

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS****MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL****HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 21 MARCH 2018****THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5  
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG****Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs	Councillor Clare Harrison
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Danny Hassell
Councillor Shafi Ahmed	Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Mahbub Alam	Councillor Shiria Khatun
Councillor Shah Alam	Councillor Abjol Miah
Councillor Abdul Asad	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Harun 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 David Edgar	Councillor Oliur Rahman
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

**The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Sabina Akhtar in the Chair**

During the meeting, the Council agreed to vary the order of business. The order the business was 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.
- Item 5.1 – Petition regarding Wapping Speed Cameras
- Item 5.9 - Petition regarding Wapping Social Club
- Item 5.2 – Petition regarding Watts Grove Parking permits
- Item 5.10 - Petition regarding the Save Jamboree Campaign
- Item 5.3 - Petition regarding Community Safety in Dunmore Point and surrounding areas
- Item 5.4 - Petition regarding Drug Dealing and Anti – Social Behavior in Gower Walk and surrounding areas
- Item 6 – Mayor’s Report.

- Item 7 – Administration Motion debate
- Item 8 – Opposition Motion debate
- Item 9.1 – Members Questions (none debated due to lack of time)
- Item 10 – Reports from the Executive and the Council’s Committees.
- Item 10.1 - Report of the General Purposes Committee, Pay Policy Statement
- Item 11 – Other Business.
- Item 11.1 - Annual Report to Council by the Independent Person
- Item 11.2 - Members' Allowance Scheme 2018/19
- Item 11.3 - Committee Calendar 2018/19

The Speaker of the Council brought the Council up to date with some of her activities since the previous Council meeting. The Speaker reported that she had attended and supported a range of community events showcasing the achievements of local individuals and groups. These included:

- A Children’s Rally as part of an International Mother Language Day Programme, in Altab Ali Park.
- The Sylhet Festival about Sylhet’s heritage, cuisine and its cultural practice.
- The Bangabandhu Young Talents Forum that encouraged young writers.
- Several events celebrating International Women’s Day.
- Canary Wharf Sports Personality of the Year Awards.
- The Annual Civic Awards Ceremony.
- The Jack Petchey’s “Speak Out” Tower Hamlets Regional Finals where the champion went forward to the next stage. This was a public speaking competition for all state schools across London and Essex

She thanked all the organisations who had invited her to share these experiences.

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Amina Ali
- Councillor Gulam Robbani
- Councillor Maium Miah

Apologies for lateness were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillors Shafi Ahmed, Aminur Khan, Denise Jones and Peter Golds declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following agenda Items:

- 9.20, Member Question relating to the Council Tax Support scheme and the self-employed.
- 12.11, Motion regarding Stop the Cut to the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme.
- 12.14, Motion regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Councillor Rabina Khan declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following agenda Items:

- 9.20, Member Question relating to the Council Tax Support scheme and the self-employed
- 12.11, Motion regarding Stop the Cut to the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme
- 12.13, Motion regarding a Private Rental Enforcement Team
- 12.14, Motion regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Councillor Rabina Khan also declared a personal interest in agenda item 5.10, Petition regarding the Save Jamboree Campaign as the premises was within her ward.

Councillors Shah Alam and Ayas Miah declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following agenda items:

- 9.20, Member Question relating to the Council Tax Support scheme and the self-employed
- 12.11, Motion regarding Stop the Cut to the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme
- 12.13, Motion regarding a Private Rental Enforcement Team
- 12.14, Motion regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
- 12.20, Motion regarding Fire Safety in Tower Hamlets for Residents

Councillor Shafiqul Haque declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following agenda item:

- 12.11, Motion regarding Stop the Cut to the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme
- 12.13, Motion regarding a Private Rental Enforcement Team
- 12.20, Motion regarding Fire Safety in Tower Hamlets for Residents

Councillor Rajib Ahmed declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda Item 12.11, Motion regarding Stop the Cut to the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme

Councillor Helal Uddin declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following agenda items:

- 9.30, Member Question relating to parking charges by Poplar Harca
- 12.13, Motion regarding a Private Rental Enforcement Team
- 12.20, Motion regarding Fire Safety in Tower Hamlets for Residents

Councillors Dave Chesterton, David Edgar, Harun Miah and Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim declared Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in the following agenda Items:

- 12.13 Motion regarding a Private Rental Enforcement Team
- 12.20 Motion regarding Fire Safety in Tower Hamlets for Residents

Councillor Danny Hassell declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda Item, 12.5 Motion regarding changes to university pensions.

Councillors Ohid Ahmed and Mahbub Alam declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda Item, 9.20, Member Question relating to the Council Tax Support scheme and the self-employed

The Speaker also reported that Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs had asked that it to be noted that she had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda item 9.9, Member Question relating to the Cadogan Terrace and Fairfield Conservation Area.

Members declaring Disclosable Pecuniary Interests would be required to leave the room for the duration of the relevant agenda items.

### **3. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 17 January 2018 and the Budget Council Meeting held on Wednesday 21 February 2018 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 this was the last Council meeting before the local elections. For any Councillors who were not standing for election, this would therefore be their last Council meeting. The Speaker thanked each retiring Councillor for their hard work supporting local communities whilst they had been Councillors and wished them well for the future.

The Mayor and Group Leaders then paid tribute to the outgoing Councillors highlighting some of their achievements and contributions to the Borough. A number of the Councillors also spoke about their time in office (both at this stage of the meeting and also during item 7, the Administration Motion debate).

On a separate matter, the Speaker announced that the Council had won a national LGC ward in the Environment Services category for its carbon fund.

The Chief Executive then made a short statement on recent events at the Council. He reported that the Council had held a staff conference on 8th

March 2018 which was well attended. The event, which fell on International Women's Day, focused on the achievements of women in Tower Hamlets, past and present. The Council had also launched the 'Your Vote is Yours Alone' Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission campaign. The Council would also be conducting one of the advanced postal vote pilots for the forthcoming local elections

## 5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

### 5.1 Petition regarding Wapping Speed Cameras

Stephen O' Shea 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. He noted the problems with car speeding in Wapping and the importance of safety campaigns and road design in addressing the issue. To this end, the Council were looking at street calming measures and street design to discourage and prevent speeding.

On the issue of speed cameras, he advised that Transport for London and the Metropolitan Police jointly installed and managed the cameras based on a specific criteria regarding road safety. None of the streets in Wapping met this criteria. However, the Council would continue to work with the community to help address the issue.

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Acting Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

#### **Procedural Motion**

Councillor Mahbub Alam **moved**, and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 12.1.(c), the order of business be changed to enable Item 5.9 Petition regarding Wapping Social Club to be heard as the next item of business." The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

### 5.9 Petition regarding Wapping Social Club

Katherine Bracken and others 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. He stressed that he wished to see a community centre remain open on the site and did not have a problem with the community centre continuing, providing that the centre was properly managed and the building was in a good state of repair.

He also added that he had met with representatives of the centre to look at how the issues could be addressed.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Acting Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

**5.2 Petition regarding Watts Grove Parking permits**

Kabir Hussain and others 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. He advised that both he and Councillor Sirajul Islam, Cabinet Member for Housing, had recently attended a meeting at Watts Grove with many of the residents.

He reminded the meeting that whilst the development was car free, the residents could apply for a parking permit under the transfer scheme. The Mayor also added that he would continue to review the Council's parking policy to ensure it balanced the needs of residents and minimised congestion. Regarding the need for double yellow lines, he reported that the Fire Authority had advised that they were necessary to facilitate emergency access to the development.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Acting Corporate Director Place for a written response within 28 days.

**Procedural Motion**

Councillor Andrew Cregan **moved**, and Councillor Rabina Khan **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 12.1.(c), the order of business be changed to enable item 5.10 Petition regarding the Save Jamboree Campaign to be heard as the next item of business." The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

**5.10 Petition regarding the Save Jamboree Campaign**

Rena Beck addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development and Waste then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She stated that the Council sympathised with the petitioners concerns and were committed to helping the music venue stay open.

She also explained that whilst the Council had limited authority in respect of some of the issues, it could seek to resist the loss of a community use at the site given this would require planning consent. However, she emphasised that each planning application would be considered on its own merits

She also reported that Officers were looking at alternative venues for the music venue in the unfortunate event that it would need to relocate.

**RESOLVED:**

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

**5.3 Petition regarding Community Safety in Dunmore Point**

Fazleh Elaahi addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Community Safety then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She advised that the Council were doing all that it could to keep the community safe, including providing additional police officers and upgrading CCTV cameras.

Tower Hamlets Homes and the Police team were aware of the particular problems in the area and along with other agencies, were taking a number of steps to address the issues, such as regularly patrolling the area. This had proved reasonably successful and had helped resolve some of the issues.

The Council were also considering taking further action to address the issues.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director Health, Adults and Community, for a written response within 28 days.

**5.4 Petition regarding Drug Dealing and Anti – Social Behavior in Gower Walk and surrounding areas**

Syed Shofor Ali and others addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Community Safety then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She reassured the petitioners that addressing anti-social behaviour was a key priority of the Council and the Police. To this end, she advised that both the Council and the Police were carrying out a number of steps to address the issues at Gower Walk as a matter of priority, including improvements to the stop and search process and the inclusion of new initiatives as part of Operation Continuum to tackle the drug dealing.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director Health, Adults and Community, for a written response within 28 days.

## 6. 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 and at the invitation of the Speaker, the Leaders of the Aspire Group, the People's Alliance of Tower Hamlets and the Conservative Group, responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

## 7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE

### Administration Motion regarding the future of Tower Hamlets Council

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

Councillor Ohid Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Oliur Rahman **seconded** the following amendment to the motion to be debated as **tabled**:

#### This Council notes that:

- ~~1. Tower Hamlets Council has emerged from a period of turbulence and chaos which was created by the previous mayor Lutfur Rahman and his administration, many of whom still serve as councillors.~~
- ~~2. The Government had to appointed Commissioners to run services in the wake of Lutfur Rahman's administration.~~
- ~~3. Since Lutfur Rahman's removal from office by the Election Court, and the election of Mayor Biggs, Tower Hamlets Council has undergone a significant period of change and improvement which was recognised by the Government who withdrew their Commissioners.~~
- ~~4. Mayor Biggs and his administration have opened up the council's decision-making process, and we now have a council focussed on the services that residents rely upon rather than a council which Secretary of State Sajid Javid said "had completely lost the trust of its residents" and "was mired in corruption and financial mismanagement".~~

#### This Council further notes that:

- ~~1. The election court in 2015 ruled that 'the election of all THF Councillors must be taken to have been achieved with the benefit of the corrupt and illegal practices'.~~
- ~~2. Most of the councillors elected as part of Tower Hamlets First remain on the Council **according to the democratic mandate given to them by the people of Tower Hamlets.**~~



3. Tower Hamlets First ~~became splintered into two groups~~: the 'Independent Group' (**10 Councillors**) and the 'People's Alliance of Tower Hamlets' (**6 Councillors**).
4. The 'Independent Group' has now **officially registered** ~~renamed itself~~ as 'Aspire', and has formally **recognised** ~~registered~~ as a political party with the Electoral Commission.
5. The 'People's Alliance of Tower Hamlets' has now been formally registered as a political party with the Electoral Commission.

