

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS****MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL****HELD AT 7.11 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 19 JULY 2023****COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL****Members Present:**

Mayor Lutfur Rahman (Member)  
Councillor Faroque Ahmed (Member)  
Councillor Kabir Ahmed (Member)  
Councillor Leelu Ahmed (Member)  
Councillor Musthak Ahmed (Member)  
Councillor Saied Ahmed (Member)  
Councillor Shafi Ahmed (Member)  
Councillor Suluk Ahmed (Member)  
Councillor Sabina Akhtar (Member)  
Councillor Amina Ali (Member)  
Councillor Asma Begum (Member)  
Councillor Maisha Begum (Member)  
Councillor Nathalie Bienfait (Member)  
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin (Member)  
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury (Member)  
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury (Member)  
Councillor Jahed Choudhury (Member)  
Councillor Abu Chowdhury (Member)  
Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury (Member)  
Councillor Marc Francis (Member)  
Councillor Peter Golds (Member)  
Councillor Iqbal Hossain (Member)  
Councillor Kabir Hussain (Member)  
Councillor Kamrul Hussain (Member)  
Councillor Asma Islam (Member)  
Councillor Sirajul Islam (Member)  
Councillor Ahmodul Kabir (Member)  
Councillor Saif Uddin Khaled (Member)  
Councillor Ahmodur Khan (Member)  
Councillor Sabina Khan (Member)  
Councillor James King (Member)  
Councillor Amy Lee (Member)  
Councillor Abdul Malik (Member)  
Councillor Abdul Mannan (Member)  
Councillor Ana Miah (Member)  
Councillor Ayas Miah (Member)  
Councillor Harun Miah (Member)  
Councillor Amin Rahman (Member)  
Councillor Rebaka Sultana (Member)  
Councillor Maium Talukdar (Member)  
Councillor Bellal Uddin (Member)  
Councillor Abdal Ullah (Member)  
Councillor Abdul Wahid (Member)

**The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Jahed Choudhury in the Chair**

The Speaker of the Council provided his update to the Council. He noted that he had a lot to learn in his new role however was enjoying the role of first citizen of the Council. He said he had met his fellow civic colleagues from across London at the induction day hosted by the London Mayors' Association. Other highlights included:

- The Lord Mayor's reception and Civic Service at St Paul's Cathedral.

- Meeting with the charities that he is supporting this year - St Joseph's Hospice and Eden Care UK, with a Fundraising dinner later in the year.
- Attending celebration and achievement ceremonies as well as citizenship ceremonies.
- Welcoming and hosting three courtesy calls from commanding officers of ships visiting the docks, with two ships from Mexico and one from France.

The Speaker was saddened to announce the death of Beatty Orwell, who passed away aged 105. Beatty had been a former Tower Hamlets Councillor and served as a Mayoress when her husband John Orwell was Mayor. The Speaker said she was a long-standing activist and was in the frontlines in the Battle of Cable Street. He said that she had spent her lifetime working for the benefit of other and would be sorely missed.

Members of the Chamber observed a minute's silence in memory of Beatty Orwell.

Finally, the Speaker congratulated the Tower Hamlets Hockey club for their recent achievement, for they were not only winners of the national championship but also picked up the England hockey team of the year award. He said they were a shining example to youngsters in the borough.

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillor Ohid Ahmed
- Councillor Shubo Hussain
- Councillor Rachel Blake

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS**

Councillor Amin Rahman and Councillor Mushtak Ahmed declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 12.3, and declared they were Board Members of Tower Hamlets Community Housing.

## **3. MINUTES**

Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Agree the minutes of the extraordinary and ordinary Council meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 be approved as a correct record of the proceedings and the Speaker was authorised to sign them accordingly.

## **4. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE SPEAKER OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

### **Announcements from the Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive, Stephen Halsey provided his regular update to the Council meeting, highlighting the following issues:

- Covid and Flu rates remain stable. The Autumn vaccine programme offering a booster is expected nationally for people who are in high-risk groups.
- Young Tower Hamlets launched on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July, which aims to offer a facility in every ward. Its part of the wider programme of supporting young people including the expansion of free school meals, education maintenance allowance and university bursaries.
- Tower Hamlets Council had won awards at the Local Government Chronicle awards – including the innovation category by the Crime Reduction Team.
- The Staff conference held at the Troxy was well attended and was an opportunity to share the aspirations and ambitions of the Council, as it begins its transformation programme.

## **5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS**

### **Petition regarding curbs to infrastructure Projects**

Adam Allnutt, Lauma Kalns-Timans and Yesmin Begum presented a petition asking the Council to reserve its decision to cut NCIL funding for infrastructure projects. Especially projects on the Isle of Dogs. Mr Allnutt said it was vital funding for projects that had already been approved were implemented. He asked why funding had been halted.

Members asked questions of the petitioners before Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding responded to matters raised in the petition. He said that some of the projects that had been approved had been nominated by less than twenty people and as such the administration was reviewing the projects to which NCIL money had been allocated.

### **RESOLVED**

That the petition be referred to the Chief Executive for a written response within 28 days.

## **6. MAYOR'S REPORT**

Mayor Lutfur Rahman presented his report to the Council.

The Opposition Group Leader, Councillor Sirajul Islam then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

Mayor Rahman provided concluding remarks

## 7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE

### YOUNG TOWER HAMLETS

Council considered a motion as printed in the agenda on the Young Tower Hamlets initiative that had been moved by Councillor Maium Miah Talukdar and seconded by Councillor Bodrul Choudhury.

Council also considered the amendment proposed by Councillor Sabina Akhtar and seconded by Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury as set out in the supplementary agenda.

Addition in Bold

Deletions ~~struckthrough~~

#### **This Council notes:**

- That Mayor Lutfur Rahman, in his previous term as Mayor, oversaw a huge investment of resources into the borough's youth services – taking young people off the street, giving them educational, cultural, recreational, wellbeing and employment opportunities, and preparing them for adult life.
- ~~The chronic cuts to, neglect and underfunding of, Tower Hamlets' youth services during the terms of the previous administration, which resulted in the closure of 70% of all youth centres and attendant services in the borough.~~ And Insert:
- **The previous administration built wealth, knowledge and skills in the community by partnering with the voluntary and community sector to deliver youth services. As they have a track record of delivering high quality youth provision.**
- **Insert: That this council's own studies demonstrated that when communities are empowered, they provide efficient, effective and economical youth services.**

Tower Hamlets Youth Service (Commissioned Provision) 3 Year Performance									
	2017/18			2018/2019			2019/2020		
	Target	Achieved		Target	Achieved		Target	Achieved	
		No.	%		No.	%		No.	%
Contacts	2779	3914	140.84%	4180	4723	112.99%	2505	5108	203.91%
Participants	1646	1676	101.82%	2598	2277	87.64%	1503	2394	159.28%
Recorded Outcome	991	1092	110.19%	1600	1462	91.38%	902	1416	156.98%
Accredited Outcome	494	499	101.05%	847	546	64.46%	451	519	115.08%

Tower Hamlets Youth Service (In-house Provision) 3 Year Performance									
	2017/18			2018/2019			2019/2020		
	Target	Achieved		Target	Achieved		Target	Achieved	
		No.	%		No.	%		No.	%
Contacts	6,040	2,564	42.45%	5740	2948	51.36%	3835	2648	69.05%
Participants	3624	1119	30.88%	3444	1355	39.34%	2301	1579	68.62%
Recorded Outcome	2174	417	19.18%	2066	350	16.94%	1381	1008	73.01%
Accredited Outcome	1087	322	29.62%	1033	401	38.82%	690	621	89.96%

- That various studies – (set out below) – outline the correlation between access (or lack thereof) to youth services for young people and increased levels of crime and ASB, as well as low educational attainment and decreased job opportunities.

#### Links to External Reports/Websites

Social Mobility Commission 2019:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/818679/An\\_Unequal\\_Playing\\_Field\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818679/An_Unequal_Playing_Field_report.pdf)

APPG on Knife Crime and Violence Reduction: *Securing a brighter future: The role of youth services in tackling knife crime*, 2020  
<http://www.preventknifecrime.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Securing-a-brighter-future-the-role-of-youth-services-in-tackling-knife-crime-v.2.pdf>

ONS 2021 – Child Poverty and Education Outcomes by Ethnicity  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/uksectoraccount>

- That this latter point is particularly true in the youngest and most densely-populated borough in the country, where green space is scarce for many communities.

