

Appendix A

Written Responses to Member Questions not put at the 29th September 2021 Council Meeting

11.1 Question from Councillor Kyrsten Perry

What support is the council offering to Afghan refugees?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

I am proud that Tower Hamlets has pledged to support to Afghan refugee families.

The council will initially offer support for up to 5 households under one of the governments resettlement schemes. This is a similar number to most other London Councils.

The Council has set up a working group involving the key services which will provide the resettlement support both from within the council and the voluntary sector.

There is a dedicated website on the council's website which sets out the ways which residents can support Afghan refugee families. While there is no immediate need for donations of clothing and other goods, there may later be the need for specific items, e.g. laptops.

Residents can donate money to the London Refugee Response set up with leadership from the Mayor of London, London Councils and charitable funders from across London to provide much needed support to new arrivals from Afghanistan. Residents can also sign up to the Volunteer Hub and volunteer their time with the Volunteer Centre in Tower Hamlets to help Afghan or other refugees and asylum seekers.

11.16 Question from Councillor Ayas Miah

Many eligible businesses applied for COVID restart grants but they have not received them despite meeting all eligibility criteria. Can the Cabinet Member for Resources clarify why they have not received it, and whether the council has figures on how much in total we have received from the government and how much we have paid out to businesses?

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

All qualifying business have now been paid the Restart Grant. The total grant allocation from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy for Restart Grants was over £22m, which like most Council's, was an overestimation of the number of qualifying businesses. This was based on VOA property description data which was out of date and assumed all properties were occupied.

The total amount paid thus far is over £20m to almost 2,300 qualifying businesses. The pandemic has been a challenging time for many businesses in the borough and we will continue to offer support as they rebuild.

Restart Grants	Amount Paid	Number of accounts
Non-Essential Retail	£2,914,095.00	768
Hospitality, leisure, accommodation, gym & sports and personal care	£17,428,000.00	1,480
Total Paid	£20,342,095.00	2,248

11.17 Question from Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan

The LBTH domestic abuse policy has been removed from the intranet and I understand that it's not been available to staff for a number of months whilst it is being consulted on. Can the Mayor confirm when the policy will be made available and if, in the interim, the previous policy might be made available to staff?

Response from Councillor Sirajul Islam

There has been a continual presence and page with useful links dedicated to Violence against Women and Girls, developed and regularly updated by the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) team.

There is also a guidance document available on the Bridge (the Council's intranet) for use by our staff and this includes how to respond sensitively, practical measures and information about safety.

However it is unclear why the guidance was not appearing on the dedicated page – this was possibly due to system updates – but the matter has been rectified and it is available on the Bridge.

11.18 Question from Councillor Rajib Ahmed

What work is the council doing to support young people into training or employment?

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

Young people have been one of the groups hit hardest by the economic fallout of the pandemic and the council is committed to supporting this cohort with a range of programmes.

This support includes:

- The council offering a range of apprenticeship opportunities to young people.
- Our Young Workpath service working with young people who are NEET or at risk of NEET, conducting over 3000 interviews per year. The service has now started to offer face-to-face interviews with vulnerable young people again.
- Securing 550 Kickstart placements for young people across the borough, including 33 placements secured within council services.
- Expanding Careers Advice and re-establishing the Careers Lead Network, tasked with developing cross-borough standards, disseminating information on courses and summer schools, and offering sector-specific advice.

- Launching the ‘Bridging the Divide’ partnership between GED, THEP, universities and employers to improve career pathway resources and immersive engagement events for young people.
- Developing “Taster Sessions” for care leavers to spend a day shadowing various roles in the Division. This is great a way for some young people who are in care to observe a role to see if this might be something they would like to pursue as a future career/ training option.
- The Supporting Families Division (within Children and Culture) has recently identified the potential for three apprenticeship roles for some of our care-leavers within our Early Help Service. These are likely to be offered at apprenticeship level 2-3.

11.19 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan

There is a constant failure to collect refuse and recycling across the estates in Shadwell.

As a Councillor I am consistently raising members enquiries in an effort to help residents, communities and businesses with problems relating to this problem. Shadwell is a small ward that should not require much effort to keep clean. Will the Mayor ensure refuse and recycling failures do not happen in the future and that every effort is made by the Director responsible for Environment to keep our streets, roads, and estates clean and tidy?

This is a very basic council function.

Response from Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning

The cleanliness of our streets and greenspaces is of the highest importance to the Council and one we take very seriously.

In Shadwell, waste collection services are performing above set standards and the teams are regularly monitoring media channels to respond to, and deal with, any reported issues. We are grateful for Councillor Khan’s 7 enquires over six months (3 cleansing, 1 recycling, 1 bio-diversity and 2 refuse) and have been pleased to respond to all of them.

Regarding Estates, the Council is working with our housing partners to tackle behaviours which sometimes result in delayed collections. Our teams too often find that private vehicles are blocking entrances to estates preventing access and immediate collection. Waste Services are working with both Parking and our Communications department to tackle this issue. However, despite these challenges, our teams, who have worked diligently throughout the pandemic, continue to ensure collections are made.

Further to these challenges the Council is tackling the blight of fly-tipping in both Shadwell and across the borough. Nearly 200 fixed-penalty notices for fly-tipping have been issued since April. The fines were handed out to people and organisations caught illegally and irresponsibly dumping items including bags of rubbish, old furniture, and appliances.

Every month the council collects about 250 tonnes of fly-tipped waste. Last year, crews cleared almost 3,200 tonnes of fly-tipped waste off our streets, the equivalent of almost 258 London buses, costing hundreds of thousands of pounds to get rid of.

We're here to help people recycle and get rid of their waste but we have zero tolerance to those who see the streets of our borough as their dumping ground, and we will always take action.

We thank councillor Khan for her assistance with this matter and would encourage her and her residents to continue to support the Council by reporting issues where she sees them.