

Responses to Questions not put at the Council meeting on 5 October 2022

11.2 Question from Councillor Rachel Blake

Will the Mayor or Lead Member provide the options appraisal analysis for removing much needed Council Homes schemes from the Capital Programme instead of other sources of funding?

Response:

The Capital Programme as approved is able support a specified level of funding for housing schemes.

Due to the significant inflationary increases experienced in recent months with building costs and supplies chains a number of schemes have exceeded their pre-tender budgetary levels.

In order to progress schemes to tender and start on site priority is given to those that are either most advanced, for example, that need to start on site due to planning permission expiry, those delivering the most homes or those where certain forms of funding are at risk.

To remain within the overall budgetary envelope this means that a rescheduling of priority has to be made.

The Council has an ambitious plan for delivering much-needed homes, as set out in our Strategic Plan, and we remain absolutely committed to delivering that.

11.3 Question from Councillor Abdul Wahid

The number of incidents concerning violent crime in the Borough is shocking. Following on from the issues outlined in Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation Report – Inspection of Youth Offending Services, can the Lead Member or Mayor update Council on the measures he will be putting in place to tackle this surge?

Response:

There have been a number of measures put in place to respond to the youth violence incidences across the borough. There are now 5 full time support workers offering intensive one to one support to children who are victims and or perpetrators of violence. We develop disruption plans for all children who have been involved in a violent incidence to ensure join up and work across agencies. The support workers within the exploitation team have all been allocated secondary schools across the borough and are providing awareness assemblies to schools who have requested it. A training program is offered through the Learning Academy and delivered by Exploitation to raise awareness of serious youth violence across of London Borough of Tower Hamlets to professionals working with young people.

Community Safety and the Exploitation Service have further developed the Neighbourhood tasking meeting to have a youth section. Through the monitoring of locations done through data we are able to develop cross agency plans to make spaces and places safer for young people. There have been several developments in this area of work to ensure that information and intelligence is shared and understood across agencies. Partnership weekly briefing developed where information, incidences and intelligence is shared weekly across the partnership and tasks and actions are clearly undertaken and documented. Mapping meetings have been undertaken for all violent incidences across the borough to ensure oversight of locations, themes, and risks these are shared through the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Panel.

Youth Justice, Youth Services, Children's Social Care and Exploitation are working together to further develop services offered young people to ensure that they are offered intensive support across the spectrum of need which is part of the development of the wider adolescent offer.

11.4 Question from Councillor Maisha Begum

I understand the Mayor will be significantly expanding the Mayor's Office. Can the Mayor tell us how many additional people he is recruiting and at what cost to the Council?

Response:

The Mayor was elected on a transformative, ambitious Manifesto, after seven years of failures, empty promises and inability to support and deliver for the residents of Tower Hamlets. The Mayor is recruiting a team to facilitate the delivery of all of his 126 pledges, that will see real change and rebuilding improve the lives of all of the Borough's residents. This team will enable the Mayor and his Cabinet to build on the already strong connections with the diverse communities in Tower Hamlets; it will enable him to reinstate and improve the Borough's public services – from care, to youth services and employment opportunities – and enable the delivery more homebuilding, community services, safer streets and much needed economic and social support for residents of the Borough that has been evidently lacking over the past seven years.

I must confess, that I find there is great irony in the tone with which this question has been asked. To accuse the Mayor of 'significantly expanding' his office, when the Tower Hamlets Labour Group across from me oversaw one of the largest fire and rehire schemes in the history of Local Government, alongside wholesale cuts to critical public services, makes this question difficult to take seriously. This Mayor – demonstrated in the statement made by my colleague concerning the withdrawn motion – is committed to keeping the staff of this Council employed, but more importantly, supported in their roles, and these appointments will ensure that they are.

