

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS****MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL****HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 18 MAY 2016****THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5  
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG****Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs	Councillor Shafiqul Haque
Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed	Councillor Clare Harrison
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Danny Hassell
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Shah Alam	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Shiria Khatun
Councillor Shahed Ali	Councillor Abjol Miah
Councillor Abdul Asad	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Craig Aston	Councillor 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 Mustaqim
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 Helal Uddin
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Andrew Wood

**The Speaker of the Council, Councillor M. A. Mukit MBE, in the Chair****1. ELECTION OF SPEAKER**

Before commencing his address, the Speaker welcomed to the Council meeting, Unmesh Desai, the newly elected Greater London Authority Member for the City and East London Constituency as well as the Boroughs two Members of Parliament, Rushanara Ali and Jim Fitzpatrick and his wife. He also congratulated the newly elected Mayor of London Sadiq Khan on his election.

The Speaker then reported that he had been overwhelmed by level of support he had received over the last two years. He wished to thank the Mayor, Councillors and Council staff for their support. In particular, he praised the local community for their generous support and willingness to get involved in

community life – as demonstrated at the recent Civic Awards ceremony celebrating the achievements of those who had given outstanding contributions to the community.

He thanked the many volunteers and organisations who had helped him raise so much money for his charities, MIND and the Surjamuki Project, and for enabling him to hold two additional events this year, (in addition to his annual events). These were the Consort's Charity event celebrating International Women's Day and a Charity Dinner. In particular, he paid tribute to the fundraising Sub-Committees who had helped arrange these events. He also thanked the Canary Wharf Group and London Tea Exchange and the Boroughs two MPs for their contributions to his fund raising efforts.

As a result of this support, he had exceeded his fund raising target for his chosen charities of £50,000, raising £51,000.

Turning to other events, he reported that he had the honour of welcoming many guests to the Town Hall from all over the world as well as school children to learn about democracy. He thanked Mayor John Biggs for supporting this and providing facilities to enable this. He also paid tribute to Councillor Peter Golds for his tireless work for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal and for supporting the Tour of the Borough that promoted the Borough to visiting Civic Mayors. He had enjoyed being the Speaker of Council very much.

Finally, he thanked his wife and daughter who had accompanied him as his consorts at events for their support. He also thanked his PA Patricia Attawia in Members Support for her hard work and dedication and his drivers for their invaluable help.

The respective political leaders in turn each responded to the Speakers address recording their thanks for his dedicated service, reflected by his election to the position of Speaker for two consecutive years. They welcomed his honesty, fairness, fund raising achievements and the dignified manner in which he had carried out his duties and had represented the Borough.

The Speaker then called for nominations to serve as Speaker of the Tower Hamlets Council for the coming year.

It was **moved** by Mayor John Biggs, **seconded** by Councillor Sirajul Islam, and:

### **RESOLVED**

1. That Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed be elected to serve as Speaker of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council until the Annual Council Meeting in May 2017.

Mayor John Biggs and Councillor Sirajul Islam then came forward to witness the Speaker of the Council signing the statutory declaration of acceptance of office.

### **The Speaker of the Council, Khales Uddin Ahmed in the Chair**

The incoming speaker, Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed thanked all those who had elected him to this important role. He stated that he would endeavour to perform his duties as Speaker as best as he could. In particular, he would work hard to encourage and acknowledge achievements across the community and to promote the Council, its aims and values. His wife and daughters would be his consorts for the year.

He stated that he had lived in the Borough and had served as a local Councillor for many years, working hard to serve and represent everyone in this diverse community. The Borough had a proud history and tradition and this had very much influenced his decision to select as his main charity, the Friends of Mile End Cemetery Park which was an important public park and nature reserve. He would also be working to raise funds for APASEN which supported the needs of people with disabilities; SOUL, the Social Organisation for Unity and Leisure, a resource for young people in the Borough, and the BBPI Foundation, that provided support to British Bangladeshi young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

He hoped that the Council would join him in supporting these causes and in fulfilling his duties as a speaker.

