row? What is the aim of these works? What consultation was had with local residents and stakeholders?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Since September 2010 the Council has spent £305k in total on street improvements along Bethnal Green Road from Brick Lane to St Matthew's Row.

The aim of the project overall has been to refurbish the public realm to make it a more attractive place for residents, businesses, people who work locally and visitors to the area

The works have involved :

- The repaving of the footway
- Tree planting
- Cycle stands and seating
- Cycle access
- Sustainable drainage incorporating Stockholm tree pits and rain gardens
- At-grade pedestrian crossing points

Consultation on these schemes has involved presentation to the Bethnal Green Retailers and Market Traders meeting, as well as letters and plans issued for comments to properties affected.

It is planned to continue improvements along the rest of the corridor with TfL's support, with intensive public consultation being carried out throughout the remainder of the calendar year.

8.12 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

Could the lead member say if the council has made any assessment of the likely impact of the PFI payments for the new Royal London Hospital on the financial situation of the local health economy in Tower Hamlets?

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

I have written to Barts Health about the PFI payment for the new Royal London Hospital.

In 2011/12 total operating revenue was £819.715m of which £106.23m were PFI payments which equates to 12.9% of the total operating revenue. I am still waiting to hear how this compares across London and have instructed officers to chase this information.

Barts Health is currently preparing to become a Foundation Trust and will produce an integrated business plan that demonstrates financial sustainability. This process will highlight the impact of the costs of PFI on the local health economy.

8.13 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

What plans does the Mayor have to extend the pilot food waste recycling service in blocks owned by East Thames Housing, Poplar HARCA and THCH to other housing associations and private developments?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

The Mayor and I are strong promoters of recycling and we are delighted that rates have reached 29% which is amongst the highest in inner London. Food recycling rates have traditionally been the hardest to increase, due to the large numbers of flats in the borough, which is why these pilot schemes have been so beneficial.

As we draw up a new Waste Plan, encouraging more food recycling is one of the key actions.

8.14 Question from Councillor Gloria Thienel

Given the prolonged disruptions caused by roadworks on the Isle of Dogs, what is the Mayor doing to ensure that utility companies complete works within a reasonable period?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

The Council introduced a streetworks permitting scheme in January this year which requires utility companies to seek approval for when they can carry out roadworks.

A permit is issued for an agreed period of time judged to be reasonable for works to be carried out and can only be extended with justifiable cause. All street works are monitored for completion within the agreed deadlines and where works extend beyond an approved period the utility company is issued with a penalty.

Over time, experience elsewhere has shown that this is effective in reducing the length of disruption caused by road works and I have introduced the scheme to this Borough with the expectation that it will do the same.

8.15 Question from Councillor Helal Abbas

Residents have received letters telling them that the Mayor and his deputy are taking enforcement action in Cudworth St to remove illegally parked taxis. The situation is back to normal again and therefore could the Mayor outline a long term plan for dealing with problems in this area?

Written Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Following a multi-agency approach all yellow lines have been reinstated and we have introduced regular enforcement checks in the area.

We continue to make every effort to engage with the local businesses operating in this area, to enforce restrictions and to ensure that vehicles are maintained within the garage forecourts rather than on the public highway.

The Mayor has instructed officers to continue to take all necessary enforcement action with our Partners to bear down on this problem.

8.16 Question from Councillor Kabir Ahmed

I would like to congratulate the Mayor for his leadership on the UNITE partnership project, and ask what does he envisage for the future of the community centre?

Written response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

The Council has supported the UNITE project with £64,000 in 2013/14 to help support 600+ local people. Unite the Union will deliver this service from a community centre in the basement of St George's Town Hall, Shadwell.

The key aim of the centre will be to assist the borough's economically inactive residents to engage in work-related activity. The centre will help them to claim the benefits to which they are entitled, take part in training courses that may improve their employability, and ultimately help build their confidence to seek out paid employment. By providing information, advice and guidance and personal development support, the project aims to equip people with the skills needed to move closer to the labour market.

The centre will provide standard accredited qualifications such as skills for life and ESOL courses, as well as employability services like CV writing and interview tips.

These will be supplemented by advice services like legal advice and debt management.

Residents from all communities will be encouraged to use the centre, as its principle aim is to reduce unemployment across all sections of the borough. Unite is able to use its positive relationships with British industry to engage employers within the borough and form relationships which could lead to the long term employment of centre users.

The services will be aimed primarily at the residents of Shadwell and the immediately surrounding wards.

If this approach is successful then the Council can look to see if the project can be built on in the future. Unite the Union have indicated that they are already examining alternative sources of funding to ensure the sustainability of the centre.

8.17 Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam

The Tory bedroom tax is now doing real harm to many of our residents, and the benefit cap will have a major impact very soon. What real practical steps is the Independent Mayor taking to protect residents from these Tory attacks? How many Tower Hamlets households have been moved out of the borough in the last year, and how many are in bed and breakfast accommodation?

