

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL****HELD AT 7.34 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2015****THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG****Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs	Councillor Peter Golds
Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed	Councillor Clare Harrisson
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Danny Hassell
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Mahbub Alam	Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Shah Alam	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Shiria Khatun
Councillor Abdul Asad	Councillor Abjol Miah
Councillor Craig Aston	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Md. Maium Miah
Councillor Chris Chapman	Councillor Mohammed Mufti Miah
Councillor Dave Chesterton	Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Andrew Cregan	Councillor Oliur Rahman
Councillor Julia Dockerill	Councillor Gulam Robbani
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Candida Ronald
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor Rachael Saunders
Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs	Councillor Andrew Wood

THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 7:34PM**The Speaker of the Council, Councillor M. A. Mukit, MBE in the Chair**

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 13. The order the business taken in at the meeting was as follows:

- Item 13.1 – Urgent Motion regarding the Paris terrorist attacks.
- Item 1 - Apologies for absence.
- Item 2 – Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.
- Item 3 – Minutes.
- Item 4 – Announcements.

- Item 13.2 – Urgent Motion regarding Somaliland's right to be recognised as a sovereign state.
- Items 5.1 and 5.3 – Petitions.
- Item 6 – Public Questions.
- Item 7 – Mayor's Report.
- Item 8 – Members Questions. (8.1 – 8.3)
- Item 12.3 – Motion regarding the Civic Centre.
- Item 8 – Members Questions. (8.4 – 8.10)
- Item 12.10 – Motion regarding the Trade Union Bill.

The Speaker of the Council welcomed to the Council it's newly-appointed Chief Executive, Will Tuckley and Melanie Clay, the new Director of Law, Probity and Governance.

Prior to commencing the formal Council business, the Speaker of the Council stated that everyone's thoughts and prayers were with all those affected by Friday's terrorists attacks in Paris. He invited the Council to stand and observe a minute's silence in memory of those killed and injured.

Procedural Motion

Mayor John Biggs **moved** and Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.5, Rule 13.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion regarding the Paris terrorist attacks to be considered". The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Helal Uddin
- Councillor Suluk Ahmed
- Councillor Joshua Peck
- Councillor Shahed Ali
- Councillor Shafiqul Haque
- Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Harun Miah declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 5.3, 'Petition calling on the Mayor and Council to support the businesses of Chapman Street' as he was a business leaseholder in the area. He indicated that he would leave the meeting for the consideration of this matter.

Councillors Denise Jones, Candida Ronald and Asma Begum declared a personal interest in Agenda items 12.1 Motion regarding the Rich Mix Cultural Foundation and Member Question 8.2 on the same matter as they were Council appointed Board Members of the Rich Mix Cultural Foundation.

3. MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

That the unrestricted minutes of the Council meeting held on 16th September 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

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

The Speaker reminded the Council that his Charity Ball would take place on Monday 30th November at the East Wintergarden. The Charity Ball would raise funds for Mind in Tower Hamlets and the Surjamuke Sunflower Project. Tickets were still available and he encouraged everyone to attend and support these great causes.

He also expressed great regret that a Police Officer had been stabbed in Tower Hamlets. The Council commended his brave service and wished him a speedy recovery.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Amina Ali **moved**, and Mayor John Biggs **seconded**, a procedural motion “that under Procedure Rule 14.1.5, Rule 13.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion regarding Somaliland’s right to be recognised as a sovereign state to be considered”. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Following the consideration and voting on the substantive motion, with the permission of the Speaker, a Government Minister from Somaliland made a short statement in support of the motion

At this point, the Speaker of the Council adjourned the meeting at 8:30pm. The meeting reconvened at 8:40pm.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS**5.1 Petition calling for a 30 MPH speed limit along the A12 Blackwall Tunnel Approach.**

Ms Juliana Ben Salem addressed the meeting in support of the petition, and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Ayas Miah (Cabinet Member for Environment) then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

He reported that the Council were working with Transport for London (TfL) who were responsible for the A12, as well as residents and relevant agencies to look at ways of improving connectivity and highway safety along the A12 Blackwall Tunnel approach.

The Council could potentially support the aspiration of a 30 mph speed limit along the A12. In the meantime, it was understood that TfL have agreed to carry out work to improve the existing crossings that residents were concerned about.

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 in support of opening an Idea Store at Bethnal Green Road, E2.

Petition not presented due to the absence of the petitioner.

5.3 Petition calling on the Mayor and Council to support the businesses of Chapman Street.

Mr Matthew Wood addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Mayor John Biggs then responded to the matters raised in the petition. The Mayor welcomed the regeneration of the Railway arches on Chapman Street but was mindful of the issues around the affordability of the business units and the need to provide such units. The Mayor had met with residents, Councillors, Network Rail and other interested parties and planned to meet again with Network Rail to consider ways of providing affordable work spaces within Chapman Street whilst meeting Network Rail's regeneration aims. The Mayor would also meet with the businesses effected to help them stay in Chapman Street and if necessary find other premises.

RESOLVED:

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

6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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

6.1 Question from Ms Lillian Collins:

Can the Mayor update me on the progress regarding Poplar Baths, including when the work will be completed, and when we can expect it to be open for local residents?

Response by Councillor Asma Begum (Cabinet Member for Culture)

The scheme is still in the construction phase and although some elements have been handed over, the final date of the handover of Poplar Baths is 24th June 2016.

(Ms Lillian Collins made a number of comments. No supplementary question was put).

6.2 Question from Mr Ahmed Hussain:

I have been previously informed by Councillor Blake that procedures surrounding Compulsory Purchase Orders are of equal status for both social landlords and freeholders. Given this, would the Council support the freeholders of Alpha Grove, E14, to purchase amenity space and garages within the freeholding area, and if so what assistance could the Council offer?

Freeholders could re-develop the freeholding area and provide the Council with at least 33.33% social housing (town houses with a garden).

(Councillor Rachel Blake sought to clarify which areas of Alpha Grove the questioner was particularly interested in. Mr Hussain responded that he lived and was a freeholder on the Barkantine Estate, but also leaseholders and freeholders would be affected in 'project stone' proposed by One Housing. He also stated that:

- There are only 42 freeholders on the Estate including myself. If the CPO is equal to everyone, we can look at buying the amenities of the garages of the freehold area and make a proposal to the Council. But we need guidance at the same time and that is our proposal today).

Response by Councillor Rachel Blake (Cabinet Member for Strategic Development)

I think we have given you some guidance already and I am more than happy to keep talking about how the residents of Barkantine and all of the Isle of Dogs Estates will be involved in the future of the homes that they live in. I hope that is helpful and I am happy to keep this conversation going, but probably the rest of the room don't want to do it through this process. But it is really important that the residents of the Barkantine and all of the Isle of Dogs Estates are part of any redevelopment that goes forward. I think you have already got the guidance on CPO powers. It's a very long process about how we would appraise it. But if you have got some really detailed proposals about how you and this group want to be involved in this process, then perhaps we should organise a separate meeting.

Supplementary question from Mr Ahmed Hussain

I am happy to arrange a meeting with yourselves and the freeholders if that helps.

In light of the Council's agenda of having houses and gardens can the Council ensure that in the event that there will be redevelopment in the Barkantine Estate, that you will ensure that the 42 houses will have like for like properties in the area?

Councillor Rachel Blake's response to the supplementary question

Thanks for your question. You know that we really want to bring forward more homes with gardens and you also know that this is not the Planning Committee this is full Council so we can't determine any of your ideas this evening. As I said, all residents should be at the heart of any redevelopment proposals so I hope that we can keep talking about exactly what you would want to see in any redevelopment that may or may not come forward.

6.3 Question from Mr Jamir Chowdhury:

Can the Mayor please explain what he is doing to get more women into employment, particularly from the BME community?

Response by Councillor Shiria Khatun (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety)

Thank you for bringing this important question. It gives me the opportunity to talk about some of the wonderful initiatives that we've got running and some of the wonderful work that we have been doing since Mayor John Biggs got into power back in June. As you know, one of the initiatives the Council runs is Skills Match which is the Council's job brokerage service. This particular service has worked with almost 800 women in 2014-15. Out of which, 84% were from the BME group. 324 women got into jobs in the same year. 80% were from the BME group which is a massive achievement which I am sure that you will agree with me.

