

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2013

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

Members Present:

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

The meeting commenced at 7.34 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 Mizanur Chaudhury, Carli Harper-Penman, David Snowdon and Abdal Ullah.

Apologies for lateness were received on behalf of Councillors Zara Davis, David Edgar and Fozol Miah.

RESOLVED

That the apologies for absence and lateness be noted.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Oliur Rahman **proposed**, and Councillor Shahed Ali **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That Procedure Rule 13.1 be suspended to allow for an urgent motion on The Council’s Anti-Blacklisting Pledge to be considered and further that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be altered such that the urgent motion be considered immediately”.

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

Urgent Motion regarding the Council’s Anti-Blacklisting Pledge

Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved** and Councillor Shahed Ali **seconded** the motion as tabled.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- That the GMB union, together with Unite and UCATT, has led an ongoing campaign to raise public awareness of the blacklisting of trade-union members in the construction industry.
- That some unscrupulous employers use blacklists in order to avoid employing trade union members, because they want to avoid the rightful challenge of exploitative pay and conditions that organised labour entails.
- That on instruction from the Mayor, the council has cross-referenced its procurement contracts with GMB’s comprehensive list of companies known to use this practice, and has found that the council has no contractual relationship with any of the named companies.
- That the Welsh Government announced earlier this month that it will take action to prevent blacklisting of workers.
- That the Mayor has pledged that the borough will take similar action, and has instructed officers to amend the council’s procurement policy to reflect this stance.
- That the borough is the first local authority in Britain to take such action.
- That the Mayor’s pledge has been welcomed by the GMB union, with its General Secretary, Paul Kenny, saying *“GMB is delighted that Tower Hamlets is the first council in Britain to run the blacklisters right*

out of town. Where Mayor Rahman has led, others will now surely follow and those companies guilty of blacklisting workers will get no more of the public contracts they crave until they own up, clean up and pay up for what they did to their 3,213 victims."

- That the Mayor's pledge has also been welcomed by Unite, with its General Secretary, Len McCluskey, saying *"Tower Hamlets is blazing a trail by becoming the first London council to stamp out blacklisting. This is a fantastic development and we commend the council for their positive action. We are urging other councils to take note of the Tower Hamlets decision to ban the blacklisters and to follow suit."*
- That the GMB union has offered the borough its assistance in delivering on this pledge, and that its National Officer Justin Bowden, who has been leading the campaign, has kindly offered to address a future meeting of the Full Council as part of this process.

This Council believes:

- That trade unions have a vital role in the workplace standing up for the rights of workers, and any attempt to curtail this role is to be condemned in the strongest terms.
- That blacklisting is a disgraceful and unlawful practice and that the council should do all in its power to prevent it.
- That it would be unacceptable for any company in a contractual relationship with the council to employ this practice.
- That it would be useful for the council to work closely with the GMB union in order to deliver on its pledge.

This Council resolves:

- To reaffirm its support the GMB campaign against the blacklisting of construction workers.
- To support the Mayor's pledge to take action against blacklisting in Tower Hamlets.
- To invite the GMB's National Officer, Justin Bowden, to address the next meeting of Full Council to assist the council in implementing this pledge, and to instruct the relevant authorities within the council to include a special item on the agenda of the meeting for this purpose.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Carlo Gibbs **moved**, and Councillor Rachel Saunders **seconded**, a procedural motion – "That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business

be altered such that when Item 12 is reached the following motions be the first to be considered, Motions 12.4, 12.3, 12.7, 12.9, 12.5 and 12.11 in that order”.

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

Procedural Motion

Councillor Carlo Gibbs **moved**, and Councillor Amy Whitelock **seconded**, a further procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be altered such that the motion 12.13 regarding Filming at Council meetings be considered immediately”.

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

12.13 Motion regarding Filming of Council meetings

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

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- Longstanding resident and campaigner John Wright’s protest at the last council meeting about not being allowed to film meetings.
- The Labour Group 2012 budget amendment which proposed introducing a live-webcasting system for Council meetings but which was blocked by the Mayor
- John Biggs’ commitment to openness and transparency.
- Recent Labour Group press statements calling on the Mayor to open up the Council chamber and allow filming of Council meetings.
- Government guidance that Council’s should allow residents to record meetings.
- Cllr Islam’s letters to Head of Paid Service, Stephen Halsey – 4th July and the Mayor – 18th July calling for a live streaming system .
- The statement by the Speaker of the Council at the beginning of the last meeting highlighting that she had asked officers to ensure the arrangements were in place to allow filming of meetings from September.

- That the Constitution states: “No photography or video or audio recording of any kind may take place at any Council Meeting without the express permission of the Chair.”

This Council believes:

- As elected representatives we should be as open and transparent as possible, including in Council meetings.
- The Mayor’s rhetoric does not match his actions – issuing press statements in favour of transparency whilst at the same time blocking attempts to introduce a modern live-streaming system.
- Whilst any change in the rules on recording of Council meetings must be in keeping with the law and respectful of those in the public gallery, the Council and the Speaker has made it clear they want meetings to be filmed and this should be made to happen.
- From September Council meetings should either be live streamed or recorded to allow residents who are unable to attend the Council Chamber to observe the meeting should they wish.

This Council resolves:

- To request the Speaker of the Council instruct that relevant officers implement the live streaming of Council meetings using equipment currently available to the Council, effective as of and including this meeting.
- To call on the independent Mayor to approve the introduction of a modern live-streaming system as soon as possible.

{NOTE: The Speaker then advised the Council that she was giving her permission for the meeting to be filmed by a contractor on behalf of the Council as a pilot exercise. The meeting was accordingly filmed from this point forward. The Speaker indicated that if the pilot filming was successful, she would be working with the officers and the group leaders to agree a protocol for filming to take place at future meetings. The Speaker reminded all present that apart from the Council’s own filming, no other photography, filming or recording of the meeting by members of the public was permitted.]

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were made.

Councillor Shafiqul Haque declared a personal interest in Question 8.23 as his son was employed in Skillsmatch.

3. MINUTES**RESOLVED**

That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Council meeting held on 26 June 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

The Speaker of the Council made three announcements:

1. That the Council's condolences be passed on to the family of school boy Ajmol Alom who had recently been killed in an unprovoked attack. The thoughts of all Councillors were with them.
2. Congratulations to Councillors Carlo Gibbs and Amy Whitelock on their marriage.
3. Congratulations to Councillor Marc Francis on the birth of his son and to Councillor Joshua Peck on the successful adoption of a young girl.

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

Mr John Cray addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor, then responded to the issues raised. He thanked the residents for the petition and for highlighting their concerns. He stated that the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, had been elected on a promise to increase police numbers and protect police stations from closure but that police funding had been cut across London and it was resulting in a worse service that was putting residents at risk.

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.

5.2 Petition regarding Tower Hamlets Community Housing at Trahorn Close, E1

Mr Yeabor Miah, assisted by Mr Mohammed Haque, 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 matters raised. She thanked residents for their petition and confirmed that she had taken on board concerns expressed about Tower Hamlets Community Housing. However, she stated that they were keen to resolve the issues and therefore she was looking to set aside some time for all sides to meet to come to a solution.