- That children from lower income households often have worse educational outcomes. A 2021 report found that those children from poorer households and without access to a decent education and extra-curricular activities end up with significant gaps in academic achievement – especially those from BAME backgrounds.
- ~~That young people in Tower Hamlets have suffered because of the previous administration's cuts.~~ **Insert: Under the previous administration Tower Hamlets had one of the best funded youth services in London and managed to secure more than £1m of funding from the GLA's *MyEnds* programme to combat youth violence on the Isle of Dogs.**

### **This Council believes:**

- That the young people of Tower Hamlets deserve the best opportunities to excel, both inside and outside of the classroom.
- ~~That every ward in Tower Hamlets should have a dedicated youth centre, where children and young people can access services to help them develop skills, as well as their interests and aspirations.~~
- ~~That a serious (re-)investment in capital, personnel, and infrastructure is required to deliver these ambitions.~~
- **And Insert: Modern youth services are most effective when they are delivered through strategically located centres equipped with state-of-the-art facilities to engage and support young people.**
- **That you work is essential and under recognised profession. Professionally trained youth worker are experts in their field and know what's best when it comes to delivering youth services.**
- That the launch of the Mayor's *Young Tower Hamlets (YTH)* scheme earlier this week (Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July) – in which a £13.7million per annum investment in the borough's redesigned youth service and a guaranteed youth centre in every ward were showcased – represents a drastic change in the Council's approach, and a firm commitment to the future of the borough's young people.
- That this investment will provide jobs, intern and apprenticeship opportunities for young people across the borough.

- That this investment will also help tackle inequalities faced by disabled and SEN young people in the borough; it will also provide women and girls with increased safe access to sporting, educational, and cultural services previously cut.
- That the work of the Deputy Mayor and Council Officers should be particularly recognised in helping to deliver this key Mayoral priority.
- That this scheme represents the insourcing of another key service in the borough, enhancing democratic accountability and control, and symbolising a key step in accelerating education and attainment in Tower Hamlets.
- **That an overcentralised youth service is an inefficient way of delivering youth services and has previously led to poor governance and malpractice occurring in the borough.**

**This Council resolves:**

- To approve and endorse the Mayor and Council's newly launched service, *Young Tower Hamlets*, and recognise the huge benefits it will have on the borough's young people and families.
- To commend Officers and the Lead Member for their work in delivering this project.
- To support officers in the delivery of this key service moving forward.
- **That every youth worker employed by the borough undergoes a full DBS check before being employed by the borough.**
- **To only recruit professional youth workers to staff our service.**
- **To request that the lead member explore the creation of a youth worker training fund to be delivered by our partners in the FE/HE sector.**

Following debate, the amendment moved by Councillor Sabina Akhtar was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

The motion as moved by Councillor Maium Miah Talukdar was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

## RESOLVED

### This Council notes:

- That Mayor Lutfur Rahman, in his previous term as Mayor, oversaw a huge investment of resources into the borough's youth services – taking young people off the street, giving them educational, cultural, recreational, wellbeing and employment opportunities, and preparing them for adult life.
- The chronic cuts to, neglect and underfunding of, Tower Hamlets' youth services during the terms of the previous administration, which resulted in the closure of 70% of all youth centres and attendant services in the borough.
- That various studies – (set out below) – outline the correlation between access (or lack thereof) to youth services for young people and increased levels of crime and ASB, as well as low educational attainment and decreased job opportunities.

#### Links to External Reports/Websites

Social Mobility Commission 2019:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/818679/An\\_Unequal\\_Playing\\_Field\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818679/An_Unequal_Playing_Field_report.pdf)

APPG on Knife Crime and Violence Reduction: *Securing a brighter future: The role of youth services in tackling knife crime*, 2020  
<http://www.preventknifecrime.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Securing-a-brighter-future-the-role-of-youth-services-in-tackling-knife-crime-v.2.pdf>

ONS 2021 – Child Poverty and Education Outcomes by Ethnicity  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/uksectoraccount>

- That this latter point is particularly true in the youngest and most densely-populated borough in the country, where green space is scarce for many communities.
- That children from lower income households often have worse educational outcomes. A 2021 report found that those children from poorer households and without access to a decent education and extra-curricular activities end up with significant gaps in academic achievement – especially those from BAME backgrounds.
- That young people in Tower Hamlets have suffered because of the previous administration's cuts.



**This Council believes:**

- That the young people of Tower Hamlets deserve the best opportunities to excel, both inside and outside of the classroom.
- That every ward in Tower Hamlets should have a dedicated youth centre, where children and young people can access services to help them develop skills, as well as their interests and aspirations.
- That a serious (re-)investment in capital, personnel, and infrastructure is required to deliver these ambitions.
- That the launch of the Mayor's *Young Tower Hamlets (YTH)* scheme earlier this week (Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July) – in which a £13.7million per annum investment in the borough's redesigned youth service and a guaranteed youth centre in every ward were showcased – represents a drastic change in the Council's approach, and a firm commitment to the future of the borough's young people.
- That this investment will provide jobs, intern and apprenticeship opportunities for young people across the borough.
- That this investment will also help tackle inequalities faced by disabled and SEN young people in the borough; it will also provide women and girls with increased safe access to sporting, educational, and cultural services previously cut.
- That the work of the Deputy Mayor and Council Officers should be particularly recognised in helping to deliver this key Mayoral priority.
- That this scheme represents the insourcing of another key service in the borough, enhancing democratic accountability and control, and symbolising a key step in accelerating education and attainment in Tower Hamlets.

**This Council resolves:**

- To approve and endorse the Mayor and Council's newly launched service, *Young Tower Hamlets*, and recognise the huge benefits it will have on the borough's young people and families.
- To commend Officers and the Lead Member for their work in delivering this project.
- To support officers in the delivery of this key service moving forward.

**8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE**

## WOMEN'S SAFETY

Council considered a motion as printed in the agenda on Women's safety that had been moved by Councillor Sabina Khan and seconded by Councillor Rebeka Sultana.

Council also considered the amendment proposed by Councillor Abu Chowdhury and seconded by Councillor Kabir Ahmed as set out in the supplementary agenda.

Additions – Bold

Deletions – ~~Struckthrough~~

### **This Council notes:**

- That many women and girls in Tower Hamlets face harassment, assault and violence in public and private spaces, which affects their freedom, dignity and wellbeing.
- That Tower Hamlets has very high levels of domestic abuse and sexual offences reported to the police, as well as 14 domestic homicides since 2011.
- In Tower Hamlets on average 6000 Domestic abuse incidents reported to the police each year.
- Last year 2,082 sexual offences were reported, of that 1348 were non rape offences and 734 rape offences.
- That improving women's safety is the responsibility of everyone, especially men, and requires more action from the Council and its partners.
- **That for some time now the council's service offer around women's safety has been far too limited, and that this lack has only been exacerbated by austerity measures occurring over the last 7 years such as the closing of the Jagonari centre.**
- **That the mayor Lutfur Rahman acknowledges these historic failings and has already demonstrated a commitment to reversing trends of service cutting by identifying new funding options for crucial VAWG services such as our women's criminal justice pathway coordinator role and investing community safety resources in a new series of ground-breaking digital women's safety walks.**
- **That the mayor has taken personal responsibility for the development of a new VAWG strategy being produced for 2024,**

**which under the direct oversight of the newly hired Women and Equalities Officer, is intended to set a new standard for direct government intervention in issues of violence against women and girls.**

**This Council resolves to:**

- Launch a public advertising campaign to raise awareness and challenge violence against women and girls, and to communicate the Council's commitment to women's safety using council communications and the public relations departments of partner agencies. The campaign should also promote positive messages about consent, respect and healthy relationships, and encourage bystander intervention. **This campaign will also focus on intersectionality in women's safety, prioritising the needs of LGBTQI women, BAME women, and women involved in sex work and/or sexual exploitation in line with the mayor's equalities priorities.**
- Strengthen the enforcement partnership between the Council, the Police and other agencies, and use innovative anti-social behaviour legislation to fine individuals who harass and cat-call women on our streets. The partnership should also work to improve the reporting, investigation and prosecution of domestic abuse and sexual offences, and provide specialist training for frontline staff.
- **Support the work being done to build a mayor's anti-crime task force that will strive to build specialisation around VAWG and women's safety issues into our local enforcement service, while also increasing the capacity of our THEO service to respond to issues of street harassment and abuse more generally.**
- **Continue to** increase the visibility and effectiveness of CCTV cameras across the borough **following the massive upgrade of our CCTV cameras and control overseen by the mayor.**
- Ensure that CCTV operators monitor lone individuals, particularly women, during the night and early hours of the morning. The Council should also **continue and expand its** use of other technologies, such as street lighting, alarms and apps, to enhance women's safety in public spaces. **The council should also continue to build on the successes of the mayor's recently rolled out women's safety walks and expand the use of resident consultation in shaping street patrols and CCTV placement.**
- Organise women's safety community meetings to connect residents with the Council and the Police, and to address their concerns and suggestions on how to improve women's safety in Tower Hamlets.