However, as the Mayor has nothing to hide, he will be recruiting new members of staff – comprised of both full time and part-time roles. These staff members include 11 additional caseworkers, additional Executive Support Assistants and additional

Cabinet Support Officers – positions that are critical in the delivery of the aforementioned gap in services presided over by the previous administration. The Mayor now holds 2 weekly surgeries, and has been averaging over 120 visits from residents for each, alongside a huge amount of casework that comes directly to his Office. As this cost of living crisis rages on these positions – alongside the appointment of experts from a diverse range of backgrounds including, Women and Equalities, the Somali community, social inclusion and policy and research – will ensure that the people of Tower Hamlets will no longer face delay and frustration in waiting for critical services, and are integral to the delivery of the Mayor’s transformational vision for our Borough.

11.5 Cllr Abdul Mannan

Can the lead member clarify the situation regarding large sums of money that were lent to other Local Authorities during the previous Administration, while at the same time cuts to services and staff were taking place? Will the Council be receiving these funds back anytime soon? Surely, they are better spent on the residents of our Borough during this Cost-of-Living crisis rather than laying idle in the coffers of other Local Authorities?

Response:

Spend on residents and services form part of the Council’s budget and this is separate from Treasury Management, which is managing cashflow each day to keep it safe and ensure money is available when the Council needs to use it. Holding money in the bank, in deposits with other Local Authorities or in funds are part of daily cash management and do not reduce the budget available for spend on services.

Compared to alternative places to hold cash, local authorities remain amongst the safest places available to hold money with, due to the organisations being ultimately linked to the UK Government.

With £1.5bn gross annual expenditure, on any given day the Council will hold a significant cash balance. Some sources of this include:

- Pending creditor payments
- Capital grants unspent
- S106/CIL cash
- Schools’ balances
- Ring fenced HRA cash balances
- Earmarked/ring fenced revenue grants
- Receipts in advance of spend including grants from Government
- Business Rates pending payment to government

Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure cash is available when needed. Monies not immediately required are invested in low-risk counterparties or instruments, keeping funds secure with adequate access to the cash prioritised, before considering investment return. This is in line with DLUHC Guidance, which states that when entering into treasury management investments, local authorities

should consider security, liquidity and yield in that order of importance. The council carefully reviews which authorities it would consider depositing funds with, carries out financial checks, takes expert advice, obtains approval to its investment strategy from full Council and it is also ratified by the council's Chief Finance Officer before being progressed.

The Council has always ensured it diversifies where it holds its cash, to reduce risks of losing money if one of those counterparties were to fail, and investment are held in line with the Council's treasury management strategy. Investments have been in Money Market Funds (MMF), local authorities (LA), banks, building societies, strategic pooled funds, cash plus funds, UK Government Debt management agency (DMO), callable deposits with banks and building societies and structured deposits. The Council's treasury management strategy includes limits for each type of investments as well as maximum amounts that can be invested with each counterparty.

At present the Council has two deposits with other Local Authorities: Liverpool City Council £10m maturing on 1st May 2023 interest earned by council £30,915.07. Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council £5m maturing on 14 November 2022 interest earned by council £60,082.19. Each local authority pays in full principal and interest on maturity.

11.6 Question from Asma Islam

Can the Mayor tell us if ANPR cameras were considered as an option when consulting with officers before approving to consult residents on removing Liveable Streets schemes?

Response:

As part of the ongoing review of Liveable Streets schemes, the Mayor and officers have been considering all options available, including the use of ANPR. Options will continue to be considered during the decision-making process.

11.7 Question from Councillor Kamrul Hussein

Could the Lead Member provide Council with an update on how the Mayor's pledge to build affordable housing is progressing following on from his first one hundred days in charge?

Response:

Between the 9th of May and the 27th of September 2022, there have been 324 completions of affordable homes. There are another 537 due for completion within this financial year, and another 1,640 currently forecast for next year.

11.8 Question from Councillor Asma Begum

It is understood that the Mayor and Lead Member are reviewing the LIF programme. Could the Mayor/Lead Member confirm:

- a) When the outcomes of that review will be published, and
- b) that the principles of the LIF programme (ie. a minimum of 25% of CIL earned in the area will be spent in the area, and projects based on residents' suggestions), will continue?