**This Council believes that:**

1. The Council has never unanimously **stated that it will ensure it does not become chaotic, dysfunctional or riddled with cronyism and corruption under any administration** ~~recognised the damage caused by the previous mayor~~ and this motion represents an opportunity for the Council to unanimously declare **as such** ~~that we will never return to the chaos of the past~~.
2. The rebranding, ~~or~~ renaming of political groups, ~~or~~ parties **or misleading politically convenient statements while in administration** does not absolve ~~them~~ **anyone** of **their responsibility and accountability of their respective record of delivery for residents** or indeed ~~hide their previous failings~~ when in office **if there were any**.

**This Council further believes that:**

1. **Most of the above points in the original motion presented by Mayor Biggs are politically motivated opinions by the current Labour Mayor and his Group. Council therefore notes the following sample of important factors that have been ignored by the current Mayor to clarify the Council's recent record:**
  - a. **Before 2015 Mayor John Biggs himself stated that Tower Hamlets was generally a 'well run borough' and many Council achievements were recognised nationally including by government such as on housebuilding.**
  - b. **Figures from across the political and social spectrum have cast doubt on the merit of the civil election court judgements and indeed the Court ruled that it had not been charged with deciding the validity of the election of any of those remaining Councillors, so they were fully entitled to retain their seats. Democratic mandates must be respected.**
  - c. **The Council's 'Good' OFSTED rating under Mayor Lutfur Rahman has been lost and the Council is now rated 'Inadequate' the worst possible rating with Government Inspectors finding vulnerable children were at risk of harm.**

- d. On 10 December 2017, all Tower Hamlets opposition groups unanimously called for “audit commissioners to check Tower Hamlets planning applications over £2m “bribery” allegations” exposed by The Sunday Times under the current Labour Mayor and his Administration
- e. This motion proposed by current Labour Mayor is a misleading attempt to blame political rivals to hide incompetence by the current administration.

**This Council resolves:**

1. ~~To condemn the record of the previous mayor and his administration.~~
2. To ~~reject any attempts to return~~ ensure the Council **does not become chaotic, dysfunctional or riddled with cronyism and corruption under any administration.** ~~to the chaos of the past which the former Secretary of State described as “at best dysfunctional and at worst riddled with cronyism and corruption.”~~
3. To call on whoever is elected Mayor this year to commit to, and build on, the openness and transparency agenda ~~introduced by Mayor Biggs~~ **of the Council and to build on the citizen focussed policy direction originally introduced under the leadership of Mayor Lutfur Rahman and Deputy Mayor Ohid Ahmed’s Administration, including taking active steps to improve accountability such as:**
  - a. **Giving the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee Chairs to the Opposition Groups**
  - b. **Rotate the Speaker of the Council between all significant political groups**

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

Councillor Joshua Peck **moved**, and Mayor John Biggs **seconded**, a procedural motion “that under Procedure Rule 16.4. the names for and against the motion or abstaining from voting be taken down in writing and entered into the minutes.

The original motion was then put to a recorded vote and was **agreed**.

The Mayor and Councillors recorded their votes on the motion as follows:-

Councillor	For	Against	Abstain	Absent
Khales Uddin Ahmed				x
Ohid Ahmed		x		
Rajib Ahmed	x			
Shafi Ahmed			x	
Suluk Ahmed		x		

Sabina Akhtar	x			
Mahbub Alam		x		
Shah Alam			x	
Amina Ali				x
Abdul Asad			x	
Craig Aston				x
Asma Begum	x			
Mayor John Biggs	x			
Rachel Blake	x			
Chris Chapman	x			
Dave Chesterton	x			
Gulam Kibria Choudhury		x		
Andrew Cregan	x			
Julia Dockerill				x
David Edgar	x			
Marc Francis				x
Amy Whitelock Gibbs	x			
Peter Golds	x			
Shafiqul Haque				x
Clare Harrisson	x			
Danny Hassell	x			
Sirajul Islam	x			
Denise Jones	x			
Aminur Khan			x	
Rabina Khan			x	
Shiria Khatun	x			
Abjol Miah			x	
Ayas Miah	x			
Harun Miah		x		
Mohammed Maium Miah				x
Mohammed Mufti Miah		x		
Mohammed Abdul Mukit	x			
Muhammed Ansar Mustaquim		x		
Joshua Peck	x			
John Pierce	x			
Oliur Rahman		x		
Gulam Robbani				x
Candida Ronald	x			
Rachael Saunders	x			
Helal Uddin	x			
Andrew Wood	x			
Total Votes	24	8	6	

**RESOLVED:****This Council notes that:**

1. Tower Hamlets Council has emerged from a period of turbulence and chaos which was created by the previous mayor Lutfur Rahman and his administration, many of whom still serve as councillors.
2. The Government had to appoint Commissioners to run services in the wake of Lutfur Rahman's administration.
3. Since Lutfur Rahman's removal from office by the Election Court, and the election of Mayor Biggs, Tower Hamlets Council has undergone a significant period of change and improvement which was recognised by the Government who withdrew their Commissioners.
4. Mayor Biggs and his administration have opened up the council's decision making process, and we now have a council focussed on the services that residents rely upon rather than a council which Secretary of State Sajid Javid said "had completely lost the trust of its residents" and "was mired in corruption and financial mismanagement".

**This Council further notes that:**

1. The election court in 2015 ruled that 'the election of all THF Councillors must be taken to have been achieved with the benefit of the corrupt and illegal practices'.
2. Most of the councillors elected as part of Tower Hamlets First remain on the Council.
3. Tower Hamlets First splintered into two groups: the 'Independent Group' and the 'People's Alliance of Tower Hamlets'.
4. The 'Independent Group' has now renamed itself as 'Aspire', and has formally registered as a political party with the Electoral Commission.
5. The 'People's Alliance of Tower Hamlets' has now been formally registered as a political party with the Electoral Commission.

**This Council believes that:**

1. The Council has never unanimously recognised the damage caused by the previous mayor and this motion represents an opportunity for the Council to unanimously declare that we will never return to the chaos of the past.
2. The rebranding or renaming of political groups or parties does not absolve them of or hide their previous failings when in office.

**This Council resolves:**

1. To condemn the record of the previous mayor and his administration.

2. To reject any attempts to return the Council to the chaos of the past which the former Secretary of State described as “at best dysfunctional and at worst riddled with cronyism and corruption.”
3. To call on whoever is elected Mayor this year to commit to, and build on, the openness and transparency agenda introduced by Mayor Biggs.

## 8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE

### **Opposition Motion By The People’s Alliance of Tower Hamlets regarding the Gender Pay Gap Audit 2018**

Councillor Rabina Khan **moved** and Councillor Abdul Asad **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Andrew Cregan **moved and** Councillor Rabina Khan seconded the following amendment to the motion to be debated as **tabled**:

Under, "The Council agrees..." add:

6. The Council to make sure it has a clear Shared Parental Leave policy, that employees are aware of this and actively encouraged to take it up.
7. As well as the gender pay audit, to carry out an ethnicity pay audit, to determine whether employees from Black and Ethnic Minority backgrounds are consistently paid less. The audit should include an action plan to address any issues found.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Oliur Rahman **seconded** the following amendment to the motion to be debated as **tabled**:

The **This** Council Notes that:

1. **The Parliament first pressed for equal pay in 1944, in relation to equal pay for men and women teachers.**
2. **In 1970 Equal Pay Act 1970 was passed. Until that time, it was commonplace for jobs to be advertised with one rate of pay for a man, and another for a woman. The Equal Pay Act outlawed discrimination in pay and is still used today to challenge such discrimination.**
3. **Pay transparency audit, which includes the gender gap pay data, under section 78 of the Equality Act 2010 was introduced, at last, in 2016.**
4. According to the latest Government data, 74% of firms pay male staff higher wages than their female counterparts.

5. The average gender pay gap across all medium and large-sized firms is now 8.2%, as measured by median pay.
6. By law, all firms with more than 250 staff must report their gender pay gap to the government by 4 April this year. So far only 1,047 firms have complied, leaving another 8,000 to go. **For that to happen, however, the information provided must lead to change. Transparency is effective only when firms act on the information revealed, and this includes Tower Hamlets Council.**
7. According to the most recent figures from the Office for National Statistics, Tower Hamlets is also one of the top ten areas with the highest gender pay gaps.
8. More women have left Tower Hamlets Council than ever before [Note – to be clarified], in particular, from black and minority backgrounds. The following FOI shows the breakdown. FOI: 9551965 - Staff who have left/joined council by ethnicity - By ethnicity of all staff having left or joined the authority since 12 June 2015, as in the following table:

White	Asian* See note below	Black	Other	Missing/ Declined to State	Men joining
193	186	123	39	72	Women joining
387	212	171	41	105	Women leaving
118	153	37	16	30	Men joining
235	211	71	17	68	Men leaving

\*Note: The council does use the ethnicity category 'South Asian'.

9. Approximately 9% of the council staff are consultants and agency staff. Under Mayor Biggs, the use of consultants and agency staff has doubled from 4.5% to 9%.
10. Tower Hamlets Council's joint Trade Unions are increasingly concerned about a new trend toward mass redundancies for Council Staff and launched the following petition: [https://www.change.org/p/tower-hamlets-council-stop-the-mass-axing-of-tower-hamletscouncil-staff-defend-jobs-equality?recruiter=46003048&utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=share\\_petition](https://www.change.org/p/tower-hamlets-council-stop-the-mass-axing-of-tower-hamletscouncil-staff-defend-jobs-equality?recruiter=46003048&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=share_petition)
11. The petition states the following: "It is of particular concern that Trade Unions have noticed that BME and female staff appear to be disproportionately affected; potentially reversing gains on equalities that took many years to achieve."