**These meeting will be built out of the digital women's safety walks that were rolled out this spring.** The meetings should also provide opportunities for women and girls to share their experiences, access support services and participate in co-designing solutions.

- **Support the development of upcoming Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and facilitate a wide-ranging consultation process that will ensure the new strategy is first and foremost based around the needs of women across the borough and from a wide variety of different racial, religious, economic, and sexual identity-based backgrounds.**
- **Reverse/mitigate the impact of the closure of the Jagonari centre by making the development of new BAME women's centre capable of providing a variety of resources around VAWG advocacy and support a top priority.**
- **Reassess the way that this borough supports women involved in sex work and victims of sexual exploitation. The council will begin this process by committing to the recommendations of the off-street sex work action plan and scoping the feasibility of both a sex workers hostel and a prostitution needs assessment.**
- **Ensure that transgender women in particular are properly served by our VAWG strategy and by the variety of VAWG women's safety services offered by the council. Trans women continue to be victims of sexual violence and hate crime at an alarmingly high rate, and yet Tower Hamlets has historically done almost nothing to support this marginalised. The council will therefore work to embed the needs of this community across the council and into our VAWG services in particular.**

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

The motion as amended by Councillor Abu Chowdhury was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

## **RESOLVED**

### **This Council notes:**

- That many women and girls in Tower Hamlets face harassment, assault and violence in public and private spaces, which affects their freedom, dignity and wellbeing.
- That Tower Hamlets has very high levels of domestic abuse and sexual

offences reported to the police, as well as 14 domestic homicides since 2011.

- In Tower Hamlets on average 6000 Domestic abuse incidents reported to the police each year.
- Last year 2,082 sexual offences were reported, of that 1348 were non rape offences and 734 rape offences.
- That improving women's safety is the responsibility of everyone, especially men, and requires more action from the Council and its partners.
- That for some time now the council's service offer around women's safety has been far too limited, and that this lack has only been exacerbated by austerity measures occurring over the last 7 years such as the closing of the Jagonari centre.
- That the mayor Lutfur Rahman acknowledges these historic failings and has already demonstrated a commitment to reversing trends of service cutting by identifying new funding options for crucial VAWG services such as our women's criminal justice pathway coordinator role and investing community safety resources in a new series of ground-breaking digital women's safety walks.
- That the mayor has taken personal responsibility for the development of a new VAWG strategy being produced for 2024, which under the direct oversight of the newly hired Women and Equalities Officer, is intended to set a new standard for direct government intervention in issues of violence against women and girls.

**This Council resolves to:**

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- Strengthen the enforcement partnership between the Council, the Police and other agencies, and use innovative anti-social behaviour legislation to fine individuals who harass and cat-call women on our

streets. The partnership should also work to improve the reporting, investigation and prosecution of domestic abuse and sexual offences, and provide specialist training for frontline staff.

- Support the work being done to build a mayor's anti-crime task force that will strive to build specialisation around VAWG and women's safety issues into our local enforcement service, while also increasing the capacity of our THEO service to respond to issues of street harassment and abuse more generally.
- Continue to increase the visibility and effectiveness of CCTV cameras across the borough following the massive upgrade of our CCTV cameras and control overseen by the mayor.
- Ensure that CCTV operators monitor lone individuals, particularly women, during the night and early hours of the morning. The Council should also continue and expand its use of other technologies, such as street lighting, alarms and apps, to enhance women's safety in public spaces. The council should also continue to build on the successes of the mayor's recently rolled out women's safety walks and expand the use of resident consultation in shaping street patrols and CCTV placement.
- Organise women's safety community meetings to connect residents with the Council and the Police, and to address their concerns and suggestions on how to improve women's safety in Tower Hamlets. These meeting will be built out of the digital women's safety walks that were rolled out this spring. The meetings should also provide opportunities for women and girls to share their experiences, access support services and participate in co-designing solutions.
- Support the development of upcoming Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and facilitate a wide-ranging consultation process that will ensure the new strategy is first and foremost based around the needs of women across the borough and from a wide variety of different racial, religious, economic, and sexual identity-based backgrounds.
- Reverse/mitigate the impact of the closure of the Jagonari centre by making the development of new BAME women's centre capable of providing a variety of resources around VAWG advocacy and support a top priority.
- Reassess the way that this borough supports women involved in sex work and victims of sexual exploitation. The council will begin this process by committing to the recommendations of the off-street sex

work action plan and scoping the feasibility of both a sex workers hostel and a prostitution needs assessment.

- Ensure that transgender women in particular are properly served by our VAWG strategy and by the variety of VAWG women's safety services offered by the council. Trans women continue to be victims of sexual violence and hate crime at an alarmingly high rate, and yet Tower Hamlets has historically done almost nothing to support this marginalised. The council will therefore work to embed the needs of this community across the council and into our VAWG services in particular.

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

### **9.1 Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Annual Report to Council**

Councillor Mushtak Ahmed, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the annual report. He outlined the achievements of the Committee before members added their comments.

#### **RESOLVED**

Council **AGREED** to:

1. Note the annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **9.2 Report of the Corporate Parenting Board: Annual Report 2022-23**

Councillor Maium Miah Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning introduced the report. He stated the report highlighted the achievements of the Corporate Parenting Board. Members of the Council commented on the report.

#### **RESOLVED**

Council **AGREED** to:

1. Note the content of the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report.

## **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

Nil Items.

## **11. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

The following questions and in each case supplementary questions were put (except where indicated) and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member.

**11.1 Question from Councillor Kamrul Hussain.**

Can the Lead Member provide an update on the ongoing costs accrued by the council in redressing the failure to sign off the council accounts under the last administration?

**Response of Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living**

Thank you for your question. You won't be surprised to learn that the costs incurred on the financial statements from 2016/17 through to 2019/20 (4-years) accrued amount to £3.1m. This money could be invested to resolve the Borough's overcrowding issue and other worthy causes. The previous administration has admitted a considerable expense has been accrued because of the mismanagement of the accounts.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Kamrul Hussain.**

How soon will the accounts be signed off?

**Response of Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living**

The 2016/17 and 2017/18 accounts have been signed off however the following three years accounts – 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 are yet to be signed off. Officers are working with Deloitte to address one final issue and it's hoped that these can be signed off shortly.

**11.2 Question from Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury.**

We are facing an unprecedented housing crisis in the borough. I have been contacted by many private tenants that their landlord is turning their rented accommodation into Airbnb accommodation for more profit. Some of these private tenants will be homeless soon, which, in turn, enhances the current crisis. Could the lead member for Housing tell us their plan to regulate the increase of Airbnb or similar holiday accommodations in the borough?

**Response from Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding**



Tackling the housing crisis is a clear priority for the council, as set out in the Mayor's manifesto and the Strategic Plan.

Regarding the regulation of Airbnb and other holiday lettings, unfortunately there are limitations on what we can do. Currently in London it is possible to let out a residential (use class C3) property as a short term let for up to 90 days a year without planning permission and it is extremely difficult to monitor and enforce against those who let out their properties for longer than that 90-day limit.

The Government have recently consulted on the possibility of introducing a new use class for short term lets, although it is not clear that any of the measures consulted on will help the situation in London. But we are proactively looking at that and will continue to explore the powers we can utilise as a council to make the best use of the borough's housing stock.