Councillor Rabina Khan stated that it was not this Administration that had pursued stock transfer but her priority was to make the structures work for leaseholders and tenants alike. This included ensuring that residents were listened to.

RESOLVED

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

5.3 Petition regarding Roman Road regeneration

The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the Council that this petition had been withdrawn and deferred to the next meeting at the request of the petitioners as the lead petitioner was unwell.

5.4 Petition from the Tower Hamlets Traders Business Association UK regarding provision for market traders

The petitioners addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members.

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.

6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

6.1 Question from Ms Kathy McTasney

As the community begin to feel the full impact of the Tory government's Bedroom Tax. Can the Mayor update this meeting and the community what the Council is doing to support residents who are and will be adversely affected?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Thank you for your important question.

I must make it clear that no tenant of Tower Hamlets Homes has been evicted due to the bedroom tax. All of them are on emergency housing plans so that we can meet the rental from the DHP payments and we are working to see if they can downsize or find ways to use legislation or policies so that they can stay where they are, for example where a tenant needs a carer to stay with them that would mean they are entitled to a two- rather than a one-bedroom property.

I also want to state that it is this government which has introduced the welfare reform, bedroom tax and housing benefit changes. What I find so offensive is that they have hijacked the word reform. It is a good word, it brought in the welfare state, enabled women to vote. They have used it to demonise the working poor.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Ms Kathy McTasney

Why do Island Gardens residents seem to have been forgotten? We asked the Mayor to look into ensuring advice was available in our area particularly for older people.

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

Thank you for bringing this to my attention. I promise that I will work with you to ensure that people in Island Gardens can access this information. It is in our interests to ensure that people can sustain themselves, particularly the vulnerable.

6.2 Question from Mr Ahmed Hussain

What steps are being taken to prevent the Canary Riverside underpass being used as a race track?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Your concerns have been noted and I will take them up with the police.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Ahmed Hussain

Will the Mayor join with me in congratulating Councillor Zara Davis on behalf of the residents of Canary Riverside and the Isle of Dogs for getting water barriers installed and increased police presence to prevent tunnel runs recently. What will you do to ensure that this crime and antisocial behaviour prevention work continues?

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

I congratulate any councillor who does good work in the community. But when people support an administration that cuts funding for the Police service I cannot thank them.

The responsibility for enforcing against dangerous driving rests with the Metropolitan Police. We will continue to liaise with them in the aim of preventing dangerous nuisance.

6.3 Question from Mr Andrew Wood

What is being done with the former NHS Portacabins on 111-113 Mellish Street, Isle of Dogs? I have heard rumours that it is being allocated to a group as a community centre already but have not seen anything publicly announced. What public consultation has taken place and how have local residents in the immediate area being involved in the process. What consideration has been given to the site being used for a primary school or for other purposes?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

There is no need to rely on rumour, all the information is clearly available on the Council's website.

The site was originally used by the PCT whilst developing their Barkantine site. It was handed back in March 2013 and in line with the Council's processes the following actions were taken:-

The Asset Management Working Group considered a report on the options available for the site from all directorates.

It was reviewed by the Education Directorate but it was confirmed that it was not a suitable site for primary expansion and that is why it was externally marketed for community use in the ELA, EEL and on the Council's website. Furthermore, a cross-directorate officer group reviewed the submission and made recommendations on 15th May 2013. The Third Sector Team have agreed with the successful group an SLA to ensure that there are measurable targets with regard to the group's outputs.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Andrew Wood

You said that it was not appropriate for educational use, but there is a sign outside that now says it will be a cultural and educational centre. So if it is a proposed educational centre on a publicly owned site, can you confirm that it will not be a private school and it has been approved by the Department of Education as an educational centre?

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

You asked me what consideration has been given to use of the site as a primary school and for other purposes.

There is a difference between a primary school and a community and education facility. I am clearly telling you it is not right for purpose as a primary school.

6.4 Question from Mr Chris Donnelly

What discussions and meetings are held with the Royal Borough of Greenwich with regard to entertainment events on the Greenwich Peninsula which have serious noise implications to residents in Blackwall and on the eastern side of the Isle of Dogs?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Thank you for bringing this to my attention. The Council has no legal powers regarding licensing decisions in the London Borough of Greenwich, but Greenwich Council are very good at keeping us informed of any events they feel may have an impact on this side of the borough.

However, I am not aware of any problems and I would have expected that the local ward councillors would have informed me if there were any.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Chris Donnelly

Greenwich Council has a masterplan for the development of the Greenwich Peninsula West and wants to turn it into London's premier entertainment zone by focusing development on the riverside. I am concerned that much of the noise pollution will find its way to Coldharbour and Cubitt Town. I know the local councillors and residents have made submissions to Greenwich Council. Have you been consulted by them on this and if so what did you say?

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

If applications come up in Greenwich it is for them to decide. However if there are planning applications that we feel may have an effect on our borough then we will ensure that we either make written submissions or ask officers to represent our case.

6.9 Question from Mr Saied Ahmed

Can the Mayor tell whether he has ever stopped filming at Council meetings?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Let me be absolutely clear here. The Mayor has never stopped anyone filming at Council or Cabinet meetings.

No Independent Councillor has ever stopped anyone filming at Council meetings.

I understand it was a Labour Group member who called the police when a pensioner tried to film the meeting.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Saied Ahmed

Having heard that response, can I urge all councillors to stop spreading these lies and rumours as the general members of the public find that behaviour unacceptable?

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

You may have read in the local media a lot of nonsense about this. To be clear, the reason you read that was because the Labour Party misled the Newham Recorder, and the East London Advertiser did not print the whole of our press statement.

6.10 Question from Mr Abu Ahsan

Can the Mayor tell us what his relationship with the union is?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

This administration is proud of its association with the Unions and the Labour movement.

Tower Hamlets was the first London Borough to adopt the London Living Wage. We are working with Unite the union and Barclays Bank in a pioneering partnership at the St George's Community Centre. We've stood shoulder to shoulder with the FBU in opposing Boris' reckless cuts to fire services, and we are in contact with the Communication Workers Union about the Government's awful decision to privatise Royal Mail.

No supplementary question was put.

The above questions and (except where indicated) one supplementary question arising from each were put at the meeting and were responded to by the relevant executive member.

Questions 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8 and 6.11 were not put at the meeting as the questioners were not present. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised that written responses would be provided to the questions [Note: The written answers are included in Appendix A to these minutes].

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor made his report to the Council meeting, extending a welcome to all present.

The Mayor concluded his report by reiterating the Speaker's condolences for the family of Ajmol Alom.

The Leader of the Majority group and Leaders of the Minority Groups each responded briefly to the Mayor's report. They each added their condolences to the family of Ajmol Alom.

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

8.1 Question from Councillor Judith Gardiner

The Mayor was elected to serve and answer to the people of Tower Hamlets. Does he not understand that by refusing to answer residents' and councillors' questions he is insulting the people who elected him?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

The people of the borough voted for the Mayor and will do so again at the next election.

