

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.35 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2016

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

Members Present:

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

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

- Item 1 - Apologies for absence.
- Item 2 – Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.
- Item 3 – Minutes.
- Item 4 – Announcements.

- Items 5 – Petitions.
- Item 6 – Public Questions.
- Item 7 – Mayor’s Report.
- Item 12.6 – Motion regarding Bishopsgate Goodsyard
- Item 8 – Members Questions. (8.1 – 8.7)
- Item 12.9 – Motion regarding the Protection of Tower Hamlets Heritage and Community Assets
- Item 8 – Members Questions. (8.8 – 8.10)
- Item 12.3 – Motion regarding the Housing and Planning Bill
- Item 9. 1 - Report from Cabinet Meeting, Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2016/17
- Item 11.1 - Audit of Accounts 2013/14 : Section 11 Recommendation - Audit Commission Act 1998
- Item 11.2 - Mid - Year Review For Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2015/16
- Item 11.3 - Review of Proportionality and Allocation of Places on Committees and Panels of the Council.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Ohid Ahmed
- Councillor Abdul Asad
- Councillor Rajib Ahmed

Apologies for lateness were received on behalf of Councillor Marc Francis.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Oliur Rahman declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 12.4 – ‘Motion regarding junior doctors and the NHS’. He stated that he would leave the meeting room for the consideration of this matter. (Motion not debated at the meeting due to lack of time).

Councillor Rachel Blake declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 5.3 - ‘Petition calling on the Mayor and Council to reject the draft guidance for roof and rear extensions’. She stated that she would leave the meeting room for the consideration of this matter.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the unrestricted minutes of the Council meeting held on 18th November 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 reported that he would be holding two further fundraising dinners on the 8th and 21st March 2016 and would be very grateful for the Council's continued support. All the money raised would be going to MIND in Tower Hamlets and Newham, and the Surjamuki Project. He stated he would like to reach a target of £50,000. He was also hoping to hold a Tour of Tower Hamlets in the coming months.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS**5.1 Petition relating to drug dealing and anti-social behaviour.**

(Note: the correct petition text had been circulated as an addendum)

The petitioners addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Shiria Khatun, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She confirmed that there had been a number of reported incidences recently on the estate. To address the issues, the Council, together with the Police, the registered housing providers and other partners were undertaking enforcement action on the estate including regular patrols of the area. In addition, the Police have instigated a dispersal zone to move people away from the area.

Residents were encouraged to participate in the Community Surgeries and the Police Ward Panels where their views would help shape their action plans. Officers would be contacting the Ward Councillors to inform them of how residents could be involved in these groups.

On the issue of CCTV and estate improvements, the Council would work with Tower Hamlets Homes who predominantly managed the housing estate to consider whether CCTV could be provided on the estate.

RESOLVED:

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

5.2 Petition relating to cuts to children's services.

The petitioners addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Rachael Saunders Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She referred to the proposals in the Council's budget relating to the Early Years Services, arising from central government cuts and decisions made by the previous administration. To improve outcomes in Early Years, it was imperative that the Council engaged effectively with families and service users including those of the One O'clock club to shape future services.

RESOLVED:

That the petition be referred to the Interim Corporate Director, Children's Services for a written response within 28 days.

5.3 Petition calling on the Mayor and Council to reject the draft guidance for roof and rear extensions.

The petitioners addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Mayor John Biggs then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

The Mayor stated that he agreed with the petition. He thought that whilst the draft consultation document had strengths in many areas given the heritage issues, it should be reviewed in light of the consultation results and the recent scrutiny review of the matter. He commented that it might be necessary to explore alternative approaches to the issues including more modern designs that fitted in with the Conservation Area. Accordingly, he had asked Council Officers to look into these matters.

RESOLVED:

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

6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

One public question had been submitted for response by the Mayor or relevant Cabinet Member. In the absence of the questioner, the question was not put. The Committee Services Manager stated that a written response would be provided to the question. (Note: The written response is included in Appendix 'A' to these minutes.)

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.

Procedural Motion

After the Mayors' report, Councillor John Pierce **moved** and Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that item 12.6 Motion regarding the Bishopsgate Goodsyrd be taken as the next item of business." The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Following the consideration of this motion and 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 a supplementary question (except where indicated) were put and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member.

8.1 Question from Councillor Danny Hassell:

What assessment has this council made of the potential impact in this borough of the Tory government's proposals to change school funding allocations?