The other initiatives that we have is Working Start, Women into Health and Child Care. We also run the raising aspirations work programme which has engaged with 491 people. Out of whom 324 were female which is another massive achievement for this Council and for the Borough. More recently the Council has been successful in securing £1.4 million of European Funding through our partnership with the East London Growth Boroughs to engage and support local unemployed people into training and work. This will include women as one of our key priority groups. The other thing that I have been doing in the last 4-5 months is working with women's groups in Tower Hamlets. As a result we have now established a group called the Bismillah Womens Journey in Poplar. It started off from the Lansbury ward. It then attracted women from different parts of Poplar. This particular group has about 45 plus women who have not worked before. It's about enhancing their existing skills.

Supplementary question from Mr Jamir Chowdhury

Thanks for the detailed response. Is the Mayor aware that the highest female unemployment is in Tower Hamlets and as a result of this, would the Mayor set up a task force to deal with this?

Councillor Shiria Khatun's response to the supplementary question

Again it gives me pleasure and the opportunity to say that since Mayor John Biggs has been in power which has been four months we have done a huge amount which I have pointed out before. However, the particular group that I have just mentioned which I wasn't able to finish because of time limitation, the Bismillah womens group which I said has about 45 plus women from the Bangladeshi community who have never worked before, but they have the passion to want to work. What they are doing is that they have set up a social enterprise and they are going to be enhancing their existing skills which is catering, sewing and so forth to actually generate jobs for themselves. I think that you would agree with me that to say that that is a massive achievement for the women of this Borough, especially the Bangladeshi women.

6.4 Question from Mr Michael James:

Can the Mayor give an update on the current programme for Landlord Licensing Scheme?

Response by Councillor Sirajul Islam (Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management & Performance)

Thank you Mr James. In line with the Mayor's commitment that a Landlord Licensing Scheme would be brought forward, preparations are currently being made and options are being examined by Officers, and an item on this issue is expected to be presented to the Mayor in Cabinet in February 2016. The scheme has been to public consultation and in developing the scheme the Council has carefully reviewed government guidance and will draw on good practice from the experience at those Local Authorities that have already introduced the licensing scheme in recent years.

Supplementary question from Mr Michael James:

Given that the new Housing Bill includes legislation to give Authorities additional powers to tackle rogue landlords in the private rented sector, can the Mayor outline how he will speed up inspections and the issuing of improvement notices so that private renters can benefit from the new law that is supposed to prevent revenge evictions.

Councillor Sirajul Islam's response to the supplementary question

Thank you again Mr James for your supplementary. So as I said in my response, a report will be coming to Cabinet in February 2016 and all the details are contained within the report in terms of taking action on rogue landlords etc. Obviously, I don't have all the information here at hand but once the Cabinet report is issued it will be on line and you can read it yourself and you are very welcomed to attend the Cabinet meeting to hear the report being presented.

6.5 Question from Mr Owen Corrigan:

Recent figures released by the London Metropolitan Police show an increase in reported hate crimes across London. Measures for Homophobic, Islamophobic and Anti-semitic hate crimes all increased city-wide. Homophobic crimes were up by 27%, Islamophobic crimes were up by 64%, and Anti-semitic crimes were up by 62%. We can all be pleased to note that in the borough of Tower Hamlets Islamophobic hate crimes actually fell in the year to Sept 2015 - by 12%. However, reported Homophobic hate crimes increased in this period by 15% ; Anti-semitic hate crimes increased by fully 100% - doubling in the previous 12 months.

I ask the Cabinet Member, what measures are already in place to tackle the issue of hate crime in the borough and what is the Council's strategy to ensure that next year's figures show a decrease across all categories of hate crime in Tower Hamlets?

Response by Councillor Shiria Khatun (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety)

Thank you once again for coming here this evening to give me the opportunity to talk about the initiatives we have in progress. Tackling hate crime is a key Council priority. What we have at the Council at the moment is a three-fold approach. We are working in partnership with the Police. One of the things that we want to do is support and protect victims and witnesses. We are doing all we can to achieve enforcement action against any identified perpetrators and also raise awareness work that focuses on prevention and reducing the harm these crimes cause to individuals and families and the community as a whole. As a Local Authority we have put in place a range of initiatives under the No Place for Hate heading. This includes the Tower Hamlets No Place for Hate Forum, the Hate Incidence Panel, No Place for Hate Campaign, the No Place for Hate Pledge and the No Place for Hate Champions Project.

Tower Hamlets No Place for Hate Forum, is a quarterly multi agency forum, which develops and implements the Borough Hate Crime Strategy, ensuring that there is support and protection for victims, offenders brought to justice and raising awareness to promote community cohesion. The Hate Incident Panel include key staff from the police, housing associations, victims support and various departments from within the Council. They meet on a monthly basis to ensure a coordinated approach to hate incidences.

There are many other initiatives we have in place and one of the things that I would like to say personally is that there is no room for any hate crimes in Tower Hamlets and the reason why reporting is high is that people now have the confidence to report where there is hate crimes, racially motivated crimes or domestic violence crimes. So in a way you can look at it in a positive way that people are finding more confidence to report these sort of crimes.

Supplementary question from Mr Owen Corrigan:

I would just ask if the Mayor and the Cabinet would consider whether extra resource may be required on the issue of hate crime given the tragic events in Paris over the weekend and given that we know that the intolerant and bigoted in our society will use events like this to stoke division usually to the detriment of our Muslim brothers and sisters.

Councillor Shiria Khatun's response to the supplementary question

Thank you Mr Speaker. Yes we have the ward panels and I would urge yourself to join your ward panel. I am not sure which particular ward you're from. One of the things that I will say is that hate crime is recorded. The one thing that is not recorded by specification is Islamophobic attacks and this is something that the Council will be doing and will be recording that particular data from now on. Once again thank you very much for coming here tonight and giving us the opportunity to talk about all the brilliant initiatives that we have got for dealing with hate crimes in Tower Hamlets.

6.6 Question from Mr Sean Michael:

Can the Cabinet Member please inform me as to what are the rights of East Thames Housing association to evict 142 residents including key workers with a few months' notice and neither the housing association or the local council advising on any real options that don't result in their lives being shattered. Whether it's a much longer time for people to buy the rent properties via shared ownership (as is proposed by East Thames but without enough time to do it), or help to move somewhere else affordable for those who cannot afford to move?

Response by Mayor John Biggs.

I have met you Mr Michael and your fellow questioner and I know that this is a very serious setback for housing in Tower Hamlets. There have been a number of meetings involving Councillors with yourselves and with our Council Officers. We have a meeting next week with the Chief Executive of East Thames where we will talk further with her about the steps they are making.

We think that they behaved quite improperly and they have ignored the consequences of their actions or they did not anticipate the consequences. They thought that people would simply say well fair enough we will live somewhere else. The reality of housing in Tower Hamlets is that housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable. One of the strong messages that came out of this decision is that the housing that they were providing and we would hope will continue to provide, has provided an opportunity for key workers in the Borough to obtain housing which they would not otherwise be able to afford and quite often would not have the priority for Council housing. This is very very important to us as a Council. We have an Affordability Commission which is looking in the future at how we can achieve more affordable housing. We are meeting with the Chief Executive next week to see what we can do to

help pursued them to give longer. They have already given some longer periods to some of the residents in order to try to find other solutions. We will work very strenuously to try to achieve those solutions with myself, my Cabinet Members and ward Members in the area in Bromley by Bow, Mile End and Stepney in particularly who are affected by this.

Supplementary question from Mr Sean Michael, (put by Jack Gilbert)

Many of the workers who are not officially key workers also have key worker roles. East Thames have failed to even allow a general mailing to be sent out to them by third sector agencies to offer health and wellbeing support and advice. There is no mechanism for actually reaching those effected by any third sector agency which means that the health and wellbeing consequences are completely unsupported.

Would the Mayor and the Councillors when they meet with the Chief Executive urge her to delay by at least a further three months, the Section 21 notices and also urge them to enable third party correspondence with all effected so that appropriate support and resettlement if necessary for their mental health and wellbeing can be given.

Mayor John Biggs response to the supplementary question

Once we became aware of this decision we made very strong representations to East Thames. We met at Officer level and with Members and I know that your residents' groups have been very strenuous in organising themselves and meeting with East Thames as well. We will make those representations. One of the points we made is that every single resident needs be properly taken through the options and East Thames has got a duty to understand what their personal challenges are and what can be done to help solve these problems. There is a bigger problems in Tower Hamlets in that we are at risk of becoming a bi polar Borough in the sense that we have housing for people on low income - social housing, and we have housing for people on very high income and for people who are key workers who are unlikely to achieve priority they are being squeezed out of our Borough. This is alongside a very large number of people on lower incomes of course.

