

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 2011

**THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Helal Abbas	Councillor Dr. Emma Jones
Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed	Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Rofique U Ahmed	Councillor Rania Khan
Councillor Shelina Aktar	Councillor Anna Lynch
Councillor Shahed Ali	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Tim Archer	Councillor Md. Maium Miah
Councillor Craig Aston	Councillor Fozol Miah
Councillor Lutfu Begum	Councillor Ahmed Adam Omer
Councillor Mizan Chaudhury	Councillor Lesley Pavitt
Councillor Alibor Choudhury	Councillor Joshua Peck
Councillor Zara Davis	Councillor Oliur Rahman
Councillor Stephanie Eaton	Councillor Rachael Saunders
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor David Snowdon
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor Gloria Thienel
Councillor Judith Gardiner	Councillor Bill Turner
Councillor Carlo Gibbs	Councillor Kosru Uddin
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Shafiqul Haque	Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Carli Harper-Penman	Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Sirajul Islam	Councillor Amy Whitelock

The Chair of Council, Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman, in the Chair

Mr Reg Ward

Before commencing the formal business on the agenda, the Chair of Council said that Members would be aware of the recent sad death of Mr Reg Ward who was the first Chief Executive of the London Docklands Development Corporation and who had made a significant contribution to the regeneration of that part of the borough.

At the Chair's invitation the Council, officers and public gallery rose to observe a minute's silence in Mr Ward's memory.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Abdul Asad, Shiria Khatun, Mohammed Abdul Mukit and Zenith Rahman.

RESOLVED

That the apologies be noted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors made declarations of interest on items included on the agenda as follows:

Councillor	Item	Type of interest	Reason
Kabir Ahmed	12.5	Personal	I sat on the Strategic Development Committee that allocated 2.1 million to Rich Mix
Ohid Ahmed	8.1	Personal	Wife works for Jagonari
Mizanur Chaudhury	12.5	Prejudicial	Board Member on Rich Mix
Alibor Choudhury	12.2	Personal	Ward Councillor for Shadwell
Zara Davis	12.2	Personal	Ward Councillor for Millwall
Zara Davis	12.6	Personal	Ward Councillor for Millwall
David Edgar	5.3	Personal	I signed the petition
David Edgar	12.2	Personal	I signed the petition
David Edgar	12.6	Personal	I signed the petition
Peter Golds	5.3	Personal	Ward Councillor and local resident
Shafiqul Haque	12.5	Personal	I was Lead Member for Regeneration and sitting on the Rich Mix Board
Carli Harper-Penman	12.5	Personal	Member of the Strategic Development Committee that allocated funds to Rich Mix and also a member of the Rich Mix Board in 2006
Denise Jones	5.1	Personal	I have signed the petition
Denise Jones	5.3	Personal	I have signed the petition
Denise Jones	12.2	Personal	I have signed the petition
Denise Jones	12.5	Prejudicial	I am a member of the Board of Rich Mix
Denise Jones	12.6	Personal	I have signed the petition

Anwar Khan	5.2	Personal	Olga SureStart Centre is in my ward
Rabina Khan	12.2	Personal	Ward Councillor for Shadwell
Anna Lynch	12.5	Personal	Rich Mix is in my ward
Maium Miah	12.2	Personal	Ward Councillor for Millwall
Maium Miah	12.6	Personal	Ward Councillor for Millwall
Lesley Pavitt	5.3	Personal	I signed the petition
Lesley Pavitt	12.2	Personal	I signed the petition
Lesley Pavitt	12.6	Personal	I signed the petition
Joshua Peck	5.3	Personal	I signed the petition
Joshua Peck	12.2	Personal	I signed the petition
Joshua Peck	12.6	Personal	I signed the petition
Rachael Saunders	5.3	Personal	I signed the petition
Rachael Saunders	12.2	Personal	I signed the petition
Rachael Saunders	12.5	Prejudicial	Board Member of Rich Mix
Rachael Saunders	12.6	Personal	I signed the petition
David Snowdon	12.2	Personal	Ward Councillor for Millwall
David Snowdon	12.6	Personal	Ward Councillor for Millwall
Bill Turner	12.4	Personal	I am a member of the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign
Motin Uz-Zaman	6.3	Personal	Board member, East End Homes

3. MINUTES

The Service Head, Democratic Services stated that he had been asked by Councillor Rachael Saunders to read out a short statement to correct the record in reference to the meeting sought by Jim Fitzpatrick MP and Rushanara Ali MP with the Mayor. The Mayor was formally invited to the meeting on the 23rd November, and did not formally accept or refuse the invitation in advance of the meeting. Councillor Saunders regrets passing on inaccurate information given to her in good faith.

RESOLVED

That subject to the above, the minutes of the ordinary Council meeting held on 8th December 2010 be confirmed as a correct record of the proceedings and the Chair of Council be authorised to sign them accordingly.

4. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF COUNCIL OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**1) Young Mayor elections**

The Chair of Council said that his first announcement concerned the recent Young Mayor elections which took place on 25th January 2011. There had been an excellent turnout of 52% and it gave him great pleasure to congratulate and welcome to the meeting the new Young Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Nahimul Islam and his deputies Tasmina Khanum and Nadeem Miah. The outgoing Young Mayor, Landry Adelard was unable to attend the meeting and the Chair therefore invited his Deputy, Tahmina Begum to address the Council.

Miss Tahmina Begum addressed Members about her year in office as Deputy Young Mayor.

2) Freedom of the Borough

The Chair of Council said that Members would be aware that as part of the recent Constitutional amendments, the Chair of Council's Panel was re-established to consider and make recommendations on any proposal to award the Freedom of the Borough to persons who have given imminent service to Tower Hamlets. The Chair informed the Council that he intended to call a Special meeting of the Council on 23rd February 2011 to consider the Freedom of the Borough.