### **11.3 Question from Councillor Shafi Ahmed.**

Can the Mayor or Lead Member please update on the progress of the LBTH Local Plan refresh, and what he hopes to see achieved in the outcomes of this process?

### **Response from Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding**

The 2020 Adopted Local Plan is currently under a full review, which includes assessing the effectiveness of all policies, and drafting new policies where required. The direction of policies will be underpinned and informed by, national and regional policy requirements, local objectives, new evidence base and consultation and engagement with all Tower Hamlets' communities.

Key milestones for the review of a Local Plan are:

- early engagement on issues and policy proposals – which took place between Wednesday 25 January to Wednesday March 8 2023
- Regulation 18 – statutory consultation on the draft Local Plan
- Regulation 19 – final representations and comments on the Local Plan being submitted to the Secretary of State
- Examination in Public with an Independent Inspector – which The Plan Making team are currently preparing for Regulation 18 and intend to take this to Cabinet in October 2023, to consult in November 2023.

### **11.4 Question from Councillor Marc Francis.**

Can the Mayor and Lead Member explain why they have stopped plans to introduce a raised table zebra crossing on Parnell Road to make it safer for

older residents and families with children crossing from Lefevre estate to cross to Roman Road market?

**Response from Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency**

The proposal for a raised zebra crossing at Parnell Road formed part of a wider package of measures put forward for the area, initially as part of the Liveable Streets programme, which encompassed changes to pedestrian crossings in addition to the traffic restriction schemes. This scheme remains under review.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Marc Francis.**

It's disappointing to hear the scheme is under review. Elderly residents are not protected at all. I was given an assurance back in February 2022 that the Parnell Road scheme was going to be implemented. However, having chased the Highway's manager I am informed that following the election, funding for all liveable street schemes including the introduction of speed tables have been cut. Can the Lead member explain why these necessary measures are not being implemented?

**Response from Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency**

The previous Mayor and administration failed to properly consult residents about their Liveable streets programme. This administration has a better plan which we will implement once we have reviewed the scheme.

**11.5 Question from Councillor Amin Rahman.**

Can the Lead Member feedback on the recent peer review that looked at our early help service which took place in February and March and the Care Leavers which happened in May?

**Response from Councillor Maium Miah Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning.**

The Early Help Peer Review was conducted by three experienced Early Help leaders and a Department of Education lead, including from highly rated local authorities, over three days. The Review Team met with staff and visited our Children and Family Centres, undertook case audits and discussions with practitioners, and met with key partners to get full sense of our Early Help offer.

Key findings were:

- Leaders, managers and staff talked passionately about this new direction and the benefits for families. This is well articulated in the new ambitious Early Help Strategy - 'Leaving no families behind – supporting access for all'
- The locality model of delivery is well embedded and supports bespoke early support to each of these 4 communities.
- The visible diversity of the workforce is commendable, particularly in terms of ethnicity, culture, age and gender. There is a real sense that staff can be their authentic selves at work.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Amin Rahman.**

How confident are you that the Council will achieve a better Ofsted review?

**Response from Councillor Maium Miah Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning.**

The review team made some recommendations which are currently being considered and implemented.

Our Care Leavers Peer Review was carried out by Mark Riddell MBE, the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, who concluded:

“I was very impressed by the leadership and management approach that was ambitious, aspirational and I got a real sense of passion and commitment to have a better offer for care leavers across the whole service area. What I also saw and heard was many examples where I felt the service was ‘pitching’ above good and that the corporate approach, and in particular the team approach stood out with workers who were highly responsive to the needs of care leavers. The local authority are in a good position to get to being great for care leavers in that I could see some outstanding features.”

**11.6 Question from Councillor Mufedah Bustin.**

With the removal of funding for George Green’s school and the cancelling of NCIL projects in the most population-dense area of the UK, what investment is the mayor making on the Isle of Dogs?

**Response from Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding**

I didn’t get to finish my answer earlier when this was raised under item 4. The previous Labour administration invested 1.99M in LIF Area 4. However, this administration will be investing 2.1M which is an increase in real and actual terms. Some of the Public Realm investments made by the previous administration should have come from the Council’s own budget and not LIF

and NCIL monies. We are going to manage our budgets better and will allow for full probity of them.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Mufeedah Bustin**

Can the Lead Member confirm what infrastructure projects they will be spending on, in the Isle of Dogs?

**Response from Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding**

We will be spending circa 18m on capital and housing projects. Circa 12M on grant funding. What the administration will not be spending on are scheme such as improvements to walking and cycling which was awarded £250,000 and was nominated by one person. Improvements to cycle route 1, awarded £270,000 and again nominated by one person.

**11.7 Question from Councillor Bodrul Choudhury**

Can the Lead Member update the council on progress with the external independent investigation of our housing management department? Can the Lead Member tell us who has been appointed and set out a timeline for delivery?

**Response from Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding**

There has been a separate commission of BDO to complete an external review of the governance, systems, and processes regarding the engagement, monitoring, and enforcement of regulations and occupancy of HMO properties. They are due to report in August.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Bodrul Choudhury**

Is there a timeline after August, as to when the recommendations from the review will be implemented?

**Response from Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding**

Once the report has been finalised, Officers will review the recommendations and this will be presented to Council, if recommended by the Monitoring Officer and Chief Executive. We are aware we need to strengthen our governance, processes and systems relating to HMO properties and that we need to protect vulnerable residents, from seizure and tenant abuse.

**11.8 Question from Councillor Asma Islam**

How many homeless residents were supported into suitable accommodation for the council year 22-23 and how did that compare against the target set for the year?

**Response from Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding**

In 2022/23, the number of homeless households who were supported to move into affordable, sustainable housing was 317 (under our target of 470).

Of the 317 homeless households, 148 moved on to private rent sector accommodation and a further 169 to social housing.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Asma Islam.**

Can you please find out how many residents apply for homelessness support, who are rejected and then apply for the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> time. This would be a good indicator to understand the issues and the barriers faced by residents.

**Response from Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding**

We do have targets and some of the targets are from Government. We are reviewing our policies and processes and take this issue seriously. If you could let me have the details of cases alluded to, I will speak with the Housing Director.

Questions 11.9 to 11.31 were not put due to lack of time. The written responses are attached at **Appendix A**.

**12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

Motions 12.1 to 12.4 were not considered due to lack of time.

The meeting ended at 10.13 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

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### Item 11: Member Questions and Answers

11.1	Question from Councillor Kamrul Hussain	<p><b>Can the Lead Member provide an update on the ongoing costs accrued by the council in redressing the failure to sign off the council accounts under the last administration?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The costs incurred on the financial statements from 2016/17 through to 2019/20 (4-years) accrued amount to £3.1m. This includes Interim Staff who were not all involved in addressing audit queries per se, but all contributed towards the overarching Finance Improvement Plan previously reported to Audit committee.</p>
11.2	Question from Councillor Mohammed Chowdhury	<p><b>We are facing an unprecedented housing crisis in the borough. I have been contacted by many private tenants that their landlord is turning their rented accommodation into Airbnb accommodation for more profit. Some of these private tenants will be homeless soon, which, in turn, enhances the current crisis. Could the lead member for Housing tell us their plan to regulate the increase of Airbnb or similar holiday accommodations in the borough?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>Tackling the housing crisis is a clear priority for the council, as set out in the Mayor’s manifesto and the Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Regarding the regulation of Airbnb and other holiday lettings, unfortunately there are limitations on what we can do. Currently in London it is possible to let out a residential (use class C3) property as a short term let for up to 90 days a year without planning permission and it is extremely difficult to monitor and enforce against those who let out their properties for longer than that 90 day limit.</p> <p>The Government have recently consulted on the possibility of introducing a new use class for short term lets, although it is not clear that any of the measures consulted on will help the situation in London.</p> <p>Local authorities are soon expected to have the discretion to double council tax on second homes through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which is anticipated to pass later this year. This</p>

