

Foreword from Mayor Lutfur Rahman on the 2023-24 Budget and MTFS

This budget represents the next stage in our vision to rebuild Tower Hamlets. In six short months, we have already achieved so much. From reintroducing the Mayor's *Education Maintenance Allowance* and *University Bursary* schemes, to the insourcing of the Borough's Leisure Services; from the Mayor's £5million *Cost of Living* package to support the most vulnerable, to the installation of £1million worth of solar panelling on Council buildings.

Yet there is still so much more to come.

This is now a Council that will invest to save in the long run. We will not bow to the pressures imposed upon us by the Cost of Living and Energy crises, nor will we undermine and underfund key services in the Borough. This Budget has been designed in a way that addresses the priorities laid out in my transformative, popular *Manifesto*. This is a prudent budget that will deliver for the residents of Tower Hamlets and prioritise and protect the delivery of key services.

It demonstrates that austerity and the cutting of vital services is a political choice rather than economic necessity. That is why we are reinvesting in our frontline services, from young people and education to Waste Management, from care to public safety, ensuring that our residents receive the best quality of life in spite of difficult economic and social circumstances.

These are not easy times. Thousands of our residents are living in poverty; 40% of our children remain below the breadline. I know I was elected Mayor to address these challenges. This budget is my first attempt to make good on this promise.

Among many other things, this budget ensures:

- **Improvement in the lives of our young people, including:**
 - £11.5million of investment in Youth Services, including an additional £8.5million in *Young Tower Hamlets* on top of £3million already invested in the Borough's Youth Services
 - £5.7million of investment to extend *Universal Free School Meals* to all Primary and Secondary School pupils – making us the only Borough in the country to do so
 - £1.1million on the reintroduction of the Mayor's *Education Maintenance Allowance* and *University Bursary* schemes

- **Safety for all residents in our Borough, including:**
 - Additional Police Officers through £1.5million in additional funding
 - Additional Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs) with £2.9million of investment
 - £215,000 in CCTV investment, including roving vehicles to keep our streets safe

- **Our streets are clean and green, including:**
 - £5.4 million investment in electric waste vehicles and charging points
 - £2.13million investment in flat waste recycling
 - £540,000 investment in Low Carbon Fuel Supply

- **An ambitious programme of housebuilding and repairs, including:**

- Provision to build 1,000 affordable homes per year for four years – a total of 4,000 this term
- £347,000 for repairs management
- **The best care for our elderly and vulnerable residents, such as:**
 - £2.4million of free community based care services our most vulnerable and elderly residents.

This is just the beginning. We are laying the foundations for an economic and social programme of real change in Tower Hamlets. As someone who has witnessed change in this Borough for five decades – both good and bad – I relish this opportunity to improve the lives of our residents and make Tower Hamlets the best place to live for all.

Kind regards and solidarity,

Lutfur