5. TO RECEIVE ANY PETITIONS**5.1 Petition from Mr. Matthew Smith and others re: touting on Brick Lane**

At the invitation of the Chair of Council, Mr. Matthew Smith and Mr. Philip Vracas addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and replied to questions from Members.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor responded to the petition. Councillor Ahmed said that he was totally against any form of touting for custom by restaurants. It was tainting the reputation of the borough. The Council had so far prosecuted over 70 touts and was taking action against 7 businesses for touting offences and seeking a review of their licences.

The Council was committed to rid the Brick Lane area of touting and Council officers would work with the police raising the levels of enforcement especially targeted at persistent offenders.

RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Communities, Localities and Culture for a written response on any outstanding matters within 28 days.

5.2 Petition from Parents, Grandparents, Carers and Children of Olga SureStart Centre opposing the closure of the centre

At the invitation of the Chair of Council, Mr. Pierre Fabri and Ms. Raquel Aguado addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and replied to questions from Members.

Councillor Oliur Rahman, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, thanked the petitioners for coming to the meeting. As a parent himself he was looking forward to sending his daughter to a centre in the borough and wanted to make it clear that no children centres in Tower Hamlets would be closing. The centres would be made more efficient, no frontline workers would be losing their jobs and in some cases family support would be increased. If anyone had any concerns, both Councillor Rahman and the Mayor would be happy to meet and discuss these.

RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to the Acting Corporate Director, Children, Schools and Families for a written response on any outstanding matters within 28 days.

5.3 Petition from the Save King Edward Park Campaign re: Thames Water's proposed works at the park

At the invitation of the Chair of Council, Ms. Emma Dunsire addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and replied to questions from Members.

Change to order of business

Councillor Rabina Khan then **MOVED** and Councillor Alibor Choudhury **SECONDED** – "That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied to allow motion 12.2 to be considered after item 5.3."

The procedural motion was put to the vote and **agreed**.

Mayor Lutfur Rahman thanked the petitioner for bringing the petition to the Council meeting. He stated that he took seriously the concerns raised and lessons had been learnt from the Crossrail saga. All opportunities needed to be explored to negate the impact on the community and the Mayor was happy work with Ms. Dunsire and officers to make sure that all current suggestions were looked at and to work with the Ward Councillors get a solution.

RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Communities, Localities and Culture for a written response on any outstanding matters within 28 days.

12.2 Motion proposed by Councillor Rabina Khan regarding King Edward VII Memorial Park

With the consent of the meeting under Procedure Rule 15.8.1, Councillor Rabina Khan altered the text of her motion.”

Councillor Rabina Khan **MOVED**, and Councillor Alibor Choudhury **SECONDED** the revised motion as follows:–

“The Council notes:

1. That Thames Water is planning to deface one of Tower Hamlets key community assets, King Edward VII Memorial Park, a landmark of the East End both for its historical significance and its social value;
2. That at present the park is well used by the community all year round and it provides an oasis in an area where green spaces are scarce;
3. That King Edward VII Memorial Park is vital to the community life of Shadwell, Wapping, Limehouse and Stepney and that damaging it in any way or reducing its accessibility and possibility of enjoyment for any period of time would bear an immediate and irreparable impact on said communities;

The Council recognises:

1. The extensive proposed works will damage the mature vegetation and wildlife habitats beyond repair and will make the park, its amenities and the Thames river path unusable for the duration of the Tunnel build;
2. Once the works are completed, the community will be left with a concrete promontory on the foreshore and huge buildings that will deface the beautiful riverfront, spoil the park view completely and erode the use the community makes of the park and its inherent heritage value;
3. That the proposed Thames Water plans for the park and its foreshore are unacceptable as the impact they will cause far outweighs the benefits it would bring to Tower Hamlets’ community;
4. That there are alternative Brownfield sites that Thames Water has failed to examine;

5. That Thames Water's current plans for construction in King Edward VII Memorial Park and on its foreshore appear to be in blatant contravention of the approved Council's strategy for open spaces based on the principles of impact on health, quality of life and preservation of biodiversity;

The Council resolves:

1. To protect King Edward VII Memorial Park and its foreshore from Thames Water's proposed plans and any future plan that may damage the park and the use the community makes of it;
2. To oppose and challenge to the full extent of its capacity said plans at every level of consultation and to obtain independent technical advice to support the continuing scrutiny of emerging proposals;
3. To continue to oppose and challenge Thames Water to use Brownfield sites where sustainable and technically feasible."

Councillor Dr. Emma Jones **MOVED**, and Councillor Zara Davis **SECONDED**, a tabled **amendment** to the motion as follows:-

"Further to 'This Council notes', insert:

4. That Thames Water is planning an upgrade of London's sewer system and has recently consulted on a number of proposed routes for the proposed Thames Tunnel sewer from Tower Hill to the sewage treatment works at Beckton;
5. That King Edward VII Memorial Park was opened in 1922 by King George V and has been one of the green lungs of the borough for nearly 90 years.