		<p>measure, once available, can be used to enforce upon owners of Airbnb and similar holiday accommodations in the borough.</p> <p>The government have also committed to introducing a registration scheme for short-term lets in England through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, and details of how a scheme will operate was explored through a consultation on a registration scheme for short-term lets in England which closed on 7 June 2023. Whilst Scotland and Northern Island already have a short-term let licensing scheme in operation, 60% of respondents favoured a light-touch registration scheme in England, in response to the governments call for evidence. It's anticipated that the scheme will be operational in 2024.</p> <p>We will continue to explore the powers we can utilise as a council to make the best use of the borough's housing stock.</p>
11.3	<p><b>Question from Councillor Shafi Ahmed</b></p>	<p><b>Can the Mayor or Lead Member please update on the progress of the LBTH Local Plan refresh, and what he hopes to see achieved in the outcomes of this process?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The 2020 Adopted Local Plan is currently under a full review, which includes assessing the effectiveness of all policies, and drafting new policies where required. The direction of policies will be underpinned and informed by, national and regional policy requirements, local objectives, new evidence base and consultation and engagement with all Tower Hamlets' communities.</p> <p>Key milestones for the review of a Local Plan are,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- early engagement on issues and policy proposals – which took place between Wednesday 25 January to Wednesday March 8 2023</li> <li>- Regulation 18 – statutory consultation on the draft Local Plan</li> <li>- Regulation 19 – final representations and comments on the Local Plan being submitted to the Secretary of State</li> <li>- Examination in Public with an Independent Inspector – which</li> </ul> <p>The Plan Making team are currently preparing for Regulation 18 and intend to take this to Cabinet in October 2023, to consult in November 2023.</p> <p>The outcomes of the Local Plan review process are to ensure the Council meets all relevant statutory requirements of the Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Town and Country Planning Act 2012 as well as effectively engagement with all stakeholders to ensure that</p>



		<p>policies reflect and address the issues and needs of the borough and its communities.</p> <p>The outcomes of the new Local Plan can be defined as those which closely align with the Mayor's 8 objectives in the Strategic Plan, and specifically that of addressing overcrowding with the focus on delivering homes.</p>
11.4	<p><b>Question from Councillor Marc Francis</b></p>	<p><b>Can the Mayor and Lead Member explain why they have stopped plans to introduce a raised table zebra crossing on Parnell Road to make it safer for older residents and families with children crossing from Lefevre estate to cross to Roman Road market?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The proposal for a raised zebra crossing at Parnell Road formed part of a wider package of measures put forward for the area, initially as part of the Liveable Streets programme, which encompassed changes to pedestrian crossings in addition to the traffic restriction schemes. This scheme remains under review.</p>
11.5	<p><b>Question from Councillor Amin Rahman</b></p>	<p><b>Can the Lead Member feedback on the recent peer review that looked at our early help service which took place in February and March and the Care Leavers which happened in May?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The Early Help Peer Review was Conducted by three experienced Early Help leaders and a Department of Education lead, including from highly rated local authorities, over three days. The Review Team met with staff and visited our Children and Family Centres, undertook case audits and discussions with practitioners, and met with key partners to get full sense of our Early Help offer.</p> <p>Key findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders, managers and staff talked passionately about this new direction and the benefits for families. This is well articulated in the new ambitious Early Help Strategy - 'Leaving no families behind – supporting access for all'</li> <li>• The locality model of delivery is well embedded and supports bespoke early support to each of these 4 communities.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The visible diversity of the workforce is commendable, particularly in terms of ethnicity, culture, age and gender. There is a real sense that staff can be their authentic selves at work</li> <li>• The 12 children and family centres are an excellent resource for families in Tower Hamlets and demonstrate an integration with health that other Local Authorities could learn from.</li> <li>• There has been considerable investment in upskilling the internal early help teams, as part of a wider children’s services investment. This is impressive and, as mentioned above, staff referenced their restorative approach in many conversations as well as examples of how it is impacting on outcomes for children and families.</li> <li>• The review team made some recommendations which are currently being considered and implemented.</li> </ul> <p>Our Care Leavers Peer Review was carried out by Mark Riddell MBE, the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, who concluded:</p> <p>“I was very impressed by the leadership and management approach that was ambitious, aspirational and I got a real sense of passion and commitment to have a better offer for care leavers across the whole service area. What I also saw and heard was many examples where I felt the service was ‘pitching’ above good and that the corporate approach, and in particular the team approach stood out with workers who were highly responsive to the needs of care leavers. The local authority are in a good position to get to being great for care leavers in that I could see some outstanding features.”</p>
11.6	<p><b>Question from Councillor Mufeedah Bustin</b></p>	<p><b>With the removal of funding for George Green’s school and the cancelling of NCIL projects in the most population-dense area of the UK, what investment is the mayor making on the Isle of Dogs?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The Council has spent and committed to spend considerable levels of funding in the Isle of Dogs. The Council’s current Capital Programme has allocated £18.5m to projects that are geographically specific only to the Isle of Dogs area. These projects include improvements to parks, schools and the public realm, as well as the delivery of South Dock Bridge, a transformative project for the area.</p> <p>Additionally, the benefits of infrastructure cannot always be viewed along rigid boundaries. For example, the Council views Secondary Schools on a boroughwide basis, recognising that delivering a new school in one area, has a ripple effect that provides capacity in</p>

existing schools in other areas. The Council also spends significant resources on boroughwide initiatives such as park and public realm improvements that benefit all areas of Tower Hamlets. The current Capital Programme includes over £40m towards such programmes.

In addition, the Council uses the planning process to require developers to provide new facilities as part of their developments. The Local Plan includes requirements for developers to deliver a range of infrastructure to meet the needs of both new and existing residents on the Isle of Dogs and adjacent areas over the Local Plan period, including 10 schools, 6 health centres, 12 new open spaces and a number of community facilities.

To date, potential schools have been secured through existing planning permissions on the Isle of Dogs at Wood Wharf, 3 Millharbour and Westferry Printworks. The same process has secured, through planning permissions a range of health and community facilities, and open spaces to be delivered by developers on-site. By delivering this infrastructure directly, developers are awarded an equivalent reduction in the funding they pay the Council through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Therefore, the cost of delivering these projects can reasonably be seen as 'spend' by the Council and amounts to many tens of millions of pounds. It should be noted that these new facilities will serve not just the development where they are being delivered, but also the wider community. The Council will fund the fit out of these new facilities and ensure they can be occupied as they are required. This also amounts to tens of millions of pounds.

The Council approved its new approach to Neighbourhood CIL (subject to call-in) at the June 2023 Cabinet meeting. This approach will ensure that residents where development is taking place benefit from the funding secured in that location. With its status of having a Neighbourhood Plan, the Isle of Dogs will benefit from 25% of CIL secured. The new NCIL approach will deliver local improvements through the Council's Grant Programme, putting spend directly in the hands of local people. Remaining funding will support the delivery of infrastructure and affordable housing projects on the Isle of Dogs in accordance with local priorities.

The Council is also undertaking work to ensure that functional infrastructure, such as utilities are well planned for on the Isle of Dogs, recognising the need for enhancements to these systems in order to accommodate new housing. Council officers have worked in partnership with the Greater London Authority, utility providers, transport providers and developers on projects with a focus on the Isle of Dogs. This work, utilising CIL funding alongside £500k

		<p>secured from the GLA has developed plans for necessary utility infrastructure, ensuring future supplies of water, electricity and digital connectivity are well planned for.</p> <p>The Council recognises the high levels of construction work and development taking place on the Isle of Dogs and the difficulties residents face living in this area during these works. The Council has therefore recently adopted its new Code of Construction Practice and continues to work closely with developers to mitigate the impacts of construction activity on local residents on the Isle of Dogs. This work is funded using S106 secured from developments.</p>
11.7	<p><b>Question from Councillor Bodrul Choudhury</b></p>	<p><b>Can the Lead Member update the council on progress with the external independent investigation of our housing management department? Can the Lead Member tell us who has been appointed and set out a timeline for delivery?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>There has been a separate commission of BDO to complete an external review of the governance, systems, and processes regarding the engagement, monitoring, and enforcement of regulations and occupancy of HMO properties. They are due to report in August.</p>
11.8	<p><b>Question from Councillor Asma Islam</b></p>	<p><b>How many homeless residents were supported into suitable accommodation for the council year 22-23 and how did that compare against the target set for the year?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>In 2022/23, the number of homeless households who were supported to move into affordable, sustainable housing was 317 (under our target of 470).</p> <p>Of the 317 homeless households, <b>148 moved on to private rent sector accommodation</b> and a further <b>169 to social housing</b>.</p> <p>The target has not been met primarily due to the economic climate which is having a considerable adverse impact on the private rental market. There is a significant shortage of affordable PRS supply available to rehouse homeless households. The acute shortage of PRS supply has been experienced during each quarter of the last financial year. All London boroughs are reporting a sudden shrinking of the affordable PRS, so this is not a problem unique to Tower Hamlets.</p>