**This Council Further Notes That:**

1. ~~After the Section 78 was introduced, Sadiq Khan has been the first mayor to~~ published a gender pay audit at City Hall and said that: "There's no excuse for there to be a gender pay gap."
2. Amidst the furore at the BBC about gender pay inequality, Michelle Stanistreet, general secretary of the National Union of Journalists, said that she was aware of a "significant amount of cases" where women say they're being paid less for doing the same or similar work.
3. Under the Equality Act 2010, employees are legally entitled to equal pay with a person of the opposite sex where they are in the same employment and doing equal or similar work.
4. According to the Women's Equality Party Manifesto, "The inflexible minimum earning threshold imposed on would-be migrants to the UK makes it doubly difficult for women to come here independently because of the gender pay gap."
5. Despite gains in school and higher education, young women are facing stark inequalities and the gender pay gap is not falling for women with A-levels or degrees.
6. The Women's Equality Party Manifesto states that "the gender pay gap is not falling for women with A-levels or degrees" and that "despite gains in school and higher education, young women are still facing stark inequalities." This is backed up by statistics published on Gov.UK (as of 1 March 2018) from councils who have already conducted a gender pay gap. **The plight of fairness and equal pay for women must not be left for Women's Equality Party but all of us must continue to contribute and campaign for equality and justice for all, including women.**

**Summary of Findings:**

Number of Councils reporting (at this point): 71

Average gap in hourly pay: - 8.4%

Number of Councils where the hourly pay gap is greater than 10%:

- Hourly pay gap in favour of men of at least 10%: 21
- Hourly pay gap in favour of women of at least 10%: 2
- ~~Indeed,~~ A Council reported that women's hourly pay was 161.1% lower than men's.

~~(The full table of information is available through the web link or at the Council meeting)~~

**The This Council Believes:**

1. That women are still undervalued in the workplace, regardless of their roles.

2. ~~As specified by the Women's Equality Party~~ **That all our residents, the local authority and partners will benefit from a transparent and easy to understand Equality Data with a particular focus on Equal Pay Audit, Recruitment, Retention and Career Progression. In particular, the any pay gap for all protected categories under the Public Sector Equality Duty under the law, especially the gender pay gap** reporting to be broken down by age, employment status, ethnicity, race, disability, industry and working hours, as well as gathering data on retention during – and up to a year after – parental leave. **In order to be truly fair, accountable and transparent it should include all disadvantaged categories as identified by law.**
3. That there should be zero tolerance for workplace discrimination for **anyone**. This should be backed up by a proactive and meaningful recourse with a safe, secure and accessible whistleblowing policy. ~~the Women's Equality Party.~~
4. That there should be greater investment in childcare to enable parents and care givers (male and female), especially those on lower incomes, to be able to afford to return to work.
5. As large employers with large female workforces, public sector organisations, **like Tower Hamlets Council**, should lead the way in gender pay gap audits.
6. That women over 50, who are vulnerable to **multiple** dual-discrimination, based on age, gender, sexuality, race and faith should be valued for their experience, **output** and dedication, since they are far less likely to change jobs than younger employees.

~~The This Council Agrees (as a large public sector employer) to:~~ the Council should:

1. **On the cross-party basis, Leaders of all political groups in Tower Hamlets Town Hall and the corporate leadership of the local authority remain fully committed to implementing the Equal Pay Act, particularly the pay transparency provision under section 78 of the Equality Act 2010 introduced in 2016.**
2. Carry out an immediate Equal Pay Audit, **with a proper Equality Analysis, covering all protected categories under the Public Sector Equality Duty with an emphasis on a gender pay gap.** ~~audit.~~
3. **Investigate the possibility of independent and transparent input into the Equal and Gender Pay Audit to ensure that this results in real progress to close the gender and other pay gaps.**
4. Investigate any difference in pay or other terms for all council employees and contractors to be completed by the end of ~~July~~ **September 2018.**



5. Using the results of the **Equal Pay and Gender Pay Gap Audit**, and ~~investigation~~ investigate and address the causes of ~~into~~ difference in ~~of~~ pay, commence a **meaningful** Equality Analysis so that greater emphasis on pay equality is embedded within Tower Hamlets Council, particularly within the Pay Policy.

~~In the latest Pay Policy Statement — 1 April 2018 — 31 March 2019, there is only two clauses pertaining to pay equality as follows:~~

~~3.7: The Council signed a Single Status agreement in April 2008 with trade unions. This brought former manual grades into the GLPC job evaluation scheme and replaced spot points with narrow grade bands. One of the key aims of the agreement was to eliminate potential pay inequality from previous pay structures and ensure that new pay structures are free from discrimination.~~

~~15.1: The Council has a keen regard for equality issues and should any changes be made to the pay policy in the future, proposals would go through an Equality Analysis. One of the key aims of Single Status agreement was to eliminate potential pay inequality from previous pay structures and ensure that new pay structures are free from discrimination.~~

6. As part of the Equality Analysis, which should commence no later than **5 November 2018** and be completed before **10 December 2018**, create greater flexible working options and enhanced leave options for primary care givers, **fair overtime compensation**, including: child care, maternity leave, paternity leave, aged care and special needs' care, so that these options are rolled out across the Tower Hamlets' workforce and take effect no later than 1 March 2019.
7. **Launch a Tower Hamlets Equal Pay Charter, with support from relevant employers and companies in LBTH to carry out an Equal Pay and Gender Audit.**

Mayor John Biggs **moved** and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded** the following amendment to the motion to be debated **as tabled**:

The Council notes:

1. According to the latest Government data **74% of firms** pay male staff higher wages than their female counterparts.
2. The average gender pay gap across all medium and large-sized firms is now 8.2%, as measured by median pay.

3. By law, all firms with more than 250 staff must report their gender pay gap to the government by 4 April this year. So far only 1,047 firms have complied, leaving another 8,000 to go
4. According to the most recent figures from the Office for National Statistics Tower Hamlets and the City of London are in the top ten areas with the highest gender pay gaps – the two main financial districts in the UK – highlighting the serious gender pay disparity that exists within the financial services industry
5. ~~More women have left in Tower Hamlets Council than ever before~~ **(note to be clarified)**: The percentage of Tower Hamlets employees who were women has remained broadly the stable between 2015-2018: in April 2015 63% of employees were women in March 2018 this was 64% in particular from the black and the minority backgrounds. The following FOI shows the breakdown: **FOI 9551965 Staff who have left/joined council by ethnicity – however this is just a snapshot in time and more in depth analysis can be provided**

By ethnicity of all staff having left or joined the authority since 12 June 2015, as in the following table:

White	Asian* See note below	Black	Other	Missing/ Declined to State	Men joining
193	186	123	39	72	Women joining
387	212	171	41	105	Women leaving
118	153	37	16	30	Men joining
235	211	71	17	68	Men leaving

\*Note: The council does use the ethnicity category 'South Asian'.

6. ~~Approximately 9% of the council staff are consultants and agency staff. Under Mayor John Biggs, the use of consultants and agency staff has doubled from 4.5% to 9%. There has been a temporary rise in the number of consultants, a major cause of this being the additional work being done to support improvements in children's services, and a significant amount of expenditure has been on social care staff, a situation that is reflected across the country in a national social care crisis.~~
- 7.6. Tower Hamlets Council's joint Trade Unions are rightly concerned about the level of cuts imposed upon the Council by the Conservative Government, with our budget slashed by £138m between 2010 and 2017 and a further £58m from 2017/18 to 2019/20 as a result of cuts and increasing demand. ~~a new trend towards mass redundancies for Council Staff and launch the following petition:~~

7. Clearly the Government's cuts have meant difficult decisions and have affected staff. The Mayor has said he understands the concerns raised by unions and has expressed a desire to move forwards, thoughtfully, quickly and with a shared sense of purpose while protecting the rights of staff.

**This Council Further Notes That:**

1. Sadiq Khan has been the first mayor to publish [a gender pay audit](#) at City Hall and said that: "[There's no excuse](#) for there to be a gender pay gap."
2. Amidst the furore at the BBC about gender pay inequality, Michelle Stanistreet, general secretary of the National Union of Journalists, said that she was aware of a "significant amount of cases" where women say they're being paid less for doing [the same or similar work](#).
3. Under the [Equality Act 2010](#), employees are legally entitled to equal pay with a person of the opposite sex where they are in the same employment and doing equal or similar work.
4. According to the [Women's Equality Party Manifesto](#), "The inflexible minimum earning threshold imposed on would-be migrants to the UK makes it doubly difficult for women to come here independently because of the gender pay gap."
5. Despite gains in school and higher education, young women are facing stark inequalities and the [gender pay gap](#) is not falling for women with A-levels or degrees.
6. The [Women's Equality Party Manifesto](#) states that "the gender pay gap is not falling for women with A-levels or degrees" and that "despite gains in school and higher education, young women are still facing stark inequalities." This is backed up by statistics published on [Gov.UK](#) (as of 1 March 2018) from councils who have already conducted a gender pay gap audit.

**Summary of Findings:**

**Number of Councils reporting** (at this point): 71

**Average gap in hourly pay:** -8.4%

**Number of Councils where the hourly pay gap is greater than 10%:**

Hourly pay gap in favour of men of at least 10%: 21

Hourly pay gap in favour of women of at least 10%: 2

Indeed one Council reported that women's hourly pay was 161.1% lower than men's.

(The full table of information is available through the web link or at the Council meeting)

**The Council Believes:**

1. That women are still undervalued in the workplace, regardless of their roles.
2. As specified by the [Women's Equality Party](#), we would welcome, "Gender pay gap reporting to be broken down by age, employment status, ethnicity, race, disability, industry and working hours, as well as gathering data on retention during – and up to a year after – parental leave."
3. That there should be zero tolerance for workplace discrimination, as suggested by the [Women's Equality Party](#).
4. That there should be greater investment in childcare to enable parents and care givers (male and female), especially those on lower incomes, to be able to afford to return to work.
5. As large employers with large female workforces, public sector organisations should lead the way in gender pay gap audits.
6. That women over 50, who are vulnerable to [dual discrimination](#), based on age and gender, should be valued for their experience and dedication, since they are far less likely to change jobs than younger employees.

**The Council Agrees that (as a large public sector employer) the Council should, and has now completed, a gender pay gap audit. The analysis of which will include:**

1. The Investigation of any difference in pay or other terms for all council employees and to note that contractors with over 250 employees are expected to carry out a gender pay gap audit of their own.
2. An assurance that greater emphasis on pay equality is embedded within Tower Hamlets Council, particularly within the Pay Policy, which states that:

3.7: The Council signed a Single Status agreement in April 2008 with trade unions. This brought former manual grades into the GLPC job evaluation scheme and replaced spot points with narrow grade bands. One of the key aims of the agreement was to eliminate potential pay inequality from previous pay structures and ensure that new pay structures are free from discrimination

15.1: The Council has a keen regard for equality issues and should any changes be made to the pay policy in the future, proposals would go through an Equality Analysis. One of the key aims of Single Status agreement was to eliminate potential pay inequality from previous pay structures and ensure that new pay structures are free from discrimination

- .3 The consideration of what flexible working options and enhanced leave options for primary care givers, including: child care, maternity leave, paternity leave, aged care and special needs' care, are currently available with a view to ensuring that all LBTH employees are treated equally and fairly.
- 4 A commitment from the Mayor to encourage all employers and companies in LBTH to agree to carry out a Gender Pay Audit.

