

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 30 JULY 2014

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

Members Present:

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	Councillor Shafiqul Haque
Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed	Councillor Clare Harrison
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Danny Hassell
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Mahbub Alam	Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Shah Alam	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Shiria Khatun
Councillor Shahed Ali	Councillor Abjol Miah
Councillor Abdul Asad	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Craig Aston	Councillor Md. Maium Miah
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Mohammed Mufti Miah
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Chris Chapman	Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim
Councillor Dave Chesterton	Councillor Joshua Peck
Councillor Alibor Choudhury	Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	Councillor Oliur Rahman
Councillor Andrew Cregan	Councillor Gulam Robbani
Councillor Julia Dockerill	Councillor Candida Ronald
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Rachael Saunders
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs	Councillor Andrew Wood
Councillor Peter Golds	

The meeting opened at 7.36 p.m.

The Speaker of the Council, Councillor M. A. Mukit MBE, in the Chair

NOTE - AGENDA ORDER

During the meeting the Council agreed to vary the order of business. To aid clarity, the Minutes are presented in the order that the items originally appeared on the agenda. Urgent motions, moved with the agreement of the Council, without notice, are listed at Item 15. The order the business was taken at the meeting was as follows:

After opening the meeting the Speaker invited the Council to observe a minute's silence in memory of the innocent men, women and children who had been killed by hate in a number of continuing conflicts around the world.

The minute's silence was followed by two urgent motions (15.1 and 15.2 on the situation in Gaza). The agenda was then taken in the order listed on the agenda (Items 1 to 14).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Harun Miah.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were made.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 11 June 2014 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

Investors in People (IiP) Silver Award

The Speaker was proud to inform Members that the Council had been awarded the Investors in People Silver Award. At the Speaker's invitation the Acting Corporate Director of Resources introduced Shelna Sinite and Marie O'Sullivan of Grant Thornton (sponsors of IiP) and Matthew Filbee (IiP Assessor). Ms Sinite addressed the meeting and presented the IiP Silver Award to the Mayor.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition regarding Saturation Zone Policy in the Brick Lane area

Mr Jon Shapiro addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He reported that many residents had complained about issues in this area and that, whilst the night time economy was important, good controls were required. He was confident the new

Licensing Committee were aware of the policy but he was happy to consider training if that proved necessary.

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 Tenants' Rights

The petitioners addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She highlighted the work the Council undertook to support residents in line with their manifesto commitment to protect the vulnerable. As an example she reported that the Council had not evicted anyone due to the Bedroom Tax.

RESOLVED

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

Procedural Motion

Councillor Rabina Khan then **moved**, and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that Motion 12.10 "Motion Calling on Landlords to Engage with Tenants" be taken as the next item of business. The motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

5.3 Petition regarding protection of Lincoln Estate and surrounding residents and traders from violence and abuse

Ms Syeda Choudhury addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He reported that he visited the site of the recent incident and that he was working with the police, partners and Ward Councillors on the concerns raised. He highlighted actions that had been taken including the issuing of ten anti-social behaviour orders to the courts and the additional police and enforcement officer patrols now taking place.

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

The following questions and in each case (except where indicated) a supplementary question were put and were responded to by the relevant Executive Member:-

6.1 Question from Mr Muhammad Haque:

What motivated candidates at 22 May 2014 to seek election to Tower Hamlets and what are the ethical, democratic, accountable actions that current councillors on Tower Hamlets Council are more content about and what actions they are not content about and what are the councillors doing to make all their actions accountable, ethical, transparent and relevant to and representative of the daily lives, needs, expectations of ordinary people of ALL BACKGROUNDS in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets?

Response by Councillor Oliur Rahman, Deputy Mayor

Thank you Mr Haque. Before I move to my answer, may I take a couple of seconds to say a few words? I have seen you actually when I was growing up, living in Brick Lane, the work that you have done for the community and on behalf of the community, some of the campaigns that you have led, and I'm very pleased even now that you are still determined to do just for the residents of Tower Hamlets and I am sure that you have certainly motivated many young generations in the past and I'm sure you will motivate many young generations in the future with your work and the commitment that you show for the communities in Tower Hamlets, regardless of their race, religion or whatever background that they come from. So I want to pay my gratitude and thanks to you for the work that you do.

Can I now move to your question and answer as best as I can, obviously within the time limit. I can't speak for everyone here but I am confident their motivations for being a councillor are the same as mine and Mayor Lutfur Rahman's - we want to make Tower Hamlets a better place to live and work and we want to ensure residents from all backgrounds have the strongest voice and representation in this council and outside.

Supplementary question from Mr Haque

I would exchange the sense of mutual recognition for the selfless work that people have been doing in the community, whether they are listed or not. Most of the proceedings in this kind of situation are limited to time and procedures so the spirit should be to extend our support to the whole

community and that is where I would leave this for the future and the coming years for the Council.

Councillor Oliur Rahman's response to the supplementary question

Mr Haque, I fully agree with you and I am hoping also that the public will hold their councillors to account for the work they do and the reasons they get elected, and also to demonstrate that in this Council you saw that we were presented with an award for the work that the Council does and I want to make this very clear – this does not happen by accident, it happens by good political leadership.

6.2 Question from Mr John Wright:

All developments have to put to council a Construction Management Plan (CMP). The CMP sets out the rules that protect existing residents against the damaging effects of the development construction. The former council failed to consult with residents regarding the CMP for the large Telfords development on the Glamis Estate. This has caused great distress to residents, resulting in the site being closed down twice already, without a brick being laid. It is perfectly obvious that Telfords have absolutely no regard for the welfare of residents. Apparently Telfords have now entered to council a new CMP. Will our new council carefully monitor and enforce all CMPs to protect its residents and also that this council protects the residents already of as previously – the developers?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

Thank you John. I did visit the site on 19th February and that's because you informed me straight away and there were a number of other people as well. You are quite right to criticise East End Homes and their abhorrent behavior towards councillors and to residents as well, and what happened last week was appalling behavior for an RP, but I have to tell you I have criticised a number of RPs including East End Homes, One Housing and Old Ford as well.

But it is this current Government which has given a great deal more freedom to RPs and less stringent constraints on them. But I can assure you that we will still continue to work with you, and when you say about who holds the power, who holds them to account too, the RPs – it is the residents of this borough, the tenants, the leaseholders. It is only when we work together as a collective, and we did do something very similar three years ago and it is something that I hope to do again and to bring them, and if necessary we will also write to the HCA.

Supplementary question from Mr Wright

Rabina Khan has been our councillor on the Glamis Estate. I've lived there a very long time and she is the only councillor of whatever party who has ever bothered with the residents of the Glamis Estate.

6.3 Question from Mr Raihan Islam:

The parking transfer scheme has many strings attached with the idea of car free zones and confuses many of the locals. In some cases even the officers from the One Stop parking shop have given misleading advice, perhaps because there are strings attached to the car free zones which creates confusion. Can the council make clear if residents who have three bedrooms and over are allowed permits in car free zones. Also to minus any conditions attached to it?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

Thank you for your question Raihan and firstly I want to apologise for any confusion caused.