11.9	<p><b>Question from Councillor Ahmodul Kabir</b></p>	<p><b>Many residents have complained about the cleanliness of Tower Hamlets' streets. Can the Lead Member or the Mayor provide Council with an update on measures being taken to ensure our residents don't have to walk through dirty streets?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>Several initiatives to improve street cleanliness in the borough will be included in the upcoming Waste Improvement Plan, which will be rolled out from August 2023. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rebranding of street cleansing vehicles, including Find It, Fix It (FiFi) signage, to make vehicles more visible.</li> <li>• New barrow sweeper-cards introduced to improve clarity for sweepers.</li> <li>• More regular grading of streets to help proactivity of street cleansing.</li> <li>• A refresh of QR codes on litter bins to enable better resident reporting through FiFi.</li> <li>• Increased awareness of FiFi app through an awareness campaign</li> <li>• Conduct a service-wide job skills audit to better organise street cleansing workforce.</li> <li>• Rollout of 39 big belly smart bins across the borough, focusing on high-footfall areas.</li> <li>• Rollout of duo recycling/refuse litter bins across the borough to encourage visitors and residents to recycle litter.</li> </ul>
11.10	<p><b>Question from Councillor Leelu Ahmed</b></p>	<p><b>How many affordable homes were delivered by the council for the council year 22-23?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The tackling of overcrowding and its negative consequences on the residents of Tower Hamlets is a top priority for the Council. Nearly 14,000 Tower Hamlets residents are living in acute overcrowding, and the subsequent health, financial and wellbeing impacts are real issues that the council is acutely aware of. Delivering new affordable and council homes for local residents is a key solution to redressing this problem, and it is an area where we are making significant investments and working closely with housing partners across the borough.</p>

		<p>For the year 2022/23, looking at both RPs and the council, a total of 623 affordable homes have been delivered in the borough. The Council remains committed to exceeding the Mayor’s pledge to deliver 4,000 social homes for rent in Tower Hamlets, and feel that this is a good start in meeting this target.</p> <p>These figures are for affordable homes completed in 22/23 for both RPs and the council, and do not include new starts on site.”</p>
11.11	<p><b>Question from Councillor Ahmodur Khan</b></p>	<p><b>Can the Lead Member explain the number of red and ambers in the Council’s Strategic delivery and performance report: Year One Delivery Plan 2022 – 2023, and what measures are being taken to urgently address them?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>Thank you for your question. We are aware there are several areas with red and amber status in the annual performance report that is going to Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> July.</p> <p>This is disappointing however the report does outline corrective action is in place and when performance is expected to improve. It also highlights that in some areas external factors i.e. the housing market are having an impact and this is a common issue for all inner London boroughs which we continue to benchmark against.</p> <p>The investment agreed in my budget earlier this year will now start to be felt by frontline services and a plan is in place to move forward in a way that focuses in on improving performance with a focus on the indicators currently below target.</p> <p>We will continue to do all we can to deliver on our ambitious Strategic Plan and improve the lives of our residents.</p>
11.12	<p><b>Question from Councillor Rachel Blake</b></p>	<p><b>How many complaints has the council received about landlords in the private rented sector and how many of these complaints have been investigated by the council?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The Council does not have the remit to accept complaints about all landlords within the private rented sector. For those where we do have remit, these are logged on icasework.</p>

		<p>If the complaint is against THH which is an RSL, the complaints are logged, responded to and iCasework stats available.</p> <p>If the complaint is against a TMO, as these are ultimately council stock, and the complaints are logged, responded to and iCasework stats available.</p> <p>If the complaint is against an RSL, these are normally taken up by the resident with the relevant RSL and they process as a complaint with recourse to the Housing Ombudsman Service or legal redress.</p> <p>For TMO and RSL complaints, in practice there will be very few on iCasework purely because residents will raise these directly with the TMO or RSL and not the Council.</p> <p>Given the above, the clearest and most complete picture we have of complaints made will be concerning THH complaints As such, stats can be provided in writing on the above basis if it would be helpful to the councillor.</p>
11.13	<p><b>Question from Councillor Musthak Ahmed</b></p>	<p><b>This Cost-of-Living crisis has seen the poorest and most vulnerable in Tower Hamlets hit hardest. Can the Lead Member tell us what measures have been put in place to support affected residents?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>As a priority both of the Mayor’s manifesto and the Council’s strategic plan, tackling the cost of living crisis has been a focal point of LBTH’s work towards supporting low income residents and tackling poverty in the borough. This has meant the delivery of a range of initiatives including the allocation of more than 53,000 cash first payments to residents in the last year, a programme of support that has provided more than £6m to residents identified by council data as being the most in need of support. This work has helped us to utilise funding both from Tower Hamlets and from the UK government’s Household Support Fund to support groups including pensioners, FSM eligible children, young carers, low income people with disabilities, those with high energy medical equipment and those experiencing in-work poverty. More funds are due to be allocated to additional cohorts throughout the remainder of the year.</p> <p>In addition we have continued to make sure everyone in our borough who needs it can access support by putting funding into our Residents Support Scheme, which is available to any resident</p>

		<p>regardless of benefit status. In using the scheme as the by-application route for HSF support, and by expanding the criteria of the scheme to include difficulties with heating and eating, the RSS has paid out more than £420,000 towards energy bills and food for residents in the last year and over a million pounds in overall grants.</p> <p>This work continues alongside projects designed to tackle poverty in the medium and the long term – including the FOOD Store programme, the Council’s Food Hub, the Holiday Activities and Food programme, the income maximisation work of the LBTH outreach team, and the ongoing expansion of universal free school meals to all secondary school aged children.</p> <p>In order to help residents to seek help and advice the cost of living campaign was launched last year to communicate the wide range of support they can access - and this is continually revised and revisited by council officers to make sure we are getting the best possible information out to our residents.</p>
11.14	<p><b>Question from Councillor Amy Lee</b></p>	<p><b>NHS Northeast London have approved cuts of £82 million this year but have not revealed which services will be affected. What questions have you asked of NHS NEL on this, to ensure that Tower Hamlets residents are not hit by these cuts?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>Briefing from NHS North East London:</p> <p>The 2023/24 Operating Plan for NHS North East London has been prepared on the basis of delivering NHS priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recovering our core services and productivity</li> <li>• Delivering the key NHS Long Term Plan ambitions and transforming the NHS</li> <li>• Continue to transform the NHS for the future</li> <li>• Local empowerment and accountability</li> </ul> <p>The Operating Plan is underpinned by a suite of national priorities and key targets to be delivered working with our system partners. This includes delivering a balanced financial plan for the North East London system which consists of North East London Integrated Care Board (ICB), The East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT), North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT), Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Barts Health NHS Trust and Barking, Havering &amp; Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust (BHRUT).</p>



		<p>North East London finance submitted a finance plan to deliver a break-even position for the system.</p> <p>Within the overall breakeven plan, Bart's have a deficit, BHRUT and Homerton are close to breakeven and the ICB, ELFT and NELFT are all delivering a surplus to offset the deficit.</p> <p>The North East London ICB plan includes £82.6m planned efficiency savings. These are not cuts to services but planned efficiency savings and the overall service offer remains the same. The total £82.6m represents 2% which is the standard required level of "Cost Improvement Programmes" (CIP). We are working with place partnerships and our providers to ensure that impact on outcomes is minimal.</p> <p>All system partners are facing financial challenges and pressures. The planned efficiency savings are required to deliver the financial plan and support/underpin financial resilience. This is not too dissimilar to the planning protocols used by our system partners.</p>
11.15	<p><b>Question from Councillor Bellal Uddin</b></p>	<p><b>Can the Lead Member update the council on progress with implementation of council's new youth service - Young Tower Hamlets?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been good progress and the expanded Young Tower Hamlets service will be launched by the Mayor at an event being delivered on 17 July 2023 alongside the launch of our full youth work summer programme.</li> <li>• There has been rapid recruitment of interim staff in order to be able to move at pace with the first steps of delivering new youth provision.</li> <li>• Refurbishment and fit out of Columbia Road and Goulston Street is on track to open in August.</li> <li>• The Young Tower Hamlets logo and branding is being designed.</li> <li>• Consultation with young people has been extensive, including x 4 Hackathon events across the borough with over 400 young people in attendance and young peoples survey with over 900 completions.</li> </ul>
11.16	<p><b>Question from Councillor Ayas Miah</b></p>	<p><b>How many waste collections have been missed for the council year 22-23 and how does this compare against its target?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p>