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

What we know is that the Conservative Government have said that they will implement a new National funding formula from 2017/18 which will include a 'transitional phase'. So there will be period of time over which the new funding arrangement comes into place. We don't have a lot more detail but we do expect the Government to start the consultation soon but what does seem clear is that London Local Authorities will see significant cuts and Tower Hamlets is likely to suffer particularly which will obviously be a serious issue for our schools. This really matters. Education has been an extraordinary success story of Labour Local Authorities since the mid 1990s and anything that undermines that success and the success of our children really needs to be strongly fought against. So people will know that there are a number of discussions going on currently about an educational partnership which we hope will increase the resilience through the cooperation of schools. However, if the Tory Government cut our funding the educational outcomes of the children in the Borough will suffer and that is enormously important.

Supplementary question from Councillor Danny Hassell:

We have seen it with the public health grant and we have seen it with the revenue support grant that the Tory Government is interested in hitting Labour Councils hard and we know that Labour Councils have chosen to fund their schools more generously and that is choices that those Councils have made historically over the years.

Does the Lead Member agree that this seems to be just another Tory attack on Labour Local Authorities trying to deliver high quality public services to their residents?

Councillor Rachael Saunders response to the supplementary question:

So what we need is a funding formulae that takes into account the high cost of schooling in London as well as the need to mitigate against separation, the importance of supporting children and families and the need to help our diverse community come together and to succeed. It is fair to say actually that in terms of Tower Hamlets education, you really do get what you pay for. We have been well funded and we have achieved extraordinary outcomes for

local children. I really hope that the Tory Government don't undermine that in any way. There is a huge risk and a huge campaign that we need to run to deal with it.

8.2 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman

Labour party, including Parliamentary Labour Party, has adopted a clear anti-austerity stance and opposed George Osborne's fiscal charter, when will Mayor Biggs listen to Independent Group and take action locally by joining hands with neighbouring Labour Mayors and other like-minded leaders and opposition groups to lead a joint anti-austerity campaign against the cuts and will he give a clear pledge to protect frontline services, the most vulnerable and jobs in his forthcoming budget?

Response by Mayor John Biggs:

As always, I am grateful for Councillor Oliur Rahman's question. I am opposed to austerity and the Government's programme of cuts. I think that it is an excessive reduction in spending, particularly in Local Government which has seen a greater percentage of cuts than most other areas of Government. I am particularly concerned about the impact on the poor people in our Borough whether it is through the effect of housing costs driving people away from Tower Hamlets or the attacks on peoples' incomes through the benefits reductions. We need to be vigorous in getting people to work but we need to protect the most vulnerable in our society and the Tory Government are failing to do that.

You asked whether I will join with neighbouring Labour Mayors. Well the answer is that I do. I meet adjoining Labour Mayors and indeed non adjoining Mayors regularly and we talk about these issues regularly and the ways in which we can mitigate the cuts. I think you need to ask yourself whether you have worked out which direction you want to face in. Do you want to balance your budget or do you want to have a non compliant budget. Because, I know that you are torn within your own mind in two directions on this issue. It is very important for the Council that we have clarity in our budget debates to come in the next few weeks and you have the opportunity to think about that.

Supplementary question from Councillor Oliur Rahman:

I think I know which direction I am heading unlike you Mr Mayor.

Mr Corbyn, your party leader, has taken a clear stance on anti austerity and against the cuts. Yes balance the budget but don't cut the throats of the residents of this Borough as you are proposing. But you would expect that as I believe Councillor Saunders said that Tower Hamlets is a Corbyn free zone so she clearly does not support Corbyn. Half of you are Blairites anyway.

The question is some of the proposals that you are making to Youth Services, Children Services and where you are proposing to raise Council Tax, will be hitting the ordinary citizens of this Borough. I ask you again if you will be

willing to look at the proposals that you have made to make sure that the lives of people in this Borough is not made even more difficult than it has to be.

Mayor John Biggs' response to the supplementary question

I note his comments and I respect the Leader of my Party who is the properly elected Leader of my party and we will work very closely with him in developing our programme of policies. One of the first items that we received from him was an instruction that we should balance our budget. I will repeat that Mr Rahman needs to work out whether he is a Gallowayite, a TUSCite, an SWPer or whether he is currently decided that he is flirting with the Labour Party. Although he seems to be selective and he needs to ask himself whether he is the same Councillor Rahman who sat in my office and said that he thought that the budget was pretty good this year actually.

8.3 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Will the Deputy Mayor for Community Safety let me know what action has been taken by LBTH and the Metropolitan Police following the recent knife-point robberies on the towpath of the Hertford Union canal and Hackney Cut at Roach Point?