The Mayor holds regular meetings with residents, weekly surgeries and is always out and about in the community answering questions. He had over 6000 items of casework in the last years.

We are the Cabinet members and we have the right to reply. Each public question is answered in full by a Cabinet member.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Judith Gardiner

None of the Cabinet Members were elected to speak for the Mayor. They were elected as Labour councillors but they have not had the courage to ask their electors if they are happy for them to switch sides. What is the Mayor afraid of?

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

The Cabinet are members of the executive and we are able, and will continue, to answer questions relevant to our responsibilities, just as happened under

the Leadership model. 25,000 people elected the Mayor and we will continue to speak for all residents not just a few councillors.

8.2 Question from Councillor Zara Davis

What is the Mayor doing to ensure that Tower Hamlets benefits from the legacy of the 2012 Games?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

The Mayor attends the London Legacy Development Corporation to lobby the authority, as well as the GLA and others, to maximise the level of affordable and family housing that is built in the former Olympic Park, and working to ensure that people from Tower Hamlets are able to access this housing.

He also uses his position to ensure Tower Hamlets residents are able to access the job opportunities which arise from the redevelopment of the Olympic Park, building on the 4,000 Olympic jobs secured for local people ahead of Games time.

The Council is also actively assisting local businesses to take advantage of development opportunities, for example through support for the Fit for Legacy project and the ongoing work of East London Business Place.

I do understand that there is more work to be done and we are doing our best to maximise opportunities for local residents.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Zara Davis

Affordable housing is extremely important. However I'm deeply concerned that Tower Hamlets are only being allocated 27 out of over 1,300 affordable housing units from the athletes village. What have you and the Mayor been doing to take action and secure a better outcome?

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

We are fighting this allocation with the East London Housing Partnership and will be taking the issue further.

8.3 Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam

Will the Mayor join me in thanking residents and politicians of all parties for their support in resisting the EDL march and agree with me that issues such as this should not be about political point scoring but uniting to protect our community?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

I wish we could have such unity, Cllr Islam, but the words and actions of some of your Labour colleagues have made that impossible.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam

Councillor Choudhury speaks in a cryptic way. But there are suggestions that the EDL may march again. What is the Mayor doing to stop this happening?

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

Let's go back to basics. Why do the EDL come to Tower Hamlets again and again?

I would like to offer you a couple of quotes from the EDL's Tommy Robinson:

"Lutfur Rahman, who's the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, he was kicked out of the Labour for his extremist views."

Or how about this: "What we're doing today is sticking two fingers up to the politicians, to Lutfur Rahman, to all the extremist Muslims."

Where did that come from?

I'm sure you'll recognise the accusations, Cllr Islam, many of them were first made by members of your party in 2010 and now they are in the mouths of far-right thugs. You know they are untrue, we know they are untrue and I'm sure the people who first made them know they are untrue. But they have been made and they have never been retracted and the EDL have used them as an excuse to come down and terrorise the people of Tower Hamlets.

So, councillor, don't talk to me about unity, don't talk to me about rising above politics. Where was the unity when Jim Fitzpatrick claimed Islamists were infiltrating local politics and the Town Hall? Where was the unity when Helal Abbas and Bill Turner penned their infamous dodgy dossiers?

Where was the unity when John Biggs accused this administration of only doing Decent Homes works for our friends - a claim that was gleefully used as propaganda by the EDL and still is?

8.4 Question from Councillor Fozol Miah

Would the lead member join with me in congratulating the teaching staff, parents and pupils who have ensured the extraordinary level of success in Tower Hamlets schools in the context of one of the most deprived communities in Britain and in applauding the Mayor's education strategy which has helped to facilitate this success and would the lead member say

what threats there are to continuing this success from the break-up of Tower Hamlets education community through the government's iniquitous policy of encouraging schools to become academies and the growth of so-called free schools?

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

I do join you in congratulating the head teachers, staff, parents and pupils of Tower Hamlets for achieving such a high standard of results. This kind of result does not happen by accident. It happens through dedication and hard work from education authorities, teachers, parents and children. Indeed parents are often the best teachers. Children learn at home too, so it is also credit to them.

I notice the later question on the Docklands Free Schools which got an OFSTED 'Outstanding' review and is supported by the Conservative government. If Michael Gove could he would make all schools free schools and academies.

They are not supporting ordinary people. How many BME and free school meals children attend that school? Last time I checked with the government it was a big fat zero.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Fozol Miah

How many academies and free schools are there now in Tower Hamlets and how many are in the pipeline?

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

From the Community schools, one secondary and three primary schools have become academies. However in the interests of our young people I have always said that we will work to ensure our children get the best education they possibly can but we will continue to make clear our opposition to academies and free schools in principle.

8.5 Question from Councillor John Pierce

What is the aim of Cllr Khan's new review of Beever & Struthers recommendations for THH leaseholder charges?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

There is no such thing as Cllr Khan's review. But there is the Leaseholder Policy Steering Group's review, which will:

- assess progress towards completion of the Action Plan
- provide recommendations to ensure that the remainder of the Action Plan is completed swiftly and to the satisfaction of all involved

- continue to improve the working relationship between THH and Leaseholders.

I'm sure you will agree these are important aims.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor John Pierce

It was news to the group that you brought forward this review. What number review is this? This has been a sorry mess. How many reviews will there be and how many thousands of pounds will you waste before you sort out leaseholder charges? Many people in the borough have been financially crippled by your incompetence and I hope you sort it out soon.

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

I am glad you are asking for transparency and honesty. I would highlight that at 14 PSG meetings since October 2010 there have been only two attendances by Labour Group Members and you have only attended one, for 40 minutes. PSG was set up as a cross-party mechanism to benefit leaseholders. They attend voluntarily and see it as a non-political group. The PSG works for all leaseholders and you should show more respect for the time that they voluntarily put in.

8.6 Question from Councillor Gloria Thienel

Why has the Mayor allowed Millwall Park to be used as a venue for the London Oktoberfest beer festival for four days, including Sunday as a "family day" with ten thousand people? The park is in close proximity to residential areas and the event could result in crime, anti-social behaviour issues and parking problems amongst others. Also the football and rugby clubs won't be able to use the pitches.

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

I understand that you made representations to last night's Licensing Sub-Committee meeting and that is the proper forum for your concern. They are a competent committee to make the decision. The decision is not within the purview of the Executive.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Gloria Thienel

The Mayor has rented out our parks for commercial ventures. It is nothing to do with what residents want. This was lost at Licensing but we will appeal. The Mayor should not be allowing any hiring out in this way. Where does the money go? Because it does not go back into the park.

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

You are welcome to appeal but please note that the decision to approve the application was taken by the Labour Party at the Licensing sub-committee, not by the Mayor.

8.7 Question from Councillor M. A. Mukit, MBE

Why did the Mayor use East End Life to take credit for the recent Redchurch Street clean up when it was Labour councillors who were there helping the local community?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

East End Life is a wonderful tool to promote the work of all councillors not just the executive.