Written response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

This borough has been one of the most proactive in taking practical steps to protecting residents from the attack on welfare reform. In fact the strength of our support has been recognised by the Fawcett Society and used as an example to other boroughs. We have been: -

Communicating to residents:

- Training for Professionals – Including a Partnership Welfare Reform Congress and training sessions for frontline staff
- Letter to all affected residents; borough-wide poster campaign; leaflet on key changes distributed to all resident services; video shown in Libraries and Ideas Stores.
- Media Campaign – Articles in the Council newspaper, local press, BME press and interviews and news items on regional news and BME channels.

Helping residents access advice and services – ‘Money Matters Month’ events:

- Representatives from the local Credit Union, local advice agencies, the Council’s housing and benefits advice service and Employment agencies attended these events. One-on-one advice sessions were available on the day and residents were also able to book appointments for a later date.
- Over 600 residents took the opportunity to get advice about the changes to welfare, and the impact that they might have.
- Since November we have held a further three Money Matters events and have a further three planned over the summer.

Home Visits:

- Officers from the Housing Options Team visited those households in temporary accommodation most affected. Each household has been supported to create a housing plan, to help them stay in the borough.

Financial Support:

- We are using both the crisis loans and the discretionary housing payments to support residents through the impact.
- The Mayor has also allocated an additional £1m in the 2013/14 Budget for a 'preventing homelessness fund' to support the most vulnerable residents in homeless temporary accommodation affected by the benefit cap through rental bridging to households in the most exceptional cases.

Housing Support:

- We are Maximising temporary accommodation households' opportunities for a social-housing tenancy by placing them on auto-bid.

Whilst the scale of the cuts makes our commitment ever more difficult we do not ever want to house families outside of the borough. Where we have done is to meet an emergency housing need.

That is why, of the approximate 560 households who, throughout 2012/13, were provided with out of borough accommodation for even one day, over half were in short-term B&B accommodation in neighbouring London boroughs. Most of the remaining households are in self-contained accommodation but, likewise, in neighbouring London boroughs.

We still have 83% of all homeless households living in in-borough temporary.

8.18 Question from Councillor Dr Emma Jones

What are the Council's plans for alterations to Wapping Woods?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

The Mayor and I are deeply concerned about Wapping Woods and this has been raised directly with the Borough Commander to improve the quality of the police presence in the area.

Council officers have met with residents and extra resources were diverted to improve lighting to the park space. A full survey of residents was also undertaken.

On the basis of this survey and feedback from residents I have asked officers to prepare proposals to further improve lighting, to improve local CCTV coverage in the area and to actively pursue Section 106 funding to bring this about. This work is well underway.

8.19 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders

The Independent Mayor signed the Time to Change Pledge. What has he done to implement it?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

After signing the Time to Change Pledge the Mayor formed a sub group of the Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board to lead on the project. This sub group developed a work programme focusing on three work streams : communications , human resources and coordinating a pan organisation approach to the Time to Change campaign.

Key milestones achieved so far in the project have included awareness raising articles about mental health in East End Life, supporting local charities to bid for funding to improve the mental health of the local community and holding events for Mental Health Awareness Week.

As an employer, the Council has undertaken a HR policy audit so that all employee procedures can be reviewed so that they follow best practice in regards to mental health. This audit has been completed and will be reviewed by an independent mental Health organisation - Rethink in the Autumn.

The sub group has also supported a pan organisation approach to mental health through supporting all partner organisations of the Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board to improve their organisational practices and undertake communications campaigns to tackle mental health discrimination.

8.20 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani

Was the Mayor aware of Baroness Estelle Morris's recent column in the Guardian, singing the praises of our local schools? Will he join me in congratulating our teachers, parents and pupils for their remarkable achievements?

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

The Mayor has read the article and endorses the views expressed by Baroness Estelle Morris.

She acknowledges the work of our maintained schools and calls the Secretary of State to task for always referring to Academies as having good practice and never mentioning or extolling the virtues of good and outstanding maintained schools.

The Mayor recognises and congratulates the teachers, parents and pupils on their remarkable achievements.

8.21 Question from Councillor Joshua Peck

How many pubs have closed in the borough in each of the last five years?

Written response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Over the past 5 years the only public house specific data we have shows that 18 public houses changed their use to residential, retail or leisure use.

8.22 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

Evidence has been given to me indicating Tower Hamlets Homes leaseholders are being charged £135 each time bulk waste is collected from their estates. Can the Mayor give me an explanation why this is?

Written response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

My officers reliably inform me that nobody is charged £135.00 for a bulk waste collection. Residents are charged an average of £28 per property.