### **Extension of time limit for the meeting**

Councillor Danny Hassell **moved**, and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded**, a procedural motion that "under Procedure Rule 12.1.(m) the meeting be extended for up to an additional 10 minutes to enable the remaining items of business on the agenda to be considered".

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

Councillor Rabina Khan stated that she accepted all three amendments to her motion

This original motion with the amendments was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The Council also agreed that the Corporate Director Governance be delegated authority to amalgamate the motion to form a coherent motion

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Corporate Director Governance, be delegated authority to amalgamate the motion to form a coherent motion (as set out below).

This Council notes that

1. The Parliament first pressed for equal pay in 1944, in relation to equal pay for men and women teachers.
2. In 1970 Equal Pay Act 1970 was passed. Until that time, it was commonplace for jobs to be advertised with one rate of pay for a man, and another for a woman. The Equal Pay Act outlawed discrimination in pay and is still used today to challenge such discrimination.

3. Pay transparency audit, which includes the gender gap pay data, under section 78 of the Equality Act 2010 was introduced, at last, in 2016.
4. According to the latest Government data 74% of firms pay male staff higher wages than their female counterparts.
5. The average gender pay gap across all medium and large-sized firms is now 8.2%, as measured by median pay.
6. By law, all firms with more than 250 staff must report their gender pay gap to the government by 4 April this year. So far only 1,047 firms have complied, leaving another 8,000 to go For that to happen, however, the information provided must lead to change. Transparency is effective only when firms act on the information revealed, and this includes Tower Hamlets Council.
7. According to the most recent figures from the Office for National Statistics Tower Hamlets and the City of London are in the top ten areas with the highest gender pay gaps – the two main financial districts in the UK – highlighting the serious gender pay disparity that exists within the financial services industry
8. The percentage of Tower Hamlets employees who were women has remained broadly the stable between 2015-2018: in April 2015 63% of employees were women in March 2018 this was 64% The following FOI shows the breakdown: FOI 9551965 Staff who have left/joined council by ethnicity – however this is just a snapshot in time and more in depth analysis can be provided

By ethnicity of all staff having left or joined the authority since 12 June 2015, as in the following table:

<b>White</b>	<b>Asian* See note below</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Missing/ Declined to State</b>	<b>Men joining</b>
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387	212	171	41	105	Women leaving
118	153	37	16	30	Men joining
235	211	71	17	68	Men leaving

\*Note: The council does use the ethnicity category 'South Asian'.

9. There has been a temporary rise in the number of consultants, a major cause of this being the additional work being done to support improvements in children's services, and a significant amount of expenditure has been on social care staff, a situation that is reflected across the country in a national social care crisis.

10. Tower Hamlets Council's joint Trade Unions are rightly concerned about the level of cuts imposed upon the Council by the Conservative Government, with our budget slashed by £138m between 2010 and 2017 and a further £58m from 2017/18 to 2019/20 as a result of cuts and increasing demand.
11. Clearly the Government's cuts have meant difficult decisions and have affected staff. The Mayor has said he understands the concerns raised by unions and has expressed a desire to move forwards, thoughtfully, quickly and with a shared sense of purpose while protecting the rights of staff.

**This Council Further Notes That:**

7. After the Section 78 was introduced, Sadiq Khan has been the first mayor to publish [a gender pay audit](#) at City Hall and said that: "[There's no excuse](#) for there to be a gender pay gap."
8. Amidst the furore at the BBC about gender pay inequality, Michelle Stanistreet, general secretary of the National Union of Journalists, said that she was aware of a "significant amount of cases" where women say they're being paid less for doing [the same or similar work](#).
9. Under the [Equality Act 2010](#), employees are legally entitled to equal pay with a person of the opposite sex where they are in the same employment and doing equal or similar work.
10. According to the [Women's Equality Party Manifesto](#), "The inflexible minimum earning threshold imposed on would-be migrants to the UK makes it doubly difficult for women to come here independently because of the gender pay gap."
11. Despite gains in school and higher education, young women are facing stark inequalities and the [gender pay gap](#) is not falling for women with A-levels or degrees.
12. The [Women's Equality Party Manifesto](#) states that "the gender pay gap is not falling for women with A-levels or degrees" and that "despite gains in school and higher education, young women are still facing stark inequalities." This is backed up by statistics published on [Gov.UK](#) (as of 1 March 2018) from councils who have already conducted a gender pay gap audit. The plight of fairness and equal pay for women must not be left for the Women's Equality Party but all of us must continue to contribute and campaign for equality and justice for all, including women.

Summary of Findings:

Number of Councils reporting (at this point): 71

Average gap in hourly pay: -8.4%

Number of Councils where the hourly pay gap is greater than 10%:

Hourly pay gap in favour of men of at least 10%: 21

Hourly pay gap in favour of women of at least 10%: 2

A Council reported that women's hourly pay was 161.1% lower than men's.

**The Council Believes:**

1. That women are still undervalued in the workplace, regardless of their roles.
2. That all our residents, the local authority and partners will benefit from a transparent and easy to understand Equality Data with a particular focus on Equal Pay Audit, Recruitment, Retention and Career Progression. In particular, any pay gap for all protected categories under the Public Sector Equality Duty under the law, especially the gender pay gap reporting to be broken down by age, employment status, ethnicity, race, disability, industry and working hours, as well as gathering data on retention during – and up to a year after – parental leave. In order to be truly fair, accountable and transparent it should include all disadvantaged categories as identified by law
3. That there should be zero tolerance for workplace discrimination for anyone. This should be backed up by a proactive and meaningful recourse with a safe, secure and accessible whistleblowing policy.
4. That there should be greater investment in childcare to enable parents and care givers (male and female), especially those on lower incomes, to be able to afford to return to work.
5. As large employers with large female workforces, public sector organisations like Tower Hamlets Council should lead the way in gender pay gap audits.
5. That women over 50, who are vulnerable to multiple discrimination, based on age and gender, should be valued for their experience and dedication, since they are far less likely to change jobs than younger employees.

**The Council Agrees that**

1. On the cross-party basis, Leaders of all political groups in Tower Hamlets Town Hall and the corporate leadership of the local authority remain fully committed to implementing the Equal Pay Act, particularly the pay transparency provision under section 78 of the Equality Act 2010 introduced in 2016.



**That Council agrees that (as a large public sector employer) the Council should, and has now completed, a gender pay gap audit. The analysis of which will include:**

2. The Investigation of any difference in pay or other terms for all council employees and to note that contractors with over 250 employees are expected to carry out a gender pay gap audit of their own.
3. Investigate the possibility of independent and transparent input into the Equal and Gender Pay issues to ensure that this results in real progress to close the gender and other pay gaps.
4. Using the results of the Equal Pay and Gender Pay Gap Audit, investigate and address the causes of difference in pay, commence a meaningful Equality Analysis so that greater emphasis on pay equality is embedded within Tower Hamlets Council, particularly within the Pay Policy.
5. An assurance that greater emphasis on pay equality is embedded within Tower Hamlets Council, particularly within the Pay Policy, [which states that:](#)

3.7: The Council signed a Single Status agreement in April 2008 with trade unions. This brought former manual grades into the GLPC job evaluation scheme and replaced spot points with narrow grade bands. One of the key aims of the agreement was to eliminate potential pay inequality from previous pay structures and ensure that new pay structures are free from discrimination

15.1: The Council has a keen regard for equality issues and should any changes be made to the pay policy in the future, proposals would go through an Equality Analysis. One of the key aims of Single Status agreement was to eliminate potential pay inequality from previous pay structures and ensure that new pay structures are free from discrimination

6. The consideration of what flexible working options and enhanced leave options are currently available for primary care givers, including: child care, maternity leave, paternity leave, aged care and special needs' care, with a view to ensuring that all LBTH employees are treated equally and fairly and to continue to analysis whether further options are available including a clear Shared Parental Leave policy and fair overtime compensation.
7. A commitment from the Mayor to encourage all employers and companies in LBTH to agree to carry out a Gender Pay Audit, an ethnicity pay audit and investigate the .establishment of a Tower Hamlets Equal Pay Charter

## **9. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

Questions 9.1- 33 were not put due to lack of time. Written responses would be provided to the questions. (Note: The written responses are included in Appendix 'A' to these minutes.)

## **10. REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES**

### **10.1 Report of the General Purposes Committee, Pay Policy Statement**

The Council considered a report of the General Purposes Committee on the Pay Policy Statement 2018-19. Councillor Danny Hassell moved an amendment to the report of the General Purposes Committee and the Pay Policy Statement that was tabled at the meeting as set out at resolutions 1 and 2 below.

The recommendations subject to the amendment were put to the vote under the guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Council:

1. Note the report of the General Purposes Committee subject to the following amendment

On page 85 paragraph 3.4 Replace the word "excluding" with "including".

So would now read: "A severance package for any member of staff of £100,000 or more (including an employee's right to contractual redundancy and pension/pension lump sum payments) will be subject to the approval of General Purposes Committee and noting by Full Council"

2. Resolve to approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2018/2019 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report subject to the following amendments:

On pages 93 to 100

Paragraph 2.1 – In bullet point for definition of Non-statutory officers the words "The Corporate Director, Place as well as" to be added before the words "Divisional Director"

So would now read: "The Corporate Director, Place as well Divisional Directors and Heads of Service in each Directorate that report to a Chief Officer"

Paragraph 4.1 – The post "The Corporate Director, Place" to be added to the list of posts.

So would now read: "Pay for the Head of Paid Service; Corporate Director, Children's Services; Corporate Director, Health, Adults and Community; Corporate Director, Resources; Corporate Director, Governance and Corporate Director, Place is made up of 3 elements"

Paragraph 12.2 – Replace the word "excluding" with "including".

So would now read: "A severance package for any member of staff of £100,000 or more (including an employee's right to contractual redundancy and pension/pension lump sum payments) will be subject to the approval of General Purposes Committee and noting by Full Council"

3. Note the proposed arrangements for the approval of salary packages and severance packages of £100,000 or more as set out in the Pay Policy paragraphs 5 and 12.2 of the report.
4. Note that the Pay Policy provisions enable the Head of Paid Service to determine a settlement payment where there is no dismissal without the need for agreement of General Purposes Committee unless the payment value is £100,000 or more.
5. Agree that if any minor changes to the 2018/19 pay policy statement are required as a result of future government guidance or an updated Local Government Transparency Code, these amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Divisional Director (HR and Transformation), the Chair of the General Purposes Committee and the Monitoring Officer. Should any fundamental changes be required, the Pay Policy statement will be referred back to the General Purposes Committee and then Council for consideration.