Response:

The council is currently reviewing how it uses available funding to best deliver infrastructure, housing and other improvements to benefit local people and support delivery of the Strategic Plan.

The Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) - known locally as the Local Infrastructure Fund (LIF) – is an important part of delivering for local communities and dealing with the impact of development. We are reviewing it to ensure it delivers on our local priorities.

The government set out regulations and guidance on NCIL, including the level (15% - 25%) and the need for consultation with the public. Any amendment to the council's approach to using NCIL will accord with these requirements.

At the current time, it is not possible to provide a timetable for the review, but we will continue to keep members updated.

11.9 Question from Councillor Musthak Ahmed

This Cost-of-Living crisis has seen the poorest and most vulnerable in Tower Hamlets hit hardest. Can the Mayor/Lead Member provide Council with an update on what measures have been put in place to ease the economic burden on those who are least to blame for this crisis?

Response:

The council is making direct payments to help low-income residents most acutely impacted by the cost of living crisis, totaling more than £5m.

Letters explaining how to access funds will start to go out to the majority of recipients in September, with payments for FSM eligible children expected to follow in November. Anyone who receives a letter will then have three months to withdraw funds from their local Post Office.

The Mayor's Energy Fund and direct payments made as part of the Mayor's cost of living relief package will provide money directly to residents – a cash first response for our most vulnerable to make sure people can continue to meet their food and energy needs over the winter.

Tower Hamlets has some of the highest rates of child and pensioner poverty in the UK so support will be targeted at those groups, with payments to all recipients of pension credit and a per child payment for FSM eligible households.

In addition we will be identifying and supporting hard to reach cohorts - like those with younger children eligible for the healthy start scheme, and the borough's most vulnerable single residents living in shared accommodation and alone. These measures will run alongside central government programmes including Cost of Living payments to Universal Credit recipients, pensioners and those with disabilities, as well as council tax rebates and the energy bills support scheme.

We will also continue to fund initiatives designed to support those in crisis and tackle the root cause issues that keep people below the poverty line – including the Mayor's free school meals, council tax reductions, discretionary housing payments, uniform grants and the residents support scheme.

We continue to support income maximisation by funding the Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN) advice network and maintaining the Tackling Poverty Outreach team. Food insecurity is mitigated by our FOOD Store pantry initiative, now operating at seven sites, and the Holiday Activities and Food programme that provides hundreds of thousands of hot meals to children over the school holidays while also tackling social isolation.

In addition we continue to fund the LBTH Food Hub, a pioneering project that provides repurposed food directly to 62 VCS organisations that help provide a safety net for those in need in the borough.

11.10 Question from Councillor Amy Lee

Could the Mayor confirm if the Council submitted a formal representation to TFL in regard to the proposed bus routes cuts?

Response:

Yes, a formal response to the TfL Central London Bus Review was submitted on 05/08/22 setting out the council's concerns on impacts the proposed reductions to the network would have on local residents. TfL's consultation report and their proposed next steps are due to be published at some point within the next 3 months.

11.11 Question from Councillor Amin Rahman

Could the Lead Member provide an update on the recently published Ofsted report following an inspection of the Borough's children's services?

Response:

Ofsted undertook a focused visit in July 2022 and published their findings in a letter on 31st August 2022. The focus of their visit was in relation to the support that we provide to the children that we care for, otherwise known as our Corporate Parenting responsibilities. They recognised the positive support that is provided to this cohort of children stating, "Children in care in Tower Hamlets benefit from committed social workers who build positive relationships with them and understand their needs and wishes well." The published letter highlights a number of key strengths including:

Children's needs are being met well and they are helped to progress and improve their experiences.

Our staff has felt well supported through the pandemic and valued by the organisation. Social workers are highly positive about the leadership and organisational culture in Tower Hamlets.

Children are enabled to build effective and supportive relationships with committed, skilled, and highly motivated social workers.

Thresholds are appropriate for children coming into care and appropriate placements are provided to meet their needs.

Children receive very effective support from the virtual school.

Disabled children's needs are prioritised, and the quality of their lives improved.