So yes we will make strenuous representations to East Thames and we think that they should give a longer period and individual counselling. If possible we would like to get in a position where they withdraw the notices to residents and are happy financially and whatever else their apprehension is about the situation they are in so that they can continue. It's become very apparent what a vital product this is and what a vital opportunity it is to keep people in our Borough from across all of our sectors of our economy and our community.

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor made his report to the Council, referring to his written report circulated at the meeting, summarising key events, engagements and meetings since the last Council meeting.

When the Mayor had completed his report, at the invitation of the Speaker the Leaders of the other political groups 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 Mayor or relevant Executive Member.

8.1 Question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed

How many families has the council placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks in each of the last three years?

Response by Councillor Sirajul Islam (Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management & Performance)

Mr Speaker, can I thank Cllr Ahmed for highlighting this desperately important situation. The challenge of providing accommodation for homeless families is growing.

The number of families placed in B&B for more than 6 weeks has been monitored on a weekly basis since November 2012. This information is also reported to Government on a quarterly snapshot basis and is published on the Council's website.

If we take the number of families who had been in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks on the 30th September of each of the last three years the figures are:

2013 – 91
2014 - 49
2015 - 106

Supplementary question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed:

26,000 people and families are on the waiting lists. It is well known to everyone here that the problem is increasing. Currently the council is sending people to Bed and Breakfasts without searching for accommodation within the Borough or neighbouring Boroughs. Could you please, Mr Deputy Mayor, tell me how often you meet with officers to discuss this issue, and what action has been taken more recently to address this issue?

Councillor Sirajul Islam's response to the supplementary question

Thank you, Cllr Ahmed. You are right, the numbers have gone up but you can understand the situation we're having, with so many families being evicted from private sector tenancies, and some are homeless. We have a statutory duty to support these families. I meet with Council officers on a weekly basis, with a Corporate Director or Service Head, and amongst many other

things, homelessness is one of those items regularly on our agenda. When you say, Cllr Ahmed, that we send people far and wide, our officers always try to find accommodation within the Borough or as close as possible. You will understand the rent in Tower Hamlets is very unaffordable. They do an assessment of family income and find somewhere the family can afford. We do not put people in financial burden; we don't send people to Yorkshire or places like that. We try to find people a bed and breakfast within London, and from there we move people onto the private rented sector accommodation. If we can't find something in Tower Hamlets we do move people. We have a duty and responsibility towards those families and we find them something as near as possible.

8.3 Question from Councillor Amina Ali:

Can the Mayor outline the next steps for the Civic Centre?

Response by Mayor John Biggs:

Following my agreement with the cabinet to the location of a new Civic Centre at The Royal London Hospital site and subject to the call in period associated with that, officers will be proceeding in line with the recommendations outlined in public report.

I also agreed to the refurbishment of John Onslow House (including the One Stop Shop and Idea Store). Officers will now be looking to proceed to the detailed design phase of the project through a multi-disciplinary team.

This appointment will be procured via OJEU. The Mayor requested that the following be included in the minutes.

In order to secure the best access to architect practices with experience of delivering schemes of a similar nature, i.e. public sector civic centres or equivalent private sector headquarter buildings. It is anticipated this appointment will be made in Spring 2016.

Concurrent to the procurement of the design team, officers are procuring a package of surveys on the Royal London Hospital site.

With both of these priority procurements underway, project officers will be working with CMT and Service Heads to develop the client brief for the new civic centre (e.g. setting out team space requirements and adjacencies).

The Civic Centre project is dependent on the cashflow released from the disposal of a number of surplus properties. In order to release this cashflow in a timely manner, officers will be progressing the disposal of these sites for housing development, in line with normal protocols. In some instances, this may involve additional design work in order to maximise the value of the site.

Key to delivery of the vision for the Civic Centre project is the delivery of a strong Local Presence across the Borough. In particular, opportunities to augment the Council's current presence in Bethnal Green and the Isle of Dogs will be progressed.

In line with my commitment at the Cabinet meeting, a cross member champion group is in the process of being set up. This will be chaired by Cllr Chesterton and will strategically support and guide the project throughout its life.

(No supplementary question was put)

Procedural Motion

Mayor John Biggs **moved** and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded**, a procedural motion “that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that item 12.3 Motion regarding the Civic Centre be taken as the next item of business.” The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

8.4 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman:

In view of the financial restraints facing the council, will the Mayor confirm when the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity will be fully implemented and when East End Life will be replaced by a quarterly communication?

Response by Mayor John Biggs:

Thank you very much for your question. I was with our new Chief Executive and the Commissioners this afternoon talking about this very matter. We are compliant with the code, and that is our intention by the end of March.

Alongside whether we have a newspaper or not, we need to have an effective communications strategy for the council. The Local Government Association were commissioned to do some work and they have carried out a quick study. They will make recommendations about our wider communications strategy which will include things like better use of the internet, reaching out to people, and other strategies which we should use as a council. I am very clear that East End life doesn't have a life as a weekly or fortnightly newspaper.

Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Chapman:

Does the Mayor accept that the speed at which he is working on this matter is unacceptable, particularly bearing in mind his previous pledges. Anything short of the quarterly publication is in breach of the legal requirements, and the original direction as laid down. It's costing £1.5 Million to taxpayers which we all know can be better spent elsewhere. I want to remind him of the contents of a letter which Doris kept after it was posted through her door. It said point three: 'I will scrap East End Life and replace it with something more useful, and not propaganda'.

Should he need some guidance, the word scrap also means remove, dismiss, decommission, expel, discard, and ditch....does he intend to do any of these things in the near future?

Mayor John Biggs response to the supplementary question

I wish him a successful campaign in pursuit of the second or third place in the elections next May. It will be scrapped as a newspaper and I have pledged that. I'm not sure Doris exists actually. We still need to have a communications strategy and it will cost money. Roughly £500,000 was raised from commercial advertising, the rest from the council. We still need a communications budget. It's wishful thinking we will save £1.5 million by scrapping East End Life, but it will be scrapped and we will have a very exciting strategy into the future you will find.

8.5 Question from Councillor Danny Hassell:

Can you please update the council on what plans you have to continue to improve the life chances of children at the start of their life, and to increase the number of children reaching a good level of development by age 5?

Response by Councillor Rachael Saunders (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services)

Thank you Cllr Hassell. The Mayor has given me the responsibility of reshaping our children's policies and it is a huge responsibility. We're the Borough in the UK with the highest child poverty, and our children's service and especially the children's centres are doing something to alleviate that but not enough and there's an enormous chunk of work we need to do all that we can so that when children go to school they can succeed and achieve what they want to achieve. Our plans are broad in the sense of bringing children's centres and management together, there's work to do in the next few months to reshape those services and ensure they meet the ambitions we have and I look forward to working with Cllr Hassell and Scrutiny on that.

Supplementary question from Councillor Danny Hassell:

Thank you for that response and thank you for confirming the work that is being done with regards to integrate the early years and children's centres. It's really important we have a joined up approach for our families and young people. I know one of the Mayor's pledges was to instigate a start of life review which looks at how we can join us services for the first year of a child's life in particular. I wonder if the Council can look at extending that to age five so we have joined up services all the way to children starting school. I know Boroughs such as Newham have their Early Years outcome better than our own.

Councillor Rachael Saunders response to the supplementary question

Thank you. I know the first year of life is particularly important when it comes to achievement in the future, and in pregnancy it's huge. The more support you can give a mother during pregnancy the more she'll be able to do everything when the baby is born. The first year of life review is right and we'll have more conversations about that on the Health and Wellbeing Board. In

terms of up to aged five, the first step is getting out children's centres in the right place in the next year. A review that looks at all services up to five is a future priority.

8.6 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman:

Could the part time Mayor, who still holds two jobs, explain as to how his decision to evict the residents of TUSH (62 Bruce Road) sits with the pre-election Labour campaign and promise by Labour to support them against the Council?

Response by Mayor John Biggs:

Rachel Saunders is doing an excellent job in her role in Children's service and we won't mention her again. Your question is about TUSH, and there was never a Labour campaign supported by myself to support the TUSH come what may. There has since the Council meeting been a series of detailed conversations with residents of the co-op, one of whom has accepted a tenancy, two of whom are being made offers and we are making plans to look at secure them housing. When we look at the opportunity to provide family housing, on the site in Bruce Road then that is something that we have a duty to see through.

Supplementary question from Councillor Oliur Rahman

Mr Mayor, on 22 July in this Council chamber your Deputy Mayor and former Leader, Councillor Saunders, and Councillors Khales Ahmed and Abbas, stated the Labour Party when in opposition campaigned very strongly to stop the eviction of TUSH residents from 62 Bruce Road, isn't that the fact Cllr Saunders and Tower Hamlets Labour supported the residents to get publicity before the election, and now they won the election and you're the Mayor, you decided to evict them. You took the secret decision to give £1 million to your friends, couldn't you let the residents stay in their homes.