## **11. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **11.1 Annual Report to Council by the Independent Person**

The Council considered the Annual Report of the Independent Person appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011. The recommendation was put to the vote under the guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Annual Report of the Independent Person for 2017 be noted.

### **11.2 Members' Allowance Scheme 2018/19**

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Governance proposing the adoption of the Members' Allowance Scheme for 2018/19. The recommendation was put to the vote under the guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Members' Allowances Scheme 2018 be adopted as set out at Appendix A to the report

**11.3 Committee Calendar 2018/19**

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Governance proposing a Calendar of Meetings for 2018/19. The Speaker advised of a proposed amendment to the calendar to move the October meeting of the Standards Advisory Committee from 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to 24<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

The recommendations subject to the amendment were put to the vote under the guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the proposed calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2018/19 be approved as set out in Appendix A of the report including the amended standard start times where appropriate subject to the following amendment:
  - That the meeting of the Standards Advisory Committee scheduled for October be moved from 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to 24<sup>th</sup> October 2018.
2. That the Corporate Director, Governance be delegated the authority to agree meeting dates for any new Committees or Panels that are set up subsequent to this report being presented to Council, subject to appropriate consultation with Members.

**12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

No motions were debated due to a lack of time.

The meeting ended at 10.25 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

## **APPENDIX A – WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING (21 March 2018)**

### **8.1 Question from Councillor John Pierce**

Can the Mayor please provide details on how much the Council has to pay for the previous Mayor and Cllr Rabina Khan's Housing Public Private Investment (PFI) arrangements, how long these housing PFI deals are for and whether ownership of these assets returns to the Council at the end of the process?

### **Response from Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development & Waste**

The Poplar Baths and Dame Collet House development was not actually a PFI, it was a similar technical arrangement called a lease-leaseback agreement.

As part of that agreement the council is committed to pay a defined sum each year to the company which owns the blocks, this year that is £1.3m. These payments increase by 3% each year, 2% RPI and 1% increase, and last for 35 years. That means based on current estimates of inflation the council is likely to have paid £78m by the time we finally own the buildings and that will not be until after 2050.

Borrowing to fund these developments would have been a far cheaper option but it's not clear why the previous Mayor and his Housing Cabinet Member decided not to do it that way.

We should also remember that the rents at Poplar Baths are far higher than our lower social rents at Watts Grove.

### **8.2 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman**

Will the Mayor provide a comprehensive update about the National Crime Agency investigation (and any police involvement) into the alleged £2m bribery scandal under his watch in relation to securing a possible planning permission for the 5th tallest skyscraper in Tower Hamlets as exposed by The Sunday Times?

### **Response from Mayor John Biggs**

Since I became Mayor I have fought to clean up the borough and tackle the corruption and wrongdoing of the past.

I am clear that I took entirely the right action in relation to Alpha Square.

When I was made aware of these allegations I immediately made the Chief Executive aware of them as is proper procedure.

Following these allegations being raised with me I was sent a short document

which I passed onto the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer.

It is entirely right that I passed them to the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer to take any necessary actions without political interference.

A full and independent external investigation was undertaken by EY including advice from a leading QC. The council and EY then provided the police their fully worked up files over a year and a half ago.

Since then we have chased the National Crime Agency on multiple occasions but to date they have not provided a substantive update on their enquiries. I have also raised the matter with the Secretary of State and asked that it is brought to a resolution as quickly as possible.

I have also asked the same of the current investigation into historic wrongdoing by the previous administration and Tower Hamlets First – Operation Lynemouth.

I think it is in all residents' interests for both of these investigations to be concluded as quickly as possible with those guilty of crimes charged and made to face the consequences of their actions.

Whilst we have taken this matter very seriously we should remember that no planning permission was granted by Tower Hamlets and to our knowledge there is no evidence to suggest that this is anything more than a questionable businessman making big claims to a developer.

### **8.3 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders**

Will the Cabinet Member update Council on the number of children and families using children's centres this year, compared to last year?

#### **Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services**

I'm pleased to report that children's centres are now reaching more children and adults compared to the same time last year, before the restructure.

This is very positive news, especially given the context in which we find ourselves.

The Conservative Government has dramatically slashed funding for early years – funding nationally has been cut by 50% since 2010.

In Tower Hamlets, the previous administration took £3m out of the budget for children's centres and left the service hollowed out, with many centres only existing on paper or running just one session a week.

The previous administration reported that there were 23 children's centres, but in reality 11 of these were not proper centres or even providing services.

We took the decision to refresh our children's centre model in line with recommendations from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Centres

We have 12 children's centre hub sites, as there have been since 2011.

Following the restructure, our children's centres are reaching more children and adults compared to the same time last year.

This is very encouraging, and we will continue to monitor their performance closely.

#### **8.4 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan**

Has the Mayor made savings following his devastating decision to charge vulnerable people for homecare?

#### **Response from Mayor John Biggs**

We cannot ignore the fact that there is a national crisis in social care funding. Tower Hamlets Council alone has to set aside an extra £9m for adult social care between 2017/18 and 2020/21.

That's an extra £9m on top of a budget which is already over £61m.

This extra pressure comes at a time when central government has dramatically cut funding for local councils. Our council budget has been slashed by £138m between 2010 and 2017 and a further £58m from 2017/18 to 2019/20.

We took the decision to introduce charging for social care reluctantly but because we decided that longer term a proportion of the service could be funded with a carefully designed charging scheme. There was a very detailed design exercise, with consultation, and we are committed to reviewing the scheme's operation quickly to ensure it is not causing hardship. It is in its design one of the most generous schemes in the country – in the top two we believe – but we decided that it was difficult to defend a completely free service when a proportion of users are on relatively good incomes, given the spiralling cost of social care with our budgets, and given that the alternative was to find cuts in staffing and services elsewhere.

It's important to note that people are only asked to contribute to the cost if they can afford it - our local policy includes rules and protections which make it one of the fairest in the country.

There is only one council in the entire country which does not charge for non-residential care.

### **8.5 Question from Councillor Danny Hassell**

Can the lead member please update the Council on the work being done to develop our understanding and response to child sexual exploitation in the borough?

### **Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services**

A significant amount of work has been done over the last 6 months to train our staff and partners to identify where risks exist and deal appropriately with them, including the learning from previous experiences of adults who have survived abuse.

Any child where there are identified vulnerabilities in relation to child sexual exploitation (CSE) now has a CSE risk assessment completed by a social worker which allows us to understand how great the risk is for them.

We then work with partner agencies to put in packages of care and support to reduce the risk to these young people. Alongside this we also work with partners to disrupt the activities of adults who are identified as people who are a risk to our children. The Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MASE) meeting which is a pan London procedure discusses all those children who are at risk of child sexual exploitation and identifies perpetrators and areas of concern and the partnership works together in order that we can disrupt the activity and reduce risk to our children.

In Tower Hamlets we are now establishing an exploitation team which will be made up of police, social care and have links to the community safety partnership and the gangs unit. This will serve and enable us to work together in a co-ordinated way to respond to those children who are vulnerable to CSE.

Monthly reports are presented to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Exploitation Sub-Group in order that the Safeguarding Board has oversight of the risks presented in this area.

Finally all members were invited to a seminar on this subject to keep them informed.

### **8.6 Question from Conservative Councillor Andrew Wood**

Will the Mayor explain why are there no Council owned CCTV cameras in any residential areas of Canary Wharf ward although the entrances to the Canary Wharf estate are covered by CCTV?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Community Safety**

CCTV plays an important role in reassuring residents. I am concerned about the misleading statements being put out that there are only 3 CCTV cameras



on the Isle of Dogs. We work with partners who have CCTV in the area such as TfL, Canary Wharf Estate, private and social landlords. All buses, DLR and tube trains and stations have CCTV systems and the Island has a high density of cameras.

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 means local authorities must have due regard for balancing the need for surveillance and the right to privacy.

Our current camera deployment process requires an assessment which evaluates the level of crime reported to the police and the type of crime committed to establish if CCTV is required. The Council will be conducting a full evaluation of all of the LBTH public space cameras including the cameras Cllr Wood refers to once this financial year has concluded.

The Council's CCTV currently assists with on average three arrests a day, and we are investing a further £2million to upgrade this. We recognise that CCTV plays a role, but with Central Government cuts taking 288 police officers off our streets, I hope Cllr Wood will agree it is only part of the solution.

#### **8.7 Question from Councillor Dave Chesterton:**

In support of the 'Time's Up' campaign will the Mayor review the Council's policy on Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs)? The Council has five licensed SEVs, the purpose of these establishments is the sexual objectification of women by men. Sexual objectification is deplorable and plays an important role in gender inequality. The Council has taken a stand on violence against women and girls, isn't it about time the Council also says Time's Up for strip joints, pole dancing and lap dancing in our borough?

#### **Response**

The Council fully supports the 'Time's Up' campaign and we have a clear position that we will not support any new sexual entertainment venues in the borough.

Our Sexual Entertainment Venues policy states:

The Council's policy is that there is no locality within Tower Hamlets in which it would be appropriate to license a sex establishment. Accordingly, the appropriate number of sex establishments for each and every locality within Tower Hamlets is zero.

That being said, the policy does recognise that current operators are exempt from this zero limit. Since we introduced the limit the number of SEV premises in Tower Hamlets has reduced from eleven to five. Over time it is likely this will reduce further.

Some areas where SEV premises were previously approved however have changed massively, leading people to question whether they are still

appropriate given the growth of residential development.

The law is quite clear that licences cannot be refused under moral grounds. Essentially the Licensing Committee cannot determine that SEVs are immoral therefore we shall not have any.

That is why the Mayor has asked officers to seek legal advice on how we might be able to amend our SEV policy to allow us to review existing SEV licenses to take account of significant development which might make existing venues inappropriate as neighbourhoods change.

In the meantime officers will be producing further information on the changes to localities over time, when determining licence renewal applications.

### **8.8 Question from Councillor Ohid Ahmed**

Will the Mayor provide an update about the latest situation relating to Raine's House Community Centre in Wapping?

### **Response from Mayor John Biggs**

The Council is developing a network of community hubs across the borough.

The proposed refurbishment and remodelling of Raines House will improve the facilities within the building and protect its historic fabric.