Children in custody have their needs met and careful planning minimises risks.

The Corporate Parenting Board provides effective scrutiny and is focused upon improvements.

Leadership has clear understanding of our services and our improvement priorities.

Political leaders and senior officers share strong ambition and aspiration for our children, and political leaders are committed to ensuring resources are available to drive ongoing improvement.

Ofsted did not find any areas for "priority action." They did however make a couple of recommendations which we are actioning:

Oversight of the work with children who go missing and are at risk of exploitation
Use of Family Group Conferences when children are subject to care proceedings
Ofsted recognised that we are ambitious in our plans for further improvement but agreed with the programme that we had developed and felt that our improvement plan contained the right areas of focus.

11.12 Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah

Could the Mayor and Lead Member provide an update on the progress of the much-needed London Docks School in St Katherine's and Wapping Ward, and confirm if the school will be completed by the initial projection date of September 2023?

Response:

The build project for the school's permanent site is now scheduled for completion in Autumn 2024. The school would therefore need to open on an interim site, for the duration of the 2023/24 school year, before moving to occupy its permanent accommodation.

All construction projects are under severe pressure due to external factors and this has caused some delay to the original estimated date.

11.13 Question from Councillor Ahmodur Khan

Could the Mayor provide us with an update on the decision taken to bring all of the Borough's leisure services in-house?

Response:

Officers, led by a dedicated project director, have commenced work on the insourcing of the Leisure Service, establishing the full governance structure for delivering this project, and identifying the budget required to resource this work. Workstreams have been established to lead on each specific strand of the project, based on both the Council's experience of insourcing the waste service and the London Borough of Southwark's own leisure insourcing programme. Officers are identifying all of the resource requirements to bring the service in-house by 1 May 2024, and where additional support may be needed to provide expert technical guidance. The cost of this support has been included in the budget.

The key objectives for this initial phase of the project are:

- To agree the operating model for the insourced Leisure Service, in particular to ensure all users, staff and visitors will be safe when using our leisure facilities.
- To identify the most effective IT solution for managing bookings and taking payments.
- To commence the recruitment of the permanent management team for the insourced service.
- To develop the detailed budget for the service, building on work already completed during the options appraisal stage in spring 2022.

Progress will continue to be reported to the Cabinet Member and Mayor through regular briefings.

11.14 Question from Councillor Mufedah Bustin

Could the Lead Member update the council on progress in delivering the new school building for George Green's secondary school on the Island?

Response:

The George Green Secondary School Rebuild scheme is in progress and is now at the design phase. The proposed design sees the school building move from its current location to where the sports pitch is currently located, with the pitch moved to the location of the car park. The new school will be built in three phases: with phase one seeing the development of the main school building and phase two and three delivering the sixth form block, MUGA and sports pitch.

The design teams are currently preparing the scheme for submission to the Planning Authority. In conjunction with this phase of works, the project team is also working with the relevant stakeholders to enable efficient and speedy progression and delivery, maximising opportunities for cost efficiencies.

The proposed start on site date is September 2023 (Phase 1), with an anticipated completion date of the school year 2025/26.

11.15 Question from Councillor Jahed Choudhury

Many residents have complained about the constantly shocking levels of filth, vermin and rubbish on Tower Hamlets' streets. Please could the Lead Member or the Mayor provide Council with an update on measures being taken to ensure our residents don't have to suffer such levels of uncleanliness?

Response:

Officers are working on a new plan for cleansing and enforcement in the borough, that will meet the Mayor's pledge to wage war on fly tipping and to provide a clean borough.

As well as a revised schedule of street cleansing, with an increased focus on evening and night time cleaning, our enforcement team will be targeting the areas with the highest number of flytips and will be issuing £400 fines for anyone caught dumping waste on our streets illegally. 252 FPNs have been issued between May and Aug 2022.

Complementing our tough stance on irresponsible and antisocial behaviour by individuals and businesses, we hope that through community engagement and education we can significantly reduce fly tipping and the significant cost to residents.

The plan will be phased in over the coming weeks and months and the impact of the change closely monitored for improvement.