Further to 'The Council recognises', add:

6. That Thames Water's preferred 'Abbey Mill' route includes overflow points on the foreshore of the King Edward VII Memorial Park in Shadwell, and part of the back of Narrow Street;
7. That Narrow Street is a historical thoroughfare through Shadwell and Limehouse, containing rare examples of Georgian terracing;
8. That the alternative 'River Thames' route includes shaft sites at Sir John McDougal Gardens and Bellgate Place on Westferry Road;
9. That the borough has a shortage of open space and that the area around Sir John McDougal Gardens is one of the most densely populated in the borough;

10. That Thames Water has also shortlisted sites at Shadwell Basin, Limehouse Basin and School House Lane.

Further to 'The Council resolves', add:

4. To object to the River Thames route which would involve shaft sites at Sir John McDougal Gardens and Bellgate Place on Westferry Road;
5. To object to the shortlisting of the Shadwell Basin, Limehouse Basin and School House Lane sites;
6. To call upon Thames Water to give consideration to the many public objections to the proposed route via Shadwell and Limehouse, and the alternative River Thames route via Millwall;
7. To ensure that the Executive Mayor meets with Thames Water to discuss the route of the Thames Tunnel and to urge them to rule out the proposed route and the River Thames route in favour of the alternative via Rotherhithe."

Following debate, Councillor Rabina Khan indicated that she accepted the amendment moved by Councillor Dr Emma Jones.

The substantive motion as amended was then put to the vote and was **agreed** with no Member voting against. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

The Council notes:

1. That Thames Water is planning to deface one of Tower Hamlets key community assets, King Edward VII Memorial Park, a landmark of the East End both for its historical significance and its social value;
2. That at present the park is well used by the community all year round and it provides an oasis in an area where green spaces are scarce;
3. That King Edward VII Memorial Park is vital to the community life of Shadwell, Wapping, Limehouse and Stepney and that damaging it in any way or reducing its accessibility and possibility of enjoyment for any period of time would bear an immediate and irreparable impact on said communities;
4. That Thames Water is planning an upgrade of London's sewer system and has recently consulted on a number of proposed routes for the proposed Thames Tunnel sewer from Tower Hill to the sewage treatment works at Beckton;
5. That King Edward VII Memorial Park was opened in 1922 by King George V and has been one of the green lungs of the borough for nearly 90 years.

The Council recognises:

1. The extensive proposed works will damage the mature vegetation and wildlife habitats beyond repair and will make the park, its amenities and the Thames river path unusable for the duration of the Tunnel build;
2. Once the works are completed, the community will be left with a concrete promontory on the foreshore and huge buildings that will deface the beautiful riverfront, spoil the park view completely and erode the use the community makes of the park and its inherent heritage value;
3. That the proposed Thames Water plans for the park and its foreshore are unacceptable as the impact they will cause far outweighs the benefits it would bring to Tower Hamlets' community;
4. That there are alternative Brownfield sites that Thames Water has failed to examine;
5. That Thames Water's current plans for construction in King Edward VII Memorial Park and on its foreshore appear to be in blatant contravention of the approved Council's strategy for open spaces based on the principles of impact on health, quality of life and preservation of biodiversity;
6. That Thames Water's preferred 'Abbey Mill' route includes overflow points on the foreshore of the King Edward VII Memorial Park in Shadwell, and part of the back of Narrow Street;
7. That Narrow Street is a historical thoroughfare through Shadwell and Limehouse, containing rare examples of Georgian terracing;
8. That the alternative 'River Thames' route includes shaft sites at Sir John McDougal Gardens and Bellgate Place on Westferry Road;
9. That the borough has a shortage of open space and that the area around Sir John McDougal Gardens is one of the most densely populated in the borough;
10. That Thames Water has also shortlisted sites at Shadwell Basin, Limehouse Basin and School House Lane.

The Council resolves:

1. To protect King Edward VII Memorial Park and its foreshore from Thames Water's proposed plans and any future plan that may damage the park and the use the community makes of it;

2. To oppose and challenge to the full extent of its capacity said plans at every level of consultation and to obtain independent technical advice to support the continuing scrutiny of emerging proposals;
3. To continue to oppose and challenge Thames Water to use Brownfield sites where sustainable and technically feasible;
4. To object to the River Thames route which would involve shaft sites at Sir John McDougal Gardens and Bellgate Place on Westferry Road;
5. To object to the shortlisting of the Shadwell Basin, Limehouse Basin and School House Lane sites;
6. To call upon Thames Water to give consideration to the many public objections to the proposed route via Shadwell and Limehouse, and the alternative River Thames route via Millwall;
7. To ensure that the Executive Mayor meets with Thames Water to discuss the route of the Thames Tunnel and to urge them to rule out the proposed route and the River Thames route in favour of the alternative via Rotherhithe.

6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

6.1 Question from Mr. Richard Desmond re: A Pride March for East London in 2011

“The group Out East is working to establish solidarity and build community among people who identify as Lesbian, Queer, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender or who are questioning issues about sexuality or gender identity in Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Newham. Thus in the face of homophobic prejudice and hate crimes, it is this group's intention to have a Pride March from Hackney into Tower Hamlets late this summer and we would like to end the march with an event in Victoria Park, it expected to be less than 2000 people for under three hours on a Saturday afternoon. We ask that the Mayor help facilitate this with the use of the park to and show his support for this campaign against all hate crimes and in solidarity with the diverse communities of our borough.”

Response of the Mayor

I support any initiative that aims to promote tolerance and community cohesion. You can apply to the Council's Arts and Events Service for permission. However, I should warn you that some Labour Councillors, especially in Bow West, have been very vocal about limiting the number of events in Victoria Park.

As Mayor, I would be happy to work with you to overcome their objections.

Point of personal explanation

Councillor Joshua Peck rose to give a personal explanation as the Mayor had referred to Labour Councillors in Bow West in his response. The Mayor had stated that they wished to limit the number of events in Victoria Park. Councillor Peck stated that this related to commercial events and the Councillors' motion had made it clear that they were in support of community events.

Summary of supplementary question from Mr. Desmond:

I am the Chair of the Victoria Park Friends Group. This is not a big event with only 2,000 people expected whereas other events have up to 8,000 attendees. Will the Mayor support our use of the park?

