

Non-Executive Report of the: Council 27 th July 2022	
Report of: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Questions submitted by Members of the Council	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services
Wards affected	All wards

SUMMARY

1. Set out overleaf are the questions that were submitted by Members of the Council for response by the Mayor, the Speaker or the Chair of a Committee or Sub-Committee at the Council meeting on Wednesday 27th July 2022
2. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.4, questions relating to Executive functions and decisions taken by the Mayor are put to the Mayor unless he delegates such a decision to another Member, who will therefore be responsible for answering the question. In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor will answer questions directed to the Mayor.
3. Questions are limited to one per Member per meeting, plus one supplementary question unless the Member has indicated that only a written reply is required and in these circumstances a supplementary question is not permitted. Oral responses are time limited to one minute. Supplementary questions and responses are also time limited to one minute each.
4. Council Procedure Rule 10.7 provides for an answer to take the form of a written answer circulated to the questioner, a reference to a published work or a direct oral answer.
5. There is a time limit of thirty minutes at the Council meeting for consideration of Members' questions with no extension of time allowed and any questions not put within this time are dealt with by way of written responses.
6. Members must confine their contributions to questions and answers and not make statements or attempt to debate.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

22 questions have been received from Members of the Council as follows:-

11.1 Question from Councillor Jahed Choudhury

Will the Mayor provide an update on how his Council plans to alleviate the current cost of living crisis on the residents of our borough, and any specific measures that have either been implemented or are likely to be implemented in the near future?

11.2 Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam

Further to the announcement of the re-opening of the Rushmere One Stop Shop, can the Mayor confirm whether this will be permanent to ensure it remains open for residents for the foreseeable future?

11.3 Question from Councillor Bodrul Choudhury

Many families are having to make the choice between eating and heating, often to the detriment of the educational needs of our Borough's children. Will the Mayor clarify how his Council will be safeguarding our young people from the current crisis, both inside and outside of the classroom?

11.4 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Will the Mayor and Lead Member for Housing set out the actions he intends to take to ensure social landlords in Tower Hamlets that are underperforming in terms of housing management, repairs and accountability to residents are required to take decisive action to improve those services?

11.5 Question from Councillor Abdul Malik

Mr Mayor, as poverty has increased, so too has crime and desperation. Many of our Borough's residents do not feel safe on their own streets. What strategy will his Council be adopting to ensure that our residents feel protected and secure?

11.6 Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah

The Wapping bus gate has made a significant positive impact on Wapping, reducing noise, anti-social behaviour and long tailbacks of traffic through Wapping up to The Highway.

With residents being given an exemption, the scheme has been a success.

Can the Mayor outline his specific concerns regarding the Wapping bus gate that have sparked this recent consultation?

11.7 Question from Councillor Ahmodur Rahman Khan

Mr Mayor, as I know you are aware, the D3 and D7 bus routes provide a lifeline to many of the poorest residents of our communities. They use these routes to get to work, to get their children to school and to move about the heart of our Borough. What is your administration doing to prevent the devastating impact that the closure of these routes would have on these residents?

11.8 Question from Councillor Rebeka Sultana

I have been approached by residents in my ward to express their concerns about crime rates in the borough. The previous Labour administration provided funding to deliver a £3.1 million CCTV transformation programme, along with other initiatives to tackle crime in Tower Hamlets.

Can the Cabinet Member please give us an update on what the Council plans to do to build on this work to reduce crime in the borough?

11.9 Question from Councillor Amin Rahman

A huge proportion of our borough rely on the ability to move around it quickly and unrestricted, be they delivery drivers or cabbies. Yet the Liveable streets programme has not only failed them economically – it is failing all our residents in terms of emissions, pollution and the subsequent health risks that follow. How will the Mayor combat this failed scheme, and what is his plan to make Tower Hamlets greener and cleaner while keeping our Borough moving?

11.10 Question from Councillor Mufeedah Bustin

The Audit Committee provides oversight and challenge to the Finance, Internal Audit and Risk Management areas of the council and is a key governance aspect of the council's structure. Why has the Mayor and the Aspire Party voted to appoint the Lead Member for Resources as a voting member on the Audit Committee?