Mayor John Biggs response to the supplementary question

I'm not aware of any secret decision to give any friends of mine money. I'm very much committed to seeing through refurbishment of housing in Tower Hamlets and to securing homes for people. You will find the campaign from when I was not on the council was to discourage the previous Mayor from selling on the open market the homes we're talking about this evening. The majority of these residents were moved out under the previous Mayor, we're following through on the decision, were we in a different place, a different decision. We have plans for those homes in Bruce Road, and we hope they will become superb council housing. To complete the answer, it is complicated with the government reforms and it might force us in other circumstances to not carry out improvements on other historic buildings in the Borough.

8.7 Question from Councillor Marc Francis:

Will the Lead Member for Adults Services explain the action taken by LBTH following the Care Quality Commission inspection of Pat Shaw House in December 2014, which found serious breaches of regulations relating to repairs and maintenance, medicines management and assessment and care planning by Gateway Housing Association?

Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs (Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Services)

Thank you, Cllr Francis. The care and safety of the very vulnerable adults in these care homes is of great importance to us as a Council. When Gateway Housing Association, the current provider of care and owner of Pat Shaw House and Peter Shore Court, took over, the buildings were in a poor state of repair. Maintenance and repair had been the responsibility of the previous provider. Gateway immediately undertook a buildings audit which highlighted the need for several large upgrades: lift replacement, boiler replacement and carpets being replaced.

When CQC visited in December 2014, three breaches of regulations were identified relating to repairs and maintenance, medicines management and assessment and care planning. I was particularly concerned to read about things like the lift breaking down so people could not get down the stairs and issues around people being isolated and bored in their rooms. There was lots of action that needed to be taken by Gateway. The Council put a temporary suspension of placements in place following the CQC inspection. That was lifted in May given officers inspecting and improvements made.

Supplementary question from Councillor Marc Francis:

I thank the Member for the first half of her question. She will be aware that earlier this summer, the CQC went to inspect the other gateway housing association, Peter Shaw Court, and the public information is only just published but the rating for the service was overall required improvements.

Is the service safe? No it is inadequate,
Is the service effective? It requires improvement.
Is the service caring? It requires improvement.
Is the service responsive? It requires improvement.
Is the service well led? It requires improvement.

Can I ask, bearing in mind the CQC findings, nine months after the inspection took place, does she share my concerns that this inspection has revealed another gateway housing association getting the same damning judgement and will she ensure she and the Mayor ensure the care homes are brought up to standard.

Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs response to the supplementary question

Thank you. I do absolutely share your concerns and I will investigate this personally, in relation to Pat Shaw house, the CQC went back in August and found improvements. In relation to both properties I will speak to officers to improve our comms protocol so that we alert Members when issues like this happen, and in terms of what we are doing about it, and I will ask officers to set up meetings with Gateway.

8.8 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood:

Will the Mayor inform the Council on the progress of the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Area Planning Framework that was launched by the GLA in July and who the members of the supervisory board are?

Response by Councillor Rachel Blake (Cabinet Member for Strategic Development)

The Mayor and senior officers attended the first meeting of the GLA's Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Area Framework (OAPF) Strategic Board meeting on 9 July 2015.

The GLA have established a Strategic Board to steer the development of the GLA-produced Planning Guidance. It includes the GLA, LBTH and TFL and other key landowners.

Supplementary question from Councillor Andrew Wood:

What is the council going to do to advertise the risks that are currently underway?

Councillor Rachel Blake response to the supplementary question

Thanks for your follow up. I anticipate your follow up as we understand the level of concern there is. We are organising the GLA to brief Members on the process and we're hoping that will happen in December. As an SGP it will have to go through consultation and hopefully you will be at the briefing in December it was nearly on Christmas eve but I thought we would have other things to do.

8.9 Question from Councillor Dave Chesterton:

The current restrictions on the issue of parking permits for 'car free' properties is causing difficulties for many residents, particularly those with large families. Can the Mayor please give an update on his plans to review controlled parking in the borough?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

I am working with Cllr Ayas Miah on the review of parking policies, and we need to get underway in the next few months. It is an objective. The tricky bit is mentioned in your question, we can talk about the controlled parking policies in one sentence and then we have to jump across the legal framework to car free developments under planning law and connecting the two is challenging. I would like us to look at car free development and parking controlled as it is causing a great deal of stress to those who need a vehicle. It's a great challenge, particularly in the North of your ward where there is an increase in density but very few parking spaces.

Supplementary question from Councillor Dave Chesterton:

As an observation based on a petition that came to the last council meeting, the double yellow lines on Blackwall way are still there and they have not yet gone, but the question is would you please ensure in the review you look at the possibility of introducing a short period for loading and unloading in controlled parking bays for those not in possession of a parking permit, particularly near Blackwall way where there are only yellow lines, there's nowhere to park.

Mayor John Biggs response to the supplementary question

I'll answer back to front. I agree it is worth looking at. With regards to double yellow lines in Blackwall way my understanding is the commitment by officers that by the end of November, as it relates to a planning application in the area, it should be possible to remove those and I have been chasing it up as I want that to happen. There was an issues as to whether parking wardens were going out at 3AM to generate revenue by ticketing people, I was clear that this is not appropriate, more so if there is no obstruction. I have signalled it is not appropriate to do that.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Rachael Saunders **moved**, and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded**, a procedural motion that following the completion of the Members Question item "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that Motion 12.10 regarding the Trade Union Bill be taken as the next item of business." The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Extension of time limit for the meeting

Councillor Rachael Saunders **moved**, and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded**, a procedural motion, that "under Procedure Rule 15.11.7 the meeting be extended, to enable the consideration of Motion 12.10 regarding the Trade Union Bill or for an additional 15 minutes whichever was sooner. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**."

8.10 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan:

What are Mayor Biggs and relevant Cabinet Member doing in relation to supporting victims of domestic abuse? Can you provide the strategic overview, monitoring of performance and securing budget/funding for this important area which affects many vulnerable people in the Borough – particularly women, children and older people?

Response by Councillor Shiria Khatun (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety)

Thank you Mr Speaker. The Council has a range of support services in place – all of which provide support for women, children and the elderly. These include;

- An Independent Domestic Violence Adviser Contract awarded to Victim support in January 2014 for three years. This provides support for all victims of DV including women, children and the elderly. This costs £270,000 over three years with £60,000 received from the Home Office.
- A Violent Crime Case Work Service which consists of two Violent Crime Case Workers providing intensive case work support to victims of Sexual Violence, Hate Crime & other forms of violence – including DV. This service is also being delivered through Victim Support at a cost of £70,000 per annum for a 3 year period (totalling £210,000)
- £90,000 has been provided by the Housing Options Support Team for the Sanctuary Project which equips high risk victim's homes with safety installations.
- £20,000 (part funding) is obtained from Hackney Council for the SDVC Coordinator role which sees the coordination of dv cases within a specialist DV court

Supplementary question from Councillor Rabina Khan: :

May I ask if the Mayor has made a bid for the new £3 million pot of funding made available from DCLG for local authorities to support victims of domestic abuse. The deadline was 1st October. I'd like to know if there was a bid, how much for, and how it will be spent and prioritised.

Councillor Shiria Khatun response to the supplementary question

Thank you for your supplementary question, we will get back to you.

Question 8.2 was not put due to the absence of the questioner. The remaining questions 8.11 - 8.25 were not put due to a lack of time. The Committee Services Manager stated that written responses would be provided to the questions. (Note: The written responses are included in Appendix 'A' to these minutes.)

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

There was no business to transact under this agenda item.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**12.3 Motion regarding the Civic Centre**

Mayor John Biggs **moved**, and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Rabina Khan **moved**, and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **seconded** an amendment to add the following point at the end of the motion.

“The Council agrees to set up a ‘Community and Stakeholder Group’ comprising of the local traders, businesses and the community group- within the proximity of the new Civic Centre, as part of the award - winning Whitechapel Vision – to ensure that the project implementation and management benefits from a comprehensive input by key local stakeholders.”

The amendment was then put to the vote and was **defeated**.