Summary of the Mayor's response:

I fully support your endeavours. Please make your application and officers will look at it on its own merits.

6.2 Question from Mr. Ahmed Hussain re: creation of more jobs in the borough

"Can the Mayor kindly let us know how is he progressing in creating more jobs in the borough?"

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member, Regeneration

Creating new jobs and connecting out of work residents to new jobs is one of mayor's five main priorities. As at December 2010, there has been an increase of over 5 per cent in the employment rate. This means that there are an additional 800 residents in work. This is great news and the early initiatives pursued by the council have played a part in the change.

We are refreshing the Employment Strategy brought in by Cllr Choudhury under a previous administration and supported by the mayor when he was leader. It is being reworked to respond to the new economic environment and the government's changes to the welfare to work programmes. This administration is engaging robustly with the Prime contractors for the new Single Work Programme – to ensure that they are responding to the needs of Tower Hamlets' residents and our commitment to put more people into work.

Summary of supplementary question from Mr. Hussain:

I do not think that Cabinet Members know that I regularly do enquiries as a resident. I have found there will be 500 job losses at this Council

with a net of 250. In the previous Council, the Mayor was the Leader and he knows about the problems. Is it not misleading to say on the Mayor's webpage that new jobs will be created?

Summary of Cabinet Member's response:

It is easy to blame the Mayor but in fact it is your Government that is implementing these cuts.

6.3 Question from Mr. John Wright re: East End Homes

"As a resident of the Glamis Estate E1 which is managed by East End Homes, I and many other residents including residents of other East End Homes estates are deeply concerned that the views of these residents are not being represented. We feel this could be due to poor attendance by Councillors. Could we be informed of their attendance records since appointment to the board of EEH and I also seek help from the council on the lack of transparency and information from EEH main Board?"

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

I know you well and you do a tremendous amount of work for the Glamis Estate TRA. The TRA ensures that the concerns of residents, in particular vulnerable residents like older people are voiced and heard. The Mayor and I feel very strongly that tenants and leaseholders have a right to have a meaningful say on how estates are managed and maintained.

I understand that a consultation took place on estate by EEH and the estate decided that they would not sign up to the consultation. I want to work with you to ensure that EEH is engaging residents effectively and that members are holding the Board to account. I would be happy to meet with you and any other Councillors to work with the Mayor to iron out any issues that may exist.

Summary of supplementary question from Mr. Wright:

Is the Council happy with the current situation? The Chief Executive of East End Homes is an ex-LBTH worker. There is a lack of transparency and representation at East End Homes in stark contrast with Tower Hamlets Homes and Tower Hamlets Community Housing.

Summary of Cabinet Member's response:

I would like to work with you and East End Homes to iron out these issues and to hold the RSL to account. We also need to ensure that rents are not increased unduly and that tenants are well looked after.

6.4 Question from Ms. Anna Begum re: increase in the number of Tesco stores across the borough

“Like many residents, I am concerned at the increase in the number of Tescos across the borough. I am worried that the Council may have been unduly influenced by big business. Can you confirm whether any councillors are either linked to Tesco directly or work for organisations responsible for lobbying and other public affairs/public relations work on behalf of Tesco?”

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member, Regeneration

I share your concern at the sudden increase in supermarket chain shops across the borough. However, I am informed by officers that the Council has no power to control who operates shops other than the shops that the Council owns within its own housing estates that it still manages.

All Councillors are required to declare who they work for and this information is on the website. The Code of Conduct for Members within the Council's Constitution requires that Members must declare interests when sitting at committee.

Summary of supplementary question:

Is it true that Councillor Joshua Peck is lobbying for the company and for Crossrail as clients of his company?

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Joshua Peck replied to the supplementary question.

Councillor Peck stated that the allegation was entirely false and without foundation. The Scottish office of his company had undertaken some work for Tesco in Scotland only. Councillor Peck had no contact with any representative of Tesco in a professional capacity. Officers had confirmed that the Council had received no planning applications from Tesco since Councillor Peck was elected to the Council with the exception of Gladstone Place, and that application pre-dated Councillor Peck joining his current employment. Councillor Peck had declared a personal interest in the Gladstone Place application as the former Lead Member responsible for Assets. Councillor Peck stated that he found it reprehensible that a known supporter of the Mayor should attempt to slur a member of the Council in this way.

7. ELECTED MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor made his report to the Council meeting. He referred to the forthcoming Budget Council meeting to be held on 23rd February 2011. In

developing budget savings proposals the Mayor felt that there was a moral duty on Members to protect frontline services, and achieve the savings by working more smartly and efficiently and streamlining management. He had had regular meetings with the Trade Unions and held Road Shows to meet Council staff.

He was also proud to say that the improvement to schools programme was pushing ahead and at the last Cabinet meeting a new site had been identified for a new secondary school in Bow Lock in 2014. At the next Cabinet meeting, the Blackwall Reach development would be discussed.

Finally, the Mayor said that he had taken part in an event which highlighted the work being undertaken by the Child Protection Team and Social Workers and Tower Hamlets had been chosen for its ground breaking approach and for providing top class services. He called on all Members to work constructively to ensure that the residents received the service they deserved.

The Leader of the Majority Group, Leaders of the Minority Groups and Councillor Stephanie Eaton each responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

8.1 Question from Councillor Joshua Peck

"Can the Mayor tell me what he believes is the right number of Children's Centres for Tower Hamlets?"

Response by Cabinet Member, Children's Services, Councillor Oliur Rahman

Children's centres are a key and important part of the welfare state and our services for children. We must applaud the labour government for their investment this has transformed provision for children under 5. Delivering excellent services to children under five has a big impact on their long term success and well being. We should be proud of our services to and the provision in the borough. I want to thank all our staff who work to support our young children.