First of all, I want to be clear – Car-Free Developments is not a policy of this Council. It is in fact a policy of the London Mayor, Mayor Johnson, which we have to follow.

However in recognition of the importance for families to have access to residential car parking we sought legal advice on how we could help families who were prevented from moving due to car-free conditions and that is why the PTS was introduced.

I do apologise on behalf of the Mayor and this administration if there has been any misleading information from staff. I would hope that you would approach the relevant councilors and myself as Cabinet member to seek further clarification. I would ask for you to consider however that the law only allowed us to issue permits in very specific circumstances, especially to help prevent overcrowding. There was a very fine line, and the Mayor has further requested a further review into the PTS so that we can get more and more families to bid for car-free zones.

(No supplementary question was put)

6.4 Question from Mr Ashok Kumar:

Can the Council provide an update on the Erik Pickles-instigated government inspection?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Thank you Mr Kumar. Many people are aware that the audit by Price Waterhouse Coopers was ordered by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles. The same Eric Pickles that spent £76,000 of your money on tea and biscuits for his department per year. £76,000 of your money, while he takes hundreds of millions of pounds from local government every year, putting people out on the streets and making people go without. This is the same hypocrite that has ordered this audit.

I can confirm that the audit is ongoing, it hasn't concluded yet and we are fully co-operating with its requirements. We will update you as and when things have concluded.

Supplementary question from Mr Kumar

Every election cycle this Council has the dubious distinction of having each cycle be followed up by a bombardment of false claims by the same political operatives, by the same councillors sitting before you. These claims have consequences – those consequences aren't for the councillors sitting around making claims to win cheap political points, those consequences are for the residents. Because this Council spends tens of thousands – the media reported over six figures – on false claims, fallacious accusations and claims without merit, and my question is that if next time the same faces for political opportunism come forward and make the same claims that have no merit, will they be required to pay for it rather than us?

Councillor Alibor Choudhury's response to the supplementary question

You're absolutely right Mr Kumar, this audit will cost you up to a million pounds by the time it is finished. I can say that this audit was precipitated by the Panorama programme which had involvement from members across the benches in the Labour group, and these are the same people that cost the Council hundreds of thousands of pounds in court costs, lost regeneration money and other costs incurred by the taxpayer for no good reason. So I totally agree with you, hopefully in future we will see an end to this and if not, we'll have to show this lot the door.

6.5 Question from Mr Gary Reddin:

What is the Mayor doing to save our Doctors surgeries?

Response by Councillor Abdul Asad, Cabinet Member for Adult Services

I was also at the rally at Altab Ali Park when we marched in solidarity with our angry residents, practitioners and residents who want to protect the NHS, because we too are concerned for our surgeries and the excellent services that they provide. But we know that being angry alone is not enough.

The Mayor has also applied personal pressure on the Secretary of State – with an open letter expressing serious concerns over the removal of context-dependent funding based on deprivation. Along with the hard work of the Jubilee Street Practice we know this has resulted in a temporary reprieve of the removal of funding for one year for at least one of our surgeries, and we will be doing all we can to push to make this a universal offer for surgeries in the borough.

Therefore, the Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board, have also agreed to send a letter signed by partners to the Secretary of State for Health requesting a fair allocation of resources to practices disproportionately affected by the funding changes.

It has been so upsetting to see the way that changes to national funding formula are affecting our brilliant practices in Tower Hamlets. Despite the borough having some of the highest deprivation indicators in the country, changes to the NHS will mean that funding will no longer take into account the level of deprivation when deciding funding.

Supplementary question from Mr Reddin

The NHS is a national treasure which needs to be protected. The attack on our vital local NHS services by the Tory government opens up our health service to private providers. They will put profit before our health care. Will the Mayor do all he can to prevent this from happening?

Councillor Abdul Asad's response to the supplementary question

As I earlier said, with the Mayor and the ruling group of this Council we have a number of energetic councillors here who are also campaigners and I have also noticed that councillors from the whole spectrum also joined the march to protest against the cuts. But the Government's cut is very drastic, very fast indeed and it does not make sense in terms of the service delivery.

On the other hand, the former Labour government built up the debt. We know that the book is balanced, but not like that. So the NHS is not safe in my view either with the Tories or the Labour. It is with the people of this country, and this side of the Council is committed to continue to campaign with the residents of this borough under the leadership of the Executive Mayor.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Abdul Asad then **moved**, and Councillor Oliur Rahman **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that Motion 12.2 "Motion Regarding Save Our Surgeries" be taken as the next item of business. The motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

Question 6.7 was withdrawn by the Questioner and would be submitted to the next Ordinary Council Meeting.

Questions 6.6 and 6.8 were not put at the meeting due to lack of time. The Service Head, Democratic Services confirmed that written answers would be provided. [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. During his report he echoed the Speaker's welcome to the three newly elected Councillors for Blackwall and Cubitt Town Ward.

When the Mayor had completed his report, at the invitation of the Speaker the Leaders of the other political groups each then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following questions and in each case (except where indicated) a supplementary question were put and were responded to by the relevant Member:-

8.1 Question from Councillor John Pierce

Why has the Mayor of Tower Hamlets not continued funding for the ASB dog patrols in Weavers Ward after the successful pilot which led to a reduction of unwelcome guests in blocks heavily affected by anti-social behaviour?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Community Safety

Councillor Pierce, I would like to know where did you get this information that we are stopping this funding? The funding has not been discontinued. I can assure you that there will be twelve ASB dog patrols over the next two weeks, two of which are to be in your ward.

Also you need to understand we had a successful pilot in your ward. When we do something right, I think that Councillor Peck should praise us rather than when we did a pilot project in my ward he just criticised that my street is cleaner than his street. We are doing something. In my ward – put the right word. When we do the right thing you should praise us because we put a pilot project in Weavers ward because there is a need for it in Weavers and this is going to continue, I assure you of that.

Supplementary question from Councillor John Pierce

Well it's nice to hear that there will be two extra patrols but actually, as we discussed earlier tonight, the high levels of anti-social behaviour in the Brick

Lane and Shoreditch Fringe mean that actually you will need a lot more patrols than the two that are going to happen to deal with this issue and I would like to see the funding that was initially given for the pilot to continue, particularly in Weavers ward and extra funding, which we would have delivered, to ensure that the programme is rolled out across the borough, because I have to say it has been massively successful. Put your money into this scheme because residents deserve this kind of action.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed's response to the supplementary question

Thank you very much. Yes, I totally agree with your last part but also I want people, particularly the councilors, to understand the policy. The policy basically is to drive away this kind of problem. 20% of the anti-social behavior derives in Brick Lane and the surrounding area, and unfortunately your ward is very near to Brick Lane. And people who sit on the Licensing Committee, I keep saying they need to follow the policy and they need to vote on the merits of the application rather than just party politics.