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

RESOLVED:

The Council notes that:

1. The lease on the current Mulberry Place Headquarters building expires in June 2020;
2. The facilities offered at Mulberry Place and associated Council offices including Albert Jacob House and John Onslow House are ageing and need to be updated
3. Mulberry Place is located at the extreme eastern end of the Borough
4. The review of options for a new civic centre undertaken since July 2015 has provided the opportunity to scrutinise proposals for a new civic headquarters as part of the former Royal London Hospital development and other options to determine which of these will offer best value for money, ensures a twenty first century working environment for staff delivering services to residents and provides a suitable location for the conduct of civic business

5. The retention of all existing One Stop Shops and Ideas Stores along with consideration of facilities in the Bethnal Green and Isle of Dogs areas of the Borough is an essential part of this proposal to ensure a strong local presence across all the geographical areas of the Borough.

Having considered the options, the Council welcomes the decision of the Mayor in Cabinet on 3 November 2015 to agree the former Royal London Hospital site in Whitechapel as the preferred location for the new civic centre and endorses the Mayor's subsequent decisions to enable the speediest implementation of this major project.

The Council further endorses the Mayor's proposal to establish a cross party reference group to keep the development of the civic centre under review and to provide regular updates to the Council.

12.10 Motion regarding the Trade Union Bill

Councillor Clare Harrisson **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

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

RESOLVED:

This Council notes that:

1. In February 2015 the United Nations agency, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), reaffirmed its belief that 'without protecting a right to strike, Freedom of Association, in particular the right to organise activities for the purpose of promoting and protecting workers' interests, cannot be fully realised.'
2. In July 2015 the Conservative government announced its intention to change legislation affecting trade unions and their members to make it harder to win ballots for industrial action. This will only be lawful if there is a 50% turnout among trade union members entitled to vote in addition to a simple majority voting for industrial action.
3. The Conservatives seek a further requirement for those working in 'important public services' to secure the support of 40% of all trade union members. Non-voters will be counted as 'against' industrial action which is contrary to ILO guidance. This means that on a 50% turnout, 80% will have to vote for industrial action for it to be lawful in many public services.
4. No such thresholds apply to elections in local government, for police and crime commissioners, or in European or Westminster elections.
5. The government has refused the request of trade unions to make electronic balloting legally permissible and increase turnout this way.

This Council further notes that:

1. The proposed Conservative legislation will also introduce greater restrictions for picketing.
2. These include requirements on unions to inform the police of the name of a picket supervisor and ensure they have a letter of authorisation that they must be required to carry, inform the police of how many members will be expected to attend a picket line and what banners or materials will be used as well as to notify the police of details of how trade unions intend to use social media during a dispute.
3. The Conservative government wants to remove the ban for employers to employ agency workers during a period of lawful industrial action.
4. The government wants to grant Ministers the power to reduce the amount of facilities time agreed by employers and the workforce which is in place to ensure adequate workplace representation.
5. Trade unions take industrial action for a wide range of reasons including defending wages and pensions, conditions at work as well as health and safety.

This Council believes that:

1. The right to strike and protest are fundamental rights which should be respected in a free and democratic society.
2. The Conservative government's bill will undermine constructive employment relations and that harmonious industrial relations are achieved by meaningful engagement and not additional legal restrictions to trade union members.
3. Workplace representation ensures access to justice and has benefits across whole organisations.
4. The government's Trade Union Bill is part of a disturbing trend to erode civil liberties and inhibit the right to speak out or protest against the government.
5. The Conservative government's Trade Union Bill is a politically-motivated attack on trade unions and could have negative consequences for wider civil society.

This Council resolves to:

1. Request the Mayor to write to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills stating the council's opposition to their Trade Union Bill and to participate in any consultations.
2. Support the TUC and civil liberties groups in campaigning to defend the right to strike and oppose the Trade Union Bill.
3. Continue to value the importance of meaningful workforce engagement and representation.

Under Procedure Rule 17.6, Councillor Peter Golds and Councillor Chris Chapman requested that it be recorded that they voted against this motion.

Motions 12.1- 12.2, 12.4– 12.9 and 12- 11 were not debated due to lack of time.

13. URGENT MOTIONS

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

13.1 Urgent Motion regarding the Paris Attacks

Mayor John Biggs **moved**, and Councillors Oliur Rahman and Peter Golds **seconded**, the motion as **tabled**.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was unanimously **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

This Council notes:

- The shocking multiple attacks in Paris on Friday 13th November 2015, in which 129 people were killed and hundreds injured.
- That council staff held a one-minute silence on Monday 16th November at 11am, as other tributes were held across Europe.
- That the world has witnessed vile and cowardly terror attacks – in Beirut, Baghdad and Paris. We hope all those responsible are identified, detained and face the full force of justice.

This Council believes:

- The attacks in Paris were horrific and abhorrent and we condemn this violence in the strongest possible terms.
- That our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of the attacks, their families and loved ones, our French neighbours and all innocent victims of terror and war.

This Council resolves:

- That a cross-party letter be written to the Mayor of Paris to express our condolences, thoughts and prayers – along with a copy of this motion.
- That we will always stand firm against the politics of hate in all its forms, wherever and however it manifests itself.

13.2 Motion Regarding Somaliland's right to be recognised as a sovereign state

Councillor Amina Ali **moved**, and Mayor John Biggs **seconded**, the motion as **tabled**.

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

RESOLVED:

This Council notes:

1. The first Somalilanders living in England settled in Tower Hamlets as early as the 19th century, working as seafarers on the local docks in this borough.
2. Many of the early Somaliland settlers settled in Cable Street, where in the 1930s along with the Jewish and other local communities they fought against fascism when Mosley's black shirts marched through Tower Hamlets ready to divide communities.
3. That Somalilanders merchant seafarers went on to fight for Britain from their base in Tower Hamlets during the first and second world wars, many losing their lives for King and country. After the war years the small Somaliland community worked hard to continue to contribute to the economy of Tower Hamlets.
4. Somaliland declared independence from the Republic of Somalia in 1991 following a long war.
5. That Somaliland has never been recognised by the UN or the African Union despite a campaign by its politicians, diplomats and prominent citizens.
6. The Somaliland government does not receive international aid and it has kept its waters free from piracy.

This Council believes:

1. That Somalilanders have made a significant contribution to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Somali-landers are the one of the oldest communities in Tower Hamlets.
2. That Somalilanders have contributed to the local economic and cultural makeup of Tower Hamlets becoming proud members of this borough.
3. The Somaliland community in Tower Hamlets has continued to have strong cultural and economic links with Somaliland and has been a strong voice in the advocacy for an independent Somaliland.
4. That this council should be strongly urged to support the growing pressure to recognise Somaliland as an independent state allowing it a seat at the United Nations
5. That this council should recognise the strength of the Somaliland's cause and the fact that it is a stable democracy with four successful and peaceful elections over the past two decades, with the inclusive democratic institutions based on universal suffrage. Somaliland is an active partner in the horn of Africa, actively working with the international community in the fight against extremism and terrorism.

6. Somaliland presents a strong case for recognition under international law; it meets the criteria for statehood, and effective government, a defined territory and with the capacity to enter into relations with other states.
7. Somaliland wants formal recognition for what has already existed since 1991.
8. An independent Somaliland can serve as an example to the region of the establishment of peace and democracy.
9. That recognition would help to entrench democracy in the Horn of Africa.
10. That recognition would also help to strengthen international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and the dumping of toxic waste in the region.
11. That recognition would allow Somaliland to attract international investors and tourists creating jobs for its growing young population and allow it to interact with the international institutions like the World Bank, African Bank, EU and the United Nations.

This Council resolves:

1. To support the campaign to recognise Somaliland as an independent state. Support for this motion will show that this Council has listened to the Somaliland community in Tower Hamlets and that we recognise them as an integral part of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

The meeting ended at 10.45 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

**APPENDIX A – WRITTEN RESPONSES TO MEMBERS' QUESTIONS
THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE MEETING****8.2 Question from Councillor Shahed Ali to the Mayor:**

As result of a call-in by the Independent Group, part time Mayor John Biggs was forced to reveal his secret decision, taken behind closed doors, about Rich Mix grant funding, resulting in a statement, according to media, which states that there is no longer a court case to recover public money from Rich Mix that was owed to the Council. Rich Mix – an organisation created by Labour and essentially run by Tower Hamlets Labour Party - to be given substantial sums of cash in the millions by Labour Mayor Biggs without seeing a business plan, raises serious questions of potential nepotism and cronyism. Will Mayor John Biggs ensure that all documents, court papers, emails and information relating to Rich Mix is made public immediately according to the practice of transparency, accountability, value for money and open data principles under Transparency Act 2014 and the local authority's Best Value duty placed on him as the Executive Mayor? Contrary to his rhetoric of transparency and openness, information and documents have been hidden away in secret from the public and elected members thus far and part-time Mayor John Biggs has failed to ensure that these are made public, also excluding opposition councillors who have challenged the secret and questionable decision-making and highlighted concerns?