- Currently the LA is responsible for 23 designated children's centres (developed by the previous government).
- These designations currently provide direct services to children under 5 in 85 venues across Tower Hamlets
- The DfE have removed the need for designated Children's centres
- Our proposed structure reduces the number of management and administration posts whilst increasing the provision of frontline services to families
- The four locality areas (based on paired LAPs) will continue to deliver direct services to children under 5 in the same 85 venues.
- None of these delivery venues will close

- 12 of these delivery venues will become Community Hubs
- Key staff will be based at each Community Hub, including a Community Lead officer, Family Support Officers and Play and Learning workers.

Summary of supplementary question from Councillor Joshua Peck:

I am concerned that the Cabinet Member has not given a clear answer. Can he confirm that the Council will not be rationing the service and that the centres will remain open to everyone with no reduction in service. Is it proposed to cut the jobs of vital staff members?

Summary of Cabinet Member's response:

Thank you for your supplementary question. We would like to have 25,000 centres – one for each child in the borough but that is not possible. Currently the Council is responsible for 23 designated children's centres. No staff have been given redundancy notice as the consultation period is still effective and I will be able to tell you after this has finished. Family Support Workers will be increased. If you are so concerned why have you waited until now to ask this question to either me or the Mayor?

Point of personal explanation

Councillor Joshua Peck rose to give a personal explanation. He stated that he had in fact raised the matters set out in his question above previously with the Acting Corporate Director of Children, Schools and Families.

8.2 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

“Has the administration undertaken any investigation or conversations with adjoining authorities and public sector bodies within the borough as to sharing staff or back office functions?”

Response of the Cabinet Member, Resources, Councillor Alibor Choudhury

The authority is actively involved in work across London and East London on shared working. We are looking at the experiments taking place to test whether there is real business case for change beyond the headlines. We have also an example of successfully sharing services in the form of our Out

Of Hours call handling contract with Vangent, where a number of London Authorities joined together and are now receiving a service significantly cheaper due to economies of scale than when delivered in house.

We have to devote our main energies over the next few months on how to save money reliably and quickly, and although I wouldn't criticise other authorities for trying to negotiate a large-scale shared services arrangement, there is a danger that it is a huge distraction which is not within the control of any one authority and is not guaranteed to succeed. It would not give us

the assurance we need that it would protect front-line services.

The NHS and the Police are not governed at a local level and are always going to be subject to change imposed on them from above. Members will be aware that we have had arrangements in the past with the PCT to share senior management posts, but the proposed abolition of the PCT means that these arrangements would not have been sustainable. I support working in partnership, but as soon as the arrangement is formalised there is additional financial risk.

The best chance of successful shared services is probably to start small, on specific service areas where we can show benefits, and to work with organisations like ourselves. An example of this is our Benefits Resilience Contract. Here we have developed a framework agreement for benefit assessment which we use to undertake peaks in workloads and is now being offered to other London boroughs for them to use.

Summary of supplementary question from Councillor Peter Golds:

I will go back to the question that was put. I am aware that there are 33 staff members that are paid over £75,000 and 13 who are paid over £100,000 per year. Why have you not considered sharing some of these staff with other boroughs when you need to save money?

Summary of Cabinet Members' response:

Councillor Golds we will consider any options to protect our frontline services. I do not consider that writing to Eric Pickles suggesting that he takes away £3M of the Council's money will help.

Point of personal explanation

Councillor Peter Golds rose to give a personal explanation. He stated that he had not asked the Minister to take away £3M of funding from the Council. The Mayor intended to put this money into reserves and Councillor Golds sought to ensure that it was instead spent on maintaining services as intended by the Government.

8.3 Question from Councillor Fozol Miah

"Is the Mayor aware of the frustration and anger of residents in the Brick Lane area about the continuing problem of urination and defecation in public areas around Brick Lane as a result of the lack of public toilet facilities, especially at market times which on Sunday now

stretches throughout the day, and is he also aware of a large sign half way up Brick Lane saying please use the toilets but which has no indication where the toilets are, and does he agree that officers should urgently investigate this problem and that at least part of the solution will be to provide adequate and well-publicised temporary toilets, especially at market time?"

Response of the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Ohid Ahmed

We are fully aware of the concerns raised by residents about the problem of street urination within the Brick Lane Town Centre. We will not tolerate this as a council. So far, the Enforcement Officers have submitted 146 cases to legal services to pursue through the courts.

Over the Christmas period, the council coordinated a zero tolerance campaign to crack down on street urination. As part of Operation Mercer, there were 427 occasions when a person was challenged for their behaviour and asked to provide their name and address. There were 13 alcohol seizures, 16 prosecutions for public urination, 20 warnings and 2 arrests made.

The council is actively reviewing a number of options for the provision of public toilets. This includes a community toilet scheme which has been a success in London Borough of Richmond, for example. Under the scheme, local businesses would allow public to use their facilities during business hours. We will know more once the council has completed its review over the coming weeks and months. I want to reassure you that we are taking this issue very seriously.

Summary of supplementary question from Councillor Fozol Miah:

Would the Cabinet Member agree that something must be done to increase the toilet facilities even though in these financial times this may mean that higher charges need be made, and that better signage is needed?

Summary of Deputy Mayor's response:

Yes I agree.

8.4 Question from Councillor Anna Lynch

"Given that I have still not been provided with a figure and now that consultation on the future structure of Democratic Services has closed, can the Mayor now tell me what is the estimated additional full year cost to the Council's budget of setting up and staffing his office?"

Response of Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Alibor Choudhury

I would ask Councillor Lynch to check her facts. The Democratic/Members' Services restructure proposals are still under consultation with staff and trade unions and therefore subject to change. Until the proposals are finalised an accurate figure cannot be given. I will not put out speculative figures but I will provide full and accurate information as soon as it is available.