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

Thank you Mr Speaker and thank you Councillor Francis for bringing this to Full Council tonight. The Police have confirmed that a robbery took place in December last year on the canal path. The victim was contacted by the local Police both by the Bow East Safer Neighborhood Team and the Hackney SNT and they have responded to him directly. The local police team are undertaking bike patrols in the area and this particular area was identified as a priority for new lighting to the towpath between Whitepost Lane and Roach Point Bridge.

Police feedback to the Council is that this is not generally an area of heavy footfall or crime and there is no clear justification for CCTV at the venue given other pressures in the Borough. However, there is a Community Safety surgery scheduled and Officers and myself have been in contact with yourself. Hopefully there will be plenty of residents turning up as they have been turning up to other Community Safety surgeries where they can actually set priorities and look at the issues in the whole ward and define what priorities need be set for the coming months.

Supplementary question from Councillor Marc Francis:

I thank the Deputy Mayor for that response and for taking the time to discuss the issue with me before the meeting as well. As she knows, the Council's response to the last series of incidences that took place a couple years ago, was to install the new lighting on the tow path.

We've got more residents than ever living adjacent to that canal and particularly that corner. The lighting is a really big improvement but will she endeavour to speak to Officers to see whether additional lighting can be put under the A12 bridge providing that it does not impact on the local ecology. Will she also agree to talk to Officers about a feasibility study potentially for CCTV if it can be demonstrated that this is a continuing hotspot for potential robberies. The reason why these robberies stopped the last time was because the Police intervened and there were more Police Officers around at the time as the London Mayor, Boris Johnson, had not cut them at that stage. They were able to catch and convict two people but we can't guarantee that that will happen next time so we do need further action.

Councillor Shiria Khatun's response to the supplementary question:

Yes Councillor Francis I will certainly be speaking to Officers. I will also be attending the Community Safety surgery in your ward where we can address such issues and talk about the setting up of priorities.

8.4 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

Will the Mayor inform the council how much the Bonfire Night fireworks display in Victoria Park cost taxpayer's and can he further explain why he thinks this is the best use of council resources?

Response by Mayor John Biggs:

I am pleased you asked this question and I am slightly angry with the answer that I have in front of me. I was advised that it would cost in the order of £120,000 and that we would raise a substantial amount through sponsorships and that we would find a way of collecting from people as they entered the park. The latter did not happen.

The reply I have in front of me is that the event cost £180,000 and we received £60,000 in sponsorship and I am rather annoyed with that. I have a list with the Chief Executive of things we need to look at to make sure we have proper control over. In my defence, I was only Mayor for a short time when we agreed to go ahead with this. But yes it needs to be better managed in the future if we are going to hold it. The good news is that 75,000 people (estimated) attended it and had a joyous time. The bad news is that the event was not under adequate financial control and I commit myself to the Council to make sure that we either don't hold it or we have proper controls this time if we hold it this year.

Supplementary question from Councillor Craig Aston:

I would suggest to the Mayor that unless he sets an admission fee for such events, then just people with buckets isn't going to raise that much money. Given that it did cost £180,000 and we do accept that the Local Government finance settlement is not going to be painless for the Borough, does he really think that this is an appropriate use of Council resources so that residents from Hackney can come and have a free fire works display at our expense?

Mayor John Biggs' response to the supplementary question:

Yes I agree with you that if we can only manage an event costing £180,000, it would not be a good use of our money to hold it again this year.

8.5 Question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar

What is the Council doing to help long-term unemployed and economically inactive residents to get into work?

Response by Councillor Joshua Peck, Cabinet Member for Work & Economic Growth:

Thank you very much. The question is a good and timely question. The Council's approach to economic development and in particular unemployment in the past has been around job brokerage. We have just this month started delivering a £2.8 million programme that takes that approach much further. Under which, we will work with people who have been long term unemployed or economically inactive to provide a whole package of support and to deal with the many issues that stop people from getting back into work. It could be drug or alcohol addiction, it could be childcare issues, it could be debt, it could be housing issues, it could be English language issues, it could be skills and training issues, so over a period of time, we can move people into work.

Our aim is to get around 550 people into work over those two years. I have to say that many of these people are absolutely on the breadline because of the cuts to the benefits that this Tory Government is targeting. Those cuts are pretty hard on these groups. So it is an essential scheme and it's a new approach and one that I think that will be very successful.

Supplementary question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar:

Can you say what the programme will be doing for people in supported housing?

Councillor Joshua Peck's response to the supplementary question:

Thank you. I am concerned by residents of supported housing. I've got a small supportive housing unit in my ward and I know that sometimes the support is pretty unsupportive. But the people in those units are the people who have some of the most complex needs that stop them getting into work. But them getting into work can really be part of their recovery. Those are exactly the kind of groups that will be targeted in this programme and I want to look at specifically what we can do around that group.