This event referred to was organised with local residents, volunteers and our wonderful council staff.

The Mayor and I were quoted in the piece simply praising the work done by the volunteers. I'm sure you will agree that we should be praising their work. They play a great role in our community. It is something to be celebrated.

You may have been distracted by a previous incident when Cllr Joshua Peck's attempted to use his Council timesheet to justify the work he does in trying to keep our streets. Please join us in thanking those volunteers and staff who were helping to clean up our environment.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor M. A. Mukit, MBE

Who were the volunteers? Isn't it the case that the Mayor's cuts to street cleaning from three to two days mean that more volunteers are now necessary?

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

Local residents were the volunteers. They were cleaning graffiti - that was the purpose of the exercise, not doing street cleaning work. If anyone helping was not local then they should also be thanked for helping to clean up the area.

8.8 Question from Councillor Kabir Ahmed

Can the Lead Member tell us what was done by the administration to galvanise the community against the EDL?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

We did so much I'll have to give it to you as a list:

We wrote to the Home Secretary, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, the Borough Commander, The Mayor of London and London Assembly Members asking for the march to be banned.

We initiated a 10,000 signature petition and an open letter in the Guardian signed by local community and religious leaders, MP's and trade union general secretaries.

We worked closely with our partners in United East End and Unite Against Fascism to raise awareness against the EDL.

We initiated a Judicial review of the policing decision on the route of the EDL march and seeking to apply maximum pressure on them to ensure EDL thwarted in their plans to march into Tower Hamlets.

We kept the community briefed via a number of press conferences, public meetings and the use of East End Life.

We worked closely with the police, council officers, UEE & UAF to ensure the anti-racist protest in Altab Ali Park passed off peacefully, and we made immediate representation to the police on hearing of the detention of local youth for infringement on crowd dispersal.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Kabir Ahmed

I welcome the attendance of many including Councillor Islam, John Biggs and local Labour councillors. However, would the Lead Member share my disappointment that the local MPs and the Conservative Group did not attend? It would have been an opportunity for a united front.

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

I am disappointed too. I would at least liked to have seen statements from the local MPs. But you probably need to ask the question to the people concerned.

8.9 Question from Councillor Helal Uddin

Why was it that the Mayor lost control of the Watts Grove project resulting in the cancellation of 149 new council homes?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Clearly you've not had much experience in housing and development matters, so let's set the record straight.

When you're building more affordable homes than anyone else in the country, due diligence is needed to ensure projects give best value for money. The question the Mayor often asks is whether we could get more social housing on the site so the question could be can we get more than 149 council homes built on the site.

Initial estimates in outline bids from the market indicated that the scheme was affordable. A change in market prices and further cuts from central government meant that this assessment had to be revised and looked into properly to ensure we could get best value for money.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Helal Uddin

I think I have a better understanding of housing as that is also my area. Can I have a clear assurance from the Lead Member to deliver this project to benefit residents in my ward?

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

Have you looked at the many other regeneration projects going on across the borough including the Ocean Estate, Blackwall Reach, Poplar Baths and many others. These are mechanisms for delivering social housing in the borough. For your information the Watts Grove project will go ahead.

The Mayor has not lost control of Watts Grove. The Labour Party has lost control of itself.

The above questions and (except where indicated) one supplementary question arising from each were put at the meeting and were responded to by the relevant executive member.

The remaining questions 8.10 to 8.28 were not put due to a lack of time. The Service Head, Democratic Services advised that written responses would be provided to the questions [Note: The written answers are included in Appendix A to these minutes].

Procedural Motion

After Question 8.8 above Councillor Oliur Rahman **proposed**, and Councillor Alibor Choudhury **seconded** a procedural motion – "That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be altered such that motion 12.4 - Motion against the English Defence League - be considered immediately".

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

12.4 Motion against the English Defence League

Councillor Alibor Choudhury **moved**, and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **seconded**, the motion as printed on the agenda.

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved**, and Councillor Rachel Saunders **seconded**, an amendment as follows:-

“Under ‘This Council Resolves’ add a line to read:-

- That the Council and officers should continue to do all they can to support the banning of EDL marches through our borough.”

Councillors Alibor Choudhury and Ohid Ahmed indicated that they accepted the amendment and altered their motion accordingly.

Following debate, Councillor Alibor Choudhury **moved** and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **seconded** a further amendment as follows:-

“To add two further bullet points under ‘This Council Resolves’:-

- Work together to counter right wing stories that aim to divide us and instil fear; and
- Accept Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE) as a progressive organisation we will aim to engage.”

Following debate the amendment was put to the vote and was **defeated**,

[Note: In accordance with Procedure Rule 17.5, the following Councillors each requested it be recorded that they had voted in favour of the above amendment:- Councillors Kabir Ahmed, Ohid Ahmed, Rofique U Ahmed, Shahed Ali, Abdul Asad, Lutfa Begum, Alibor Choudhury, Shafiqul Haque, Aminur Khan, Rabina Khan, Rania Khan, Fozol Miah, Harun Miah, Maium Miah, Oliur Rahman and Gulam Robbani.]

Councillor Rachael Saunders then **moved** and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded** a further amendment as follows:-

“To add a further bullet point under ‘This Council Resolves’:-

- To support the work of all organisations that made a contribution to preventing the EDL attack on Tower Hamlets.”

Following debate the amendment was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

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

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

That since the murder of Lee Rigby in May 2013, the EDL has sought to stir up racial tensions in communities across the UK, including in Tower Hamlets on 7 September.

This Council believes:

That all those in the community who worked to counter the EDL's divisive, hateful message and protect community cohesion in the borough, are to be congratulated.

This Council resolves:

To condemn the attempts by the English Defence League to bring their message of hate to our borough on September 7.

To strengthen the Council's commitment to our No Place for Hate policies, eradicating hate crime in Tower Hamlets and creating an environment where everyone can enjoy living, working and visiting Tower Hamlets - free from fear, intimidation and attack.

That the Council and officers should continue to do all they can to support the banning of EDL marches through our borough.

To support the work of all organisations that made a contribution to preventing the EDL attack on Tower Hamlets.

Procedural Motion

After Question 8.9 above Councillor Carlo Gibbs **proposed**, and Councillor Bill Turner **seconded** a procedural motion – "That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be altered such that the motion 12.3 - Motion regarding the Watts Grove Depot redevelopment - be considered immediately".