Summary of supplementary question from Councillor Anna Lynch:

Thank you Councillor Choudhury. I have a figure for you. One of your staff is being paid more than £200 per day. With the care of the elderly being faced with cuts, do you think that is justified?

Summary of Cabinet Member's response:

I have no information of that nature. The borough voted overwhelmingly for the Mayoral system and the Mayor is working extremely hard. No resources are wasted in the Mayor's office.

8.5 Question from Councillor Tim Archer

"Will the Mayor please inform me what the future of the Isle of Dogs hoppa bus is?"

Response of the Mayor

Let me say first of all that I am a supporter of this service. The Hoppa bus was introduced in September 2009 and is due to run until 27th August 2011. The cost of the enabling work and operation in the first year was approximately £207,000. The service is funded through a s106 contribution from Crossharbour (London Arena) specifically aimed at bus improvements or new bus services and was agreed by the Planning Contributions Overview Panel on the 28th May 2009.

Officers have advised me that because of licensing, insurance and cash handling issues it was determined that collecting fares would not be a viable option to off-set some of the costs which would be entirely met from s106 contributions.

The Council is due to explore options with TfL to see if they could adopt a Councillor to lobby TfL and the Mayor. I hope that Cllr Archer can help me protect this service even when his Tory colleagues in Whitehall are cutting like mad.

Summary of supplementary question from Councillor Timothy Archer:

It is interesting to note you are a supporter of this bus or the Isle of Dogs ghost bus as it is known. It replaced a popular shopper bus provided by Tower Hamlets Community Transport which was well used and well liked. The hoppa bus is not well liked and costs £172,000 per year. This amounts to £36 per person, per journey. It would be cheaper to get taxis for people. Instead of charging for the use of the hoppa bus, will you scrap it and re-instate the previous service which was much loved and cost a fraction of the price?

Summary of the Mayor's response:

I note your comments and all possibilities will be explored.

8.6 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

“Is the Mayor aware that a contracting local authority may exclude an economic contractor from bidding if the contractor has “committed an act of grave misconduct in the course of its business” and does he agree that grave misconduct must include assisting the maintenance of illegal Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory and would he urgently investigate the situation of Veolia in this regard and in particular the possibility both of terminating contractual arrangements with this company and excluding them from future bidding for council contracts?”

Response of the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Ohid Ahmed

I am aware that this issue has been raised in the past and it arouses strong emotions. At a personal level I share your feelings on this and strongly object to the illegal settlement of the West Bank. However, it is important that we put the interests of Tower Hamlets' residents before our own personal feelings. Our obligation is to provide the best service for the residents of Tower Hamlets. Faced with huge cuts from central government, we have to make sure, more than ever before, that we are providing the service that is also most cost effective.

Senior managers of Veolia have offered to discuss this issue with members. I would be more than happy to ask relevant council officials to set up a meeting with Veolia if sufficient members express an interest in this matter.

No supplementary question was asked.

8.7 Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah

“Can the Mayor tell me what action he is taking to build on the progress made by the last administration on increasing recycling rates in the Borough?”

Response of the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Ohid Ahmed

Since the October 2010 Mayoral elections, the council has taken significant steps in this area.

A new high impact communications campaign was launched in January. As a former Lead Member, Cllr Ullah will be aware that past publicity campaigns have had a significant positive impact. Promotions include: outdoor advertising at bus stops, poster sites and public transport locations; lamppost banners; new vehicle livery; newspaper adverts and press releases; and on screen advertising at Idea Stores and Brick Lane.

The Council also recently made a bid to the Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to deliver a campaign on food waste recycling.

This administration is committed to improving recycling.

Summary of supplementary question from Councillor Abdal Ullah:

Thank you Councillor Ahmed. I wasn't aware who had taken over cleaner, safer, greener but I note that it has been given to the Deputy Mayor. When I left the job recycling had increased 23%. Will the new Mayor take the challenge to improve on that?

Summary of Deputy Mayor's response:

Thank you Councillor Ullah. Under the current Mayor's leadership, as the former Leader of the Council, performance did increase and I congratulate you and the Mayor for your good work. You, I and other colleagues share the same goals. Come and work with us, the real Labour.

8.8 Question from Councillor David Snowdon

“The Mayor's diary includes a regular Tuesday slot with the Head of Communications to “look at the proposed news list for East End Life”. Would the Mayor please intimate as to whether he has directed the Head of Communications or any other officer to include or exclude a story for this publication, or specified which stories he wishes his picture attached to?”

Response of the Mayor

As Mayor I take a keen interest in how we promote our services and values. I know East End Life has its critics in this chamber, and I have already stated that it is up for review. However, it remains the main way the Council communicates with residents. As Mayor, it is my duty to be aware of what we're putting into the public domain.

As with previous administrations there are meetings with the Head of Communications to discuss the items they have placed in East End Life, but editorial control and compliance with the law continue to rest with that department. The guidelines as set out in the 2007 Cabinet report are strictly adhered to.

Summary of supplementary question from Councillor David Snowdon:

Thank you Mr. Mayor. Does it not bother you that the person holding the consultation on the future of East End Life is the person responsible for this publication? Should we not have a proper independent enquiry?

Summary of the Mayor's response:

I have full confidence in the integrity of our officers. Let us wait for the options and then make a judgement.

8.9 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders

"Does the Mayor support the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park in their vital conservation and heritage work and will he work with me to secure the future of the Park?"

Response of the Mayor

I fully support the conservation and heritage work done by the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park and other park green spaces in the borough. For example, he has given his full support to protect the King Edward Memorial Park. I want to work with the community to conserve our green spaces and preserve the borough's heritage.