Response from Mayor John Biggs:

This claim was commenced in 2012 by the previous administration and had been listed for trial in July 2015.

The decision I took in June 2015 was on the day before this matter was listed for an urgent application hearing. Officers brought a report to me with various options for resolving this dispute which included continuing with the proceedings.

As there were active high court proceedings much of the information in the report was legally privileged (confidential) and releasing this publicly would have jeopardised the Council's position if proceedings had continued. It was always my intention to make this information public when it was appropriate to do so i.e. when the legal matters had been resolved between the Council and Rich Mix.

The information was made public at the earliest opportunity as soon as a settlement was reached. It can be located at:
<http://edemoc2ksrv:8070/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=434&MId=6307&Ver=4>

Legal Services hold the background material relating to this matter.

8.11 Question from Councillor John Pierce

Can the lead member give us an update on extending payment options for Tower Hamlets Homes leaseholders for Decent Homes Works?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

I recognise that recharges of major works costs represent a significant financial burden to leaseholders and that paying charges, particularly in a lump-sum, may cause difficulties. Therefore, it is important for the Council to offer assistance to leaseholders in meeting their major works bills.

It has been very helpful to be able to draw upon the work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny last year. A report proposing a range of payment options, including arrangements for phasing of payments and for extending the period over which payments can be made potentially up to ten years, is scheduled for Cabinet in January 2016.

8.12 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill

Will the Mayor publish a publicly available list of all unoccupied buildings owned and maintained by the council and all unoccupied and currently unused land in its possession?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

There is a requirement for the authority, under the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, to publish its asset list. The Council prepared documentation on property and land assets owned by the council and identifies whether it is used by the council for service delivery, is leased to third parties and/or is vacant. It is updated annually and the current version shows the position as at 1st April 2015.

(note – on the website - in the Council and Spending section under Council and Democracy)

8.13 Question from Councillor Md. Maium Miah:

At this time, the Government has announced that local councils will retain all the money they raise from business rates. Can the Mayor inform the Council what it means for Tower Hamlets, and how much he expects Tower Hamlets to raise, and how they are going to use this money? And will he ensure it benefits all sections of the community, particularly small businesses across our Borough?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

The announcement that councils will retain all business rates income is broadly welcomed, but is lacking in detail. It is clear that other funding, such as revenue support grant, will disappear, and the future of New Homes Bonus is uncertain. We are not yet in a position to say whether the Council will be

better off or worse off under the proposal until the detail of the scheme is published.

8.14 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

Will the Mayor confirm how many funerals have taken place at the council acquired burial site at Kemnal Park, Chislehurst? Will the Mayor indicate the level of subsidy for each of these burials and the cost to the taxpayer?

Response by by Mayor John Biggs

The council agreed to establish a multi-faith burial site in February 2015, and to date there have been six burials at this site. Each burial was subsidised by £350, with a total cost to the Council of £2,100.

8.15 Question from Councillor Ohid Ahmed

Can the Cabinet Member responsible provide monthly and yearly breakdowns of crime levels, particularly murders, taken place in Tower Hamlets since 2010 until present? Could the Cabinet Member also provide brief summary of what kind of crimes have increased and what seem to be the causes and what is the Council doing to address some of these issues, aside from working with Police and stakeholders?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

I have a very detailed set of figures which addresses the annual crime figures Councillor Ahmed has asked about from 2010 to present. I will circulate this to all members. Figures for 2015/16 do not capture the full year.

There are areas of particular note.

1. Recorded incidents of **ASB** in Tower Hamlets are high but falling quickly over the period 2013 to date.
2. There is an increase in recorded incidents of **violence against the person** in 14/15 against previous years in all categories highlighted
3. There is an increase in recorded **sexual offences**, both rape and other sexual.
4. Murder rates for 15/16 so far remain consistent with what we saw in 14/15, however it should be noted that the figures for the current year do not capture the full year.

Causes

In most instances there is no reliable way of conducting definitive local analysis into the causes of specific categories of crime trends over time.

Deprivation, higher levels of transient residents evidenced by higher levels of private rented accommodation, poverty, attitudes towards alcohol, prevailing levels of drug use, police resourcing, population density, the relative size and profile of the night time economy, unemployment levels, perceived levels of social isolation, ease of reporting of crime, social attitudes to reporting of crime can all play their part. All are dynamic and change with time impacting on crime levels.

Managing the issues:

ASB continues to be a priority for both the Council and the Police. It is managed in a number of ways including the use of the ASB Operational Group which meets fortnightly and ensures tasking prioritises areas of needs and manages hotspots. A joined up approach across enforcement teams including Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOS) and Police Task Forces (PTF) remain focused on managing a range of community safety and ASB concerns. The Community Trigger process and panel is also used to support incidents of reoccurring crimes whereby residents request a detailed action plan to resolve an issue they feel has not been adequately addressed

		FY 10/11	FY 11/12	FY 12/13	FY 13/14	FY 14/15	FY 15/16
Anti-Social Behaviour	ASB	Unavailable	18933	16882	16495	15610	7819
Violence Against The Person	Murder	5	5	3	5	3	3
	Wounding/GBH	399	432	327	748	920	512
	Assault With Injury	1981	1554	1863	1588	1808	972
	Common Assault	1877	1827	1671	1845	2427	1312
	Offensive Weapon	145	171	120	128	142	78
	Harassment	1720	1635	1873	1965	2472	1461
	Other Violence	175	193	258	366	277	181
	Total	6302	5817	6115	6645	8049	4519
Sexual Offences	Rape	119	138	122	157	190	122
	Other Sexual	259	293	264	273	371	172
	Total	378	431	386	430	561	294
Robbery	Personal Property	1104	1319	1358	1177	1094	523

	Business Property	59	96	80	73	65	25
	Total	1163	1415	1438	1250	1159	548
Burglary	Burglary in A Dwelling	1231	1538	1388	1396	1208	603
	Burglary in Other Buildings	1326	1179	1417	1225	1203	642
	Total	2557	2717	2805	2621	2411	1245
Theft & Handling	Theft/Taking Of Motor Vehicle	825	873	841	899	930	533
	Theft From Motor Vehicle	2133	1944	1818	1758	1532	794
	Motor Vehicle Interference & Tampering	93	87	118	121	299	195
	Theft From Shops	694	719	735	836	916	587
	Theft Person	1366	1606	1814	1542	1319	695
	Theft/Taking Of Pedal Cycles	1362	1342	1468	1316	1264	648
	Other Theft	4179	4412	4298	4030	3664	1858
	Handling Stolen Goods	62	70	62	74	67	25
	Total	10714	11053	11154	10576	9991	5335
Fraud & Forgery	Counted Per Victim	814	974	610	0	0	0
	Other Fraud & Forgery	399	426	332	21	22	10
	Total	1213	1400	942	21	22	10

Criminal Damage	Criminal Damage to a Dwelling	750	629	522	507	534	271
	Criminal Damage To Other Buildings	392	318	298	277	300	157
	Criminal Damage To Motor Vehicle	1013	928	792	779	874	462
	Other Criminal Damage	649	589	578	563	675	361
	Total	2804	2464	2190	2126	2383	1251
Drugs	Drug Trafficking	431	226	195	126	130	37
	Possession Of Drugs	2670	3481	3047	2831	2042	801
	Other Drugs	9	16	9	13	8	6
	Total	3110	3723	3251	2970	2180	844
Other Notifiable Offences	Going Equipped	41	20	26	25	15	17
	Other Notifiable	386	423	775	475	556	283
	Total	427	443	801	500	571	300
	Total Notifiable Offences	28,668	29463	29082	27139	27327	14346

8.16 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

In view of the escalating anti-social behaviour on Ropemakers Fields, Narrow Street, which has seen fireworks ignited and aimed at resident's windows, will the Mayor request the police to restore order as opposed to remaining in a police car, before driving away, as happened on the weekend of October 31st?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

Ropemakers Field is currently a priority area for ASB for the Council and Police and for October 2015 received additional patrols from the Safer Neighbourhoods Team (SNT) and Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers

(THEOs) between 2000 to 0400 hours, Thursday to Sunday. Additional visits have also been carried out by detached youth workers in the Rapid Response Team (RRT) to divert young people into more positive activities.

This has resulted in a reduction of Police 101 ASB calls from residents to the area by 25%.