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

12.3 Motion regarding the Watts Grove Depot redevelopment

Councillor Carlo Gibbs **moved**, and Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed **seconded**, the motion as printed on the agenda.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- The Mayor's decision on the 29th July to scrap the Council's redevelopment of the Watts Grove Depot site.
- That this decision was taken in secret behind closed doors and without any opportunity for scrutiny from residents of councillors as would have been the case were it made at Cabinet two days later.
- Scrapping the development of Watts Grove will mean the 149 planned social homes will now not be built.
- In the report the Chief Finance Officer wrote that *"It is estimated that as a result of the project the net deficit in the HRA will increase by between £200k and £900k from 2015/16 onwards"* making the development unaffordable.
- The motion proposed by Cllrs Gibbs and Peck at this year's Budget which stated:
 - o *That between the Chancellor's Emergency Budget in 2010 and 2017/18, the Council's General Fund budget will have been cut by 50%;*
 - o *The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan is showing a black hole of £39m in 2015/16, £24m of which is unfunded, and a deficit of at least £55m is anticipated in 2016/17;*
 - o *In facing these cuts the residents of this borough deserve openness and honesty about how those elected to represent them will deal with this issue;*
 - o *The Mayor has lost control of the Council's finances and has no proposals - such as an invest to save strategy, star chamber programme or review of service - to deal with this black hole;*
- There are over 20,000 people on the housing waiting list
- The Mayor wrote in his decision that he would *"reconsider the decision to declare the Watts Grove Depot surplus to requirements" meaning the site would not be available for development."*
- The Mayor wrote in the ELA on the 14th August that *"scheme has not been scrapped and it will be going ahead"*

This Council believes:

- That the Mayor was warned about the impact of his mismanagement of Council finances and did nothing.
- The cancellation of Watts Grove could have been avoided had the Mayor listened to Labour councillors and got a grip on the Council's

finances.

- 20,000 residents on the housing waiting list have been thoroughly let down by the Mayor who has failed to deliver the much needed council housing he promised, and that it is residents who are paying the price for the Mayor's financial incompetence.
- The Chief Finance Officer's report raises serious concerns about the mechanism used by the Mayor to fund the redevelopments of Dame Colet House and Poplar Baths.
- By taking the decision in secret, behind closed doors, the Mayor further demonstrated his contempt for any kind of scrutiny of his actions and that this is a further insult to residents who are concerned about the housing shortages in the borough and whom he is supposed to represent.
- The Mayor's contradictory and inaccurate statements to the media are misleading and unacceptable.

This Council resolves:

- To instruct the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate the reasons for the collapse of the Watts Grove Depot project, and the sustainability and suitability of the financial mechanisms used to fund Dame Colet House and Poplar Baths and to report back to Council in November on its findings.
- To call upon the Mayor to come clean about the state of the Council's finances and to put in place a plan to balance the Council's books.
- To require the Section 151 officer to report to councillors within the week how much money including an estimate of officer time has been spent to date on the Watts Grove Project.

[Note: In accordance with Procedure Rule 17.5, the following Councillors each requested it be recorded that they had voted against the above resolution:- Councillors Kabir Ahmed, Ohid Ahmed, Rofique U Ahmed, Shahed Ali, Abdul Asad, Lutfu Begum, Alibor Choudhury, Shafiqul Haque, Aminur Khan, Rabina Khan, Rania Khan, Maium Miah, Oliur Rahman and Gulam Robbani.]

Procedural Motion

Councillor Carlo Gibbs **moved**, and Councillor Rachel Saunders **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.14 the meeting be extended for up to half an hour to allow for the consideration of Agenda Items 9 and 11 and then the following Motions:- 12.7, 12.9, 12.5 and 12.11”.

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

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

9.1 STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY REVIEW

The Council considered the proposals of the Executive arising from the review of the Statement of Licensing Policy as presented in the Supplemental Agenda.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed **moved**, and Councillor Alibor Choudhury **seconded**, the recommendations as listed in the report.

Following debate the recommendations were put to the vote and were **agreed**.

RESOLVED

1. That the Statement of Licensing Policy including the Cumulative Impact Zone for the Brick Lane area be adopted as set out at Appendix 5 to the report of the Corporate Director/Head of Paid Service.
2. That the Statement of Licensing Policy take effect from 1st November 2013 until 31st October 2018; and the existing Statement of Licensing Policy be rescinded on the 31st October 2013.
3. To agree the adoption of the 'no casino' resolution to amend the Gambling Policy 2013, as set out at Appendix 8 to the report of the Corporate Director/Head of Paid Service.

9.2 REPORT OF THE STANDARDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

The Council considered the report of the Standards (Advisory) Committee proposing revisions to the arrangements for dealing with complaints.

Councillor Rachel Saunders **moved**, and Councillor Rajib Ahmed **seconded**, the following amendment to the recommendations in the report:-

“To add to the recommendations:

- That at each of its meetings, a report be presented to the Standards Committee listing all complaints which have exceeded the two month period since referral for investigation and that this report include details of the length of time elapsed since referral and the reasons for the delay to a resolution. This report would include all complaints which exceeded the two month period since the Committee last met as well

as those previously reported to the Committee which remain unresolved in excess of the two month period.

- In cases where the Monitoring Officer exercises their power to extend the time period of investigations into complaints from 2 months to 3 months, a report on the reasons for this is presented to the Standards Committee for noting.
- Also in cases where the Monitoring Officer exercises their power to extend the time period of investigations into complaints from 2 months to 3 months a letter is to be sent to the complainant and the subject or subjects of the investigation notifying them of the extension and the reasons for this.

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

The substantive recommendations, as amended, were then put to the vote and were **agreed**.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposed revisions to arrangements for dealing with complaints about Member conduct set out at Section 4 of the report (attached as Appendix A to the Standards Advisory Committee's report to the Council) be approved subject to (a) below:-
 - (a) Extension of the timescale for completion of an investigation, once a complaint is referred for investigation, from the current 1 month to 2 months, with the existing provision for a further 1 month extension by the Monitoring Officer under the provisions of paragraph 8 of the current arrangements to remain, providing for a total maximum period of 3 months.
2. That at each of its meetings, a report be presented to the Standards Committee listing all complaints which have exceeded the two month period since referral for investigation and that this report include details of the length of time elapsed since referral and the reasons for the delay to a resolution. This report would include all complaints which exceeded the two month period since the Committee last met as well as those previously reported to the Committee which remain unresolved in excess of the two month period.
3. In cases where the Monitoring Officer exercises their power to extend the time period of investigations into complaints from 2 months to 3 months, a report on the reasons for this is presented to the Standards Committee for noting.
4. Also in cases where the Monitoring Officer exercises their power to extend the time period of investigations into complaints from 2 months to 3 months a letter is to be sent to the complainant and the subject or

subjects of the investigation notifying them of the extension and the reasons for this.

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

There was no business under this heading.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 STANDARDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE - APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBER(S)

The Council considered the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services regarding the appointment of Co-opted Members to the Standards (Advisory) Committee, including the addendum report contained in the 2nd supplemental agenda pack.

Following debate, the recommendations set out in the addendum report were put to the vote and were **agreed**.

RESOLVED

1. That Mr Barry O'Connor and Mr John Pulford MBE each be appointed as co-opted members of the Standards Advisory Committee (SAC) for a term of office of four years.
2. That the Council note that Mr Denzil Johnson has given notice that he will be unable to undertake his duties as a co-opted member of the SAC during the period from now until the end of April 2014
3. That Mr Grenville Mills be appointed as a co-opted member of the Standards Advisory Committee, to replace Mr Denzil Johnson for the period until 30th April 2014; and that Mr Denzil Johnson be re-appointed to the Committee with effect from 1st May 2014 until the expiry of his original term of office in May 2016.