8.2 Question from Councillor Mufti Miah

Tower Hamlets has been named by the department for education among the top 10 boroughs in the country for the proportion of students who go to university. Will the Mayor join me in congratulating our young people for their remarkable achievement?

Response by Councillor Gulam Robbani, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Councillor Mufti Miah, can I thank you for asking this question. Yes, can I publicly congratulate and thank all the students, the young people, their parents, teachers, governors and the staff who worked hard to achieve this result. This is a remarkable and achievement for our borough. Especially this hasn't happened by accident, this has happened because for many years this borough invested in education – including Mr Haque, who is still in the audience, he will remember that he created an organisation called BENTH, and many of my councillors here will know what BENTH stands for, maybe they could ask Mr Haque to explain. This demonstrates a history of campaigning for education and you Mr Speaker, I think that you were involved as well in the establishment of BENTH.

And I think this borough invested, including the current Mayor, Mayor Lutfur Rahman, invested via the Mayor's Education Allowance, the university bursary and free school meals. So all this fruition came because of the efforts made by the previous predecessor and the current administration. Yes, I would be happy to congratulate all the parents and students.

Supplementary question from Councillor Mufti Miah

I am also a parent governor of two local schools. I would just like to say thank you very much, keep up the good work and keep funding, thank you.

Councillor Gulam Robbani's response to the supplementary question

That's fine, we will continue. As a new lead member for education, I am committed to this borough and I am committed to continue the work that has been done by my predecessor Oliur Rahman.

8.3 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman

Will the Mayor inform the council as to when he last met officials of One Housing?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

The Mayor last met with One Housing on 18th March 2014.

Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Chapman

I am a little disappointed that the Mayor has not met with officials more recently, particularly as their failures continue to mount and these include:-

- The three fires that have occurred in the underfloor garages on the Samuda Estate, caused by One Housing's failure to properly secure waste they had dumped there;
- The increase in damp suffered by residents on the St John's Estate after the completion of the major works programme which I can only imagine was designed to make things better rather than worse;
- The leaseholders who are continually receiving threatening letters from One Housing, something which is causing many of them deep distress;
- I've also got a road on the St John's Estate which has got no street lighting because One Housing are arguing with the Council and a third party as to who is responsible for it.

This is only a very brief summary of two estates in my ward. I fear that the picture across the borough is indeed far worse. Isn't it about time that this administration hold One Housing to account for these failures?

Councillor Rabina Khan's response to the supplementary question

Well, well, Councillor Chapman, you've been very busy. I must remind you that the full council voted on three separate occasions to support the residents of One Housing in their campaign to make One Housing uphold the promises in the offer document. Support was received from all parties represented on the council and no councillor has ever voted against a resolution of support, although I think some actually abstained for technical reasons.

I must refer to a letter though, dated 2nd August 2012 which Councillor Peter Golds sent to Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. I actually welcome Councillor Golds' letter, along with the letter that was enclosed from the TRA Chairs, which was also sent to the Secretary of State, which was attempting to stop One Housing from dissolving Island Homes.

Unfortunately there was no response from Mr Pickles. It is sad though that Mr Pickles will intervene in Tower Hamlets on the strength of some allegations made on TV but will not intervene when residents and councillors of this borough appeal to him to use his power to do so.

8.4 Question from Councillor Helal Uddin

I assume the administration is aware of the recent congregation of youths around the Devons Road area. Can the Lead Member brief us on what action is being taken by the council to prevent further incidents?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Community Safety

Thank you Councillor Helal for your question. I don't want to go through the long list I went through before. I said 20 things we have done in your area. As Syeda Choudhury mentioned earlier, there were two murders before – in 2001 and 2008. It's a historical problem in this area and we are trying to tackle the problem permanently.

You are the local councillor, of course you have a role to play and we need to work together to make sure it doesn't happen again and we are completely adamant that we will resolve this problem once and for all.

Supplementary question from Councillor Helal Uddin

I was expecting to have some concrete answer in terms of action, in terms of mechanisms preventing the incidents, such as engaging youth, taking some initiatives to working with the local community, working with the local councillors, working with the RP itself. So maybe the lead member, I am happy to wait for a detailed response in the coming weeks and months and if he wants to meet up with me I am happy to meet up with him.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed's response to the supplementary question

I am quite happy to meet any councillor if they want to meet me as lead member, I don't have any problem with that, and as I mentioned before I can only reiterate two points:- We have issued 10 court orders; and as I mentioned before our Rapid Action Team is still active in this area.

We have set up community groups and our THEOs are active and police officers are active in this area. We have the Dispersal Zone in place also. So

we are doing everything we can to make sure that our community is safe and I am happy to meet you if you have any further suggestions.

8.5 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam

Can the Lead Member provide an update on progress with protecting our GP surgeries that are under threat from the Tory government's cuts?

Response by Councillor Abdul Asad, Cabinet Member for Adult Services

Thank you Councillor Mahbub for your question. You and me have been working with the GP practices for the last six months at least.

There have been many questions about this today. I just want to reassure that we are doing everything we can: We have marched together; we applied personal and public pressure on the Secretary of State for Health.

We are now using his temporary reprieve for one of our surgeries to make the case for more of our surgeries at risk now and, whilst the issue is ultimately out of our control, I have hopes that the Secretary of State will make the same considerations for our other surgeries as he has done for the Jubilee Street Practice.

We are also putting additional pressure on NHS England to open more GP Surgeries in the borough and I hope that will help to ease the pressure of this situation and reassure residents.

Supplementary question from Councillor Mahbub Alam

Yes, I do agree that we have been working together to comfort the worried residents – and they are very worried. Like you have done in the past we had small meetings with the residents and with the Director of Health, just to give them the assurance that we are working to find a solution to help them in the tough time they are going through. Will you be willing to do the same small meetings with the residents to give them some comfort in this difficult time, especially the elderly people who are seriously worried?

Councillor Abdul Asad's response to the supplementary question

Yes I know you led a delegation to this council to meet me and the Mayor about the concerns of GP surgeries and so on. We can go further, we can continue to campaign against the cuts and austerity, particularly on the health service and we will continue to do that. And I know that the people of this borough, they are all in favour to keep the NHS under state control, and we are with them. We are doing it for the public need, not for the private greed.

8.6 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood

Will the Mayor update the council as to what steps will be taken to implement the Openness of Local Bodies Regulations 2014 when they come into law, and will he follow local best practice on press access in copying Hackney,

Newham, Lewisham & Greenwich Boroughs in providing a permanent table for the press?

Response by Councillor Oliur Rahman, Deputy Mayor

Thank you Councillor Wood for your question. The Openness of Local Bodies Regulations 2014 will make provision to allow members of the public to report and commentate on public meetings of local government bodies in England.

The Mayor fully supports openness and transparency. The Monitoring Officer is updating the relevant sections of the Constitution to reflect the changes in the law.

In relation to facilities for the press at the Council meeting, the Head of Communications is looking at how this can be achieved in the space available and as you can see, this has already been provided and my good friend Ted is very happy today.