11.16 Question from Councillor Leelu Ahmed

Will the Mayor follow Westminster Council's example, and seize dumped e-bikes and e-scooters that are cluttering streets in the borough?

Response:

A London-wide e-scooter rental trial is taking place – see Electric scooters - Transport for London (tfl.gov.uk) for further details. This covers Tower Hamlets on a limited basis with parking of e-scooters restricted to a small number of sites at Canary Wharf and on TfL land only – no trial scooters can be left on council owned land. Privately owned e-scooters are illegal on public roads, and officers are in contact with the Metropolitan Police regarding enforcement.

With regards to dockless e-bikes, officers are closely monitoring Westminster Council's approach to enforcement and its effectiveness via the borough officer pan-London dockless working group. Officers are also reporting issues directly to the operators themselves.

11.17 Question from Councillor Ahmodul Kabir

Could the Mayor provide us with a timeline of when the new Town Hall will be completed, and when Council services can expect to move into the new facilities?

Response:

The new Town Hall build works are expected to be completed by the end of October 2022, with fit out and move programme to follow on to January 2023. Staff and services will be moving in phases subject to the thorough and highly important testing and commissioning stage.

11.18 Question from Councillor Faroque Ahmed

I have been receiving complaints from concerned residents and business owners about the untidy waste left on the streets on Whitechapel Road and has not been cleared for the last few months. Could the Lead Member provide an update on how he is going to tackle this as soon as possible?

Response:

Officers are working on a new plan for cleansing and enforcement in the borough, that will meet the Mayor's pledge to wage war on fly tipping and to provide a clean borough. As well as a revised schedule of street cleansing, with an increase focus on evening and night time cleaning, our enforcement team will be targeting the areas with the highest number of flytips and will be issuing £400 fines for anyone caught dumping waste on our streets illegally – 252 FPNs have been issued between May and Aug 2022.

Complementing our tough stance on irresponsible and antisocial behaviour by individual and businesses, we hope that through community engagement, education we can significantly reduce fly tipping and the significant cost to residents.

The plan will be phased in over the coming weeks and months and the impact of the change closely monitored for improvement.

Specifically, at the Whitechapel Market area, we have recently started a pilot to improve the management of market trader waste and tackle the high levels of fly tipping in the area. Whilst this is still early days, we expect it to greatly reduce the amount of waste deposited in the area and improve the streetscape.

11.19 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

Can the Mayor provide Council with an update on his plans to make Tower Hamlets a greener and cleaner Borough?

Response:

The Mayoral Greener Future for Tower Hamlets programme is an umbrella for all policy delivery for a Clean and Green Future. The programme has four themes as follows;

- Mayor's Energy Fund: This will now include the Carbon Fund which is collected through s106 for carbon offsetting from new developments, projects delivered from these funds will include Energy Grants for Schools, Small Businesses, Community Groups and Residents
- Mayor's Advisory Board for Climate Change: Through the Partnership Executive Group (PEG)

In addition to the work we are undertaking to improve the cleansing regimes and prevention of fly tipping, we are very pleased that Tower Hamlets has been awarded 'Tree Cities of the World' status for our dedication to urban and community forestry, tree-planting, and biodiversity.

In the last five years, Tower Hamlets Council has planted approximately 7,800 trees in our streets and across our parks.

The Mayor has committed to a programme of planting even more trees in our borough, including with a £1.5 million fund for tree-planting so all our residents can enjoy the benefits of trees and the improvement to the environment.

11.20 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Will the Mayor and Lead Member update me on the progress of the review of the Car Free Zone / Permit Transfer Scheme policies initiated by former Councillor Kahar Choudhury in late-2021?

Response:

A review of the PTS policy is nearing completion and will be taken through the decision-making process in the near future.

11.21 Question from Councillor Ana Miah

Sport and culture have played an historic role in the tradition and identity of our Borough. Can the Mayor tell us more about his plan to encourage young people in the Borough to use sport to take them onto better things?