8.23 Question from Councillor Carlo Gibbs

What will the council do to prevent a repeat of the unlicensed "Canalival" event last month?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Most of this event took place in Hackney with only the tail end coming into Tower Hamlets on the Canal. The Council's Licencing team had no prior knowledge of the event and there are no records of any complaints to either the Council or the Tower Hamlets police about this event.

If the Council were made aware of any similar unlicensed event being planned within the borough then the Safer Communities Tasking meeting and the Licensing Enforcement Forum would ensure that the Council Enforcement staff were deployed to monitor and enforce against any illegal activity and where necessary and appropriate support the Police.

8.24 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan

Does the Mayor agree with me that the recent opening of Watney Market Idea Store, in contrast to other boroughs such as Brent which has closed six libraries, shows that Tower Hamlets is truly leading the way in offering an alternative to austerity and Tory cuts?

Written response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

Whilst other council across London and the country make significant reductions to their library offer Tower Hamlets continues to grow its Libraries and Learning offer through the Idea Stores. Idea Store Watney has been open since the 14th May 2013 and already we are seeing 1,300 visitors every day.

Over 2.1M people visit the Ideas Stores each year with Whitechapel Ideas store seeing 20000 visitors per day, 7 days per week, making it the busiest central London Library. Access to this type of high quality service is vital for the residents of Tower Hamlets to enrich their lives and to combat disadvantage.

In July 2009, LBTH Council agreed a refreshed Idea Store Strategy that committed to the delivery of the complete network of idea stores including the Watney Idea Store. We have managed to keep to this commitment despite huge financial challenges.

The opening of Idea Store Watney Market is a successful and exciting new phase of the ground-breaking Idea Store programme. It remains, 13 years after the launch of the concept, a national and international benchmark for innovation in the provision of community library, learning and information services and testament to the Council's commitment and determination to develop and deliver quality public services.

8.25 Question from Councillor Anwar Khan

How many people has Skillsmatch placed into work in each of the last five years, and what postcode areas did the people who got jobs live in?

Written response by Councillor Shafiqul Haque, Cabinet Member for Jobs and Skills

'Skillsmatch' has engaged 10,000 local people over the last five years and placed a total of 3340 into jobs.

- 2008/9 = 612
- 2009/10 = 621
- 2010/11 = 638
- 2011/12 = 628
- 2012/13 = 841

This figure does NOT include the 3,950 local people who achieve short term jobs with Olympics contractors and games organisers.

In the last year residents gaining jobs came from:

E14	= 37%
E1&E1w	= 29%
E3	= 20%
E2	= 10%

Other postcodes = 4%

The employment rate in Tower Hamlets has increased steadily over the last three years and is currently the highest it has ever been, with the gap between Tower Hamlets and London continuing to narrow.

There is still more to do, particularly for young unemployed people. That's why we are generating even more local job and apprenticeship opportunities through our work on contracts, procurement and planning.

8.26 Question from Councillor Tim Archer

Can the Mayor please reassure us that he would oppose any plans to build on Sir John McDougall Gardens, or develop the park in any way not in keeping with its status as a park?

Written response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

Sir John McDougall Gardens is designated in the Council's local development plan as publicly accessible open space. The Council's planning policies provide strong protection for such areas.

Policy DM10 states that development on areas of open space will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where:

- a. It provides essential facilities to ensure the function, use and enjoyment of the open space; or
- b. As part of a wider development proposal there is an increase of open space and a higher quality of open space outcome is achieved

8.27 Question from Councillor Ann Jackson

Can the Independent Mayor tell me what costs were incurred in putting Victoria park to rights as regards ground damage last year after Lovebox and live nation; and what costs were reclaimed from promoters.

Written response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

2012 was an exceptional year both with regard to the poor weather and the high level of activity within the Park generated by the Olympics.

The Council secured £52k from the events promoters and £30k from the Olympic Live Site Operator to cover park reinstatement. These sums covered all reparations resulting directly from the commercial events and the Live Site.

These events also contributed directly a further £100,000 of earned income that supported community activity budgets and parks maintenance throughout the year.

8.28 Question from Councillor Lutfa Begum

What is the Mayor doing to ensure that our young people are supported in going on to further and higher education?

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

The Mayor introduced the MEA (Mayor's Education Award) for students staying on in education post 16 and has followed this up with a unique award for those going on to University.

Through the Mayor's Higher Education Award, 400 students will be able to benefit from £1500, over two years to support their needs at University. This initiative is being launched on 1st July at Mulberry School. The criteria and process for application is being published in East End Life and through the schools. There has already been national coverage in the Times Educational Supplement.

In addition the Mayor has supported post -16 learning for University through Aim Higher projects, including masterclasses with university partners, programmes in academic literacy, student mentoring and encouraging parents to accompany students on university visits. All year 11 students have benefited from careers advice and guidance.