Supplementary question from Councillor Andrew Wood

I welcome the reintroduction of a permanent table and permanent seating for journalists, I think it's really good. I'm grateful that the Mayor is recognising the important work done by local journalists to keep the wider community informed about what is happening in this Council Chamber.

The Openness of Local Bodies Regulation Act also talks about filming of Council meetings by the public. I would like to ask the Mayor on his views about public filming of meetings and what he thinks is appropriate?

Councillor Oliur Rahman's response to the supplementary question

Thank you Mr Speaker. Councillor Wood, as you would know we have filming in place which is conducted by the Council, and this is the only filming that is currently allowed in this Council Chamber.

8.7 Question from Councillor Denise Jones

Does the Mayor intend to press ahead with the sale of Old Flo despite LB Bromley's contest of ownership and if so when does he expect this to go ahead?

Response by Councillor Shafiqul Haque, Cabinet Member for Culture

Thank you Councillor Jones for your interest on the matter. Let me confirm to you that this administration always works and takes decisions for the best interests of the residents of the borough. You are right that LB Bromley are contesting the ownership of Old Flo. The matter has been referred to the Court for a legal determination. Our legal advice is that our case for ownership is clear, and we will make a decision following the court's determination.

Supplementary question from Councillor Denise Jones

Could you just confirm, I think you just said that's now going to court. Can you just confirm the timetable for that, and if Bromley is found to be the owner, and I believe that they are not suggesting that that they are going to claim the sculpture but that they are minding it for the whole of London and are keen for it to be put outside the museum in Docklands so that all of London can actually visit it, would you still want to go ahead to sell it?

Councillor Shafiqul Haque's response to the supplementary question

Thanks Councillor Jones for your interest. I know your interest in arts and culture. What I can tell you, subject to the determination of the court on the ownership of Old Flo, we will make a decision for the best interests of the residents of the borough. I cannot give you a definite timetable, this is up to the court to make a timetable and make a decision on this one. I hope that answers your question Councillor Jones.

8.8 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

Will the Speaker of the Council outline his principal engagements for the coming month?

Response by Councillor Abdul Chunu Mukit, Speaker of the Council

Thank you Councillor Miah. I would like to once again start by thanking my colleagues for this tremendous honour.

In less than two months I have already carried out 25 civic engagements, which includes taking part in celebrations with members of our community and recognising their achievements, welcoming a French ship and her commanding officer to our docks, representing Tower Hamlets at City Hall, the London Youth Games and a service in St. Paul's Cathedral alongside my civic colleagues from other London Boroughs.

I have had the honour of welcoming Prince Edward to Tower Hamlets on a recent royal visit and taken part in the traditional 'rent' ceremony at Billingsgate Market with the Lord Mayor of London, as well as supporting Tower Hamlets staff at the annual 5K your way event.

I am planning a busy year promoting Tower Hamlets everywhere I go and raising as much money as possible for the Tower Hamlets Foodbank.

At present I have several events planned for August including the dedication & unveiling of a memorial to honour the 23 officers of the metropolitan police who died during the great war, and the annual 'Love where you live' event

I will also be spending a morning with my chosen charity, the Tower Hamlets Foodbank, to see the wonderful work that they do as well as attending several community events with partners like THCH, and local organisations.

I have received many other invitations which I hope to attend, however due to limited resources the civic role does not have a full time driver so the engagements I can accept are limited to those on Tuesday, Thursday, weekends and evenings. Despite this I will endeavour to support as many events as I can, and if necessary where acceptable to the organisers attend in my capacity as an elected member without the civic insignia.

(No supplementary question was put)

8.9 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill

On 13 June a young gay couple were subject to a violent attack on Whitechapel Road, only moments away from Altab Ali Park, a public space which symbolises this borough's unity and determination to stamp out any intolerance and violence shown towards our neighbours. I welcome the Mayor of Tower Hamlets' wholehearted condemnation of this homophobic attack and statement that 'we take a zero-tolerance approach to homophobia'. Can he please reiterate these sentiments in this Chamber; update us on the work of the Hate Incidents Panel following the referral of this case to them; and advise us on the work he is doing to promote tolerance towards people of every sexuality within our community?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Community Safety

Thank you very much for your question. In relation to your specific case, the victims were referred to the Council-funded Victim Support Team and they received confidential support and advice. Two suspects were arrested and they are in bail condition now. The Council discussed this incident at the Hate Incident Panels.

In relation to your second part, I think I just want to ensure that this Council works very closely with Hate Incident Panels. Also, this Council works very closely with Rainbow Hamlets and attend the Hate Incident Panels' meeting. Also we work very closely with Positive East, who are the third party responsible for responding to crimes against LGBT people. So we are doing everything we can as a council.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill

Thank you for those words. As the Mayor is here I think it would be really nice if he showed leadership and personally stated that view again so that everyone in the chamber can hear it.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed's response to the Supplementary Question

Again, thank you for your question and your comments. The Mayor's word is my ward is the Executive's word is the Mayor's word so of course you can take it is his word. Thank you, I can't say anything more.

8.10 Question from Councillor Rachel Blake

Following the motion passed by the Council in April last year, will the Mayor update us on what progress he has made to formally investigate the conditions attached to the sale agreement of the old bath houses by Tower Hamlets Council and to recognise the Women's Library as a community asset for women's and community use?

Response by Councillor Shafiqul Haque, Cabinet Member for Culture

Thanks Councillor Blake for the question. I can assure you that progress has been made, and the Old Bath Houses have been registered as an Asset of Community Value. Furthermore, any proposed disposal of it would therefore be delayed while an opportunity is available for transfer to a community based organisation.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Rachel Blake

Thanks, the reason they are a Community Asset is because the Friends of the Women's Library, which I am part of, registered them as a Community Asset. What has the Mayor done about the conditions that the Council place on this asset being a Community Asset for women of the Council? That is the Mayor and the Mayor's officers, not me and the Friends of the Women's Library and it being a Community Asset? Thanks.

Councillor Shafiqul Haque's response to the Supplementary Question

Thanks Councillor Blake, I think in that case you have an interest in this agenda item. Come on Councillor Saunders, you are the Leader of the Opposition now. Certainly as mentioned earlier Councillor Blake, I can confirm that at the time of disposal any women's organisation or project's bid for it will be considered subject to them meeting the criteria for the bid. Thank you.

8.11 Question from Councillor Abjol Miah

Will the Cabinet Member for Development outline the timetable and progress with the Whitechapel Vision?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

Thank you for your question Councillor Miah. The launch of the Masterplan in March 2014 has already led to a high level of developer interest in the Vision area.

The Council is in pre application discussions with a number of these developers and the first planning application is anticipated in September 2014.

Those proposed developments will secure both private sector investment into the area, which will provide around 3,000 new dwellings, include significant levels of affordable housing which is much needed in this borough, and help to deliver the key transformations in the vision.

To ensure these developments meet the vision's aspirations and to better co-ordinate the delivery of a Strategic Partnership will be established between the Council, the GLA/TfL, Barts NHS Health Trust, Queen Mary University, key landowners and the local businesses and traders.