11.2 2012-13 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT

The Council considered the report of the Acting Corporate Director, Resources setting out the Treasury Management outturn position for the financial year ending 31 March 2013.

The recommendation set out in the report was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted.

11.3 REPORT IN RELATION TO THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR'S CAR

The Council considered the report of the Acting Corporate Director, Resources in relation to the Executive Mayor's Car.

Councillor Bill Turner **moved**, and Councillor Rachel Saunders **seconded**, an amended recommendation that the report be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

Following debate the amended recommendation was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED

That the report of the Acting Corporate Director, Resources be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Note – Motions 12.3, 12.4 and 12.13 had been considered earlier in the meeting and the decisions are listed at those points.

12.7 Motion regarding the Mayor's failure to deliver on street cleaning

Councillor Helal Abbas **moved**, and Councillor Khales Uddin-Ahmed **seconded**, the motion as printed on the agenda.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- That across the borough there have been 667 reports of missed bin collections over the last 6 months in the E3 area alone.
- That in response to the 667 reported missed bin collections in the E3 area the Council has issued just 9 penalty notices to the contractor Veolia.

This Council believes:

- That because the above figures only represent missed bin collections which have been reported by residents they represent only the tip of

the iceberg with many more uncollected bins left to litter our streets.

- 667 reported missed bin collections over 6 months in one postcode area is a damning reflection on the Mayor's record on street cleanliness.
- That the number of missed bin collections show that the Mayor and his independent Cabinet member for Cleaner and Greener, Cllr Shahed Ali have failed to get to grips with managing the basic services residents rely upon.
- By only issuing penalties to the contractor on 9 occasions despite 667 incidences of failure to fulfil the rubbish collection contract the Mayor and Cllr Ali have shown astounding complacency and ineffectiveness.

This Council further notes:

- The Mayor's 2012 Budget chose to cut street cleaning to only two days a week, as well as introducing charges for pest control services and bulk rubbish collection.
- That Labour councillors opposed the Mayor's decision to cut the street cleaning budgets highlighting the potential for it to degrade the borough.
- The Mayor's 2013 Budget included £70,000 of cleaner streets funding for resident 'education' designed to 'align the perception and the reality of the condition of the borough'.
- Last year's Annual Residents Survey showed that 41% of residents have a negative view of street cleaning services with 35% unhappy with rubbish collections.

This Council believes:

- The Mayor's cuts to street cleaning are having a demonstrable effect on the state of our borough's streets.
- By spending £70,000 of taxpayers' money on propaganda campaigns to 'educate' residents how clean the streets are the Mayor is missing the point, we need cleaner streets not more propaganda.
- That the Mayor should spend less time being ferried around the streets in his tax payer funded Mercedes and actually get out and see the results of his cuts to street cleaning.
- The Mayor's claims that the streets are 97% are ridiculous and just shows how out of touch he and his Cabinet are.

This Council resolves:

- To censure the Mayor and Cllr Ali for their failure to effectively manage the Council's contract for bin collections with Veolia.
- To instruct the Section 151 officer to investigate the fulfilment of the Council's bin collection contract to ensure that tax payers are getting best value for money and to report back to Council.

12.9 Motion regarding 'Affordable' rent cap

Councillor John Pierce **moved**, and Councillor Rajib Ahmed **seconded**, the motion as printed on the agenda.

Councillor Bill Turner **moved**, and Councillor John Pierce **seconded**, a procedural motion under Procedure Rule 15.12.1 that the question be now put.

Councillor Rabina Khan indicated that she wished to propose an amendment to the motion as follows:-

"Delete last point under 'notes' and replace with

- That Tower Hamlets is currently working with other London councils, including Islington, on the possibility of a Judicial Review of Boris Johnson's decision.

Insert after all text under 'notes'

- That the London Borough of Tower Hamlets was one of the consortium of nine London councils that provided evidence at the Revised Early Minor Alterations (REMA) to the London Plan Examination in Public (EiP) on the affordable rent policies in November 2012.
- That as a result of the incisive evidence produced from a landmark research project undertaken by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, the Planning Inspector ruled in the councils' favour, but was ignored by Boris Johnson.

Delete first point under 'resolves' and replace with

- To endorse Mayor Rahman's decision to instruct lawyers to work with other boroughs on a possible Judicial Review of the Mayor of London's decision."

The Speaker advised the Council of the text of Cllr Khan's proposed amendment as above. However, there was insufficient time left before the expiry of the time limit for the meeting for the amendment to be debated.

The procedural motion moved by Councillor Turner was then put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The substantive motion was then put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- That a government-appointed planning inspector recently recommended that Boris Johnson delete paragraphs from his Draft London Plan which would prevent councils from setting localised caps for affordable rent.
- The planning inspector reported that nine councils had provided *“compelling evidence about the lack of affordability of homes at 60-80 per cent of market rents for many of their poorest residents”*
- Boris Johnson has since indicated that he will reject the inspector’s recommendations and press ahead with mandating affordable rent for London at 80% of market rates.
- Many residents in Tower Hamlets cannot afford rents at 80% of market rates and will be forced to look outside of the borough for housing options in the future.
- Labour-led Islington Council have said that they are exploring the possibility of legal action against the Mayor of London’s decision.

This Council believes:

- The Conservative ‘affordable rent’ model is a farce which is totally unaffordable for many of those currently living in London
- Boris Johnson’s refusal to allow councils to set a localised ‘affordable’ rent is a clear abdication of his duty to protect the poorest in our society.
- Not allowing councillors to set localised ‘affordable’ rent shows the hollow nature of the Conservative’s much promoted localism agenda.
- That this decision is indicative of the gentrification agenda of a Conservative Party who would rather see lifelong residents turfed out of London than supported.

This Council resolves:

- To call upon the Mayor of London to reconsider his decision and to allow councils to set localised affordable rent caps which reflect the needs of their local populations.

- To call upon the Mayor of Tower Hamlets to support Labour-Led Islington council in its potential legal action against the Mayor of London's decision.
- To call upon the Tower Hamlets Conservative Group to publically condemn the Mayor of London's decision.

Motions 12.1, 12.2, 12.5, 12.6, 12.8, 12.10, 12.11, 12.12 and 12.14 – 12.17 were not considered due to lack of time.

The meeting ended at 11.04 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

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

6.5 Question from Mr Graham Collins

When will the proposed school to be built on the News International site be open for pupils?

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

This depends on the timing of the planning application and the provision of funding from the Department of Education.

We require detailed planning work and consultation before the school can be built.

However we hope that school places will be available within the next 5 - 7 years.

6.6 Question from Ms Sima Begum

Is it true that the Council failed to support a no casino motion to prevent the proliferation of gambling joints in Tower Hamlets?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Yes. At the last Council meeting, Labour Councillors chose not to consider a motion that would ban casinos and halt the proliferation of gaming establishments in Tower Hamlets.