The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park currently receives annual funding from the Communities, Localities and Culture Directorate budget. This pays for maintenance responsibilities within the cemetery park. This funding will continue and I will be happy to work with the Member to secure the future of the park.

Summary of supplementary question from Councillor Rachael Saunders:

I am glad to hear that commitment and welcome any work the Mayor can do on this. Dockers and Match Girls and those that died in the Bethnal Green Tube Disaster are buried at this cemetery. Will you arrange a meeting as soon as possible with me and the Friends of the Park to discuss funding?

Summary of the Mayor's response:

Being able to visit loved ones that we have lost is important. I will work with you and anyone else to ensure the good work continues.

8.10 Question from Councillor Zara Davis

"What steps has the Mayor taken to engage with Tower Hamlets residents over his budget proposals, and what opportunities have been provided for residents to feedback their views?"

Response of the Cabinet Member, Resources, Councillor Alibor Choudhury

The authority regularly asks questions on finance and value for money as part of its regular consultation with residents. For this budget process, four focus groups were held with local residents from 9 – 13 January 2011. Participants were asked a series of questions, best grouped into three main subject areas. The first part of the session aimed to develop awareness about the forthcoming cuts amongst residents; the second part to develop a better understanding of the ways in which participants felt that the cuts will impact on local people; and the third part of the session was to explore the ways in which local people and organisations can work more effectively together in order to achieve results with less funding.

The outcome of this will be reported together with other consultations to Cabinet in February. The Mayor has also held two Budget Congress events with partners over the last few months to gain a shared understanding and approach to the issues we face as an area in response to Government cuts and the impact of Welfare reform, which of course go far beyond the Council's budget.

Summary of supplementary question from Councillor Zara Davis:

Two weeks ago in your own column in East End Life you said there would be lots of chances for residents to have their say in the coming weeks but I have not seen any consultation for all residents. Other boroughs are doing this. Why haven't you done a full and open consultation?

Summary of Cabinet Member's response:

We have had two sessions of Overview and Scrutiny with residents observing. We have held discussions with the Trade Unions, many of

whom are residents. A Budget congress with the third sector has been held and we have been out to the communities and spoken to people directly that are going to be affected.

In accordance with Rule 12.10 (expiry of the time limit) questions 8.11 to 8.24 were not put. Written responses would be forwarded to the questioners.

9. REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

There was no business under this agenda item.

10. TO RECEIVE REPORTS AND QUESTIONS ON JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS (IF ANY)

There was no business under this agenda item.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Review of proportionality and allocation of places on committees and panels of the Council

RESOLVED

1. That the review of proportionality at paragraph 3 to the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services be noted and the allocation of seats on committees and panels established for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2010/11 be agreed as set out in paragraph 4.2 to the report.
2. That Members and deputies be appointed to serve on those committees and panels in accordance with nominations from the political groups to be notified to the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services).

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

12.1 Motion proposed by Councillor Fozol Miah regarding the Condem Government cuts

Councillor Fozol Miah **MOVED**, and Councillor Harun Miah **SECONDED**, the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor David Edgar **MOVED**, and Councillor Helal Abbas **SECONDED** an **amendment** as follows:-

“Under ‘This Council notes’ add:

7) The government has announced that it will provide a Council Tax Freeze Grant to Councils that set a Council Tax increase of 0%. This will be equivalent to the difference between a 0% Council Tax and raising 2011/12 Council Tax by 2.5%.

Under 'This Council believes':

Delete from Point 4 "i.e. through a rise in the top rate of taxation and"

Replace current point 5 with "The focus in reducing the deficit should be on protecting services that are essential to working people and the less well off."

Under 'This Council wants':

Delete Point 3"

Following debate, the amendment moved by Councillor Edgar was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Councillor Peter Golds **MOVED**, and Councillor Tim Archer **SECONDED**, a further amendment to the substantive motion as follows:-

"Delete the title of the motion 'The Condem Government Cuts' and replace with:

Savings implemented by the Coalition Government

Delete all bullet points after 'This Council notes that' and replace with:

1. Labour doubled the national debt and left the current government with the biggest budget deficit in our peacetime history.
2. Labour brought the nation to the brink of bankruptcy, and it is costing the government £120 million every single day just to pay off the interest on Labour's debt. This is Labour's legacy.
3. In response to Labour's failed fiscal policies, the Coalition Government have had to reduce the government settlement in real terms awarded to nearly all local authorities in the UK.
4. Despite the huge pressures on public finances, the Coalition Government has taken unprecedented steps to protect councils most reliant on central government funding, such as the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, and freeze council tax.
5. The Coalition Government understands the importance in protection of frontline services in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and is assisting the Council in its efficiency drive by providing a transitional grant. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is only one of three London Boroughs to receive this grant.

6. To further help Tower Hamlets residents, the Conservative Mayor of London has also frozen the Greater London Authority precept of Tower Hamlets residents' council tax.

Delete all bullet points after 'This Council believes that' and replace with:

1. These savings are necessary and justified and are a result of Labour's failed fiscal policies.
2. Labour have burdened our children and grandchildren with debt, and undermined our economy. They've opposed tough decisions by the Coalition Government on VAT, tuition fees and deficit reduction but offer no credible deficit reduction plan of their own.
3. The deficit does need to be reduced.
4. Running up Government debt is like someone running up massive credit card bills – the longer you leave it, the worse it gets. The Coalition Government have taken steps now to live within our means; if they had not have taken those steps we would end up paying higher taxes and face deeper cuts just to pay off our national debt.
5. As mentioned in a response to a question posed at Prime Ministers Question Time on Wednesday 26th January 2011, the Prime Minister stated that for their role in the banking crisis, he will ensure that taxes on banks go up and bankers' bonuses come down.