The Police have confirmed that between 2pm and 2am on the 31st October 2015 they responded to 505 calls relating to nuisance fireworks across the borough and provided the best service they could to this high call demand. We will continue to monitor the situation and raise issues with the police as required

Further Information

A multi-agency firework operations plan between the Council, Police, Fire Service and Registered Landlords was also introduced across the borough from 31st October to 9th November 2015, which implemented:

- Police Dispersal zone for the Colingwood Estate
- Joint THEO/Police patrols in identified hot-spot areas
- Duty call out of RSL contractors to clear bonfires/rubbish/fly-tipping on estates
- Prevention of fire/arson visits with LFB
- CCTV targeted observations
- Joint Police/Council silver management in our Control Centre
- Increased resources for visiting Noise complaints
- Police rapid response to the misuse of fireworks calls
- RRT (Detached Youth workers) in key hot-spot locations with youth buses.
- Deployment of mobile police van and use of THEO CCTV vehicles
- Trading standards visits to licence to sell fireworks sellers
- Additional clean and green clearance of bulk waste

8.17 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani

Part time Mayor John Biggs has been quoted that the Council will require £60m worth of cuts to corporate budget. Can the Mayor inform us where did he get this figure from, what areas is he basing his quotes on and what evidence is there to support this claim? And why this important information has not been made available to Members or even discussed fully with an official report at Overview and Scrutiny Committee before going public with his claim? Is that what he means by his new so called transparency and accountability rhetoric that he can just pluck figures from thin air without informing, putting a report or a proper discussion? Will he ensure that concerns raised by the Trade Unions and staff/officers at large are fully taken on board and made public and any budget proposals are backed up with meaningful information and data rather than ambiguous headline figures and

spin?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

The Cabinet report on the Medium Term Financial Plan of the 28 July clearly set out the need for £63m savings covering a three year period, and the underlying assumptions. £15m of this total relates to 2016/17 and savings proposals have been identified and are currently out for public consultation. Overview and Scrutiny committee considered these proposals alongside the July Cabinet report, at a meeting on 2 November. All staff directly affected by the proposals have been briefed by their managers in line with the council's normal procedures. Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) have been prepared where necessary, and feedback from the public consultation will be used to review both the savings proposals and the EQIAs in November. Formal consultation with staff and the trade unions on proposed restructures will begin in late November and will continue into December. Individual Directorates are also meeting with Trade Union representatives to discuss their proposals in more detail.

8.18 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam

At the last Council meeting, it is recollected that a Councillor stated that East End Life (EEL) costs the Council £1.5m – can the Mayor tell us if that is the correct figure because you (Mayor or Cabinet) did not challenge this figure or seemed concerned about its use – Does it mean that Mayor Biggs and Labour administration agrees with this figure, if not what is the current cost?

Also can the Mayor circulate the following information in relation to EEL and wider communications review, in writing to all members, as part of the response:

- the business case and value for money report/work about EEL that we understand had been produced to articulate its value and contribution
- a copy of letter written by the Unison about EEL
- Who will you consult about the proposal to reduce it from weekly to as little as quarterly to meet Government diktat – non binding - and how it is being publicised and consulted upon – keeping in mind residents feedback about consultation recently to OSTC consultation. *(If not already being done, can the consultation be extended through residents associations, Council's own online e-account, posters and information in idea stores)*
- What is the risk of job losses and/or any kind of redeployment or redundancies

- What is the purpose and objective of consultation
- Why the consultation questions were being changed on daily basis and who is amending them. Are any councillors involved and who are they and what has been their contribution?
- How will you reach out to hard to reach/engage residents
- How will you reach out to those whose first language is not English
- Who will be conducting the review and when? When will it commence, what are the scope, time-scale and cost involved?
- Will the Members be consulted and how?
- Has/will the Equality Impact Assessments and risk assessment been/be carried out? If not why not and when will it take place? Will it be public and available to all Members?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

Further to the discussion at the last Full Council meeting a statement was published to the council's website (on the Setting the Record Straight page) which stated:

"The income generated by advertising covers the majority of the cost of the production of East End Life – it is not produced at a cost of £1.5m to tax payers."

East End Life aims to be self-financing. In 2014-15 the print, production and staffing costs for the weekly production of EEL amounted to £1.2m. The East End Life sales team generated income of £1.1m, of which just under £500K was from external advertising

A background report was provided in August 2015 which informed the decision to reduce the frequency of East End Life to fortnightly. This was taken in consultation with the Commissioners. It should be noted that at the time of the decision the Commissioners still held powers which enabled them to exercise general direction on all matters. This decision, like all individual mayoral decisions could have been subject to a call-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee subject to the normal procedures. A link to the report for the Mayoral decision is below:

<http://moderngov.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=434&MIId=6349&Ver=4>

The equality implications were considered through an Equality Assessment (EA) which informed this decision process. I have also confirmed that staffing levels would remain unchanged until the end of the financial year.

On September 24th I received a letter from Unison which did not appear to relate to its role as a representative body for staff. I was very happy to receive this letter and it has helped to inform my thinking. A copy of the letter can be requested from Unison.

Based on the background information provided, I instructed that a review of the council's communications should be carried out. This review considered how the council can best communicate with its residents in a diverse and fast-changing borough in a way that meets their needs, ensures we promote cohesion, takes account of our equality duty, offers best value for money and is compliant with the law and reasonable guidance.

The communications review has been undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA) who made the successful bid for this work. This review was undertaken at no charge to the council as a member of the LGA.

As part of the review, the LGA met with numerous individuals and groups which included representatives of schools, the police and health organisations in the borough as well as staff and resident focus groups. Non-executive members were invited to attend drop in sessions held on 3rd and 4th November 2015 and invitations for one-to-one interviews were also extended to leaders of the opposition groups. The scope for this review is attached as an Appendix to this answer.

The changes to East End Life and details of the communications review have also been published in the East End Life with a range of articles in English, Bengali and Somali. Residents were provided an email address, phone number and post address to feedback their comments. The review and opportunity to comment on changes to East End Life was also publicised on the council's website and its social media channels and issued via press release in both English and Bengali (to the local BME media outlets). Residents were also invited through the East End Life to contribute to the communications review at an event at Idea Store Chrisp Street on November 4th. It is my understanding that there have been no changes to the consultation questions which were asked.

Future proposals relating to the reduction of the East End Life, perhaps to a quarterly distribution, will emerge as a response to the Communications Review. A final version of the report has not yet been received.

[Note – the Specification for the Review of Communications Activity is included as an Appendix to this report.]

8.19 Question from Councillor Abdul Asad

Following 29 October announcement by the DCLG in relation to Tower Hamlets Commissioners, Can you please provide the details about:

- What details have now been taken away from the Commissioners and have been given back to the elected representatives as a result of this announcement?
- What powers still remain with the Commissioners?
- What role, if any, have the Commissioners played or will play in setting out the budget?
- Given that most of the requirements have been fulfilled, what endeavours are being made to ensure that Commissioners – who are costing the residents and the Council a lot of money - £800 per day for the lead Commissioner, and there are a few of them at various rates – are gone back now rather than in 6 months' time or until 2017?
- Why the Mayor Biggs has been so reluctant to officially ask the Commissioners, appointed by Eric Pickles, to leave publicly?
- Why the Labour Leader's motion was not debated in the Chamber, despite Labour majority, which among usual political rhetoric and point scoring had a genuine reason and motive, calling for Commissioners' withdrawal?
- Was assurance(s) given or sought not met? and if these assurances were met what were these - in Mayor Biggs secret meeting with the Secretary of State of Communities and Local Government, accompanied by Deputy Mayor Rachel Saunders but apparently without the other two Deputy Mayors, Islam and Khatun - since Commissioners are essentially staying put, despite spin and intense rumours that Commissioners will be completely and comprehensively leaving Tower Hamlets, in a matter of days – and these rumours have been going on since August 2015 yet this announcement has been disappointing.

Response by Mayor John Biggs

Between May and October 2015 a Direction was in force giving the Commissioners powers to require the authority to undertake any action that the Commissioners required it to take in order to comply with its best value duty. This Direction expired on 31 October 2015 and is no longer in force. The Commissioners retain powers to exercise all functions relating to grant making and we must still seek their prior written permission before disposing of or transferring property. They have no powers in relation to budget setting.

Following the six month progress report and DCLG recognition of the progress we have made, the Chief Executive and I regularly meet with the Commissioners to consider how my senior officer team and I can take back responsibility for all Council function. I have also met with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to discuss how we can best achieve this. The expiry of the additional Direction as at end of October this year is a positive step in this direction and I remain committed to ensuring that the council satisfies the requirements within the Directions as soon as possible to enable the departure of the Commissioners and the return of powers to the Council.

