

Mayor's Report to Council

17TH November 2021

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Key Events/Announcements

It is almost Christmas already, and this past month has been an extremely busy and productive month for Council business.

Remembrance Day: It was Remembrance Day last week, a very solemn occasion where we remember all those who have died in war and pay tribute to their sacrifice. I attended the memorial service at the Garden of Remembrance at Tower Hill on Sunday with the Speaker, Cllr Ullah, Cllr Golds, the Chief Executive and Apsana Begum MP and laid a wreath on behalf of the Council. We will remember them all. There were commemorations at a number of other memorials in the borough.

Net Zero Carbon Partnership Action Plan: The climate emergency is one of the world's most pressing issues impacting our lives, and the Council has now launched our Net Zero Carbon Partnership Action Plan in order to ensure we do our bit to effectively combat climate change.

Under the plan, the alliance will work together towards the 2045 target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and offset remaining emissions, by finding ways to reduce energy consumption, create sustainable supply chains and nurture biodiversity through planting trees and greening the borough. This plan will focus on a fair and just transition towards net zero carbon.

I was delighted to read that Tower Hamlets is the most eco-friendly place in England according to new research published in a national paper. This may seem strange news for such an urban area, and it doesn't mean we don't have a lot more to do, but it is pleasing that your quality of life by quite a few measures is less bad than people might lazily think. This was followed by news that the council's pension fund has been shortlisted for a national award for "best climate change strategy". This is all very positive and highlights the work we are doing at Tower Hamlets Council since declaring a climate emergency in March 2019.

Whitechapel Funding: Whitechapel Road will benefit from £9.3m investment after Tower Hamlets Council and Transport for London (TfL) successfully secured government funding, from the 'Levelling Up' funds. We had initially been placed in the lowest priority group and London as a whole did very badly under this programme, often presented as a programme to divert funding away from London.

And so this is a very welcome investment that will go towards us delivering the improvements needed in Whitechapel Road to make it safer and more accessible and give a boost to the market and local businesses. It is also a testament to the work we do as a council to stand up for Tower Hamlets and lobby for the resources we need. Whitechapel is changing massively, with Crossrail, the new Town Hall, the potential of a major biomedical sciences 'cluster, and other major developments. The challenge for us is to ensure that a sizeable range of benefits reach local communities.

Liveable Streets: The next steps on Liveable Streets have been announced following a short review of the seven "live" schemes which were paused earlier this year. These

schemes are in Bow, Bethnal Green, Wapping, Old Ford Road West, Shadwell, Brick Lane and the Barkantine Estate on the Isle of Dogs. We've always been committed to the benefits of safer, calmer and cleaner streets, but it's important to consider the issues that some residents and businesses have raised about the impact of closures and diversions.

Following the review, we are adapting the schemes in a few places but mostly we are going ahead as planned. Our review was about finding the right balance for our community to deliver the cleaner air and safer streets that our residents deserve, while making a small number of changes to address problems that had been identified, and maintain broader community confidence. I am well aware that this is an issue on which passions are roused, in both directions.

Additionally, the council is continuing to deliver School Streets, which can include road closures outside schools during drop-off and pick-up times to improve air quality and safety, with 20 School Streets already in place and 30 more on the way by spring 2022, reaching most primary schools in the borough.

BAME Inequalities Commission Action Plan: You will recall that our BAME Inequalities Commission reported recently, and we adopted its proposals. We have now agreed, and backed it up with £1.5m of funding, an action plan to take forward a number of the recommendations. The Commission was powerful in raising hopes and expectations and, while it will be a long process, we are starting on an ambitious programme to facilitate change.

The Commission's full report was released in March and is available to view on the dedicated webpage: www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/raceinequalitiescommission

Leisure Consultation: We are committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of our residents and a network of modern, affordable and accessible leisure centres will be a key part of this. Unfortunately, we were not immune to the impact of Covid-19 on our leisure centres which were both forced to close and operate at reduced capacity following restrictions. Like many other local authorities too, our ageing leisure centres are proving to be too costly and increasingly unsafe.

However, the pandemic also highlighted the vital importance of being active, which is why we are now consulting on future options for leisure in Tower Hamlets, to help us deliver a leisure ecosystem that's safe, successful and sustainable.

Residents can let their views be known by going on the following link:

<https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/leisure>

The consultation opened on Monday 15 November 2021 and closes Monday 3 January 2022.

I know in particular that there is interest in the future of St George's Pool. Up and down the country local communities have been scarred by the loss of leisure facilities through austerity and the lack of investment.

I am happy to state this evening as a pledge that my administration will replace, or refurbish, the pool. We want to make a decision very soon, after proper discussions with the public.

Council Homes: Last month, the Council secured funding from the Mayor of London's Affordable Housing Programme which is excellent news for the borough. The £32m grant will help fund an additional 194 new homes for social rent as part of our plan to deliver 2,000 new council homes across Tower Hamlets. We currently have 1,055 homes delivered or in

delivery, with the rest identified and plans being progressed. This includes new homes being built, buy-backs and purchases from developers and the 2000 manifesto target for homes built or in the pipeline will be reached.