It is proposed that the first meeting of this Partnership will be chaired by the Mayor, to take place in Autumn of this year.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Abjol Miah

What guarantees are there that the existing local traders, who have been working very hard to build up their business, will not be priced out or designed out in any form or shape?

Councillor Rabina Khan's response to the Supplementary Question

It is a very important question that you ask and at the heart of the vision is the traders and businesses and residents of Whitechapel. They will be included as part of that partnership and that process of delivery. An example of that is when the consultation first went out we had residents who were not very keen on some of the developments around Durward Street and we took that on board and changed the plans as well.

May I also remind everyone that when Canary Wharf was first being built it was under Michael Hestletine's regeneration programme. During that time, that particular government failed to listen to residents and decisions were made behind closed doors. In this Vision we want to include everyone and we want to make sure that the residents who need to benefit, like the businesses, like the traders and the residents, do so.

8.12 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

Will the Mayor give details as to the disposal of the land, 111-113 Mellish Street, E14?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

With pleasure, Mr Speaker.

Councillor Golds, how can we take you seriously? You are a compulsive liar. Today you lied about the Mayor trying to jump into bed with the Conservative Party, and you have no evidence to substantiate that at all.

I think Councillor Golds, you should sort yourself out and answer questions that we put to you. Can you update the chamber on what happened to your Tory, your Conservative candidate for Mile End, as he was arrested for voter fraud? Can you update the chamber please?

(No supplementary question was put)

Procedural Motion

Following the above question, Councillor Peter Golds **moved** and Councillor Chris Chapman **seconded** a procedural motion that under Procedure Rule 14.1.16 Councillor Alibor Choudhury be not heard further due to his conduct at the meeting. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

8.13 Question from Councillor Amina Ali

The council will be aware that the drug Khat has recently been made illegal. What has the Mayor done to link up with health professionals and police to support people coming off Khat?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Community Safety

Thank you Councillor Ali for your question. When the Home Office first announced their intention in 2013 to classify Khat as a class C substance, the Council's Drug and Alcohol Action Team set up a seminar to gather local responses.

I helped develop in conjunction with Representative from the Local Police, Home Office, local communities, NHS and treatment agencies.

An action plan was prepared which was implemented this year ensuring that local treatment agencies, NHS and Police are able to assist people in understanding the health and legal impacts of this use of Khat.

So we as a council are doing everything we can to make sure that people, particularly from the Somali community, are completely aware of using Khat and the consequences. We had seminars, we had workshops and a lot of Somali people attended. I was there and I think this shows as a council we are doing our best to make sure that people are fully aware.

Supplementary question from Councillor Amina Ali

You said that you've done seminars and you've met with the Somali community. I want to make sure that the Somali community are being made

aware so we can stop any criminalisation of young Somalis who might not be aware.

My main concern is the 'stop and search' procedures some of the police in London use and that they might be using those kinds of excuses to stop young Somalis on the pretence they might be carrying Khat. I think it is very serious that we do take this issue quite seriously and I'd like this council to take that seriously.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed's response to the Supplementary Question

These are helpful suggestions, we do take it very very seriously. I had a meeting with the Borough Commander and he is fully aware of this. These are very sensitive things and we must do everything to ensure that this doesn't happen in our borough.

Questions 8.14 to 8.24 were not put at the meeting due to lack of time. The Service Head, Democratic Services confirmed that written responses would be provided. [Note: The written responses are included in Appendix A to these minutes.]

Procedural Motion

Following the above question, Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved** and Councillor Alibor Choudhury **seconded** a procedural motion that under Procedure Rule 14.1.16 Councillor Peter Golds be not heard further due to his conduct at the meeting. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

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

There was no business to transact under this agenda item.

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

There was no business to transact under this agenda item.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Appointment of a Co-opted Member to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Council considered the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services on the appointment of a co-opted member to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Joshua Peck **moved**, and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded** a tabled amendment to the recommendations in the report. Following debate, the amendment was put to the vote and was **agreed**. The recommendations as amended were then duly approved. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

1. That the Council approve the appointment of Mr Shaynul Khan as a non-voting co-opted member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee representing the Muslim Community in the borough, for the remainder of the administration (until May 2018), subject to confirmation of the acceptability of the appointment by the Tower Hamlets Council of Mosques.
2. That in future the principal consultation when filling this post will be the Tower Hamlets Council of Mosques.

11.2 Review of proportionality and allocation of places on committees

The Council considered the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services on the allocation of places on Committees and other bodies covered by the proportionality requirements in Local Government and Housing Act 1989 following the delayed election in Blackwall and Cubitt Town Ward held on 3 July 2014.

Councillor Rachael Saunders **moved**, and Councillor Khaled Ahmed **seconded** a tabled amendment. The amendment replaced the table on page 31 of the report with that set out below, the figures in brackets being the only changes from the original report to Council:

Committee/panel	Total	Labour	Tower Hamlets First	Conservative
Overview & Scrutiny Committee (plus 6 co-optees)	9	5	3	1
Health Scrutiny Panel	7	4	2	1
Appeals Committee	9	4 (-1)	4 (+1)	1
Audit Committee	7	3	3	1
Development Committee	7	3	3	1
Strategic Development Committee	9	5 (+1)	3 (-1)	1
General Purposes Committee	7	3	3	1
Human Resources Committee	7	4 (+1)	2 (-1)	1
Licensing Committee	15	7 (-1)	7 (+1)	1
Pensions Committee	7	4	3	-

Standards Committee (plus 7 co-optees)	Advisory (plus 7 co- optees)	7	3	3	1
TOTAL			45	36	10

At the request of a number of Members the Speaker agreed that the meeting would adjourn briefly to allow Members to consider the tabled amendment.

The meeting **adjourned** at 9.51 p.m.

The meeting **reconvened** at 10.04 p.m.

The Interim Monitoring Officer advised the meeting that the tabled amendment was in order and could lawfully be considered by the Council. Following debate the amendment moved by Councillor Rachael Saunders was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Councillor Oliur Rahman the **moved**, and Councillor Alibor Choudhury **seconded** a further tabled amendment as follows:-

“That overall seats are increased by 1 from 91 to 92.

This will enable a tweaking of the number of seats on the few committees in which Labour’s proposal wishes to adjust but in a way that ensures proportionality overall and proportionality in the committees.

The amendments are:

Increase Strategic Development Committee seats by 1 – THF seats increase by 1 to 3.

Increase HR Committee seats by 1 – THF seats increase by 1 to 3

Decrease Licensing Committee seats by 1 – THF seats decrease by 1 to 6

Labour as required by proportionality will continue to have the majority on all committees.”