Delete bullet point 3) after 'This Council wants' and replace with:

3. Opportunities to be explored to boost locally raised revenue without the need for a Council Tax rise.

On bullet point 4) after 'This Council wants', amend;

'and to minimise the adverse effects of the government imposed cuts' with '."

Delete bullet point 4) and 5) after 'This Council wants'."

Following debate the amendment moved by Councillor Golds was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

The substantive motion as amended was then put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

This Council notes that:

- 1) The Con Dem Coalition government is imposing very severe cuts on local government, including £70 million cuts on Tower Hamlets

- 2) These cuts are affecting poorer areas like Tower Hamlets much more severely than better off areas represented by the Conservatives and Lib Dems
- 3) These cuts will have a disastrous effect on the essential services provided by this Council
- 4) These cuts will have a disastrous effect on employment in the borough as jobs in the Council disappear
- 5) The effects of these cuts are going to be compounded by rising unemployment particularly but not exclusively amongst our young people
- 6) The cuts in local government spending are also being made worse by other cuts such as the abolition of the Educational Maintenance Allowance and by the massive increase in university tuition fees
- 7) The Government has announced that it will provide a Council Tax Freeze Grant to councils that set a Council Tax increase of 0%. This will be equivalent to the difference between a 0% Council Tax and raising 2011/12 Council Tax by 2.5%.

This Council believes that:

- 1) These cuts are unnecessary and unjustified
- 2) The government deficit which is being used to justify these cuts is the product of the chaos and decline in the real economy brought about by the reckless activity of the financial sector
- 3) The deficit does need to be reduced over time but in the first instance this must be through economic growth which is being jeopardised by the Government's spending cuts
- 4) The deficit can be further reduced by taxing those most able as opposed to least able to pay through exceptional taxes on bank profits and bankers' bonuses.
- 5) The focus in reducing the deficit should be on protecting services that are essential to working people and the less well off.

This Council recognises the difficulties imposed on the Council, given the central Government cuts, by the legal requirement to produce a so-called "balanced budget".

This Council wants

- 1) The budget being prepared for vote on 23rd February to reflect the perspective outlined above
- 2) Every effort to be made both to eliminate waste and drive up efficiency in the delivery of council services

- 3) Maximum consultation with the trade union representatives of the council staff and with the recipients of the council's services to try to identify efficiency savings and to minimise the adverse effects of the government imposed cuts.
- 4) A campaign, such as the one being pursued by Lambeth Council, informing Tower Hamlets residents of the unprecedented cuts being imposed by the Con Dem Coalition government and inviting them into a dialogue on the best way forward.
- 5) A campaign to inform every Tower Hamlets resident of the great march and demonstration against the cuts called by the Trades Union Congress for Saturday 26th March

12.3 Motion proposed by Councillor Tim Archer regarding recording Council meetings

Councillor Timothy Archer **MOVED** and Councillor Peter Golds **SECONDED** the motion as printed in the agenda.

The motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

This Council notes that:

- It is able to audibly and visually record council meetings using current technical equipment available in the council chamber.
- It is able to record business conducted at Full Council with little or no cost to the taxpayer.

This council believes that:

- democracy and accountability are important concepts in order to gain public trust in the decision making in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- residents should be able to refer to and view council meetings through the use of audio visual equipment.
- conduct of Members of the Council will be positively affected by the knowledge that footage is in the public domain.

This Council resolves: -

- To audio and video record each meeting of the Full Council to enable reference for members of the public, Council Members and officers and to increase transparency and accountability.

- To amend the Tower Hamlets Council Constitution, Part 4, Rule 27.1 to read 'No photography or video or audio recording of any kind by guests and members of the public may take place at any Council Meeting without the express permission of the Chair.'
- To introduce to the Tower Hamlets Council Constitution, Part 4, Rule 27.2 to read 'The Council Chamber, whilst the public gallery is open and the Council is conducting its business at the Meeting of the Tower Hamlets Council, will be video and audio recorded by the Council and made available online within 48 hours.'

12.4 Motion proposed by Councillor Harun Miah regarding “Bin Veolia”

Councillor Harun Miah **MOVED**, and Councillor Fozol Miah **SECONDED**, the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Stephanie Eaton then **MOVED**, and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **SECONDED**, an amendment – “That under point 4, replace the word “terminate” with the word “review”.”

Councillor Harun Miah accepted this amendment to his motion.

The motion as amended was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

This Council notes that:

- 1) This Council has long-term contracts with the multinational company Veolia
- 2) Veolia is deeply involved in contract work for the Israeli government which assist their continued oppression of the Palestinian people
- 3) In particular Veolia is directly implicated in maintaining illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian territory
- 4) Under the Public Contract Regulations (2006) a contracting local authority may exclude an economic contractor from bidding for a contract if the contractor has “committed an act of grave misconduct in the course of its business”

This Council believes that:

- 1) Veolia has clearly committed acts of grave misconduct in relation to the Palestinian people and the maintenance of illegal settlements and in other respects as well
- 2) There should be an urgent investigation by Council officers to confirm the charges of grave misconduct that have been levelled in the international campaign to “Bin Veolia”

- 3) This Council should do everything in its power to support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against the pariah state of Israel.
- 4) Urgent steps should be taken to review all contracts with Veolia and not to place any further contracts with this company
- 5) The Mayor should write to Veolia as soon as possible to communicate to them the contents of this motion and the council's determination to terminate any relationship to Veolia.

Debate then commenced on Motion 12.5 but this motion was not put, and Motion 12.6 was not considered, due to the time limit for the meeting being reached.

The meeting ended at 10.30 p.m.

Chair,
Council

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