Response:

The Council is financially supporting the delivery of school sport, the London Youth Games, the School Games and the elite school sport pathway through district and borough teams for gifted and talented students. This programme enables inter-borough competitions between primary and secondary schools, young people with SEND as well as training and competitions against other London boroughs and districts. Leadership, and volunteering opportunities are also included as part of the programme.

The Council has just completed an extremely successful Summer Programme that provided a variety of sporting activity for children and young people ranging from adventurous activities such as canoeing and climbing to football and basketball. To assist families with the 'cost of living' crisis, free nutritional food was also provided with each activity.

The Council also provides certified and accredited courses / training for young people through the Duke of Edinburgh and Community Sports Leaders Award.

Looking ahead, officers are working with the Mayor and Lead Member to develop proposals for a significant investment in our youth provision, which will include a specific element to promote sporting activities for young people.

11.22 Question from Councillor James King

Will the Mayor provide an update on the structural work on Malting and Brewster Houses?

Response:

Following a Cabinet decision to undertake structural works to the two blocks, Wates was awarded the works contract in May 2021.

The delays we have experienced relate to a number of factors, mainly contractual related to the contract awarded to Wates, and this has led to unforeseeable delays THH have resolved all the outstanding matters and the works are likely to commence in September 2022 and complete in February 2024.

Some works have already taken place on site, for example lift overhauls. Work is also well advanced in identifying and refurbishing the temporary accommodation into which residents will move into whilst works are undertaken in their flats. Residents on the 11th and 12th floors will be rehoused temporarily for the duration of the project and six households are planned to be permanently re-housed due to overcrowding and medical issues.

Forty-two properties have been earmarked to support the decanting process. On site respite facilities will be available for residents to use during the works.

11.23 Question from Councillor Bellal Uddin

Following the death of HRH Queen Elizabeth II, will the Mayor endorse the Aspire Group's suggestion for a memorial to the Queen at the new Town Hall?

Response:

The Queen spent many, many years as Head of State of the UK. If there is appetite for a memorial at the Town Hall then I will not object to its construction and would support any memorial agreed by this Council.

11.24 Question from Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury

Tower Hamlets council has been providing lower skilled training which doesn't encourage or provide higher skilled work opportunities. The cost of living set to increase to the highest amount in 10 years. Upskilling is a proven method of mitigating the impact of inflation for the individual, local communities and wider society.

What is the Council's plan to provide opportunities for residents to move into high skilled professional roles?

Response:

The employment and skills service is delivering a number of projects designed to support residents into more aspirational work in the short, medium and long-term which are listed below.

However, to set the context, further education qualifications above Level 2 are not delivered by the council; they are delivered by FE colleges and other providers who are funded by the government to deliver them. Idea Store Learning, the council's adult and community learning provision, delivers a range of training to approximately 4,500 residents each year, translating into 6000 learner registrations (i.e. individuals taking more than one course). Idea Store Learning is funded by the Adult Education Budget (AEB) and is the largest provider of ESOL and functional skills courses in the borough, after New City College. The AEB funding has been devolved from the Department for Education to the GLA and is linked to qualifications that already exist, and must be taught to a syllabus. Idea Store Learning direct their AEB funding to learners who are at entry level or have not yet achieved their Level 2 qualifications in ESOL, English, Maths and/or Digital Skills. These qualification courses are aimed at supporting learners who are furthest from the labour market and those learners who have barriers to progression into higher level qualifications or employment.

The council's employment support service, Workpath, focuses its limited resources on supporting people furthest from the labour market into work and the majority of the 2000 residents who use the service each year have multiple barriers to employment. Barriers include: a lack of basic employability skills, ESOL needs, health, disabilities, mental health issues, debt, long term worklessness and a lack of basic skills in English and maths, which they are supported to overcome. These basic barriers need to be removed before clients can be supported into upskilling to Level 3 and higher.