		<p>The number of total reported missed collections for the year 2022-2023 was 13,717.</p> <p>The breakdown of this total is as follows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residual missed collections 5998</li> <li>• Recycling missed collections 6258</li> <li>• Organic missed collections 1461</li> </ul> <p>The target was 10,000 missed collections and we received 13,717 reports. This is the total number of reported missed collections before the data was processed in order to remove</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple reports from the same property which would equate to one missed collection.</li> <li>• Access issues- parked cars blocking access, roadworks, building works blocking bin access.</li> <li>• Waste not present at time of collection</li> <li>• contamination</li> <li>• Keys/fobs- collections crews carry more than 1000 keys/fobs to access these properties.</li> </ul> <p>The service makes over 10 million collections per year.</p>
11.17	<p><b>Question from Councillor Harun Miah</b></p>	<p><b>Could the Mayor or Lead Member provide us with an update on the decision taken to bring all of the Borough’s leisure services in-house?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The decision to insource the leisure services, when the current contract with GLL expires at the end of April 2024, was made in August 2022. Subsequent to the decision a project board was established to scope the project. Activities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying and securing project resources (primarily responsible officers from across the Council to lead on specific workstreams).</li> <li>• Agreeing governance for the project and establishing a high-level strategic Board to oversee the creation of work packages for each workstream.</li> <li>• Agreeing a revenue budget to deliver the project.</li> <li>• Drawing together a range of recent analysis to better understand the current condition of the estate and customer usage.</li> <li>• Initial meetings with GLL to agree the transition process.</li> <li>• Ensuring connection as a dependency to the Capital Delivery Team led project to rebuild a facility at St. Georges</li> </ul>

		<p>Since mid-March, we have successfully moved into the delivery phase and recent months have prioritised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resourcing the project team and recruiting to service management posts.</li> <li>• Finalising the transition plan with incumbent provider.</li> <li>• Procurement of a Leisure Management System.</li> <li>• Internal engagement week with LBTH staff.</li> <li>• Initial engagement with community groups, schools and key partners/funders.</li> <li>• Specialist engaged to support Corporate Communications team with branding, business development, website &amp; app development and sales strategy.</li> <li>• Market testing progressing (equipment/operations/specialised servicing etc) and a number of procurements out to tender to deliver a Leisure Needs Assessment, Facilities Planning Modelling, Service Design, Quality Assurance and a Swim Latent Demand &amp; Programming assessment), many of which will inform a 10-year investment strategy for leisure and wellbeing facilities across Tower Hamlets.</li> <li>• Task &amp; Finish group to identify commissioning opportunities within the local health economy. With a specific post out to advert for a Public Health Manager to support the T&amp;F group.</li> <li>• Contracts pipeline established.</li> <li>• Health &amp; Safety audits completed.</li> <li>• Lessons learned discussions across key thematic areas (Finance, HR, IT etc).</li> <li>• Draft business plan developed and being validated.</li> <li>• Latent demand analysis for St Georges completed and engagement around St. Georges underway.</li> </ul> <p>The coming months will see the emergence of a new brand and business development pipeline, using public engagement that is meaningful and helps generate enthusiasm for the project. At the same time, the team need to provide the structure and processes that will enable the management team to deliver both a safe transition from GLL and some new services and products ahead of the new service launching.</p> <p>We remain on track to bring the service back in-house in May 2024.</p>
11.18	Question from Councillor Maisha Begum	<p><b>How many children are receiving EHC assessment decisions within the statutory 6 weeks? How many parents are receiving communication on the outcome within the statutory 16 weeks? How many children are receiving a plan within the statutory 20 weeks?</b></p>

		<p><b>Response</b></p> <p>Currently, 98% of requests are considered within the statutory 6 weeks: the only reason for delay is where further information has been sought rather than issue an outright decline to assess. Approx. 75% of requests have a decision made within 4 weeks of the request into the LA.</p> <p>All parents receive information on the 16- and 20-week timescales of the assessment process when informed of the decision to assess or not.</p> <p>Cumulatively for this year, 50% of all EHCPs have been delivered in-timescale, which is at the national average. However, month-by-month, our performance is higher still, and over the last 3 months, we have issued 75% of EHCPs within the statutory 20 weeks.</p>
11.19	<p><b>Question from Councillor Abdul Mannan</b></p>	<p><b>Could the Lead Member update Council on action taken to address the concerns raised by some Somali residents about the lack of support from the housing options service?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>A series of actions and steps have been taken over the previous months following the Town Hall meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023.</p> <p>Many Somali residents attended the Town Hall meeting at the Council on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023. Appropriate Council staff were at this meeting including the Director of Housing and the Head of Complaints to listen and offer support to the families who attended.</p> <p>The Head of Complaints and Director of Housing offered support to all the families to have their individual cases and concerns investigated via the council's formal complaints procedure. The Head of Complaints committed to creating some guidance for the attending families covering how to easily navigate the complaints procedure and to specifically create custom simple complaints form to make it easier for families to submit information and evidence. These documents were completed and were distributed at the end of March 2023 via their representative (these can be shared). This guidance and custom form made an easy and supportive way to raise complaints. It has also been offered for these documents to be translated.</p>