As part of the Council's consultation, we have held two consultation events at Raines House to gather residents' views on the refurbishment of the building to create a community hub and about the proposed charges.

The events were well attended and the majority of those who attended were supportive of the investment in essential repairs and making the building more accessible for the Wapping community.

The intention is to submit a planning application for the refurbishment works, appoint a specialist contractor and start work on site at the end of September 2018. The work is expected to take between 6 to 8 months to complete and will be re-opened in time for the 300 year anniversary celebrations in May 2019.

Until the refurbishment works are carried out, we will not be changing the costs for community groups to use Raines House. When we have completed the works the building desperately needs, community groups that deliver activities that benefit the local community can apply for a discounted room rate. There were serious problems with the repairs and management of the building to which we could not secure satisfactory replies.

I want Raines to be accessible to a wide range of activities that meet the needs of Wapping's community. There is no agenda to squeeze out existing users but the building needs refurbishment and professional management. It

is a jewel and should be used as a community centre for local people. I have asked my officers to review the charges for community use, as I agree that a sum like £30 an hour for a group of local residents to just meet each other would be silly. We are also giving consideration to the issue of retaining a bar.

### **8.9 Question from Councillor Marc Francis**

Will the Lead Member for Environmental Services update me on the proposed consultations with residents in Cadogan Terrace and Fairfield Conservation Area about the extension of Controlled Parking Zone timings?

### **Response from Mayor John Biggs**

Following last Full Council on the 17 January, work has not progressed as much as I would have liked. The relevant Council team has been predisposed with other projects and has not had the resources to carry out either the informal consultation or the occupancy survey. I am happy to report however that we are now in a position to start.

- A parking bay occupancy surveys of the Fairfield Road area will take place over five weekends (morning, lunchtime and evening on both Saturdays and Sundays and evenings on Mondays) starting from 31 March. This will allow us to monitor the area both during the West Ham home games (currently scheduled for 31 March, 16 April and 29 April) and at other times.
- With respect to Cadogan Terrace, from 2 April we will start liaising with the Communications Team to put together an informal consultation with stakeholders with the aim to complete the consultation by mid-May.

I am happy to keep the Bow Ward Councillors updated on progress.

### **8.10 Question from Councillor Shah Alam**

Why has the Mayor chosen to delete the Higher Education Support Bursary?

### **Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services**

The Higher Education Support Bursary scheme awarded a flat rate grant to qualifying students with no measure of impact. This was felt unsatisfactory as no evidence of value for money could be provided.

As a result the Government-appointed independent Commissioners stopped the previous arrangement.

In light of that decision, it was our view that schools are best placed to develop such schemes, and that the Schools' Forum was a useful vehicle for inputting into the scheme at a strategic level. A new scheme, The Mayors Post 16 award was put in place. The scheme targets those most at risk of not continuing in education and training.

The new model to provide all our qualifying schools with a sum of money to promote continuation in education and training post-16 and/or post-18 but within a clear framework of accountability. It is seen as transitional funding, helping schools to support students as they come to terms with the new funding arrangements and allowing non-statutory opportunities that might otherwise have to be reduced.

It also expands the range of those able to benefit from the scheme (when compared to the previous programme) to those intending to move into further education or apprenticeships on leaving school.

The scheme will allow schools to target interventions specifically at our most vulnerable students post-16 with the aim of increasing numbers in education and training post-school

It is further proposed to passport Council grant through Schools Forum to ensure that oversight remains, and that any monies awarded have a genuine impact on outcomes for our students. There is up to £600,000 earmarked in General Funds available to support this programme.

#### **8.11 Question from Councillor Candida Ronald**

Could the Mayor/Lead Member update on any progress in securing government funding for retrofitting sprinklers in existing tall buildings?

#### **Response from Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing**

In 2016, a year before the horrific Grenfell disaster, the Mayor commissioned new Fire Risk Assessments for all 900 Tower Hamlets Homes blocks. This found that under the previous Mayor and Lead member for Housing fire safety standards had slipped.

Since then we have acted to improve safety in the blocks we found to be at substantial risk and the Mayor has committed nearly £27m to accelerate fire prevention works.

The Council has not yet made a decision about retrofitting sprinklers to the Council's high rise blocks.

With around 130 blocks of six storeys or higher, the estimated cost of installing sprinklers in all Council high rise blocks would be substantial.

The Mayor has written to the Prime Minister a number of times, and put requests through London Councils and the LGA, seeking confirmation that the Government will fund the installation of sprinkler systems in blocks where it is assessed they would be of significant safety benefit and have resident support.

The Government have refused to support this.

The Government must properly fund fire safety works across the UK, for example including sprinklers, and accept that its disastrous programme of deregulation and cost cutting is dangerous.

We will of course want to see the conclusions of the public inquiry into the Grenfell fire and recommendations made.

### **8.12 Question from Councillor Peter Golds**

There are increasing problems of poor water pressure on the Isle of Dogs. Residents on the Kingsbridge Estate, Mill Quay, Maritime Quay, Lockesfield Place and Betty May Gray House on the south of the Island are all suffering from this problem. Will the Mayor investigate whether the situation is related to the scale of development on the Island causing increasing demand on existing and therefore overcapacity infrastructure?

### **Response from Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development & Waste**

The Council consults Thames Water on the development of all planning policy, including the Local Plan.

We discussed the supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plan with Thames Water and they are aware of the plan for development on the Isle of Dogs and throughout the borough.

We consult Thames Water on all strategic planning applications. This will generally result in the inclusion of a condition on planning permissions for the developer to complete an Impact Study of the existing water supply infrastructure, which is reviewed by Thames Water, before development commences.

The developer and Thames Water are then responsible for implementing measures recommended by the Impact Study to ensure the network capacity is not impaired.

As a result, Thames Water should notify the Council if they expect the scale of development on the Isle of Dogs to cause the water supply infrastructure to be detrimentally impacted.

Council officers are in regular contact with Thames Water and will raise the matter with them to ensure that this is the case.

### **8.13 Question from Councillor Shiria Khatun**

What progress is being made with Operation Continuum, the ongoing partnership between the Council and Police tackling drug crime in the borough?

## **Response from Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Community Safety**

Operation Continuum is the partnership response to issues of drug dealing in the borough.

Borough Police, the Council and its funded police officers, and Tower Hamlets Homes have been taking action over the last few months. This is a co-ordinated effort to remove as many drug dealers and drugs off our streets as possible.

To date there have been two operations, one in December and the latest in February. It has resulted in:

- 14 properties being raided seizing drugs and £27,000
- A handgun being recovered
- Carried out two weapons sweeps
- 26 Arrests
- 84 ASB Warnings issued
- Given 40 Section 59 Warnings for Anti-social use of vehicles, allowing Police to seize them if found being used this way a second time
- Seized drugs including crack cocaine and
- Seized over £10,000 in cash in one raid alone

More operations are planned.

As well as tackling drug dealing, the Council offers many services to support those experiencing drug and alcohol problems, with around £8m spent on treatment services each year. Investment locally is generating benefits: the estimated number of crimes prevented per year after starting drug treatment in Tower Hamlets is 45,790.

### **8.14 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam**

Will the Mayor inform how many residents have been hit by his decision to remove our free homecare service in the borough?

#### **Response**

We cannot ignore the fact that there is a national crisis in social care funding. Tower Hamlets Council alone has to set aside an extra £9m for adult social care between 2017/18 and 2020/21 – that's an extra £9m on top of a budget which is already over £61m. We have to do this because demand for social care services is increasing and last year alone (2016/17) we received over 3,600 requests for new adult social care support – that's 10% up on the previous year.

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) estimates that nationally, between 2010 and 2015, £4.6bn was cut from the adult social care

budget. Combined with the ever-increasing demand for social care services, these Government cuts are simply unsustainable.

Despite the fact that the Council has to provide social care for more residents, with less funding, the Conservative Government continues to cut budgets. Our council budget has been slashed by £138m between 2010 and 2017 and a further £58m from 2017/18 to 2019/20.

Conservative Government cuts, plus year-on-year increases in the number of residents who rely on social care services, puts great pressure on the resources we have available to us. It means difficult decisions have to be made.

It's important to note that people are only asked to contribute to the cost if they can afford it - our local policy includes rules and protections which make it one of the fairest in the country. Indeed, there is only one council in the entire country which does not charge for non-residential care.

Many councils across London and the UK have introduced charging for social care, and some use the national scheme. We firmly decided against the national scheme, as it would mean around 50% of service users would pay a charge. We agreed a local policy which means that the majority of users still receive free home care and day care. To further support vulnerable and disabled adults, their carers and families, Tower Hamlets Council does not charge carers for services that they access and receive.

For those who do have to contribute, most people only pay a small amount towards it, not the full cost.

Everyone's housing costs (rent, mortgage, service charges, council tax and the value of your main home where you live), earned income, disability-related expenditure, and savings up to £14,250 are also completely protected from charging. (Savings between £14,250 and £23,250 are only included in part – on a taper rate).

There are currently 2,929 people in receipt of community based care. Financial assessments have been completed for 2,145 people. Of these completed assessments, 746 people will face no charge for homecare whatsoever.

The Council also runs a benefits maximisation campaign to ensure everyone can access the financial support they are entitled to for care and living costs. We have also set aside £6.6 million since April 2017 for a Tackling Poverty Fund, including £1 million to provide assistance to those affected by Universal Credit.

As well as individual cases being reviewed as and when there are changes to an individual's package of care, or on receipt of any updated financial information from individuals, an overall impact assessment on the charging policy will be carried out in 2018.

The cuts the Council has faced has meant some very tough decisions, and the decision to charge for social care was one of these tough decisions.

#### **8.15 Question from Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed**

Can the Lead Member confirm when regeneration work will start at Stroudley Walk?

#### **Response from Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development & Waste**

To facilitate the Estate Regeneration scheme for Poplar HARCA – Bow Bridge Estate, the Council successfully confirmed a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) on 23rd May 2017. The Council is shortly to serve a General Vesting Declaration (GVD) on the residual land interests (mostly shops, plus some rights of way).

This triggers a three month notice period, after which the council can take possession of the land interests and then formally transfer them back to Poplar HARCA in line with previous approvals.

HARCA has confirmed that the construction work start on site at Stroudley Walk is envisaged to be “late 2018”, following the completion of land assembly which is nearing conclusion.

#### **8.16 Question from Councillor Abdul Asad**

Will the Mayor reverse the decision to charge disabled people paying £8 per week in council tax following his decision to change the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme?

#### **Response from Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Resources**

The current Local Council Tax Reduction scheme was approved by Full Council in February last year and included continued support of up to 100% discount of resident's council tax liability. This means that those entitled to the maximum reduction will not have to pay any council tax.

