

# Mayor's Report to Council

18<sup>th</sup> September 2019

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

## Key Events/Announcements

### **Ofsted**

The Ofsted report has been published in the period since our last council meeting and while the result is widely known, this gives me another opportunity to congratulate and thank our excellent staff and partners who have worked so hard for the fantastic result.

Ofsted has rated our Children's Services department as 'good' just two years after it was given an 'inadequate' rating, something that Ofsted itself described as 'remarkable progress'.

When I was first elected we inherited major problems which required a great deal of time and investment to fix. This has been a major focus of ours over the last few years and the result is testament to the outstanding efforts of our staff and partners, including schools, NHS services, the police, voluntary sector organisations and many committed people across our community. Thanks to you all.

### **Budget**

Whilst the current Chancellor may believe that 'austerity is over' – the reality is very different. The Chancellor's recent 'giveaway' did nothing to provide certainty for local authorities and with rapidly growing demands and pressures, budgets for local councils across the country are looking precarious.

As an administration we are well into preparations for the upcoming budget round, and as ever the next few years will require very careful management and some tough decisions.

### **Brexit**

It is worth noting that we as a local authority continue to meet to discuss issues, but that our national parliament has shamefully been shut down during the height of a national crisis.

While this is a hugely uncertain time for all of us, we must not forget the uncertainty facing the 41,000 non-UK EU citizens living in Tower Hamlets. This is their home too.

I am lobbying the government to fully respect the rights of these citizens and I'm calling for their rights – including voting rights – to be enshrined in UK law. I hope all colleagues will echo these calls.

### **Local Community Fund**

The Local Community Fund (LCF) decision process – including a scrutiny call-in – has now concluded. This decision means £2.7 million annually for three and a half years to over 50 community groups. This is a major investment in many fantastic groups to deliver change and benefit the lives of many residents.

We have also committed to help organisations that made high quality albeit unsuccessful bids find alternative sources of funding. This includes setting up a 'funders forum' where community groups and potential funders can network and share ideas. We have also committed to an additional annual £180,000 funding pot for the next two years and agreed to look at what additional support can be given to our Somalian communities, as well as local groups that provide play, sports and recreational activities for older people, and ensuring advice services of quality are available across the borough. We are also planning to extend funding for the current lunch club programmes and community language projects for six months to allow for reviews of these areas to be completed.

### **Transport Strategy**

The council's consultation on its draft transport strategy has recently closed. The strategy aims to support residents and visitors use more sustainable methods of transport and we will be looking at feedback very closely.

### **Tower Hamlets Homes**

We have agreed to extend THH's contract by 4 years, with the option of extending it by a further 4 years beyond that. This decision follows a comprehensive review, resident engagement, an independent report and a scrutiny call-in. THH has made significant progress over recent years (including winning Landlord of the Year at the UK Housing Awards).

We do however recognise that THH still has areas to improve on and they will be working very hard to deliver this. Clearly a lengthy re-organisation process would have taken focus away from the areas where we need to see improvement.

### **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

We cannot understate the importance of this issue. We have been campaigning about funding for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services – and indeed warning about how these services are now at a 'tipping point'. Put simply, the government funding for these services has failed for a number of years now to keep up with rapidly increasing demand leading to very serious budget gaps.

The recent announcement from the government of £700m for pupils with SEND is of course welcome, but we have yet to receive concrete details about their plans. We remain concerned that the extra cash doesn't close the gap on high needs spending from last year, let alone what the gap is anticipated to be next year. The LGA estimates the gap to stand at £1.6bn by 2021.

Our administration motion is on this topic and I look forward to raising these issues in more depth. The implications of the funding gaps are potentially very serious for some of the most vulnerable children and young people in our borough.

### **City of London Police investigation**

The Police have informed us that their investigation into misconduct in public office related to the former Mayor has concluded. This followed on from Operation Lynemouth.

They have advised us that after consultation with the Crown Prosecution Service, they have decided that there is insufficient evidence to support criminal proceedings against any individual.

We should be clear that this is not a statement of innocence as the former Mayor has already been found guilty of serious election offences and was thrown out of office because of them. As the new Mayor I and my team have made a massive effort recovering the borough from the terrible mess he left behind. We have moved a long way forward since then and we must never go back.

### **London City Airport expansion consultation**

As a council we have responded to the more technical 'Our Skies' consultation. I am pleased that consultation period for the broader 'London City Airport Master Plan 2020-2035' has been extended until 18<sup>th</sup> October so resident views can be more fully considered.