		<p>Since this offer of support to help families through the complaints process, the council has successfully received several formal complaints from some of the Somali women and these have been going through the procedure correctly. For those who have not yet submitted a formal complaint and evidence, they have been re-invited to do so, and the Head of Complaints has continued to offer the residents support and guidance to raise their complaint.</p> <p>At the time of writing, no evidence has been submitted that demonstrates Council employees either racially discriminated against the women in the bidding process, or that offers were made to fast-track bids in exchange for money.</p> <p>However, the number of complaints received vs the amount of residents that attended shows that many have not come forward. (The Head of Complaints personally worked on progressing approx. 30 cases as far as residents would engage). Due to this, continuing and further engagement strategies have been sought such as working to meet again with the residents.</p> <p>An in-person meeting had also been offered with the Chief Executive and relevant council officers to the residents on 30<sup>th</sup> June, however this meeting was declined shortly the day before it was due to take place. Another meeting has since been offered and the council is working encourage residents to attend so that they can engage productively with the council.</p>
11.20	<p><b>Question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar</b></p>	<p><b>How many students have been successful in applying for the EMA/bursary fund and how many applied? How much funding remains in both yearly budgets?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p><b>University Bursary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding available for 400 successful applicants.</li> <li>• 1751 applications received.</li> <li>• 1398 met criteria.</li> <li>• 400 successful applicants paid.</li> <li>• Oversubscribed by 998</li> </ul> <p><b>EMA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding available for 1250 successful applicants.</li> <li>• 1931 applications received.</li> <li>• Currently undersubscribed by 456</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 794 successful applicants. Threshold revised due to challenges with applicants meeting attendance threshold – Original threshold was 95% attendance, reduced to 85%.</li> <li>• The remaining funding has covered the staffing and administration costs which were not factored in the growth approved for 23/24.</li> </ul>
11.21	<p><b>Question from Councillor Shubo Hussain</b></p>	<p><b>How many payments to date have been made from the SME Energy Efficiency Grants programme? Is there a register of successful applicants?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>Funded through the carbon offsetting funds, the Council delivered two phases of the SME Energy Improvements Grants.</p> <p>The grant provided 50% match funding up to a maximum of £5,000 to SMEs to carry out energy retrofit projects that will reduce their carbon emissions. The scheme closed in November 2020 where we allocated £401,807 to 84 SME businesses.</p> <p>Due to the success of the project, we ran a further phase of funding providing 50% grant funding up to a maximum of £5,000 to SMEs to carry out energy retrofit projects that will reduce their carbon emissions and 50% grant funding up to a maximum of £10,000 for projects that installed renewable energy or electric heating. This programme closed in July 2021 where we allocated £274,139 to 49 organisations.</p> <p>The Council keeps a register of all successful applicants and the amount of grant given to each organisation.</p>
11.22	<p><b>Question from Councillor Asma Begum</b></p>	<p><b>How many meetings have there been of the Mayor’s Advisory Board for Climate Change (MABCC) and what is the current membership of the board?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The Mayors Advisory Board for Climate Change meetings takes place quarterly, two meeting have taken place so far with the next one scheduled for September 2023. In addition to this the launch of the ‘A cleaner greener future for Tower Hamlets’ launch took place in February 2023.</p> <p>Current membership of MABCC is as follows.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lutfur Rahman – Executive Mayor</li> <li>- Kabir Hussain – Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency</li> <li>- Mohammed Maium Miah Talukdar – Statutory Deputy Mayor</li> <li>- Sam Harney- Political Advisor to the Executive Mayor</li> <li>- Kieran Andrieu - Head of External Relations</li> <li>- Corporate Director - Place Directorate</li> <li>- Simon Baxter – Director of Public Realm</li> <li>- Karen Swift – Director of Housing</li> <li>- Abdul Khan – Head of Sustainability</li> <li>- David Tolley – Head of Environmental Health</li> <li>- Mark Bagnall Barts Health NHS Trust</li> <li>- Paul Brickell – London Legacy Development Corporation</li> <li>- Katharina Winbeck – London Councils</li> <li>- Deivi Norberg - Queen Mary University of London</li> <li>- Hira Islam - Secretary General of <i>Council of Mosques</i></li> <li>- Sufia Alam – Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum</li> </ul> <p>Two co-opted members to be recruited.</p>
11.23	Question from Councillor Rebekah Sultana	<p><b>How many meetings of The Mayor’s Keep our Borough Moving forum have taken place and who currently sits on the forum/board?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The board has not yet been set up. The new interim Director of Public Realm is currently in discussion with Mayor’s Office about a number of priorities, including this board, and will report back in due course.</p>
11.24	Question from Councillor Amina Ali	<p><b>Could the KC advice on the Grant’s determination process be published and/or provided to members?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The information requested is subject to legal professional privilege and is therefore considered to be exempt from disclosure at the present time.</p>
11.25	Question from Councillor James King	<p><b>How many new cycle parking hangers/racks have been completed by the LBTH this year and what is the completion target for 23-24?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p>

		<p>During 2022-23 a total of 82 secure cycle parking spaces were installed. This figure comprises 10 bike hangars and 22 individual lockers. We are looking at arrangements, including delivery targets, for the cycle parking programme in 2023-24 and beyond.</p>
11.26	<p><b>Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah</b></p>	<p><b>Can the Mayor explain why the Council has chosen to retain basketball hoops in Wapping Gardens, despite their commitment to remove these if there was misuse of the MUGA during the trial period, and despite a large amount of evidence from residents that shows there was misuse?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>During the trial we received direct feedback from park users and residents and also via questionnaires with park users, which were conducted by Park Rangers.</p> <p>A minority (20 out of 57) of the respondents were specifically opposed to basketball at Wapping Gardens. Given this, and the need to provide sports provision in the borough to help tackle obesity and promote health and wellbeing, a decision has been taken to keep the hoops in-situ. It should be noted that some of the respondents also complained about wider noise disturbances, including the noise of people playing football and from dogs in the park.</p> <p>We will continue to investigate ways to further reduce the impact of noise disturbance in terms of the basketball installation and will be arranging for signage to be placed up around the site to remind people of the Park Rules and to be considerate of residents and other park users.</p>
11.27	<p><b>Question from Councillor Faroque Ahmed</b></p>	<p><b>Could we be provided with a progress update on the refurbishment of the mayor's office and the associated costs with the work?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The configuration of office accommodation in the new Town hall is currently being considered as part of the ongoing review of the utilisation of the building. Works associated with changes in the Grade II listed Town Hall will need to be approved via listed building consent, planning permission has been submitted and we are awaiting this to be determined in the coming weeks.</p> <p>We are finalising the costs for the changes which have been budgeted for within the existing Town Hall budget, this was approved</p>



		at Cabinet in January 2023, subsequently agreed at full council on 01.03.2023.
11.28	<b>Question from Councillor Sabina Khan</b>	<p><b>Could the lead member provide me the number of students that were excluded from school for the 22-23 year and a breakdown of how long it took before those students found a new school placement?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>There have been seven permanent exclusions this academic year. Three from schools in Tower Hamlets and four from out -borough schools, where the pupil is a resident of Tower Hamlets. All permanently excluded pupils are provided with education provision from the 6<sup>th</sup> day of exclusion at the Tower Hamlets London East Alternative Provision. They are then allocated to the Local Authority's Fair Access Panel to assess whether they should move to a new mainstream school or whether, with parental consent, they transfer to an alternative education programme for Year 10/11.</p> <p>Of the seven permanently excluded pupils this year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• four successfully moved on to new schools, following an 8–12-week intensive intervention programme aimed at reducing the risk of further exclusion.</li> <li>• three moved to a full-time alternative education setting, agreed by professionals and parents as the best provision for their continuing education.</li> </ul>
11.29	<b>Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam</b>	<p><b>Will the Mayor be able to update me on whether the borough will be accepting £1m LIP funding that is being held by TfL? I have received an inquiry on behalf of a resident who requested an upgrade to a bus stop and to have a bench installed – he was informed that funding was restricted and that negotiations were ongoing with the mayor.</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>TfL have not released the 2023-24 LIP allocation funding to London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The TfL position is that the release of this funding is subject to discussions between the Mayor and TfL.</p>
11.30	<b>Question from Councillor Peter Golds</b>	<b>Island Gardens ward residents on Manchester Road and Eastferry Road have concerns regarding the damage done to their homes caused by increased commercial and public traffic</b>

		<p><b>on the roads. The decision by the Mayor to cancel the feasibility study and traffic measures on these roads in his revisions to the NCIL scheme could potentially cause serious problems to houses in this area. Will the Mayor reconsider this decision and meet with residents to see personally the current situation?</b></p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The focus of NCIL is to help deliver local infrastructure and address the demands and pressures that development places on an area. Adopting a new approach to NCIL (subject to call in) has meant that a number of projects have had their NCIL funding withdrawn, including some highways projects. Although the NCIL funding for these projects have been cancelled, NCIL is just one of the funding sources that the Council uses to deliver infrastructure and local improvements to support development. Notably, the NCIL funding collected from developments on the Isle of Dogs (NCIL area 3) will continue to be spent to support the development of that area in accordance with the priorities set out in the Annual Residents Survey (ARS).</p> <p>Officers are happy to meet the residents to listen to and understand their concerns. However, for a study to take place a funding source would need to be identified.</p>
11.31	<p><b>Question from Councillor Nathalie Bienfait</b></p>	<p><b>I along with all other councillors hear countless stories from constituents that they have had confusing or unexplained contact with the housing team and lettings team at the council. For example: paperwork is lost or not filed, viewings are recorded which never actually happened, viewings which happened aren't recorded, letters are reportedly sent but are never received.</b></p> <p><b>Could the administration please outline what work they are doing to improve the Council's housing service?</b></p> <p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>We are sorry to hear about these incidents that you are hearing about. When Cllrs hear about these sort of matters then please encourage residents to raise these with the service. We value feedback from residents. Our IT systems and processes are being consolidated and improved to make the customer journey better and avoid duplication and better document handling.</p>

		<p>Applicants who are requested to attend viewings of permanent offers will always be written to advising them of the offer and viewing date. The results of the viewings are recorded on the our letting IT system if the offers are refused, the reason is stated. To ensure offer letters are received and to speed up the viewing process, where possible the council and its Registered Provider partners will email applicants. If the letter can't be emailed, it will be posted. If for any reason applicants don't receive the letter or receive it late, applicants may make representations to the council or its partner Registered Providers seeking a review, which will be considered diligently. The council and its Registered Provider landlords welcome any feedback on customer experiences and would encourage those with concerns to raise these directly with the relevant landlord.</p>
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