Part of the rationale for changing the scheme was the introduction of Universal Credit which is being rolled out across the borough and has far greater consequences for our residents.

Where the changes have had an impact on specific groups such as self-employed residents and residents with disabled non-dependants we have responded by introducing a scheme to provide discretionary relief in cases of financial hardship. Over 300 individuals have been contacted and offered assistance to reduce their council tax bill.

For households where the deductions for some non dependants who receive



disability benefits are higher than was the case under the previous scheme, the council's Benefits Service has contacted all affected households to enable consideration of an additional discretionary reduction in council tax liability under s13A of The Local Government Finance Act 1992.

For disabled non dependant claimants - requests have been sent to 255 households and approximately 103 replies received to date. All those who have replied are likely to have a S13A reduction applied to their council tax. We are continuing to follow up with those who haven't replied and we will also contact new applicants to advise them that they can apply for a reduction too.

The Mayor has also approved £500k per year to help those affected by Universal Credit and the changes to LCTRS to ensure that they receive support that improves their financial circumstances in the longer term

The Council continues to be one of the few in the country that still offers up to 100% reduction in council tax for the lowest income households. During this year 19,115 households have received 100% reduction in their council tax totalling £18.8m and consequently these households do not have to pay any council tax, with over 27,000 households receiving some form of discount. The total discount awarded is likely to be over £24.4 million.

#### **8.17 Question from Councillor Helal Uddin**

Can the Mayor or Lead Member please provide an update on the borough-wide Big Clean Up events that have taken place as part of the Clean & Green campaign

#### **Response from Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development & Waste**

The council held three Big Clean Up events as part of the Council's 'Love Your Neighbourhood campaign', which aims to work with local people to improve the areas where they live.

We worked with partners including Tower Hamlets Homes, local businesses, social housing providers and Keep Britain Tidy.

Over 130 bags of rubbish were collected, with wall tiles cleared and graffiti removed.

The first week-long clean up event took place between 23 – 27 October 2017. Volunteers took part in litter picking from the area around Whitechapel Idea Store to Cotton Street, E14.

A second Big Clean Up was in December 2017. We asked members of the public to nominate roads and open spaces where they felt that a dedicated clean up could have a positive impact.

Sites across Tower Hamlets were covered, from fly post removal in Brick

Lane to litter picking in Mile End Gardens and the cleaning of an alleyway in Whitechapel.

A third Big Clean Up 3 took place between 5 and 9 March saw nine areas receive some extra love and attention from council staff and volunteers during the week, from Manilla St in E14 to Whitechapel High Street, Roman Road, and Mile End Park.

### **8.18 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman**

The Mayor will be aware that recycling across London is increasing , whilst in Tower Hamlets the figures are decreasing. On the Isle of Dogs, half of all public recycling points were removed last year due to fly tipping. However, fly tipping across the Island and in particular the Samuda and St John's estates has increased whilst nobody has been prosecuted by Tower Hamlets for this practice in over ten years. What does he intend to do to make the Borough and the Isle of Dogs cleaner and greener?

### **Response from Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development & Waste**

The Mayor and I are committed to improving recycling rates in Tower Hamlets.

While some of the public recycling sites were removed due to incidents of fly-tipping across the island we have maintained two sites along Westferry Road in addition to the Re-Use and Recycling Centre at Yabsley Street and a further site at John Smith Mews. This is in addition to our recycling bin collections from properties.

We have also extended the times that recycling sacks available in Idea Stores and libraries to 7 days a week to help make recycling easier for residents.

To help make recycling easier, we are undertaking an inventory of waste and recycling facilities on estates across the borough, which will be followed by a programme of recycling improvements and engagement activities to help residents recycle more.

As part of this programme we will be working in partnership with housing providers across the borough such as Tower Hamlets Homes, Tower Hamlets Community Housing, One Housing, Swan Housing and others to help improve the quality of recycling, reduce contamination levels and recycle more.

This work is supported by our 'Love Your Neighbourhood' campaign which encourages people to work with us to improve the areas where they live.

With regards to fly tipping our enforcement teams issue Fixed Penalty Notices and warning letter to anyone found to be breaking the law in regards to litter and fly tipping. However as part of our cleaner, greener focus we will be delivering a programme of environmental cleanliness improvements, to tackle

problem areas reducing litter, graffiti and fly tipping.

The Mayor's decision to scrap the charge for bulk waste collections has also helped to reduce fly-tipping and has saved residents over £220,000 since 2015.

I have also been working with residents on the Isle of Dogs regarding securing door step recycling in blocks where previously they had used public recycling facilities.

### **8.19 Question from Councillor Ayas Miah**

Can the Mayor explain what changes are planned for Raines House, what is the timetable for any building works and will the pensioners who use the building for social gatherings be able to continue their daytime bingo sessions and social evenings?

### **Response from Mayor John Biggs**

The Council is developing a network of community hubs across the borough. These are versatile spaces designed to allow multiple community groups to use the building at the same time.

The proposed refurbishment and remodelling of Raines House will improve the facilities within the building and protect its historic fabric.

As part of the Council's consultation, we have held two consultation events at Raines House to gather residents' views on the refurbishment of the building to create a community hub. The events were well attended and the majority of those who attended were supportive of the investment in essential repairs and making the building more accessible for the Wapping community.

The intention is to submit a planning application for the refurbishment works, appoint a specialist contractor and start work on site at the end of September 2018. The work is expected to take between 6 to 8 months to complete and will be re-opened in time for the 300 year anniversary celebrations in May 2019.

In the meantime, existing community groups are continuing to use the building at no cost and we have offered Pollyanna temporary accommodation at Chandler Street and will be looking for an alternative venue for the social club activities.

When the refurbishment works have been carried out the building will be available for existing groups, including the Wapping Social Club and the daytime bingo group, to return to and for new groups to book space as required.

The full timetable is as follows:

Date	Task
August 2017	Appointment of architects
October 2017	Completion of concept design and feasibility assessment
November 2017	Pre-application advice
End January 2018	First community engagement event to consult on initial concept design and inform design development
Early March 2018	Second community engagement event
End March 2018	Further pre-application advice
October 2017 – March 2018	Completion of surveys and reports required to support planning application
April 2018	Refinement of designs in response to consultation and survey outcomes
<b>May 2018</b>	Submission of planning application
June 2018 – Sept 2018	Prepare detailed working drawings Procure a contractor to undertake refurbishment
Early October 2018	Start on site
<b>Spring 2019</b>	Completion

## 8.20 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

Will the Mayor inform how many hard-working self-employed and vulnerable residents have lost their Council Tax Support after his decision to make cuts to the scheme in April 2017?

### Response from Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Resources

The Council continues to be one of the few in the country that still offers up to 100% reduction in council tax for the lowest income households. During this year 19,115 households have received 100% reduction in their council tax totalling £18,816,998 and consequently these households do not have to pay any council tax, with over 27,000 households receiving some form of discount. The total discount awarded is likely to be over £24.4 million.

This is the information in terms of total number supported through LCTRS – overall number down by 3,729, but the proportion getting a 100% discount (i.e. paying no council tax) is up.

	Total No. of LCTR claims	Total No. in receipt full CTR	% in receipt of full CTR
31/03/2017	31,089	20,929	67.1%
01/02/2018	27,810	19,258	69.2%

Changes in CTRS claims arise as a result of a large number of causes, including rising employment rate, and are not simply a consequence of changes to the CTRS. As an administration, we remain alarmed that the implementation of Universal Credit changes poses a serious threat to many of our poorest families and we are working on ways to mitigate the impact of these changes.

### **8.21 Question from Councillor Clare Harrison**

Drug dealing around Teale and Coate Street has increased rapidly over the last 6 months. This has escalated into fights on the street in the last few months, which is very distressing to residents. What Council projects and initiatives are planned to tackle the drug dealing problem in these areas?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Community Safety**

Coate Street, Teale Street and Pritchard Street are known locations for drug-dealing and this issue has been raised at the Anti-Social Behaviour Operations Group meeting.

Previous requests for resources have resulted in increased resources being allocated over the past year for example:

- High visibility patrols on foot in and around the area during the day (SNT)
- High visibility patrols on foot in and around the area during the evening and early hours of the night (THEO/SNT/Neighbourhood Task Force (NTF))
- Plain clothes patrols in the area throughout the day (SNT/NTF)
- Vehicle patrols in the area (NTF)

Whilst these actions resulted in a decrease in reports, an initial analysis of drug-related calls to the police between March 2017 and February 2018, indicates a slight increase of 6.8% within the last 6 months (Sep '17 to Feb '18). We will continue to monitor this and whether additional resources can be reallocated but this will have to be done while balancing other priority areas across the borough.

Residents are encouraged to continue to report community safety issues using the 999/101 police telephone numbers, or in the case of ASB they can use the online reporting methods.

More broadly across the borough Operation Continuum, the coordinated partnership effort to remove as many drug-dealers and drugs from our streets as possible has continued and as part of the first two operations:

- 14 properties were raided, seizing drugs and £27,000
- A handgun was recovered
- Two weapons sweeps were carried out
- 26 arrests were made
- 84 ASB warnings were issued
- 40 Section 59 warnings were given for anti-social use of vehicles, allowing Police to seize vehicles if they are used this way a second time
- Drugs, including crack cocaine, seized
- Over £10,000 in cash seized during one raid alone

Further operations are planned.

As well as tackling drug dealing, the Council offers many services to support those experiencing drug/alcohol problems, with around £8m spent on treatment services each year.

These services are having a major impact with Public Health England estimating that each £1 spent on drug treatment will save £2.50 on costs to society.

## **8.22 Question from Councillor Shafi Ahmed**

Does the Mayor believe he is doing enough to address the increase of knife crime in the borough?

### **Response from Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Community Safety**

We face huge Government cuts meaning fewer police officers on the beat and knife crime nationally going up. We have invested in 39 Council funded police officers, and put extra £1.4 million into tackling anti-social behaviour.

Through our Community Safety Partnership Plan we have prioritised violent crime including the use of knives and corrosive substances in the borough. A dedicated Partnership Action Plan is in place to address knife crime.

We have recognised the success of the Violence Reduction Unit in Scotland where violence is treated as a public health problem. We are adapting our approach based on this learning, involving health, education, social work sectors in developing early help and prevention. For example an intervention project at Royal London Hospital Paediatric A&E is being developed.

We are commissioning a knife crime programme in schools. Community

weapon sweeps are being conducted in partnership with the police, community safety's Rapid Response Team, and the local community. 56 underage knife test purchase operations have been undertaken utilising the council's trading standards service.