11.11 Question from Councillor Mustak Ahmed

Truman Brewery: Could the Mayor and cabinet members please provide an update on the legal challenge to the plan to build a shopping mall on the site of the historic Truman Brewery in Brick Lane?

11.12 Question from Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury

Residents have raised concerns with me about the Council's move from paper parking permits and visitors' scratch cards to an online form. As I am sure you will agree, there are a number of residents – especially those who are elderly and vulnerable – who do not have access to the internet and are therefore now unable apply for their parking permits.

Can the Cabinet Member describe what actions the Council will be taking to make parking in the borough accessible to all?

11.13 Question from Councillor Abdul Mannan

Mr Mayor, for too long residents in our borough have been squeezed out of their homes by avaricious landlords, rising rent prices and a dearth of council and affordable housing. How are you ensuring that Tower Hamlets remains a Borough that values its proud history of welcoming all who enter it, and helping them to stay in decent, affordable housing?

11.14 Question from Councillor Kamrul Hussain

Mr Speaker, the heritage of our borough is one of the richest and most diverse, not only in London, but in the whole of the UK. From Cable Street to Brick Lane, Stepney to the Isle of Dogs, we boast some of the most iconic landmarks in the country. I ask the Mayor,

how will his administration continue the conservation of these sites, while championing and rejuvenating older equivalents?

11.15 Question from Councillor Abdul Wahid

Mr Mayor, football plays a huge role in our Borough's daily life, with huge support for several London clubs and an excellent and healthy local sporting tradition. How will you use your time in office to harness this passion and provide our communities with a competitive yet unifying experience to express their love for the beautiful game?

11.16 Question from Councillor Saif Uddin Khaled

Mr Mayor, what will your administration be doing to bring our Borough's women closer to the heart of social, cultural and economic power during your first term?

11.17 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

Mr Speaker, in 2018, 137 languages were spoken in our Borough's schools. That is something that we as a local authority should be immensely proud of, and is a statistic that should be celebrated and championed, not shied away from. What will your Council be doing to encourage those children from multilingual homes to develop their mother tongues and further enrich the already deep cultural and linguistic diversity present in our Borough?

11.18 Question from Councillor Ahmodul Kabir

Council Tax Relief: Mr Mayor, Council Tax Relief is by definition help for those whose income is beneath a certain threshold. How will you rectify the unfair way in which self-employed residents have been denied relief by the previous Administration?

11.19 Question from Councillor Bellal Uddin

Mr Mayor, in rebuilding Tower hamlets and rebuilding our future, our Manifesto pledges to run a Council which listens to residents. Could you tell us which consultations are open or planned so we can encourage residents to give us their views?

11.20 Question from Councillor Ana Miah

Mr Mayor, Fairness and Equity is at the heart of our Manifesto, how will you ensure that our diverse communities are represented at all levels of the Council and not just in the lower ranks?

11.21 Question from Councillor Nathalie Bienfait

I'd like to bring to the attention of the Mayor serious safety concerns around traffic on Tredegar Road, Bow as well as the so-called Skew Bridge. The safety and health of residents living around these two locations are at daily risk because of a lack of pedestrian security features, narrow roadways causing dangerous driving and speeding and blind corners.

Residents' property has been repeatedly damaged by speeding vehicles around Skew Bridge; residents have to put up with daily arguments around the Tredegar/Coborn Roads junction due to the road not being wide enough to allow two vehicles to pass each other; pedestrians and cyclists using both areas are constantly at risk of serious injury.

What is the Mayor currently doing to improve safety at these two locations?

11.22 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

The recently published 2021 census showed Tower Hamlets to be the fastest growing local authority in the country, with a population of 310,300. This is, however, lower than had been forecast or expected. This reduction of the estimated population will have an appreciable affect with regard to government grant aid which is based on population statistics. There is evidence that during the enumeration period many residents of Tower Hamlets, including students and young people, had gone elsewhere due to lockdown but have now returned.

Will the Mayor outline what discussions have been initiated on this subject between the council, government and other London Councils?