If the motion referred to is the motion on Mainstream Grants and Commissioners from Councillor Saunders (who is not the Labour Group Leader) at the last Council meeting, this was not taken before the meeting ran out of time. As is often the case there is often not time to debate all motions put forward and on this occasion there was time to debate only one.

8.20 Question from Councillor Mohammad Mustaqim

Can the Mayor confirm that he will stand up to Tory Government cuts - including welfare cuts, tax credit cuts and all others that are targeting many of our residents and particularly working families - as well as protecting all frontline services in his forthcoming budget by carefully taking advantage of new Government announcement on 5th September 2015 (which Independent Group Councillor Rabina Khan argued for locally and it is welcomed by us, provided equality, fairness and safety net issues are addressed in the details) that local Councils will be able to retain all their Business rates ?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

The announcement that Councils will retain business rates will not come into effect until 2020. It is not possible for any council to take advantage of this to lessen the impact of cuts in the medium term, as this date is beyond the planned austerity period. The council will continue to lobby government for a fairer funding settlement, and along with key partners, express its concerns when proposed legislation adversely affects residents.

8.21 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

Boris Johnson's decision to take control of the proposed redevelopment of Bishopsgate Goodsyrd comes after an appeal from the developers and has the effect of preventing Tower Hamlets and Hackney councillors deciding the scheme in planning committee where local people can raise objections easily. The project, which includes two skyscrapers of 47 and 43 storeys and 100 high-end shops and offices and 1300 homes (of which only 10 per cent will be affordable) has been slated by local campaign groups who fear it will drive out the area's creative industries, force local traders on Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Road out of business and cast a shadow over local housing estates. What is the personal and official position as Mayor of Tower Hamlets about the Goodsyrd development with 43 and 46 storeys Tower blocks (is it just that he is not happy about the height and minor concerns but okay with

the proposal otherwise?) that the Mayor of Hackney has publicly branded as “wholly inappropriate” and called Boris’s intervention as “cynical” – Do you agree with Mayor of Hackney about this? Given that Mayor John Biggs draws two allowances as Mayor of Tower Hamlets and local GLA member, has he made a compelling case (please provide examples and links to the contribution or representation) to ensure developers and City Hall do the best for the area rather than be simply driven by profit at the expense of what is good for local residents. Does the Mayor have the sway to hold Boris to account or the courage to stand up for local residents – otherwise what good is part time Mayor Biggs, and his two jobs, are to local people?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

The planning applications for redevelopment of Bishopsgate Goods Yard have been taken over by the Mayor of London, under powers that are available to him under the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008. Whilst it is not unprecedented for the Mayor of London to take over applications, it is exceptional for this to happen prior to the Council considering the application and determining it themselves.

An extraordinary meeting of the Council’s Strategic Development Committee has been scheduled for 10 December to consider a report with recommendations and agree the Council’s planning position.

The Committee’s decision, on behalf of the whole Council, will form the basis for Tower Hamlets representations to the Mayor of London both in writing and at the public hearing in City Hall, to decide the application. The earliest date that the hearing is likely to take place is January 2016.

8.22 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed

What is the total figure of combined allowances from Mayor Biggs’ two jobs – GLA and local Mayor - not withstanding any forgoing of allowances, associated rhetoric and spin - just the total figure from his two jobs? Does he claim any other allowance(s), salary, income-in-kind support/donation or finance except his two jobs? What interests – personal and discloseable pecuniary interests – have been recorded and declared by Mayor Biggs at the GLA and in Council meetings in last three years and since election in Tower Hamlets. Please provide details and breakdown with information to explain the level of interest and involvement.

Response by Mayor John Biggs

The respective Members Allowance schemes for Tower Hamlets and for the GLA provide for allowances of £67,094 for the position of Mayor and £55,161 for being an elected member of the London Assembly.

As Councillor Ahmed notes I have agreed to forego £36,774 of the Mayoral allowance till 5/5/16 (calculated as 2/3 of the GLA member allowance, but providing a saving to LB Tower Hamlets), giving a combined allowance for the Municipal Year 2015/16 of £85,481.

My taxable benefits as a GLA Member are recorded on the GLA website and for 2015 -16 amount to £2188 for a travel card and £222.72 to September 2015 for a mobile phone.

As publicly declared, during the June 2015 Mayoral election period my campaign received financial support from four trades unions, The Cooperative Party and the London Labour Party.

I do not claim any other allowances, salary or income in kind/donations.

All my interests are declared and publicly available on the GLA or Tower Hamlets websites. Essentially they amount to being a Board member of the London Legacy Development Corporation and a member of the Governing Body of Birkbeck College, University of London. I am the owner with a mortgage of a property in London E1.

8.23 Question from Councillor Shah Alam

Under the new enlightened era of transparency and accountability, what is the Council protocol if a Member or Mayor is publicly hosting an event or a foreign dignitary etc., using Council resources, inviting members of community and other stakeholders, in the Council Chamber or Committee Room – a tax payer funded building and rooms – in terms of inviting other Members, regardless of political affiliation. Should it be extended to all Members or just to certain political groups and parties? Following this, what sanctions or procedures are prescribed in the Code of Conduct, Standards regime or elsewhere if a Member or the Mayor fails to adhere to the guidelines and what should officers be doing to impress this upon members if any such events or meetings are organised by using offices of power and authority by administration where other elected members are deliberately excluded, since no invitation has been extended, from such public meetings/events which are hosted at the council facility?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

The Council has decided, in agreeing its Executive Arrangements, that the Speaker of the Council will be the first citizen of the borough and will perform the majority of civic and ceremonial duties for the borough. The Mayor will perform those functions as the Council's representative where they relate to the promotion of, or business of, the Council.

There is a guidance note on the Speaker's Civic role. Whilst carrying out the role [the Speaker] must remain politically neutral and not attend political meetings or make political speeches. The Speaker does however remain a councillor during their term of office and may attend group or other political meetings outside their 'speaker' role.

The Speaker's Office may be used for hosting receptions in an official capacity, for the promotion/benefit of the Borough. Full details of the purpose

of the occasion together with all attendees should be provided to the Speaker's Office in advance of the event.

In accordance with requirements of the Localism Act 2011 the Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for Members together with a Protocol for Members/Offices including gifts and hospitality, which is set out in the Council's Constitution.

Under the Protocol all Members need to decide personally how to respond to invitations of hospitality or gifts and enter anything over a £25 value in their register of interests.

Potential sanctions for a proven breach under the Code of Conduct are set out in para 12 of the arrangements for dealing with complaints.

8.24 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan

What is the total cost - direct, indirect and associated - in refurbishing and redesigning the first floor as ordered by the part time two-jobs Mayor Biggs after his election in June 2015? Please specify the facts and figures with a breakdown in relation to fixtures, fittings, furniture, material, painting, labour, employee hours, contractors etc. and any other costs that are incurred so far and or are expected?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

The total cost of the works on the alteration of the first floor was £33,324. This included the cost of moving the Mayor's office, re-providing the Speaker's Parlour and providing accommodation for all the political groups. This also includes some costs associated with moving some of the officers on the first floor.

The costs can be broken down as follows:

Security works: £4,770
Electrical works: £9,831
Ventilation works: £828
Building works: £17,495
Data cabling: £400

Total: £33,324

8.25 Question from Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury

Sometimes members get complaints about Registered Social Landlords for their poor performance and poor customer care. Does the council have any standard policy to monitor the performance of registered social landlords?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

The performance of Registered Providers (RPs) is regulated by the Homes

and Community Agency under various Economic and Consumer standards.

We do not have the authority to regulate performance of RPs who operate within the borough but we do have systems in place to assess key aspects of RPs performance and encourage RPs to improve performance.

Currently we collect a variety of performance information from social landlords working in the borough. Benchmarking data for 17 Performance Indicators (PIs) is collected from the key 21 RPs operating in the borough (including all preferred development partners) on a quarterly basis to compare performance. This benchmark information is collated by Housemark and good practice presentations are devised to showcase best practice at Tower Hamlets Housing Forum meetings.

Further Information

In addition in 2010 we selected sixteen RPs as preferred development partners. As part of this agreement the Council advised that it proposed developing a Performance Management Framework to allow it to report on housing management (and other) standards across the borough. This would cover the preferred development partners and other RPs who are members of Tower Hamlets Housing Forum (THHF) (which included Tower Hamlets Homes), as services for residents are not just provided by preferred development partners within the borough.

The Performance Management Framework was approved in late 2013 and RP's are asked to produce performance data for 12 key customer facing KPIs on a six- monthly basis. The information is discussed with RPs and annual reviews are held. These reviews provide a useful basis to encourage RPs to both engage better with the Council and to look at ways where performance can be improved.