

Responses to Questions not asked at the Council Meeting on 17th March 2021

11.11 Question from Councillor Dipa Das

What support has the council given to help businesses recover from the impact of Covid -19?

Response from Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman, Cabinet Member for Work and Economic Growth

Thank you Cllr Das. As I said in my response to Cllr Chowdhury, the council can be proud of the work we have done to support local businesses during the pandemic and help their recovery.

In addition to the wide range of support measures discussed at the council meeting, there are numerous projects which illustrate how we are supporting businesses to emerge successfully from the pandemic. To give just one example I would highlight the 'Wick Together' project which provides new funding to stimulate the creative sector at Hackney Wick & Fish Island by commissioning projects for freelance creatives who have lost work because of the pandemic.

Alongside this the council also launched the White Post Lane Makers Market, giving local makers, designers and artists the opportunity to showcase their products. It is initiatives like this which we want to see across the borough and we would welcome your input as we continue to develop new proposals to support local businesses.

11.14 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Will the Lead Member for Planning & Social Inclusion set out the enforcement action that has been taken against the developer of 329 Morville Street for its persistent breaches of the hours of operation on that site?

Response from Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (job share) Cllr Eve McQuillan:

The Council currently has an open planning enforcement investigation concerning the allegations of working taking place outside of the permitted hours for this site.

The investigation began in March 2020, although due to the national restrictions on movement visits were not made to the site. Letters were still sent to the developers informing the investigation being carried out.

Towards the end of 2020 concerns were raised alleging Sunday working at the site. A local resident was contacted about these allegations, although at that time the working outside of the permitted hours appeared to have ceased which the resident agreed was most likely due to the external structure having been completed. The local resident in question was given contact details for the enforcement team should the breach reoccur. To date no further reports have been made to the team.

Noise pollution has a negative impact on resident's health and quality of life and the council will continue to take such allegations seriously.

11.15 Question from Councillor Victoria Obaze

What is the council doing to keep our streets clean during the pandemic?

**Response from Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (job share)
Cllr Asma Islam:**

There is no doubt that keeping our streets clean has been more challenging during the pandemic. Not only are far more people rightly staying local, sickness and self-isolation has also affected our waste service crews.

Our first priority has been to ensure staff are kept safe and have the tools available to prevent potential spread of coronavirus. This means gloves, hand sanitisers and protective wear but also a testing centre specifically set up at the depot.

Despite the challenges we have continued to deliver an effective service including:

85 barrow sweepers working on any given day

Mechanical brooms are also deployed throughout the day

Daily cleaning of our markets

Targeted clearing of fly tipping hotspots including issuing 162 Fixed Penalty Notices for fly tipping since October.

11.16 Question from Councillor Ayas Miah

How much Covid grant have we received so far from government, can the lead member provide a breakdown of how we have spent it, and is there any further discretionary grant available for charities or non-rateable businesses?

Response from Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector, Cllr Candida Ronald:

The council has received around £62m from government in direct grants and reimbursements. These vary from un-ringfenced grant to reimbursements of lost income. In addition to this funding we have received and allocated over £200m in grants and business rate relief for businesses through statutory and discretionary schemes throughout the pandemic. We have also given rent free periods and other support to eligible charities and community organisations.

The Council has not been notified to date of any further discretionary grant specifically available for charities or non-rateable businesses.

11.17 Question from Councillor Shah Ameen

As the Liveable Streets scheme has been suspended in Whitechapel, will funding still be made available for cleaner streets, as that is needed?

Response from Mayor John Biggs:

Liveable Streets funding is for improving access to active travel and public transport, public realm and road safety.

However, there will be no Whitechapel Liveable Streets programme taking place until at least 2023. We think it makes sense for any changes to the roads in our ward to follow after the other big changes that are taking place locally. A number of large new housing developments, the opening of the new Town Hall and planned Whitechapel Road improvements will all affect Whitechapel significantly. We want to look at the impact these changes have before doing any more work to improve our streets. There may however be some smaller individual road works, for example

associated with public realm works in Whitechapel Road, to address individual traffic issues in specific streets and possible improvements to pedestrian access in the Ford Square and Cavell Street areas, together with ongoing school street proposals. There is also a proposal to improve the street scene in Cannon Street Road, on the boundary between Shadwell and Whitechapel Wards. Any such changes will be subject to local consultation.

Funding allocated for Whitechapel Liveable Streets project will be carried forward.

We are committed to ensuring that all the streets in the borough are kept clean and safe. We welcome suggestions from residents, businesses and councillors on areas which they think need attention and we will look to take appropriate actions based on need.

11.18 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan

Following the full council motion Regarding Fire Safety & The Security of The Housing Sector in Tower Hamlets when will there be an online cladding portal on the council website to provide information, updates on funding and remediation progress on what the council is doing for residents and leaseholders affected by the cladding crisis. This is not the generic fire safety information page on the council website but one specifically to address the Cladding Crisis.

Response from Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (job share) Cllr Eve McQuillan:

While the information that the council holds on individual blocks is sensitive information and not for public consumption to ensure the safety of residents I can assure you that council officers regularly engage with resident groups and developers on individual buildings to ensure they are aware of their situation and what interim measures are in place as per the advice of the London Fire Brigade who undertake regular checks.

We regularly review our webpage content in relation to fire safety and have recently uploaded FAQs in relation to EWS1 alongside other cladding and fire safety advice.

We continue to regularly press Government for greater support for residents affected by the cladding crisis and the Mayor has spoken directly with the Minister responsible on multiple occasions in recent months to make this case.

11.19 Question from Councillor Puru Miah

Can the mayor confirm that the relevant Covid 19 risk assessment have been carried out for all front line council staff who have interaction with members of the public?

Response from Mayor John Biggs:

Thank you for your question. We greatly value our council staff who have all been there to support our community during the pandemic.

All services that have been open during the pandemic have been required to complete a risk assessment which has been reviewed by Corporate Health and Safety and Public Health as well as the cross-council Back to Business group, chaired by the Corporate Director of Place.

These risk assessments include the measures which have been taken to ensure staff are protected from Covid-19. As government policy has changed, services have refreshed and updated these risk assessments.

While many staff have been working from home to reduce risks to them and our residents those who are front line council staff have been required to complete an individual risk assessment and discuss this with their manager to ensure any individual circumstances are taken into account and acted upon.