### **New council homes**

As part of our work to meet our manifesto commitment to deliver 2,000 new council homes, the council has launched its new 'Build Here' tool, an online tool to enable residents to nominate sites where they think we could build new council homes:

[https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/housing/New\\_homes\\_programme/Build\\_here.aspx](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/housing/New_homes_programme/Build_here.aspx)

### **Progress against climate commitments**

We have made solid progress towards becoming carbon neutral by 2025 and achieved an 18% reduction in the council's greenhouse gas emissions compared to last year and later this week we will join millions of others across the world calling for governments to take decisive action to tackle our Climate Emergency.

### **Exam results**

We saw some excellent exam results across the summer. Nearly three quarters of students gained A\*-C grade in their A levels and 98.9% of students entered for A Levels achieved at least 1 A\*-E grade. Similarly there were great GCSE results, where 85% of Tower Hamlets students achieved grades 9-4 in English, equivalent to the old A to C grades, (an improvement of

3% on 2018), while in maths 74% of students achieved grades 9-4, up four per cent on the comparable figure last year.

**Individual Mayoral Decisions taken since last meeting:**

- 19<sup>th</sup> August 2019 – 188 – Response to call-in (Local Community Fund)
- 19<sup>th</sup> August – 189 Response to call-in (THH Strategic Review of Housing Management Options)

**Engagements and Meetings: 18<sup>th</sup> July – 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019 (as recorded in Mayor's diary)**

**18 July 2019**

- Traffic Meeting
- Cllr Asma Begum
- Amanda Marcus, Divisional Director, HR
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Celebration of Wilfred Coppin Elm Tree
- Mayor's casework surgery

**19 July 2019**

- Central East BCU Commanders Commendation Ceremony
- Limehouse Welfare Association meeting

**20 July 2019**

- Addison Act Exhibition
- 130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary St Hilda's Community Centre Street Celebration

**21 July 2019**

- 20<sup>th</sup> Rainbow Film Festival
- Crest Distribution Ceremony Sherpur Welfare Trust

**22 July 2019**

- Deputy Mayor of London for Housing and Residential Development James Murray
- Media interviews - Ofsted
- Finance and Procurement meeting
- Mayor, Chief Executive and Borough Commander
- Resident home visit
- Harpley School Visit
- Tower Hamlets Children's Services Ofsted Celebration

**23 July 2019**

- Briefing on Maltings and Brewster

- Housing meeting
- Meeting with Director of V & A Museum of Childhood
- Planning, Air Quality & Tackling Air Poverty Portfolio Meeting
- Strategic Forward Planning Meeting
- Adults, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Meeting

#### **24 July 2019**

- Children, Schools & Young People Portfolio Meeting
- Regeneration Board
- Political Cabinet
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Public Meeting on Maltings and Brewster

#### **25 July 2019**

- Bow Liveable Streets meeting
- Vicky Clark, Divisional Director, Growth & Economic Development, Employment and Enterprise
- Protocol Officer of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh visit
- Mayor's casework surgery
- Westferry Printworks – meeting with residents
- Regional Schools Commissioner– Sue Baldwin

#### **27 July 2019**

- Roman Road Park Festival
- Bow East Coffee Morning
- Tower Hamlets Somali Summer Event

#### **28 July 2019**

- Mile End Leisure Centre Open Day
- 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration at Calvary Charismatic Baptist Church
- Golapganj Festival

#### **29 July 2019**

- School holiday club media event
- Westferry Printworks briefing
- Meeting with Nozrul Centre
- Property and asset management meeting
- Meeting with Representative Deputy Lieutenant for Tower Hamlets. Mr Leslie Morgan OBE DL
- Meeting with ATN Bangla representatives
- Meeting with Brick Lane Mosque
- Meeting with TFL re. Prudential Ride London

**30 July 2019**

- Sharon Godman, Divisional Director, Strategy Policy and Performance
- Meeting re. Maltings and Brewster
- Parking Policy review group
- Cllr Rafique and constituent
- Regional Schools Commissioner– Sue Baldwin
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**31 July 2019**

- Meeting re. Thames path
- Traffic schemes meeting
- Town Hall Project Board
- QUAD Meeting (Richard Baldwin, Debbie Jones, Danny Hassell and Mayor John Biggs)
- Political Cabinet
- Incoming Divisional Director Housing Strategy, Regeneration & Sustainability
- Public Realm Strategic Board
- Cabinet

**1 August 2019**

- Tower Hamlets Council Voluntary Service
- James Murray, Deputy Mayor of London for Housing and Residential Development
- Will Tuckley, Chief Executive
- Canary Wharf Group
- BBC London Interview - East End Pubs
- London Legacy Development Corporation
- Mayor's casework surgery

**2 August 2019**

- Tower Hamlets Homes Summer Programme media

**5 August 2019**

- Community Safety & Equalities Portfolio meeting
- Wellbeing Wheel Launch
- Andreas Christophorou Divisional Director, Communications and Marketing