8.6 Question from Councillor Muhammad Mustaqim:

What practical steps are being taken by the Mayor to reach out and help many small community organizations who are delivering fantastic services, are loved by local people and helping residents in line with the Council's broad corporate objectives and community plan but are suffering significantly and will potentially collapse as a result of cuts in their recent MSG funding. Can Mayor Biggs, at the very least, agree with me and arrange a few sessions, particularly for smaller organisations with non-existent or limited resources and capability, to see how they can be supported to make a bid for any emergency assistance from the Council, so that they can use that fund as their match funding capacity to make further applications elsewhere. This will also help them understand recent changes in criteria and what steps could they take to make a potentially successful bid for future Council funding if possible?

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

Thank you. Whilst I was really frustrated by a whole number of the decisions that the Commissioners made on the mainstream grant process and I sat here with Labour colleagues advocating as best as we could for a whole number of organisations, being the only party to do so, I am glad that the Commissioners funded the Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS) to give exactly this kind of support to local organisations.

Through the Main Stream Grant 2015/18 programme, the Council is funding a partnership project led by the THCVS, aimed at supporting local organisations with a focus on helping those that were unsuccessful in the recent MSG round. The project will deliver training, information and advice to organisations on how to raise funds for the provision of projects and core services, the effective management of their projects and staff and how to achieve quality assurance accreditations. There will be training workshops as you described, intensive and short-term one-to-one help, peer support events and e-bulletins.

Officers within the Third Sector Team do routinely provide support and general guidance on submitting applications for Emergency Funding. We have also done all we can to be flexible quite recently in terms of using match funding to lever resources into the Borough. However in relation to Emergency Funding, it is important to be clear that where Officers are assessing the applications there needs to be a separation. So you can't help write an application that you will also be assessing. That why it is right that we funded the THCVS to give that help.

Supplementary question from Councillor Muhammad Mustaqim:

Thank you Cabinet Member for elaborately responding. I have received many representations from organisations and they are suffering from the funding cuts. Given this, can the Mayor ask the relevant Officers to have one to one meetings with the organisations to assist them with their emergency funding application?

Councillor Rachael Saunders response to the supplementary question:

So as we have described we have funded the THCVS to give this help and support. I personally and I know that other Members have met with a whole number of organisations to give the best advice that we can. I have also met with a number of organisations along with the Corporate Director of Resources and we have done all we can to help there as well. So if people want to approach us the door is always open.

8.7 Question from Councillor Andrew Cregan:

What is the Council doing to ensure historic fabric is protected at the so-called Norton Folgate site in Spitalfields, particularly given the continued interest by developers in developing the site?

Response by Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development:

Councillor Cregan, thank you for bringing this question forward.

As you know, the Mayor of London decided to 'call-in' the application and determine it himself and heard the case on 18th January 2016. To respond directly to your question a senior officer did represent the Council's views as determined by the Strategic Development Committee in July. The Council's views on this were that their refusal related to the impact on the heritage assets and harm to the character and appearance of the Elder Street Conservation Area. The compliance with the planning permission now falls back to the Council and obviously we will be taking those responsibilities very seriously.

Supplementary comment from Councillor Andrew Cregan:

Thank you for your response Councillor Blake. Like many local residents, I was appalled to see the Mayor of London intervene in this planning proposal and overturn the decision of this Council and one that was strongly supported by the local community. This does not bode well for the outcome of the Bishopsgate Goodsyrd proposal which is pending and we have already discussed tonight. At Norton Folgate, the London Mayor has taken the decision to demolish historic warehouses in our Borough's Conservation Areas. This is a shameful intrusion on the authority of this Council and presents a clear loss to our heritage and community assets.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Andrew Cregan **moved** and Councillor Joshua Peck **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that item 12.9 Motion regarding the Protection of Tower Hamlets Heritage and Community Assets be taken as the next item of business." The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

8.8 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill:

The Borough wide 20mph Experimental Traffic Order is due to end this September. Will the Mayor consider whether to extend, amend or end the test? Given that only 103 people supported the original reduction in speed versus 43,589 car & van drivers in the Borough how will the Council include all road users in that decision?

Response by Councillor Ayas Miah Cabinet Member for Environment:

Thank you Mr Speaker and thank you for your question. A decision on whether to extend, amend or withdraw the 20 mph Experimental Traffic Offer will be taken at the point that we have sufficient data on the impact to make a judgement. Officers will present the analysis of the Experimental Traffic orders impact to Cabinet in September 2016, in order to inform action to be taken in relation to its expiry on 13th October. This decision will be based on a comprehensive review of the impact of the scheme up to that point, taking into account changes in driving behaviour, collision patterns and public perception.