Thankfully, that’s not the end of the matter and despite Labour’s inexplicable move, we are currently consulting on the policy which will return to this meeting in due course.

Hopefully this time, Labour will vote in the interests of residents and not just indulge in opposition for its own sake.

6.7 Question from Miss Bushra Hussain

Why is the Council spending money on a local newspaper, the East London Advertiser, that promotes exploitation of women and advertises escort services?

Written response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

We believe it is very important to support our independent local media.

But at the same time, we need to set an example. I'm very concerned about public money being spent on an outfit that promotes these services.

6.8 Question from Ms Noorun Nessa

Given the shortage of school places in the borough, what is the Mayor doing to address this concern?

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

Since 2008 the Council has created 2,000 extra permanent primary school places and there are plans for more places in our programme.

Bonner Primary School is being expanded, as are Stebon, Olga and St Paul's Way schools and new buildings will be built for Bow School and Woolmore School.

6.11 Question from Mr Len Aldis

A few years ago, on behalf of Tower Hamlets CND I asked the council to consider joining the international organisation Mayors for Peace, that now stands at 5,712 cities in 157 countries.

I am pleased that after the suggestion had been considered it was approved unanimously. Tonight, I ask the council to consider another suggestion that would in our opinion show your concern for Peace. That is to plant a cherry tree as a symbol of peace, in Bethnal Green Gardens.

Each year on 6th August a ceremony is held by the cherry tree planted in August 1967 by the then Mayor of Camden. It a reminder of the dropping of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki August 1945.

We feel a cherry tree in Bethnal Green Garden would be a reminder of that event, but also a symbol of bringing people together for peace.

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Thank you for your question Len. As you know, the Mayor is proud to be a member of Mayors for Peace.

I am aware of the annual ceremony held at Tavistock Square to remember the use of weapons of mass destruction used against the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. This ceremony is held beside a Japanese cherry tree. I think that it is an admirable idea to plant a similar tree in Tower Hamlets and Bethnal Green Gardens seems a very suitable location.

8.10 Question from Councillor David Snowdon

Will the Cabinet member for Jobs and Skills please outline what the borough is doing to promote English language learning for those for whom it is not their mother tongue?

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

Our Idea Stores offer English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to over 900 adults with English language needs. In addition, we subcontract ESOL provision to a third sector provider and work in close partnership with other ESOL providers in the borough.

In the last financial year, the Mayor allocated £250,000 to fund 250 additional ESOL places and develop our ESOL Advice Service, which has made the service more efficient and more effective.

We also work closely with the Job Centre to raise awareness of the ESOL provision on offer and improve information provided to job seekers.

8.11 Question from Councillor Ann Jackson

Why did the Mayor use his executive powers recently to remove Labour councillors from the boards of 37 different local community groups in some cases leaving unfilled vacancies?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

In 2010, local people voted by a decisive 60%, on a whopping 60% turnout, in favour of transitioning to a mayoral model of governance.

In this model, a well-known elected figure takes on the responsibility of delivery across all areas of council business, and is held to account directly by voters.

External appointments are, in law, an executive function. The Mayor has an unquestionable mandate as the executive.

So of course it would not make sense to have the previous executive, that were rejected by the people of this borough, still hanging around and exercising executive functions.

8.12 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

In the wake of the debacle over the closure by the government of Lewisham Hospital A&E to pay for the bankruptcy of a neighbouring trust, now fortunately overturned by judicial review, could the lead member indicate what

assessments have been made of the economic viability of health care in Tower Hamlets for the foreseeable future, given, in particular, the burden of costs imposed by the PFI scheme under which the new Royal London Hospital was built and the real cutbacks being suffered by the NHS despite the government's claims to have ring-fenced health spending?

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

The Mayor and I share your concern at the real cut backs the NHS is suffering under this government.

Barts Health not only face fixed costs from PFI but also

- They have a national productivity target of £50m this year as well as a further local target of £28m/ Make savings of £75m this year
- They are faced with deficit of £24.4m in the first quarter of 2013/14 (June)
- They estimate £50m deficit at the end of the year
- As you say, they are also faced with fixed costs from PFI and this constrains scope for savings

We are highly concerned and vigilant about the impact on patient care.

The Mayor will be meeting members of the Trust Board later this month to get assurance on the Barts Health turnaround plans. These plans will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by us and our health partners.

8.13 Question from Councillor Helal Abbas

Figures have emerged recently which show that there have been 667 reported missed rubbish collections in the last 6 months in the E3 area alone but that the Council has only issued 9 penalties against the contractor. Can the Mayor explain why?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

It should be noted that from April 2013 Veolia carried out 54,311 rubbish collections per week, this amounts to 2.8 million collections per year. The average performance of the refuse collection contract, including recycling, is 99.97%.

The contract gives the contractor 24 hours to rectify missed rubbish collections before imposing a fine.

For the period April-September, there were 2,167 reported missed rubbish collections throughout the whole Borough. Of these, Veolia were issued with 40 default penalty notices for failing to collect within 24 hours.

8.14 Question from Councillor Tim Archer

Does the Mayor agree that Canary Wharf College's achievement of an "Outstanding" assessment from OFSTED 2 years after launching proves that we need more Free Schools in Tower Hamlets?

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

Our local community primary schools, who accept any pupils from the local community are performing excellently - 88% of maintained primary schools are good or outstanding. So I am saddened by the fact that a very small, selective school with hardly any BME pupils and with hardly any pupils on free school meals should be seen as a flagship by our local Tories.

This borough does not need one section of the community self-segregating and ghettoising itself or refusing to take part in the community life of the borough. So neither I nor the Mayor, nor would I hope, the majority of Councillors in this room would agree that this borough needs more Free Schools.

8.15 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders

Last month the Care Quality Commission issued a worrying report on some services at Whipps Cross Hospital. What representations has the Council made to the Barts trust regarding this issue?

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

The Mayor is deeply concerned by the issues raised and is meeting the Chair of Barts Health, Sir Stephen O'Brien, to discuss this report next Tuesday. The Mayor is also aware of the CQC report on Maternity services and services for Older People at the Royal London.

8.16 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan

Can the Lead Member tell us what is being done to challenge Boris' Johnson's proposed Fire Station Closures in Tower Hamlets?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Boris Johnson's decision to close Bow fire station, and to reduce capacity at Whitechapel, demonstrates his reckless approach to Londoners' safety, and we believe it is unlawful.

Accordingly, the mayor is preparing to challenge Boris Johnson's decision in the High Court, in partnership with other left-wing councils including Islington.

8.17 Question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed

How much did the abandoned Brick Lane Summer Saturdays project cost the Council?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

As you know, the Mayor and this administration are committed to enhancing our town centres and helping our local businesses to thrive in difficult times.

You will be aware of the report by Bill Grimsey that suggests local authorities should be doing all they can to support local high streets. In the last budget we provided additional funding for town centres, including Brick Lane.

The Brick Lane Road Closures were designed as a pilot to investigate the practicalities and benefits of pedestrianizing Brick Lane on Saturdays.