## **2. ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER**

The Speaker sought nominations to serve as Deputy Speaker of the Council for the forthcoming municipal year. It was **moved** by Mayor John Biggs, **seconded** by Councillor Sirajul Islam, and:

### **RESOLVED**

1. That Councillor Sabina Akhtar be elected to serve as Deputy Speaker of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council until the Annual Council meeting in May 2017.

## **3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of

- Councillor Mahbub Alam
- Councillor Joshua Peck

## **4. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

**5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

**RESOLVED**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 23 March 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

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

The Mayor gave an update on the Chief Executives' appraisal process. He reported that his first appraisal would be carried out shortly and a report on the matter would be submitted to the General Purposes Committee, setting out the Chief Executives' objectives for the year ahead in compliance with the Commissioners' directives.

**7. MAYOR'S CABINET AND EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Law, Probity and Governance setting out the Mayor's Cabinet appointments and other arrangements in respect of Executive Decision Making.

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

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Mayor's Executive Decision Making scheme be noted.

## **8. PROPORTIONALITY AND ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEES**

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Law, Probity and Governance proposing the establishment of the Council's committees for 2016/17 and setting out the review of proportionality and the allocation of places on those Committees and sub committees.

The report also proposed changes to the Non-Executive Committee Structure and noted recent changes to the Council's Scrutiny Structure.

### **RESOLVED**

That the Council agrees:

1. That a new 'General Purposes Committee' be established with the terms of reference as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
2. The review of proportionality as at section 3 of the report and the allocation of seats on committees and panels for the Municipal Year 2016/17 as set out at paragraph 4.2. of the report.
3. The committees and sub-committees established for the municipal year 2016/17, and places be allocated on those committees and sub-committees, as set out at paragraph 4.2 of the report.
4. To note the proposed arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committees.

## **9. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2016/17**

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Law, Probity and Governance setting out a revised calendar of meetings for the Council, Committees and other meetings for the municipal year 2016/17.

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

### **RESOLVED**

1. The following proposed amendments to the calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2016/17 be approved as set out in Appendix A to the report, including, amongst others, changes to –
  - a. Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee (New);
  - b. Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee (New);
  - c. General Purposes Committee (New) (combined with the former Human Resources Committee and Appeals Committee)
2. That the Corporate Director, Law, Probity and Governance be delegated the authority to agree meeting dates for any new Committees or Sub-Committees that are set up subsequent to this

report being presented to Council, subject to appropriate consultation with Members.

## 10. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND PANELS OF THE COUNCIL

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Law Probity and Governance, on appointments from political groups for members of the committees, sub-committees and other bodies including those established under item 8 above (including the Chairs where appropriate). The list of nominations was tabled at the meeting. The Council agreed to resolve as follows:

### RESOLVED

1. That members and substitute members be appointed to the committees and sub-committees of the Council and other bodies for the municipal year 2016/17 as set out in tabled Appendix A of the report.
2. That the Chairs of Committees for 2016/17 be appointed to the committees and sub-committees of the Council as set out in the nominations listed in tabled Appendix B of the report.
3. That, in relation to any unfilled places within the seats allocated to a particular political group, the Council note that the Corporate Director, Law, Probity and Governance has delegated authority subsequently to agree the appointments to those places in accordance with nominations from the relevant political group.

## 11. SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES 2016/17 - AMENDED

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Law, Probity and Governance, setting out an updated Scheme of Members Allowances for 2016/17.

During the discussion, the Monitoring Officer agreed to respond to questions put in relation to the powers of the Mayor or Council to appoint Members to paid positions.

Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved** and Councillor Rabina Khan **seconded** the following amendment to the recommendations.