Knife crime is a criminal matter so responsibility sits with the police, but as a Council we are using resources where we can to tackle this.

Finally, you can never do enough, of course, and we are receptive to other ideas and proposals to extend our challenge to this menace.

### **8.23 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill**

The Mayor will be aware of the importance of Raines House as a hub for local elderly residents, will he guarantee that following the proposed refurbishment of Raines House, the facility will remain as financially accessible as it is today for elderly residents with the same or improved facilities?

### **Response from Mayor John Biggs**

Raines House is indeed an important local facility for Wapping residents and I'm very pleased that we're able to refurbish it and improve the facilities that are available as part of our development of a network of community hubs across the borough. These are versatile spaces designed to allow multiple community groups to use the building at the same time.

The proposed refurbishment and remodelling of Raines House will improve the facilities within the building and protect its historic fabric.

The intention is to submit a planning application for the refurbishment works, appoint a specialist contractor and start work on site at the end of September 2018. The work is expected to take between 6 to 8 months to complete and will be re-opened in time for the 300 year anniversary celebrations in May 2019. For information, I have included below the full timetable.

In the meantime, existing community groups are continuing to use the building at no cost. We have offered Pollyanna temporary accommodation at Chandler Street and will be looking for an alternative venue for the social club activities.

When the refurbishment works have been carried out the building will be available for existing groups, including the Wapping Social Club and the daytime bingo group, to return to and for new groups to book space as required.

The Council is also carrying out a review of charges for community groups to ensure that the building is financially accessible.

The full timetable is as follows:

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August 2017	Appointment of architects
October 2017	Completion of concept design and feasibility assessment
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#### **8.24 Question from Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim**

Will the Mayor provide parking income generated by the council for 207/18, 16/17 and 15/16?

#### **Response from Councillor Amina Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment**

Income from parking fully funds the parking service, with surpluses being used to fund to concessionary fares and highway and road improvements.

The income from parking charges in the past three years is listed below.

2015/16 (17,792,957)  
2016/17 (18,543,677)  
2017/18 (15,496,722) (up to period)



### **8.25 Question from Councillor Abjol Miah**

Will the Mayor agree to reverse the decision to privatize council funded nurseries?

#### **Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services**

Despite your assertion we are not seeking to privatise nurseries.

Currently the three day nurseries provide about 1.5 per cent of the borough's early years provision in term time (105 children out of over 7,000 attending day care), dropping to about 30 children during holidays.

There are almost 22,000 children under 5 in Tower Hamlets, and over 7,000 of them attend a day nursery service. We have a wide range of provision in Tower Hamlets with:

- 68 primary schools, 65 of which have nursery classes and the other 3 have reception classes (attended by 2,980 children)
- 6 maintained nursery schools with teaching staff (407 children)
- 47 day care nurseries and nursery schools provided by private businesses and voluntary or independent organisations including charities (2,503 children)
- 30 playgroups (888 children) and 114 child minders (560 children).

Following the recent consultation on the proposal to seek a new operator for the three day nurseries currently run by the council, we have listened to resident concerns about affordability and have instructed officers to look again at the proposals to see what we can do to improve them.

### **8.26 Question from Councillor Craig Aston**

It has been announced that there is likely to be a further Big Half Marathon in 2019. What steps will the Mayor take to ensure that residents are, unlike this year notified well in advance of both road closures and interruptions to public transport?

#### **Response from Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE, Cabinet Member for Culture and Youth**

The Council does appreciate that large events can cause disruption. In advance of this year's Big Half we put information on our website and social media channels in addition to the mail-out the organisers sent out. We also let residents know details of free parking we provided to minimise disruption on the day.

It is estimated that 1,100 Tower Hamlets residents took part alongside more than 40 community groups from our borough. The race is run under the auspices of the London Marathon Charitable Trust Ltd. The LMCT makes

grants to a range of organisations. Since it was established in 1981, a total of £2,820,952 has been awarded to projects in Tower Hamlets.

With events like this, it is principally for the organiser to provide adequate communication to residents to ensure consistency of message. In this case it is clear that communication was insufficient.

We have raised this matter in detail with the event organiser and it will be addressed in the planning of any future events.

### **8.27 Question from Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury**

Will the Mayor confirm the total Community Safety Service budget for each year since 2014/15 until this budget year?

### **Response from Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Resources**

The Community Safety Service in Tower Hamlets Council is made up of the following service areas/budgets: Management, Partnership, Domestic Violence, Violence Against Women and Girls, Hate Crime, Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT), DAAT Treatment, Rapid Response Team and Business Continuity/Civil protection. A significant proportion of funding comes from the Public Health Grant (which has been reducing year on year through government reductions) as well as other sources including the Home Office and Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). The combined budget for this service area for the periods requested is as follows:

2014/15 total budget was £15.1 million  
2015/16 total budget was £13.9 million  
2016/17 total budget was £13.5 million  
2017/18 total budget was £11.6 million

Excluding Public Health Grant (drugs & alcohol), Home Office & MOPAC funding the figures are:

2014/15 - £4.6 million.  
2015/16 - £3.7 million.  
2016/17 - £3.5 million.  
2017/18 - £3.2 million.

In 2017 the Mayor announced that he was investing over £3m to fund additional police officers in Tower Hamlets for the coming three years. This is in addition to the above figures.

### **8.28 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan**

Does the Mayor believe that the 6 council funded youth centres are sufficient for a growing young population?

### **Response from Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE, Cabinet Member for Culture and Youth**

No I do not. That is why Tower Hamlets has one of the biggest and best funded youth services in London with 37 council funded venues offering almost 400 hours of high quality activities every single week.

Those venues include :

- Eight hubs operating six days a week
- 10 additional commissioned services running five days a week after school and six days a week evening activities.
- Three specialist youth projects
- 16 additional grant funded youth projects

The opposition might like to make wild claims about the youth service but under Mayor John Biggs we have one of the best youth services in London offering hundreds of hours of quality activities every single week.

### **8.29 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed**

Will the Mayor update the Chamber about the result of the Council's decision to initiate regulatory proceedings against the Times/Sunday Times in relation to a foster child story?

### **Response from Mayor John Biggs**

Tower Hamlets Council made a complaint to IPSO with regards to The Times article published on 30 August, 2017, under point one of the IPSO code – accuracy.

The council has also made a complaint to IPSO with regards to The Times article published on the 28th August and The Daily Mail article published on the 30 August, under point six of the IPSO code – the use of a photograph of a child in care.

The complaints have progressed for a decision by the IPSO Panel which we are waiting for.

The council also complained to IPSO with regards to The Sun article published on 30 August, 2017, under point one of the IPSO code – Accuracy. This matter was settled by a letter by The Sun accepting the article was not accurate which meant the complaint did not have to go to the IPSO panel.

### **8.30 Question from Councillor Mufti Miah**

Will the Mayor inform us about his meeting and any result in relation to extortionate increase parking charges by Poplar Harca?

## **Response from Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing**

We will continue to advocate and lobby Poplar Harca to robustly engage their local community whenever they wish to make such changes.

I would remind Cllr Miah, Poplar Harca are an independent organisation and as such, the Council has no formal role in their management, they decide their own parking charges. If however, some of his colleagues attended meetings while they were on the board, we may have had more say.

We made representations at the time of the increase which led to a reduction in the charges from the levels initially proposed.

Poplar HARCA have increased their parking charges for year 2018/19 as set out in the table below:

	<b>Parking bay</b>
<b>Tenant/ resident leaseholders and spouses/partners</b>	Increase from £4 to £4.20
<b>Others living with tenant/ resident leaseholder (including VAT)</b>	Increase from £8.40 to £9
<b>Others (including VAT)</b>	Increase from £16.20 to £24

### **8.31 Question from Councillor Harun Miah**

Will the Mayor demonstrate how the Social Value Act is being put in practice to secure better social value and benefits for our residents when the Council commissions services or engage with relevant stakeholders?

### **Response from Mayor John Biggs**

The application of Social Value is embedded into Councils procurement procedures and is applied on all contracts over £100,000. As part of the tendering exercise a maximum of 5% of the contract weighting is allocated to secure employment and community benefits for local residents. The range of benefits secured includes employment, educations and skills, supply chain and community resources.

Work is in underway to develop a new Social Value Policy to build on our success and broaden the scope of employment and community benefits to ensure they are aligned with broader council priorities.

### **8.32 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani**

Will the Mayor provide statistics of the total numbers of crime and ASB committed in Spitalfields and Banglatown Ward for each year since 2014 until now?

## **Response from Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Community Safety**

Crime across London has increased across the whole of London over the past year. I have no doubt that this is partially as a result of the Government's savage cuts to the police which have resulted in 197 dedicated borough police officers and 98 PCSOs being cut from Tower Hamlets since 2010 and the closure of the police front counter at Brick Lane.

That is why the Mayor is investing over £3m in extra police officers, bringing the total number of officers the council has provided funding for up to 39.

Spitalfields and Banglatown, containing the heart of our night time economy, remains a hotspot for a number of types of crime and for ASB, and resources are targeted there accordingly.

The Metropolitan Police recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour and crime for the Spitalfields and Banglatown Ward as of 12th March 2018 are provided below.

Spitalfields & Banglatown	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18*
ASB	1118	1310	1643	1030
Crime	2723	3073	3425	2709
* Information for Quarters 1-3 (April 2017 – December 2017) only as the year has not finished				

### **8.33 Question from Councillor Andrew Cregan**

Will the Council revise its decision to reject the application for Cable Street Studios to become an asset of community value? Cable Street Studios is a heritage building housing a range of arts units that form a unique venue for creative collaboration and cultural exchange, serving as a great asset to the local community in Shadwell and Limehouse, and well beyond. The much celebrated grassroots live music venue at its heart, Jamboree, is clearly on its own enough to secure ACV status. This decision to reject must be revised urgently, and the process for appeal outlined to the applicants.

### **Response from Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development & Waste**

Jamboree located at Cable Street Studios is an important grassroots music venue to our residents, who enjoy the jazz and folk music performed here.

I know that Jamboree is due to celebrate its 10th anniversary shortly and it will be a great shame to lose this popular venue in Tower Hamlets.

We have a strong history in Tower Hamlets of supporting cultural and nurturing cultural venues and I am determined to continue this commitment.

We have provisions in the Local Plan to protect cultural venues.

The Mayor has asked officers to look into options to support Jamboree to stay in their current much loved venue.

The Mayor has written to Sudbury properties asking them to review the decision to issue a notice to quit. He has also written to Jamboree to show his support to them.

Officers rejected the Asset of Community Value application; as you know these decisions are taken independently of the Mayor and councillors. There is no right of appeal but we are talking to Jamboree about all their options including making a fresh application.