**6 August 2019**

- Interview with the Guardian – Holiday hunger
- Housing Portfolio meeting
- Quarter one performance & budget monitoring meeting
- Community reception for Muhibur Rahman Manik MP

**7 August 2019**

- Resources Portfolio meeting
- Amanda Harcus, Divisional Director, HR
- Quarter one performance & budget monitoring meetings
- Political Cabinet
- Silvertown Tunnel meeting

**8 August 2019**

- Quarter one performance & budget monitoring meetings
- Dan Jones, Divisional Director, Public Realm
- Jim Fitzpatrick MP
- CCTV and Knife Crime meeting
- Will Tuckley, Chief Executive
- Mayor's casework surgery

**10 August 2019**

- Collins House Estate Fun Day

**11 August 2019**

- Eid In the Park

**12 August 2019**

- Cllr Val Whitehead
- Tower Hamlets Plan annual report review
- Stifford Centre meeting

**13 August 2019**

- Pocket Living meeting
- Cllr Rachel Blake
- Quarter one performance & budget monitoring meeting
- Tower Hamlets Homes and LBTH housing
- Culture Arts & Brexit Portfolio meeting
- Public Meeting - Lister and Treeves

**14 August 2019**

- Cllr John Pierce
- Foundation for Future London
- Cllr Sirajul Islam
- Grants Determination Sub Committee briefing
- Liveable Streets
- Environment Portfolio meeting
- Davenant Centre
- Quarter one performance & budget monitoring meeting

**15 August 2019**

- A-level results
- Vallance C.S.A meeting
- SEND progress meeting
- East End Homes re. Island Gardens
- Tower Hamlets Parent Centre meeting
- Locksley and Jubilee Street site visit
- Mayor's casework surgery
- Bangladesh High Commission Event

**27 August 2019**

- Regeneration meeting
- G15 housing representatives
- Swan Housing Watts Grove development visit
- Stifford Centre youth project visit

**28 August 2019**

- Cllr Danny Hassell
- City Fringe briefing
- Quarter one performance & budget monitoring meeting
- Resident meeting
- Property and asset management meeting
- Self-build policy briefing
- Amanda Harcus, Divisional Director, HR
- Tower Hamlets Transport Strategy consultation event
- Resident meeting - Batty Street

**29 August 2019**

- Mark Baigent, Divisional Director, Housing
- Tower Hamlets Job Fair
- Lib Peck, Director of the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit
- Granby Hall site visit
- Mayor's casework surgery

**31 August 2019**

- Mayors Cup 2019

**04 September 2019**

- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Malting and Brewster House meeting
- King George's Field Charity



**5 September 2019**

- Wapping Group Practice

**7 September 2019**

- Labour Group Away Day

**8 September 2019**

- Mayors Cup 2019

**9 September 2019**

- New town hall site visit
- Chief Executive and Sir Alan Wood Independent Chair of Improvement Board
- Property and asset management meeting
- Tower Hamlets Partnership Executive Group
- Tower Hamlets Transformation and Improvement Board
- Bangladeshi Book Fair

**10 September 2019**

- London Communications Agency
- Cllr Sirajul Islam
- Cllr Rachel Blake
- Poplar Harca Quartley Meeting
- Community Safety and Equalities Portfolio meeting
- Will Tuckley, Chief Executive
- Culture, Arts and Brexit Portfolio meeting
- Civil Contingences and Emergency Planning Portfolio meeting

**11 September 2019**

- Work & Economic Growth Portfolio meeting
- Planning meeting
- Traffic and highways meeting
- Environment Portfolio meeting
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Grants Determination Sub Committee
- Limehouse Triangle Site Visit

**12 September 2019**

- Sharon Godman, Divisional Director, Strategy Policy and Performance
- Regeneration Board
- Town Hall Project Board
- Somali Taskforce meeting
- Andreas Christophorou Divisional Director, Communications and Marketing
- Mayor's casework surgery

**13 September 2019**

- Tower Hamlets Citizens advice 80 years celebration
- Drug & alcohol action service Recovery Walk

**14 September 2019**

- Opening Ceremony of Al Safa Grocers Haat Bazar
- Liveable Streets Wapping residents workshop

**15 September 2019**

- The Sharbojonin Golapganj Utshob

**16 September 2019**

- Liveable Streets
- London Councils GLPC and GLEF briefing

**17 September 2019**

- Youth Offending Team briefing
- Resident meeting re. ASB in Weavers ward
- Speech at the Future of Universal Credit conference
- Parmiters Bethnal Green Educational Fund presentation evening
- Somali Taskforce public meeting
- Labour Party Local Campaign Forum

**18 September 2019**

- Public Realm Strategic Board
- Meeting with Mayor of London's Office re. LLDC
- Political Cabinet
- Property and Major programmes meeting
- Planning and building control meeting
- Council meeting