### **Taking into consideration the fact that Mayor John Biggs and his administration in their Budget for 2016/17:**

- Increased the Council Tax by 4% for ordinary residents of Tower Hamlets while it was frozen for many years by the previous administration – a Council Tax rebate for residents in real term, despite huge austerity cuts;

- Increased the essential charges for residents and small businesses by an additional 1.7% in the Fee and Charges Schedule;
- Failed to note and appreciate that the staff at Tower Hamlets Council have not had a fair and adequate increase in their salaries for a number of years – and capped at 1%;
- Slashed or reduced the front line services and other essential provisions for the most vulnerable residents, including children, women and the disabled;
- Disingenuously and hypocritically did not incorporate the new posts of three Mayoral Advisers, paid for by the local tax payers, to pay an extra £21,000 to three Labour Cllrs for advice - a role they are already obligated to fulfil. This is after the Mayor's Office has been budgeted to £605,000 – including the Head of Mayor's Office costing in the range of £85,000 - £100,000, a new Head of Marketing at £100,000; and
- Reduced front line Tower Hamlets Partnership Police Officers to 6 from 41, despite huge issues and concerns around the rise in anti-social behaviour, drug and gang related crimes.

**Whilst also taking in to consideration:**

- The Scheme of Members' Allowances 2016/17 has not transparently outlined whether Mayor John Biggs will be receiving the full increase for his entire term until 2018. In particular, this would make the spin to forego £3,953 for this year, an insulting gesture given the fact the Labour Group proposed, voted and passed an amendment on October, 27, 2010 to cut the Mayor's salary by £10,000 to £65,000 which is demonstrative of their political bias and vindictiveness.
- The Independent Review to increase the Member's allowances was available to the previous mayor, who decided against an increase due to austerity cuts and to sharing the pain with staff and residents who were suffering under the Tory-led Government.

**Based on the above facts, the Council agrees to:**

- Freeze all Member's allowances, including the Mayoral and Special Responsibility Allowances, until such a time when the Tower Hamlets Staff are given an adequate, fair and proportionate rise, Council Tax is frozen and/or austerity cuts have been dealt with, anything less will mean that Mayor John Biggs and his administration is more interested in lining up their pocket rather than providing value for money and standing up for people of Tower Hamlets.

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

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

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the updated London Borough of Tower Hamlets Scheme of Members' Allowances 2016/17 be adopted as set out at Appendix 'A' to this report with any changes coming into effect from Thursday 19 May 2016 or the appointment of a Councillor to the relevant position, whichever is the later.
2. To confirm that no automatic uplift in the Basic Allowance in relation to the Local Government Pay Settlement be taken for the 2016 Pay Award.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17.6, the following Councillors each asked that it be recorded that they had voted in favour of the proposed amendment (above) and voted against the recommendations.

Councillor Suluk Ahmed  
Councillor Ohid Ahmed  
Councillor Shah Alam  
Councillor Shahed Ali  
Councillor Abdul Asad  
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury  
Councillor Shafiqul Haque  
Councillor Aminur Khan  
Councillor Rabina Khan  
Councillor Harun Miah  
Councillor Md. Maium Miah  
Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim  
Councillor Oliur Rahman  
Councillor Gulam Robbani

**12. STATE OF THE BOROUGH DEBATE**

Mayor John Biggs made his state of the Borough speech to the Council. He began by describing the key challenges facing the Borough and his Administration achievements to date.

He then discussed their future aims. Specifically, he highlighted their plans for further improving the Council's governance structure, their approach to providing affordable housing, responding to the budget challenging facing the Borough, and the Government welfare changes. He also outlined their education and employment plans, their youth services strategy, environmental policies and their approach to addressing anti-social behaviour.

He also highlighted their plans for improving the health and wellbeing of residents, their position on the Mela and the Rich Mix Cultural Centre and that there would also be a review of the Council's Development Plan.

He welcomed the appointment of the new Senior Officers and thanked his Cabinet and Council staff for their hard work over the course of the year.

Councillor Oliur Rahman then responded to the Mayor's speech. He expressed concern about the recent rise in the Council Tax rate, cuts to the burial service, nursery closures, changes to the home care services, the funding of advisors and the Mayor's position on the Rich Mix centre and the Mela.

Councillor Peter Golds then addressed the Council. He concurred with the points made about the importance of good government arrangements and welcomed the appointment of permanent senior officers at the Council.

Mayor John Biggs then briefly responded to the points raised summarising the Council's key priorities.

The meeting ended at 9.20 p.m.

Speaker of the Council