Covid-19: The pandemic continues to affect us all, and the Council's work on Covid-19 recovery for the borough carries on. But it is also important that we reflect on the impact of the virus and the response from the community. In October, we had a series of public events across Tower Hamlets paying tribute to all those who have passed away and suffered loss due to Covid-19, and celebrating the response of residents and partners, and the strength of our community.

Memorial events began in Victoria Park, where frontline staff including the NHS, Covid Champions, Rushanara Ali MP, volunteers and the Tower Hamlets' inter-faith forum were invited share their personal stories and talk about their contribution to the response. This was followed by a tree planting and memorial plaque, outside of the Victoria Park Hub, intended to be a lasting memorial. Plantings and events have happened across the borough.

You can leave tributes to remember and celebrate the lives of family members, friends and colleagues lost on the [council website](#).

Violent Crime and community safety: There have been a number of high profile violent crimes recently, including murder, almost certainly a homophobic crime, in the Cemetery Park and knife crime, including another murder, on the streets. There is not a sudden upsurge though and we must not talk despair but as the borough comes back to life there are issues particularly with drug related incidents. There is also a serious problem with young men carrying knives.

We take our responsibility to help create a safer environment very seriously, and to assure and safeguard people, while being clear that this is at its core a policing matter. We have strong partnerships and we work with police, local organisations, and others in order to target serious crime in the borough. Most of this crime is with young adults, not children, but we have relaunched, and focused outwards, our youth services, in order to better protect young people, particularly those at risk.

Kickstart: I was happy to welcome the new Kickstart recruits at the Town Hall last week. The Kickstart scheme, which launched last year, has successfully provided job opportunities across Tower Hamlets with local young people having access to over 700 placements. Each placement has been funded by the government who pay the national minimum wage based on a 25 hour per week placement and provides the opportunity for young people to gain valuable experience and training while the employer gets an additional resource.

In total, 340 young people aged 16-24 have started Kickstart placements through the Tower Hamlets gateway. The council has added to this with the delivery of 33 placements paid at London Living Wage in which 16 young people have already been allocated in areas such as legal, housing, markets, children services and employment & skills.

Young Mayor of Tower Hamlets: I am pleased to announce that 16 year old Tahmid Hussen, who went to Bow School and now attends St Paul's Way Sixth Form, has been elected as the new young Mayor securing 1,558 (8.8 per cent) of the total votes cast.

The Young Mayor's team is a strong voice at the town hall and in the community, working on behalf of young people and influencing the way youth services, careers advice and other services work. I look forward to working with the new Young Mayor and his Deputy Mayors.

Individual Mayoral Decisions taken since last meeting

None.

Mayor's engagements and meetings

Below is a summary of my main engagements and meetings from 29th September to 17th November 2021.

29 September 2021

- Introduction to interim Human Resources Director
- Mayor's Housing Portfolio Meeting
- Shortlisting for Director, Supporting Families
- Waste Meeting
- Communications Portfolio Meeting
- LGA Corporate Health Check Feedback Session – Placeholder
- Mayor's Community Safety Portfolio Meeting
- Council

30 September 2021

- Meeting with Green Park re CD Resources & Governance
- Strategic Forward Planning
- Communications Portfolio meeting
- VCS Portfolio meeting
- Community Meeting with Baitul Mamur Academy
- Liveable Streets update
- Sandys Row application meeting
- Shortlisting – Director of HR & OD
- Follow up meeting: Explorer's Court residents / One Housing

1 October 2021

- Clarion catch-up
- Final interviews for Director of Adult Social Care
- London Councils Labour Group meeting
- Clare House update
- Liveable Streets update
- Black History Month launch

2 October 2021

- The Boundary Estate Fun Palace
- Labour Group away day

3 October 2021

- London Marathon photocall
- Cable Street march
- 50 Active Club UK – launch event

- Clean-up post marathon
- Biennial General Meeting – Golapganj Social & Cultural Trust UK

4 October 2021

- Clarion catch-up
- Battle of Cable Street 85th Anniversary event

5 October 2021

- Informal chats with candidates for position of Director, Supporting Families
- Clarion catch-up
- OSC preparation with Sri Sudhakar
- Housing portfolio meeting

6 October 2021

- Planning meeting
- Mayor's Surgery
- Clare House update meeting
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Mayoral update re AEG contract
- City Fringe Area Board pre-meeting

7 October 2021

- Visit to Antill Road
- Meeting with Mayor's caseworkers
- 1:1 with Janet Fasan
- Leaside Partnership Board

8 October 2021

- BBC Radio London interview
- Resident home visit
- Flu jab comms event
- Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund photocall
- Liveable Streets update

9 October 2021

- No Place For Hate football match

10 October 2021

- Curry Life Awards

11 October 2021

- Clarion catch-up
- Final interviews: Director, Supporting Families
- Resident phone call
- Bow Liveable Streets update

12 October 2021

- Mayor's Survey
- NARE Annual meeting
- London Council Leaders' Committee
- Brodick House briefing
- Poplar HARCA business plan briefing
- Late Night Levy report meeting
- PEG agenda
- Meeting with residents
- Resources Portfolio meeting
- Durga Puja event