The Interim Monitoring Officer advised the meeting that the tabled amendment was in order and could lawfully be considered by the Council. Following debate the amendment moved by Councillor Oliur Rahman was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

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

RESOLVED

1. That the review of proportionality be noted and the Council approve the above amended table showing the allocation of seats on committees and panels established for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2014/15.
2. That Members and deputies be appointed to serve on committees and panels in accordance with nominations from the political groups to be notified to the Service Head, Democratic Services.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**12.1 Motion regarding Space for Cycling Campaign**

Councillor Rachel Blake **moved**, and Councillor Amy Whitelock-Gibbs **seconded** the motion as printed on the agenda.

Procedural Motion

During debate, Councillor Rachael Saunders **moved** and Councillor Shiria Khatun **seconded** a procedural motion that under Procedure Rule 14.1.16 Councillor Alibor Choudhury be not heard further due to his conduct at the meeting. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

That Councillor Alibor Choudhury be not heard further.

Following debate, the motion regarding Space for Cycling Campaign was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- That 40 of the 42 councillors elected on 22nd May had signed up to support the London Cycling Campaign's 'Space for Cycling' initiative.
- That the 'Space for Cycling' campaign called upon candidates to commit to supporting a number of local measures if they were elected.
- That the measures, identified by local residents and promoted by the Space for Cycling campaign listed by ward are:
 - **Bethnal Green:** Protected Space for cycling on Mile End Road
 - **Weavers:** Make Columbia Road Market a Liveable Town centre with cycle and pedestrian access to, and through the area
 - **Spitalfields:** Allow two way cycling on Brick Lane

- **St Peter's:** Protected space for cycling on Cambridge Heath road with a safe junction at Bethnal Green
 - **Bow West:** Protected Space for cycling on Bow Road
 - **Bow East:** Remove through traffic from Tredegar Road and the surrounding area
 - **Whitechapel:** Remove through motor traffic from Vallance Road, New Road and Cannon Street Road
 - **Stepney Green:** Safe cycle access to Sir John Cass Redcoat School and Stepney City Farm
 - **St Dunstons:** Safe cycle access to schools around Ben Jonson Road
 - **Shadwell:** Protected Space for Cycling on Cable Street
 - **St Katherine's and Wapping:** Allow 24-hour access on the Greenway through King Edwards Park
 - **Limehouse:** Protected Space for cycling on Horseferry Road (E14)
 - **Mile End:** Protected space for cycling on Burdett Road
 - **Bromley North:** Protected Space for cycling at Bow Roundabout
 - **Bromley South:** Install protected space for cyclists along both Devons Road and Devas Street
 - **Lansbury:** Safe and convenient route from all of Lansbury ward to Lea River Park
 - **Poplar:** Provide a safe, inviting and clear route for Cycle superhighway S3 in Bromley South centre
 - **Canary Wharf:** Reinstall the riverside path at West Ferry Circus and create a cycle crossing across South Dock.
 - **Blackwall and Cubitt Town:** Protected Space for cycling on Manchester Road and Preston's Road
 - **Island Gardens:** Protected Space for cycling on Manchester Road and Preston's Road
- The motion previously passed by Council on the LCC Safer Lorries campaign included and ask that the Council “strongly encourage contractors used by the Council to meet its Safer Lorries conditions”.

This Council believes:

- That all of the councillors who signed up to the Space for Cycling Campaign should now work with the campaigners to further develop the feasibility of the commitments and then deliver the changes needed to make cycling in the borough safer.
- That while the pledges are an incredibly welcome development some will be more challenging than others and there is potential for officers, councillors and cyclists to develop the plans and, in some limited cases, propose alternative actions which would achieve the aims in a different, potentially more effective manner.
- That the number of councillors who made these commitments, and the support the electorate gave them, shows a clear mandate for action to improve cycling infrastructure.

This Council therefore resolves:

- To call on the Mayor and relevant Cabinet Member, following consultation with ward councillors, to bring a plan to the September Council meeting detailing the budget feasibility and impact of each of the specific ward based asks set out above and that this plan should include potential options for implementation.
- Following the aforementioned report from the Mayor, that councillors should consult with residents and cycling campaigners in their wards to prioritise and agree a course of action to best deliver the strategic aims of each pledge.
- To welcome the Labour GLA campaign to improve the safety of the Cycle Superhighways and in particular their lobbying work on the Bow Roundabout.
- To call on Boris Johnson to immediately look at further steps to protect cyclists using CS2 along the full length of Mile End Road and Bow Road, and the Bow Roundabout.

Motions 12.2 to 12.10 were not debated due to lack of time.

13. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

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

14. HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The report of the Service Head, Human Resources and Workforce Development regarding the statutory position of Head of Paid Service was considered by the meeting. The Council agreed the reasons for urgency as set out in the report.

Following debate the Council agreed one of the options set out in the report.

15. URGENT MOTIONS

[Note: The Urgent Motions were debated in Part One of the meeting (public session)].

The Council agreed to suspend Procedure Rule 13.1 to enable the following urgent motions to be debated without notice:-

15.1 Motion on violence in Gaza

Councillor Shiria Khatun **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded** the motion as tabled.

During debate an amendment was moved that was accepted by Councillors Khatun and Saunders, who altered their motion accordingly. The revised motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- The latest escalation of violence in Gaza, which is part of an on going conflict.
- The humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the appalling standards of living faced by the people of Gaza, prior to this latest escalation of violence.
- The rapidly rising death count of hundreds killed in recent weeks and thousands who have been displaced.
- The calls by local MPs, Rushanara Ali and Jim Fitzpatrick, on the British Government to show leadership in working to end this conflict.
- Condemnation by Ed Miliband and other leading politicians of the Israeli incursion into Gaza.
- The gesture of solidarity with the people of Gaza by Tower Hamlets Council in raising the Palestine flag at Tower Hamlets Town Hall.
- The unity of Councillors and the Mayor in condemnation of the conflict.

This Council believes:

- The UK now must urgently take a lead role in bringing together the international community to ensure humanitarian law is upheld.
- The Prime Minister needs to show international leadership, working with the EU and the USA and help bring an end to the conflict.
- The horrendous images of innocent civilian casualties from Gaza over the past weeks show the profound urgency of the situation.

This Council resolves:

- To condemn the violence in which innocent civilians are being killed and displaced.
- To call on our MPs to continue to place pressure on our Government to take action to end the humanitarian crisis, secure a ceasefire and set upon the path to peace.

15.2 Motion on the situation in Gaza

Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved**, and Councillor Maium Miah **seconded** the motion as tabled.

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

RESOLVED

This meeting notes:

- Since Israel commenced military operations in Gaza on July 8 some 1,200 Palestinians and 55 Israelis have been killed in the conflict.
- Most of the Palestinian deaths have been civilians, a large number women and children.
- In the last 24 hours over 100 Palestinians have been killed. These include 15 people who died as a result of an Israeli attack on a UN-run school, housing refugees. The UN stated they informed the Israeli's in advance there were civilians in the building.
- A delegation of Tower Hamlets Councillors recently visited the Occupied Territories as part of the Tower Hamlets Jenin Friendship Association. Tower Hamlets Council has also agreed to a request from Unison to facilitate a collection among staff for the charity Medical Aid to Palestine.