There are clear concerns expressed by residents about speeding traffic across the Borough. It is not correct to suggest that car and van drivers do not support or benefit from the reduced speed limit and the costs and benefits for all road users will be taken into account in this assessment and it would be wrong to put the interests of any group above that of public safety.

Supplementary question from Councillor Julia Dockerill:

My theory is that too much faith is placed in the 20 mph limit and without any real enforcement or public backing, it is creating unintended consequences, for instance dangerous overtaking on some of the A roads such as Manchester Road. So as part as the review, can we receive reassurance that you will be looking at road safety as a whole rather than just focusing on this blind adherence to the 20 mph limit?

Councillor Ayas Miah's response to the supplementary question:

The Council is committed to improve the safety of our roads and road users. We need to encourage our road users and drivers with respect to behavioural changes as well so thank you for your question.

8.9 Question from Councillor Helal Uddin:

Does the Mayor have any strategy in place to improve community cohesion further in the Borough?

Response by Mayor John Biggs:

This is a vitally important question and I think anyone coming out of the events in the last few years will recognise that whatever else was said, there were voices from across the community talking about the lack of cohesion, dialogue and understanding. Although we have made great progress, we

need to make far greater progress still to dissolve boundaries between communities and increase understanding of different faiths and cultures. So it is vital that we have such a strategy. Stating that is one thing, putting together such a strategy will involve the development of a far more complex and comprehensive set of measures. So we are doing quite a lot of work.

I commend the work that Councillor Shiria Khatun is doing as part of her brief. We are working with a range of community partners including mosques, migrant groups, faith leaders, disabled people, schools, the LGBT community to develop a community cohesion action plan which will better coordinate the wide range of activities that are already happening. But I think more than that it does need leadership from all of us. It needs trusting relationships between ourselves and faith communities and community groups. It needs us to reemphasise our equalities duties and commitments and the fact that you can't have equalities unless you have respect and understanding between communities. I think it also requires - and this is perhaps more political than some people would like in this chamber, us to challenge the dreadful effects of poverty and exclusion which some policies, intentionally or otherwise, are causing within our communities in the east end. So we need to be very vigilant, we need to be forever inventive, we need to deal with the problems of radicalisation, the problems of racism in our community. In essence, we need to deal with the challenges preventing all from enjoying the same chances. So there is a whole set of strategies.

Therefore, I think the most comprehensive answer to this question is that at the very core of everything that the Council does, should be the driver towards making sure that we are a very fair community in which people have opportunities and can achieve their potential.

Supplementary question from Councillor Helal Uddin:

Thank you Mr Mayor, very helpful indeed. I'm just wondering whether you have experienced any difficulties from the legacy that was left behind especially by the opposition that divided our community. If this is the case, what message would you like to send tonight to the politicians?

Mayor John Biggs' response to the supplementary question

I think the record shows that the political experiment of the first Mayor's administration in Tower Hamlets was successful in some respects but not in quite a few others and was quite, with hindsight perhaps with good intentions at the time, very divisive in our communities in Tower Hamlets. I think we are fairly clear in our understanding of that.

I have always been determined as Mayor at least up to now to try to provide bridges and opportunities to those who were involved in that administration to get real about the effects of what happened and to work with us to help create a cohesive community in the Borough. I think we need to learn by looking forward by being an outward looking community and not by spending too much time looking backwards at the events of the past unless they have unresolved lessons that we need to learn from.

8.10 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan:

There has been much criticism of the housing bill, especially the extension of right to buy and the forced sell-off of social housing stock. But the “pay to stay” scheme will have a huge impact on tenants especially in Tower Hamlets, how will the Mayor address this scheme so that tenants are protected from facing eviction?

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

Thank you Mr Speaker and thank you Councillor Khan for this question. As Councillor Khan will know, the Housing and Planning Bill is currently making its way through Parliament and is at the Report Stage in the House of Commons.

Chapter 4 Section 79 sets out that ‘The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision about the levels of rent that a registered provider of social housing must charge a high income tenant of social housing in England.

This is widely expected to impose a requirement for tenants in a household earning over £40k in London (and £30k elsewhere) to pay a higher rent in line with the regulatory requirements.

Until the final details in the Bill are agreed and regulations issued by the Secretary of State, it will not be possible to predict how much impact this duty will have on existing Council tenants as the Council does not currently collect details on household income for tenancy management purposes. At this point it is therefore not possible to consider what mitigating actions, if any will be required to ensure tenants can be protected from eviction.