13 October 2021

- Portfolio meeting: Work & Economic Growth
- City Fringe Area Board meeting
- Matchwomen meeting
- BBC Sunday Politics interview
- Portfolio meeting: Environment & Public Realm
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Freedom of the Borough: Full Council meeting

14 October 2021

- Local Authority NEL ICS meeting
- Bromley by Bow meeting
- GLPC Labour Group pre-meeting
- GLPC Employers' Side meeting
- GLPC Employers' and Trade Union Side Joint Meeting
- Portfolio meeting: Assets/Property
- Portfolio meeting: Adults, Health & Wellbeing
- Assets meeting: 100 Roman Road
- Ask the Mayor event

15 October 2021

- Tower Hamlets Peace Walk at St John's Church

17 October 2021

- Zakigonj Welfare Association UK Education award ceremony

18 October 2021

- Marking the Pandemic – event
- Police Borough Commander catch-up
- CLF ESB pre-meeting
- Executive Committee & Labour Group meeting

19 October 2021

- Clichy Estate meeting
- Locksley D ground-breaking event

- Co-Op Commission
- 1:1 with Cllr Sirajul Islam
- Portfolio meeting: Regeneration
- 1:1 with Cllr Mohammed Pappu
- Traffic meeting
- Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny sub-committee

20 October 2021

- Clarion catch-up
- Tree-planting event at Millwall Park
- Bow modelling meeting
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- All Points East meeting
- Audit Committee

21 October 2021

- Final Interviews for Director, Workforce, OD and Business Support
- LGA Labour Group meeting
- Young Mayor inauguration

22 October 2021

- London Councils Labour Group
- Portfolio meeting: Culture, Arts and Sports
- BAME Commission – video recording

24 October 2021

- Muslim Charity Run
- Zakigonj Welfare Association AGM
- Beani Bazar Welfare Trust

25 October 2021

- 1:1 with Susmita Sen
- CLF Employment and Skills Board
- Launch Event – Grill Hut
- Regeneration Board
- Overview and Scrutiny pre-meeting
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee

26 October 2021

- Mayor's Surgery
- Call with Jayne Cindy Fairman
- Raines House – memorial bench event
- Resident visit
- Victoria Park Friends – 10 year anniversary reception

27 October 2021

- Portfolio meeting: Social Inclusion

- Launch of Millwall Park playground
- Cabinet pre-meeting
- Meeting re development of 73 Strahan Road
- Budget catch-up
- Cabinet

28 October 2021

- Future for London catch-up
- Portfolio meeting: Community Safety
- Limehouse Mosque meeting
- 1:1 with Ann Sutcliffe
- Environment Summit

29 October 2021

- Meeting with Heidi Alexander and Will Norman
- Resident phone call
- AEG catch-up

1 November 2021

- Meeting with Mayor of Hackney

2 November 2021

- 1-20 Old Market Square, major works meeting
- Youth Service commissioning meeting
- TH Partnership Executive Group meeting
- Strategic Forward Planning
- Aberfeldy Mosque meeting
- Met Police briefing on councillors' safety

3 November 2021

- Planning meeting
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- BBC Radio London interview
- Parliamentary Reception – 50th anniversary of Bangladesh

4 November 2021

- Liveable Streets catch-up
- Mayor's Surgery
- Isle of Dogs public meeting on violent crime

5 November 2021

- 78 Aston Street
- Visit to Apasen with Foreign Minister of Bangladesh

6 November 2021

- Memorial meeting – Zillul Haque
- Repton Boxing Club

7 November 2021

- Over 50s football match
- BCA awards

8 November 2021

- New City College meeting
- 1:1 with Janet Fasan
- Mayor's Surgery
- Resident meeting
- S151/Leaders' meeting – 8 authority London Pool
- London Moving East event
- St Paul's Way Community facility meeting

9 November 2021

- London First meeting
- Visit to Tiller Leisure Centre
- 1:1 with Cllr Sirajul Islam
- Planning and Performance meeting
- Covid-19 Local Engagement Board
- Met Police – community meeting

10 November 2021

- CLF Partnership Board
- Clarion catch-up
- Future for London event
- Kickstart photocall
- Portfolio meeting: Environment and Public Realm
- Christmas card judging
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Dockland's Community Organisation meeting

12 November 2021

- Resident visit
- Catch-up with Denise Radley
- Bangla Sanglap anniversary

13 November 2021

- Collingwood Estate TRA AGM
- Remembrance Concert

14 November 2021

- Remembrance service at Tower Hill

15 November 2021

- Leisure contract update meeting
- Mayor's Surgery

- Portfolio meeting: Communications
- Barley Mow meeting
- Portfolio meeting: Housing
- Public meeting – swimming provision

16 November 2021

- Comms photocall
- Sonali Otith
- Charles Dickens House update
- Traffic meeting
- Building in Resilience – Interfaith Forum event

17 November 2021

- Portfolio meeting: Work & Economic Growth
- Clarion catch-up
- Portfolio meeting: Assets/Property
- Meeting with Cllr Hassell and Ann Sutcliffe
- Labour Group
- Full Council