This meeting agrees:

- To support the Prime Minister's call for an immediate ceasefire.
- The killing of innocent civilians, Palestinian and Israeli, deepens hatred on both sides and makes conflict resolution more difficult to attain.
- The experience of conflict resolution in Northern Ireland and South Africa demonstrates that any lasting solution must entail negotiations with all partners to the conflict.

- That the Prime Minister should use his influence, and the UK's experience of engagement in the peace process in Northern Ireland, to aid a peaceful and just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- To write to the Prime Minister expressing the above concerns.
- To encourage residents to support humanitarian aid relief for all victims of the conflict.

The meeting ended at 10.49 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

APPENDIX A – WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PUBLIC AND MEMBERS' QUESTIONS NOT PUT AT THE COUNCIL MEETING**6.6 Question from Ms Jackie Applebee, GP:**

What steps are being taken by the council to ensure the survival of vital GP services in Tower Hamlets? Could they determine from NHS England, or if necessary the Secretary of State, what is being done in detail to support GP practices in Tower Hamlets that have identified themselves as being at risk of closure or severe service reduction due to cuts in funding either through the withdrawal of MPIG from GMS practices or the withdrawal of monies to PMS and APMS practices?

Response by Councillor Abdul Asad, Cabinet Member for Adult Services

Thank you for submitting your question Dr Applebee. We have been working closely with GPs in the borough and are doing all we can to prevent these vital sources of funding from being taken away. So far, the Mayor has drafted a letter to the Secretary of State for Health, Mr Jeremy Hunt. I know that this, along with the hard work of staff at the Jubilee Street Practice has resulted in one year's temporary reprieve of this removal of funding. Whilst this is in some ways a success, I am aware that it is only a temporary measure which ultimately, if not extended, will still result in difficulties at some point.

Therefore, our Health and Wellbeing Board is currently working with local GPs on drawing up a fairer formula for the allocation of funds, which will incorporate healthy life expectancy – a very blunt indicator of need – instead of just age. As a result of this work, we are in the process of drafting an additional letter to Jeremy Hunt, requesting the use of this formula, which will ensure funding will remain context-driven in this borough.

I would be happy to work with you and of your other colleagues or surgeries in the borough to make this ambition a reality, and to take your advice on how to move forward on this issue. Thank you.

6.8 Question from Mr. Glenn McMahon, Tower Hamlets Renters Group:

Can the Council please update us on what action is being taken to enforce better conditions in the private rented sector? We are particularly concerned about the reports of serious disrepair and threats of retaliatory evictions at Chapman House, Bigland Street, E1.

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

Thank you for your question. That's why the Mayor gave a commitment during the election to create a landlord registration scheme.

The issue of tenants being exploited or victimised in our private rented sector is an important one.

This sector is the fastest growing housing tenure in the borough. There are now more privately rented homes in Tower Hamlets than owner occupied homes with between 35 - 40,000 private rented homes across the borough.

The Council has a team of environmental protection officers who take action to enforce standards in rented housing but we know that sometimes landlords take retaliatory action against tenants who complain.

Harassment and unlawful eviction are dealt with by the Housing Options Service whose officers enforce laws protecting tenants. However if a landlord acts lawfully we are unable to prevent lawful evictions

The Housing Options Service also runs an accreditation scheme which provides a quality mark for private landlords. Landlords who work with the Council to provide temporary accommodation and homes under its Private Sector Access Scheme must also be registered and undergo checks to ensure they are fit and proper persons.

However, we do need to look at what way we can better protect private tenants. Officers are working on that scheme at the moment and a paper will be coming to Cabinet before the end of the year.

8.14 Question from Councillor Ansar Mustaqim

Will the Mayor continue to support families through the Temporary Accommodation Fund even though the current government is cutting benefits for the most vulnerable in our society?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

The Mayor allocated £2.2million in 2013/14 to provide support to homeless households affected by the Benefit Cap living in temporary accommodation. This is in addition to the £2.9m Discretionary Housing Payments fund which is also used to support residents. This fund has been used to ensure these residents can remain in their homes and will continue to be used.

However we do face the risk that the government will reduce the amount of funding available for discretionary housing payments. This is why we are continuing to work with these families to help them access training and support into employment as well as to explore different housing options.

8.15 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

Will the Mayor give details as to the disposal of the Limehouse Library site at 638 Commercial Road?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

Thank you for your question. Limehouse Library was declared surplus to Council requirement by Cabinet on 12 January 2011 and officers were given authority to dispose of the property via a 199 year lease in the open market.

In 2011 the selling agents, BNP Paribas, estimated the value of the Limehouse Library at between £400,000 and £950,000 depending primarily on the costs of repair. There were 2 marketing processes, which were undertaken by BNP Paribas on council's instructions.

The first marketing period commenced on 9 May 2011 and best and final bids ranging from £500,000 to £1,500,000 were received on 17 June 2011. The sale was aborted when the preferred bidder did not perform by not meeting the agreed deadlines. There was no appropriate second bidder so marketing was undertaken again. The property was re-marketed on 16 January 2012 and best and final bids were received on 24 February 2012. The preferred bidder, Hazev Limited, was selected on 14 March 2012 and the 199 year lease was completed on 12 April 2012. The price paid was £945,000.

8.16 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

How many pensioners and disabled residents have had their homes redecorated under the council's Tenant Decoration Scheme in a) 2013/14 and b) 2014/15?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

Thank you for your question. The Council place huge importance on looking after the elderly and disabled residents.

For example, we are the only borough to continue with free elderly homecare.

Through the Councils Tenant Decoration Scheme pensioners and disabled residents can have their homes redecorated for them.

In 2013/14, 215 residents from that group had their homes decorated, and for this year there has been 51 homes decorated to date.

8.17 Question from Councillor Shah Alam

What is the council's plan for centenary commemoration of WW1 in the borough?

Response by Councillor Shafiqul Haque, Cabinet Member for Culture

The 4th of August 2014 marks the Centenary of the outbreak of the First World War.

The Council have put together a commemorative programme of well over 50 cultural events, including exhibitions, workshops, walking tours, talks, archive film screenings and poetry readings, to remember and reflect on this moment.

All events are free and no booking is required. The aim in part is to reflect the impact WW1 had on the borough and its residents, the personal stories and sacrifices made and what lessons we may still learn from it today.

8.18 Question from Councillor Joshua Peck

What is the vacancy rate in each of the borough's district and local town centres and how does the lead member intend to reduce these?

Response by Councillor Oliur Rahman, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Economic Development (Jobs, Skills and Enterprise)

Thank you Councillor Peck for your question. The overall vacancy rate for district centres in the borough, at 9.9%, compares favourably with the average rates for London, at 11%, and nationally at 14.1%.

The Council does not currently record vacancy rates in local town centres.