The Pay to Stay proposal was subject to a public consultation by the Government and the Mayor responded robustly to the scheme stating that ‘I do not agree with the Pay to stay policy which I believe is flawed, particularly in relation to the London Housing market and the impact on hard working families in LB Tower Hamlets.

The response went on to make several points concerning the flawed notion of tenants receiving subsidy, proposed entry levels, the impact on mixed and balanced communities, the cost of the scheme to the Council and the operation of the scheme in relation to Housing benefit entitlement.

A copy of the consultation response is available to all Members from the Mayor’s office.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved** and Councillor Rachel Blake **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 Housing and Planning Bill be

taken as the next item of business.” The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Supplementary question from Councillor Rabina Khan:

I understand that there was a consultation by the Government between 9th October, I think to the 20th November by which this Council were supposed to submit evidence or information. I want to know what kind of information was submitted on behalf of the residents of this Borough and also who was consulted when that submission was given. Did you contact Tower Hamlets Homes renters, did you speak to the Tower Hamlets Tenants Federation and did you collate some of the information from the people who care about this Borough, particularly in light of those who will definitely be effected by the pay to stay.

Councillor Sirajul Islam’s response to the supplementary question:

Thank you Mr Speaker. I already said in my initial response, Mayor Biggs has responded to that consultation and you are very welcomed to get a copy of the response from the Mayor’s Office.

The remaining questions 8.11 - 8.22 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

9.1 Report from Cabinet Meeting, Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2016/17

The Council considered the report from Cabinet on the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2016/17.

The recommendations set out in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

1. That the continuation of the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2016/17 be approved which will retain the same level of support to all working age Council Tax payers on a low income as set out in the report to Cabinet on 5 January 2016;
2. That it be agreed that the extension of the scheme is for one year only, to be reviewed alongside the impact of the Government’s proposed welfare reform changes and an options review for the future of LCTRS during 2016.

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

There was no business to transact under this agenda item.

11. OTHER BUSINESS**11.1 Audit of Accounts 2013/14 : Section 11 Recommendation - Audit Commission Act 1998**

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director of Resources on the Council's intended response to the recommendations made by KPMG under S11 (3) of the Audit Commission Act 1998.

Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Resources highlighted the key points in the report. He explained that, due to the intervention of the DCLG and the subsequent best value investigation carried out by PricewaterhouseCoopers, KPMG carried out additional work in the areas of concern. This meant that they were not in a position to issue an opinion on the 2013/14 accounts until September 2015.

Despite the unqualified audit opinion, KPMG raised some concerns with the best value review and therefore issued an adverse conclusion on the arrangements to secure Value for Money for 2013/14. In the Section 11 Recommendation subsequently issued, the Council's Auditor's state that whilst they were satisfied that the Authority was taking sufficient steps to address the specific matters identified to date, that a wider governance review should be undertaken. Councillor Edgar considered that considerable progress had been made in addressing the issues identified. The Mayor had introduced a transparency protocol and also the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had established a transparency commission. Significant progress had also been made against the Best Value Action Plan and the updated version was included in the Council papers. However it was recognised that further work needed to be carried out.

The Mayor endorsed Councillor Edgar's comments. He considered that whilst the recommendations mainly related to the actions of the previous administration, it also raised systemic and structural issues regarding the way the Council behaves and manages its business which were being taken account of substantially in the Best Value process. He stated that the Council were taking the issues raised very seriously and were grateful for the work that was happening in this area.

The recommendations set out in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

1. That the recommendations made by KPMG under Section 11 (3) of the Audit Commission Act 1998 be accepted;

2. That the actions already put in place by the Corporate Director of Resources in response to the recommendations made under Section 11 (3) of the Audit Commission Act 1998 be noted and endorsed;
3. That the issues identified by KPMG under Section 11 (3) of the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the commitment of Members and officers to resolve these be noted;
4. That progress against the recommendations be monitored by the General Purposes Committee, alongside the other monitoring arrangements put in place.

11.2 Mid - Year Review For Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2015/16

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director of Resources reviewing progress on the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy approved by Full Council on 25 February 2015

The recommendations set out in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

That the Council note:

1. The Treasury Management activities and performance against targets for the six months to 30 September 2015;
2. That the current development and update for MiFID II Impact on LGPS and Local Authorities and also Changes in credit rating methodology as set out in section 4 of the report;
3. That the Council's investment balance of £421.3m as at 30 September 2015 of which £40m was invested in other Local Authorities (set out in Appendix 1 of the report).
4. The Council's position on prudential indicators (set out in Appendix 6 of the report).

11.3 Review of Proportionality and Allocation of Places on Committees and Panels of the Council

The Council considered the report of the Director of Law Probit and Governance, setting out the position regarding proportionality and the allocation of Committee places following a change in the political composition of the Council.