The experiments were extremely successful, with businesses seeing an increase in trade, and residents and visitors enjoying the best of Brick Lane.

8.18 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

Will the Mayor join with me in welcoming the formation of the Friends of Island Gardens, and state his opposition to planning applications which impinge upon the park?

Written response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

The heritage of this borough and the protection of its green spaces is a central part of our approach to improving the life of residents.

All planning applications will be addressed on their own merits and the views of the local community taken into account.

8.19 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

What is the current average length of time taken for an Occupational Therapy assessment for those seeking rehousing on medical grounds?

Written response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

The Occupational Therapy Service advises that the average period from initial referral to assessment is 8 – 12 weeks.

This is considerably more than we would like but in the current climate there is little money for investing in improvements.

8.20 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani

Can the Lead Member tell us how our pupils have performed in this year's GCSE and A-Levels?

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

The high level outcomes for A levels and GCSE 2013 have been forwarded to Members through the Member's briefing.

The results are provisional still. Overall the Average points score for students at A level, which is the key measure, has risen by 33% to 679 points, closing the gap with national figures.

The GCSE results have risen to 65% 5A*-CEM with English and Maths A*-C also sitting above national averages.

A full report on results will be presented to Cabinet in October.

8.21 Question from Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman

Can the Mayor explain to me and the full Council why he has failed to attend the last two overview scrutiny committee meetings?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

I note that you yourself missed the meeting before last Councillor. The Mayor has a very busy diary and has always offered alternative dates on which he can attend O&S.

8.22 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

To ask the Mayor how much has been spent to date on posters in Tower Hamlets advertising street cleaning services?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Cleanliness in Tower Hamlets is a Mayoral priority and rates highly on residents' concerns in the annual residents' survey.

We have engaged in several highly campaigns to publicise our services and change residents' behaviour including the push to increase recycling to over 30 per cent.

The spend on communications for street cleaning has been 0.05% of this year's Clean and Green budget.

8.23 Question from Councillor Anwar Khan

How many new jobs has the Mayor created since the beginning of the year, that has gone to residents of Tower Hamlets and what age group were they in?

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

Since January 2013 the Mayor's employment initiatives have so far directly created 352 job opportunities for local people of which 287 (81%) are within the 16-24 age bracket. 100% of these roles are targeted at local recruitment and therefore ring-fenced to Tower Hamlets residents.

Jobs have been created across a broad range of sectors including the niche market of creative industries. As part of the Mayor's Accelerated Delivery Programme, 10 creative apprenticeship opportunities have been secured with local and national arts organisations: Royal Academy of Art, SpitalfieldsMusic, Half Moon Theatre, Theatre Royal Stratford, Old Vic, Museum of Childhood, Whitechapel Gallery and the Design Museum. Placements will begin at various points in September. Creative & Cultural, the National Skills Agency's creative skills provider, is now interested in supporting Tower Hamlets to expand this programme and initial meetings have been held with a view to progressing this.

The largest number of jobs has been created within the construction sector as a result of procurement negotiations undertaken to secure local economic benefits for Tower Hamlets residents; an area of work being rapidly expanded across all procurement including a retrospective look at existing contracts.

8.24 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

Can the Lead Member tell us what is being done to reassure residents after the tragic murder of Ajmol Alom on Spey Street last month?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

This was a tragic incident where a talented young man's life was snatched away before it had even really begun. Our thoughts are with his family in this difficult time.

Police have undertaken extensive reassurance patrols in the area. The THEOs have also had a presence, making use of the CCTV vehicle. The Rapid Response youth team has done extensive outreach work with young people in the area to reassure them and help them to feel safe.

The Council has worked with the Police to ensure that an enhanced Police resource is available to Langdon Park school, where the victim attended. A

memorial has been held at the school and the school has a plan for supporting its students with these difficult matters.

The victim and perpetrators families, as well as their extended networks are being supported by children's social care, who are managing their risk and support needs. Agencies are joined up at a senior level, including Council, Police, Housing and Education to ensure the community is appropriately supported at this difficult time and this is continuing to be monitored.

8.25 Question from Councillor Bill Turner

Following the motion passed by the Council in January what steps has the Mayor taken to ensure that the Council does not support or contract with companies which engaged in the practice of blacklisting workers until they have issued formal apologies and compensation to those affected?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Blacklisting is unlawful. All and any business found to be involved with blacklisting must first acknowledge their responsibility - apologise and, where appropriate pay compensation to those workers affected.

This Council has no contracts with known blacklisters and the Mayor has pledged that we will take action against blacklisting, a move publicly welcomed by trade unions including GMB.

It is somewhat ironic that this question comes from Cllr Turner - someone who submitted his own "blacklist" to the Labour Party National Executive Committee in September 2010.

8.26 Question from Councillor Dr Emma Jones

What is the Council doing to protect wildlife in Tower Hamlets, particularly around Shadwell Basin?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

The main threat to wildlife in Tower Hamlets, as is the case throughout London, is loss of suitable habitat. The Council is addressing this in two main ways: by protecting habitat through planning policies, and, through the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, by improving habitat in its parks and encouraging other landowners to provide wildlife habitat.

Planning policies seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity in new developments. Developments which cause damage to a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), or significantly harm the population or conservation status of a protected or priority species, will not be supported

unless the social or economic benefits of the development clearly outweigh the loss of biodiversity. Shadwell Basin is a SINC, and nearby Wapping Wood and Wapping Canal became SINCS following a review in 2011.

The Council has created new wildlife habitats, such as meadows and woodland, in many of its parks in recent years. The Council, Tower Hamlets Homes, Registered Providers, Schools, and Community Groups work in partnership to create and enhance wildlife habitat all over the borough. Over 1000 packets of wildflower seed have been distributed to schools and residents so they can do their bit to help wildlife. Close to Shadwell Basin, woodland and meadow have been planted in Wapping Wood, providing excellent habitat for birds, insects and other wildlife.

8.27 Question from Councillor Joshua Peck

Whether he intends to complete Decent Homes works on the Malmesbury and Alfred Estates by May 2014?

Written response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

As Cllr Peck will know from our response to his party's inaccurate and inflammatory press statement on Decent Homes that was so gleefully used as propaganda by the EDL, every single council house in the borough will receive Decent Homes works in the next two years.

It is estimated at present that the internal works on 457-527 Mile End Road properties will be completed by 31st March 2014, and external works are programmed for 2014/15. The remainder of the estate is currently being programmed, this process will be concluded at the end of September 2013.

8.28 Question from Councillor Lutfa Begum

Can the Lead Member tell us what is being done to hold the council's waste management contractor to account for instances of missed rubbish collections?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

It should be noted that from April 2013 Veolia carried out 54,311 rubbish collections per week, this amounts to 2.8 million collections per year. The average performance of the refuse collection contract, including recycling, is 99.97%.

The contract gives the contractor 24 hours to rectify missed rubbish collections before imposing a fine.

For the period April-September, there were 2,167 reported missed rubbish collections throughout the whole Borough. Of these, Veolia were issued with 40 default penalty notices for failing to collect within 24 hours.