The most recent data available on vacancies in the borough's district town centre is published in the 2012/13 Annual Monitoring Report, based on surveys conducted in August 2013. Vacancy rates were as follows:

DISTRICT TOWN CENTRE	VACANCY RATE
Bethnal Green	5.4%
Chrip Street	6.3%
Roman Road East	15.0%
Roman Road West	8.9%
Whitechapel	5.5%
Brick Lane	11.1%
Watney Market	11.9%
ALL LBTH DISTRICT CENTRES	9.9%
LONDON AVERAGE	11.0%
NATIONAL AVERAGE	14.1%

8.19 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

A few weeks ago the Mayor attended the People's Assembly March against Austerity to protest at this Tory-led government's attack on the poor and the most vulnerable in our community. What are being done to protect our residents from the brunt of these vicious cuts?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

We are deeply concerned about the impact of government austerity. As the motion points out the latest and most comprehensive research on poverty shows that poverty is hitting twice as many British households as 30 years ago.

The government would have us believe that many of those people are benefit scroungers and benefit fraud is at the source of our problems. It's simply not true. The majority in receipt of benefits are from working families.

Low wages, the growth of part time work and the rising cost of living are forcing more people into poverty. And the amount lost to the exchequer through benefit fraud is a mere fraction of that lost to illegal tax evasion carried out by the wealthiest in our society.

I am proud of the measures we have introduced to protect residents. The extension of free school meals, the Mayor's Education Award and University grant scheme, our Energy Co-op and free Homecare are all making a huge difference to some of the poorest in our borough.

With worse spending cuts to come we are going to have to brace ourselves for the coming storm government cuts will bring and redouble our efforts to try protect the most vulnerable from their impact.

And with the general election only a year away we need to ensure that this coalition government is kicked out of power.

8.20 Question from Councillor Amy Whitelock-Gibbs

What assessment has the Lead Member made of road safety in the borough and how regularly is this reviewed for each ward? Is the Lead Member satisfied that current measures – such as speed limits, traffic calming and enforcement of speeding – are sufficient to protect residents, cyclists and drivers from accidents?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Clean and Green

Thank you for your question. We regularly monitor safety statistics across the borough, based on feedback from members and individuals, the police and from our Find it Fix it Love it app.

In addition to this we have our annual monitoring through the Local Implementation Plan which allows officers to plot all accidents across the borough on a geographical basis and to identify hotspots. This is not currently done on a ward by ward basis as it needs to be responsive to the needs of the borough and the trends in accidents.

8.21 Question from Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury

The Tour de France cycling ride through our borough was an amazing spectacle that brought back memories of the London Olympics. How is the Mayor supporting cyclists and budding athletes in the borough?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Clean and Green

Thank you for your question. The Mayor supports athletics and cycling through a range of initiatives. For example, we provide many athletics coaching courses, particularly for young people and these include nationally recognised qualifications to train people as athletics coaches.

We also provide athletics competitions in the borough such as the London Min-marathon) and provide funding contributions, for example towards a Run England Activator, which facilitates running groups in non-traditional settings in the borough

To encourage more cycling the Council provides 4 levels of cycle training for children, with 2500 pupils having achieved 5000 passes in the year 2013-14.

This takes children from the basics of learning to balance on a bike through to being competent to cycle on busy roads. Additionally nearly 2,000 hours of adult cycle training are provided to residents in the borough.

Such training, equips children and adults with the skills to enjoy safe cycling and the Council's infrastructure programmes help to support them in making that activity a part of their daily lives.

These include: the extension of the Cycle Hire Scheme which the Council secured by March 2012 gave residents improved access to bicycles; the on-going improvement of cycle routes on quieter borough roads helps to provide more permeability through local networks; the TfL Cycle Superhighways provide more direct commuter cycle routes which the Council is lobbying TfL to make safer for all road users.

8.22 Question from Councillor Danny Hassell

What is the current wait for an Occupational Therapy assessment ahead of Decent Homes work?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

Thank you for your question. From 2013/14 to date, a total of 694 properties have progressed from screening tool to OT Assessment, and the time for OT assessment ahead of Decent Homes has averaged one hundred and three days.

Once the assessments are complete, works commence within 27 days, and are complete in circa 8 days.

A plan is being put in place to ensure OT resources are allocated according to need, on a contract-by-contract basis resulting in appropriate numbers of senior OT assessors available to handle the caseload.

8.23 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed

Tower Hamlets has become one of the first councils in London to be an accredited London Living Wage employer, how will this benefit our residents and staff?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Thank you for your question. The benefits of the London Living Wage are increasingly being recognised and this policy has a valuable impact on both staff and residents to ensure high quality services are provided.

The Living Wage Foundation, which issues accreditation for London Living Wage employers have made the following statement in respect of the benefits of paying the LLW. The benefits identified are applicable to Tower Hamlets. What are the benefits?

Good for Business

An independent study examining the business benefits of implementing a Living Wage policy in London found that more than 80% of employers believe that the Living Wage had enhanced the quality of the work of their staff, while absenteeism had fallen by approximately 25%.

Two thirds of employers reported a significant impact on recruitment and retention within their organisation. 70% of employers felt that the Living Wage had increased consumer awareness of their organisation's commitment to be an ethical employer.

Following the adoption of the Living Wage PwC found turnover of contractors fell from 4% to 1%.

Good for Families

The Living Wage affords people the opportunity to provide for themselves and their families.

75% of employees reported increases in work quality as a result of receiving the Living Wage.

50% of employees felt that the Living Wage had made them more willing to implement changes in their working practices; enabled them to require fewer concessions to effect change; and made them more likely to adopt changes more quickly.

Good for Society

The Living Wage campaign was launched in 2001 by parents in East London, who were frustrated that working two minimum wage jobs left no time for family life.

The causes of poverty are complex and in order to improve lives there should be a package of solutions across policy areas. The Living Wage can be part of the solution.

Finally, London Mayor Boris Johnson has stated that "Paying the London Living Wage is not only morally right, but makes good business sense too. What may appear to be an unaffordable cost in a highly competitive market should more often be viewed as a sound investment decision. I believe that paying decent wages reduces staff turnover and produces a more motivated and productive workforce."

8.24 Question from Councillor Asma Begum

Is the Lead Member for Housing happy with the current performance of Registered Housing Providers in the borough?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

As I am sure you are aware I take an extremely robust approach to performance managing the services provided by our registered social landlords.

Over 50 Registered Providers operate in the Borough managing nearly 30,000 tenancies and several thousand leasehold properties.

This means there are hugely differing standards of management and service and we have to make sure they work in the interest of their residents and the wider community. This is made more difficult as unfortunately the Council does not have a regulatory role.

However we do regularly monitor standards through the Performance Management Framework and here performance does not meet the standards required or if specific issues are brought to my attention through case work and complaints I will take up the matter immediately with the provider to make improvements.

I am currently deeply disappointed with the overall performance of three of the Registered Providers in the borough where there has been a steady number of complaints and disputes relating to poor performance and poor customer care. I am working with officers and the organisations concerned to resolve these issues although we have limited powers as the Council does not have a regulatory role.

If you have any concerns over a specific RSL I always welcome members informing me so that my officers and I can address the problem as soon as possible.