The recommendations set out in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

That Council agrees:

1. The review of proportionality as at section 3 of the report and the allocation of seats on committees and panels for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2015/16 as set out at paragraph 4.2 of the report;
2. The committees and panels established for the municipal year 2015/16 as listed in paragraph 4.2 and that the total number of places on these committees and panels be reduced from 91 to 90 by reducing the Strategic Development Committee from 9 to 8 seats;
3. That Members and deputies be appointed to serve on those committees and panels in accordance with nominations from the political groups to be notified to the Director, Law, Probity and Governance.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**12.3 Motion regarding the Housing and Planning Bill**

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved** and Councillor Rachel Blake **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. The Government published a Housing and Planning Bill for First reading on 13 October 2015.
2. The second reading took place on the 2 November 2015 and that the Bill was carried at its second reading in Parliament.
3. The Bill has been through the Committee Stage and is now in the final stages of being agreed by the Commons
4. The Bill includes:
 - a. Introduction of a General Duty to promote Starter Homes
 - b. Measures to force Councils to sell high value council homes
 - c. Measures to require higher earners to pay higher rents and for the increased income to be paid to the Secretary of State
 - d. Measures to implement the Right to Buy for Housing Association Tenants through a on a voluntary basis.
5. That Cllr Philippa Roe, Conservative Leader of Westminster Council, has said "it is absolutely vital that the proceeds of right-to-buy from London are kept in London."

6. Rushanara Ali MP and Jim Fitzpatrick MP voted against the Bill at the second reading.
7. Zac Goldsmith MP, in the House of Commons on Monday 2nd November, said:
 - “the gap between supply and demand remains very wide, and without radical action, it will grow wider still, further pricing Londoners out of their own city”
 - “closing the gap between supply and demand, therefore, is the absolute priority”
 - “council homes in London are far more valuable than they are elsewhere, and without a change we will see a disproportionate flow of resources out of London”
 - “the amendment that I intend to table after today’s debate will ask for a binding guarantee that London will see a net gain in affordable housing as a consequence of this policy—a guarantee that London will see, in addition to the replaced housing association homes, at least two low-cost homes built for every single high-value home sold”
 - “the bottom line is that we are going to have to use every single available lever to deliver affordable homes at all incomes”
8. Sadiq Khan MP tabled an amendment to the Bill that would ensure that a proportion of starter homes are available to local people.
9. Sadiq Khan MP described the Bill as being “catastrophic for hundreds of thousands of people who will see rents and house prices rise and a steep decline in the number of affordable properties.”
10. The Mayor in Cabinet in September 2015 approved the development of new affordable homes.

This Council believes:

1. London’s successful future is threatened without sufficient supply of genuinely affordable homes.
2. Tower Hamlets has historically provided a vital role for supplying homes for households on low incomes who play a vital role in London’s economy and that role is under threat.
3. This Bill will have a severe detrimental effect on the ability of LB Tower Hamlets to address housing need and demand in Tower Hamlets.
4. This Bill will force many households to leave the borough as they will no longer be able to afford to live in Tower Hamlets.
5. This Bill will undermine the mixed and diverse communities that we are proud to be part of in Tower Hamlets.
6. There is no provision within the Bill to ensure that the proceeds from the Right to Buy of Housing Association homes or from the forced sale of Council homes will stay within Tower Hamlets.

This Council calls on:

1. The Mayor and all councillors to actively campaign to highlight the disastrous consequences of this Bill.

2. The Mayor to give full consideration to finding meaningful, genuinely affordable housing solutions for Tower Hamlets.

12. 6 Motion regarding Bishopsgate Goodsyard

Councillor John Pierce **moved**, and Councillor Rachel Blake **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved** a friendly amendment to insert an additional resolution 'That the Council should write to all candidates in the London Mayoral election to seek their views and stance on whether they will oppose/reject the Bishopsgate Goodsyard development should they be elected Mayor of London in May 2016.

Councillor John Pierce and Councillor Rachel Blake indicated that they accepted this amendment and altered their motion accordingly.

Following further debate the substantive motion as altered was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

This Council notes:

- The Bishopsgate Goods Yard site is located across the borough boundary of Hackney and Tower Hamlets.
- The site's most well-known historic structures, such as the listed Braithwaite Viaduct and the entry gates, originate from the 19th century goods depot, a sophisticated three storied complex which opened in 1881.
- These historic assets and other remnants of our heritage, such as the Goods Yard walls and the Georgian weavers' cottages on Sclater Street, provide a snapshot of the site's previous use.
- The majority of the Goodsyard buildings burnt down in 1964 and, other than for temporary uses, the site has remained derelict ever since.
- Part of the site lies within the Fournier Street and Brick Lane Conservation Area and is adjacent to the boundaries of four other Conservation Areas.
- Developers Hammerson and Ballymore want to construct 12 buildings on the 11-acre Bishopsgate Goods Yard site, which spans Hackney and Tower Hamlets from Shoreditch High Street to Brick Lane.
- Boris Johnson, Mayor of London, decided to call-in the Goodsyard decision in September 2015.