The strategic work being delivered by the Employment & Skills service to secure an inclusive economy includes:

LIFT Digital Hub – GLA Mayoral Academies Programme

The E&S team is delivering the LIFT Digital Hub as part of the GLA funded Mayoral Academies Programme. The MAP aims to support Londoners into good work in growth industry sectors with job creation potential and that are key to London's recovery. LBTH and LIFT successfully secured MAP Funding of £250k over 2 years to deliver the LIFT Digital Hub across TH, Camden, Hackney and Islington. The Academy is focusing on this thriving sector, spanning the breadth of front end, back end and business roles, and reflecting industry demand. Key areas of focus will include software engineering, web development, cyber security, digital marketing, data analytics, business analysis, tech consulting. The team is working with employers, booking insight sessions for the wider staff team, and running outreach sessions to promote opportunities to a wider audience.

Central London Forward: Strategic Development Fund

Led by our own New City College, we are working at a sub-regional level on a collaboration between employers, equipment manufacturers, industry standard

bodies and education providers to create low carbon technology learning labs. Through these, people will have access to contemporary equipment and skilled staff, so they can enter and develop a career in low carbon technologies. Starting with the delivery of conversion courses for current electricians and plumbers, the project then seeks to develop pathways for people wishing to enter the industry as either an initial job or as a career change. Learning courses are being aligned to industry standards by working with MCS, so people can be confident they will meet the required level of industry competence to install and maintain low carbon energy technology. This work will also provide a best practice framework for the Corporation of London's Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce, which is mapping over the next three years, development and skills needs to achieve carbon net zero across London development, and which seeks to ensure that London residents will benefit from the resultant skills accelerators.

Supported Employment - Intermediate Labour Market programmes

The Supported Employment Programmes team delivers a range of intermediate labour market programmes, i.e. paid work experience with mandatory training over 4 to 6 months. ILM programmes still support those most in need and with significant barriers, but whilst they are expensive to deliver, have a retention and progression rate as high as 76% (national average is @ 55%). The combination of work experience with mandatory training allows people to prove themselves and to develop both personal and workplace skills simultaneously. Target groups for various programmes include women, over 50s, Through Care, 16-24yrs, SEND. Programmes depend upon available funding, but the delivery focus for 2022/23 is on:

- An ESF funded cohort of 10
- 10 x creative and cultural apprenticeships
- 10 x creative and cultural internships
- 10 x SEND apprentices
- 50 Plus programme
- DWP funded Supported Employment (SEND) programme for a cohort of 60 over two years

Creative Enterprise Zone

The CEZ which encompasses Hackney Wick and Fish Island is delivering the following outcomes:

- Protection and creation of permanent, affordable creative workspace and live-work spaces at below market rents;
- Development, delivery and implementation of proactive, pro-cultural statutory and non-statutory policy approaches;
- Providing innovative, effective business support to artists, sole traders, micro and small creative businesses to support their resilience and growth;
- Developing career pathways and progression opportunities into the creative industries and supporting sectors, building a pipeline of local talent through accessible skills and training;
- Embedding creative production in communities through engagement activities that create vibrant, socially inclusive and integrated places.

The new (July 2022) Careers & Social Mobility team has picked up work related to “Bridging the Divide” and the Race Equality Action Plan to raise and expand the careers opportunities for our young people. Some key areas of work are:

- Careers Curated Website - Research and scoping for the new curated website is well under way with a view to launching in the autumn term. Providing careers information and resources from a range of partners. Youth Council consulted and engaged.
- Leaders Forum - The Leaders Forum is a key recommendation from the 2021 Equalities Commission and aligns with the Mayor’s proposals to write to all businesses in the borough to re-engage and negotiate ‘better/higher skilled’ roles for residents. This is part of a wider effort to maximise our opportunity with partners. “Assemble a Leaders' Forum which brings together organisations in Canary Wharf and City of London to deliver a range of initiatives to support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people into work, increase the representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents in senior positions, and unblock systemic barriers within organisations”.