This Council further notes:

- Hundreds of local residents and campaign groups have objected to this proposal.
- On Thursday 10 December, Hackney and Tower Hamlets councils held special planning committee meetings to discuss the applications. Both voted for refusal.

- BNP Paribas, commissioned by both councils to carry out an independent viability assessment, found that there were many discrepancies with the developer's viability assessment. These include:
 - Developers say it would be justifiable to provide no affordable housing, but offer 10% out of "goodwill".
 - BNPP identified 'distortion', 'double-counting' and a 'lack of transparency' throughout the developer's assessment.
 - BNPP states the developers have exaggerated their costs and downplayed profits. BNPP states developers could offer far more in S106 contributions than they currently are.

The Council believes:

- Boris Johnson decision to call in the proposal rides roughshod over local democratic decision-making.
- The viability assessment on which the developers base their case does not stack up.
- There is so much potential for Bishopsgate Goodsyard to be developed in a creative way which works for the benefit of everyone.
- The proposal fails to meet to the planning rules and will cause substantial harm to the local heritage and townscape.
- The lack of affordable homes - only 10% is proposed is out of "goodwill" - is an insult to local people.
- The proposal also fails to provide a mixed and balanced community, has an unacceptable impact on the amount of daylight and sunlight in the local community, and does not meet site design principles and housing standards.
- The scheme will have a 'major adverse impact' on the air quality on Bethnal Green Road.

This Council resolves:

- To ask the council to support the More Light More Power campaign which aims to promote inspired and innovative development of the Goodsyard
- To call on the Mayor to request an urgent meeting with the Mayor of London to discuss the impact of the proposal on the local neighbourhoods and our conservation areas.
- To consider all options in relation to the Mayor of London Boris Johnson's decision of the application, including a judicial review.
- To call on the Mayor of Tower Hamlets to submit evidence to the Mayor of London setting out why we do not believe this application meets planning policy.
- That the Council write to all candidates in the London Mayoral election to seek their views and stance on whether they will oppose/reject the Bishopsgate Goodsyard development should they be elected Mayor of London in May 2016.

12.9 Motion regarding the Protection of Tower Hamlets Heritage and Community Assets

Councillor Andrew Cregan **moved** and Councillor Joshua Peck **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

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

RESOLVED:

This Council notes:

- There is a rich variety of historic buildings in our Borough that add immense value to our community.
- That Tower Hamlets' "Local List" was compiled in 1973, alongside the Borough's Statutory List.
- That although it has been added to over the years, the Council's Local List is not a complete list of all non-designated heritage assets in the Borough.
- Heritage and community assets, in particular pubs, play an important role in our Borough, helping to provide local character, strengthen social networks, contribute to the local economy and provide an important focal point for local communities – hosting events, clubs and meetings that are necessary for community cohesion.
- Once heritage and community assets are gone it is impossible to bring them back.

This Council believes that:

- The protection of heritage and community assets must be a core consideration in the borough's approach to regeneration and development.
- Developers should consult with local heritage and conservation groups early enough in the stages of a planning application to shape those applications appropriately.
- Tower Hamlets would benefit from a review of policies to mitigate against harm to historic fabric by developers, before planning applications reach the Committee stage.
- Soaring property prices and gaps in planning law mean that many local heritage and community assets can easily be turned into a supermarket, flats or even demolished.
- Heritage and community assets must be protected from wilful neglect and property speculation.

This Council resolves:

- To revise the Local List in its entirety as soon as possible, to include all non-designated heritage assets and historic public houses.
- To establish a process whereby local residents can make additions to the Local List easily.

- To create a local “Heritage at Risk Register” incorporating all at risk buildings on the Local List.
- To take a proactive stance in monitoring the condition of historic local buildings on a local “Heritage at Risk Register” through the use of notices issued by the Planning Enforcement Team.
- To protect community assets under threat from change of use by “Article 4 Directions”.
- To implement a specific pub protection policy to be incorporated into the Local Plan as well as a separate policy to enhance community infrastructure.

Motions 12.1, 12-2, 12.4, 12.5, 12.7, 12.8 were not debated due to lack of time.

The meeting ended at 10.35 p.m.

Speaker of the Council