The Leaders Forum will support and guide a mixed programme of work based on the following:

- o Mentoring commitments
- o Internship commitments
- o Apprenticeship commitments
- o Experience of the Workplace and curriculum support, including challenge events and soft skills training
- o Develop guidance and resources for businesses to review their CSR programmes
- o Creating Safe spaces in the workplace for meaningful dialogue to take place
- o Developing and piloting New Methods of Recruitment

- 6 x Borough-wide Careers Fairs each year – delivered over the academic year from Oct 2022. Dates and venues secured from NCC, UEL, QMU, CWG, London Met, as well as input from various public and private partners. Full programmes are still being developed but each fair will host @ 2000 young people from our secondary schools across the borough.

- The Summer School – university (UEL, QMUL, London Met) summer schools being promoted to the schools again from May in order to get young people booked into sessions.

- BAME Mentoring - contract awarded to The Switch. Their development work began May 2022 with mentoring work beginning from Sept term 2022. 400 young people over two years. Discussion underway to develop a generic and co-produced offer of mentoring to support more young people.

- CEZ - The Careers & Employment Support officer will pick up delivery of the CEZ employment outputs with the Supported Employment Team (SEP). 10 x CCI apprenticeships and 10 x CCI paid internships.

In addition to the work the teams are undertaking, the Mayor is currently writing to the top businesses in the borough to re-engage and negotiate “better/higher paid” roles for residents as part of the Council’s effort to maximise our opportunities with partners.

11.25 Question from Councillor Abdul Malik

Could the Mayor explain how he plans to strengthen the Trade Union voice in the decision-making processes in Tower Hamlets, and how these changes can be locked in constitutionally?

Response:

Trade Unions are an integral and invaluable vehicle in the social, political and economic furtherment of working people, and this administration recognizes their importance and the importance of ensuring their voice is heard and considered in any decisions taken by the Council. The Mayor has already held several meetings with the recognized Trade Unions in this Council, and continues to liaise and consult with them on all policy decisions that could impact council employees – front line or otherwise.

The Mayor is confident that this relationship will continue to grow, and is pleased to announce that he will be extending an invitation for representatives from the Council's three recognized Trade Unions to update the administration's monthly cabinet meeting, where they will be able to share concerns, ideas and suggestions to the Executive.

11.26 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

The revised traffic scheme on Preston's Road will have a serious impact on residents and business on the Isle of Dogs. It has been known for years that the traffic Island close to Yabsley Street has regularly been the location of many accidents. Will the Mayor outline when and what level of consultation was undertaken prior to the commencement of these works and what happened as a result of the consultation on what appears to be a different scheme?

Response:

The works that started on the 19th September on Prestons Road are Section 278 Highway works for the Wood Wharf development and therefore are not being financed by the Council, they are purely to facilitate the access to Wood Wharf.

The S278 works cover an area from the Blue Bridge to approximately 40m north of Managers Street and is not the scheme previously consulted on for Prestons Road. The consultation for the Vision 0 scheme took place on June 21.

11.27 Question from Councillor Nathalie Bienfait

Could the Executive outline what they are currently doing to start work on insulating council homes in the borough? Could they also outline any work they are undertaking to understand the current state of home insulation in the borough's council homes?

Response:

THH, who manage the council's housing stock, has delivered insulation works to over 2,200 flats and houses which has been funded through a number of initiatives including Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP), Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT) funding schemes.

THH are exploring funding sources and engaged in the Retrofit London Housing Action Plan to deliver the boroughs objective of reaching an average EPC B rating across all London domestic properties. The financial implications require further investigation as significant additional funding will be required to achieve EPC B by 2030 (SAP 81).

THH are looking at opportunities to carry out insulation improvements as part of any building safety/fire safety work and upgrade properties to achieve EPC B rating.

Tower Hamlets is a member of the Retrofit London Housing Action Plan, through this action plan London Councils is working to leverage significant private sector finance to support green initiatives, including retrofit projects across the country. The Council is also working on a number of other funding opportunities including the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and Local Authority Delivery Scheme to retrofit homes in the borough.

The Mayor's Greener Future for Tower Hamlets programme will set up a Mayor's Advisory Board for Climate Change, this board will have the remit to work with and engage all housing providers in the borough to work together to retrofit and improve the energy efficiency of all homes in the borough.