

# Public Pack

COUNCIL, 17/07/2024

SECTION ONE (UNRESTRICTED)

## LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

### MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.03 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 17 JULY 2024

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

#### Members Present:

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

#### Councillors in Virtual Attendance

Councillor Maisha Begum (Member)  
Councillor Ayas Miah (Member)

#### The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Saif Uddin Kahled in the Chair

The Speaker of the Council provided his update to the Council. He noted that he had attended the London Mayor's Association's induction event and had met with new civic colleagues across London.

He had visited his chosen charities, the Sick Children's Trust and the Osmani Trust and had the opportunity to see first-hand the work they do. Other highlights included:

- Attending a celebration event for a lifeboat from Sweden, built in 1868 by Messrs. Forrestt & Son of Limehouse; and
- Participating in a Democracy event with young Children in the Council Chamber;

The Speaker congratulated Councillor Rachel Blake for being elected as MP for Cities and Westminster and Councillor Nathalie Beinfait for coming a close second in her bid to become MP for Poplar and Limehouse.

The Speaker congratulated Aspana Begum MP on her re-election to Poplar and Limehouse and Rushanara Ali MP on her re-election to Bethnal Green and Stepney constituencies. He also congratulated Rushanara Ali MP for being appointed as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Further congratulations were given to Uma Kumaran MP, elected as MP for the newly formed constituency of Stratford and Bow as well as congratulations to Sir Keir Starmer for being elected as Prime Minister and forming the next government.

Finally, the Speaker thanked the Acting Returning Officer and staff who had worked on the elections and count.

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rachel Blake, Councillor Ohid Ahmed and Councillor Abdul Malik.

Councillor Ayas Miah and Councillor Maisha Begum joined the meeting online.

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

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests declared by members.

## **3. MINUTES**

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Agree the minutes of the Annual General meeting of the Council of 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024, and approve them as a correct record of the proceedings, save for the correction at item number 2, that Councillor Suluk Ahmed was appointed as Deputy Speaker of the Council and not Councillor Saif Uddin Khaled who is the Speaker. The Speaker was authorised to sign the minutes accordingly.

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

Steve Halsey, Chief Executive provided an update to the Council meeting, highlighting the following issues:

- Steve Halsey thanked the Elections team, polling clerks and count staff for their work on the General Election and congratulated the MP's who had been appointed for their constituency.
- He congratulated Sir Keir Starmer as Prime Minister and said the Council had already been in contact with the new government.
- He highlighted the success of the Staff Conference and Awards held in early July and said almost 3,000 staff members had attended.
- He informed Members, that the new Corporate Director for Health, Adults and Social Care, Ms Georgia Chimbani would be joining the Council on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024; and lastly
- Interviews for the Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer had been held and Ms Shupriya Iqbal had been appointed to the position.

#### 5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

##### 5.1 Petition requesting the Council to re-open the Boundary Estate Community Launderette.

Johnathan Moberly, Lorraine Hart and Abdul Goffar presented their petition relating to the re-opening of the Boundary Estate Community Launderette. Mr Moberly said many people in the community had concerns about the closure of the launderette in February 2024. He said the launderette was a vital community hub and was used by many residents of the Estate. He said whilst they welcomed the re-opening of the launderette following negotiations with the Council, they were seeking a permanent solution regarding the location and status of the launderette. He said they'd like to see the premises designated to the 'community asset' portfolio and not as it is under the 'commercial asset' category.

Members asked questions of the petitioners before Council debated the matter as the petition had received over 2,800 signatures.

Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and Cost-of-Living responded to matters raised in the petition. He said a tenancy at will for a period of up to twelve months was granted on 26 March which allowed the Launderette to resume operations.

The property does not meet the criteria for additions to the community premises portfolio, one of which excludes retail properties. The criteria was agreed at Cabinet in 2021, however we are working closely with the charity and remain committed to dialogue with the Launderette to explore whether there are alternative options that would allow for it to continue occupation on a long-term sustainable basis.

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director for Communities 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

### MOTION ON BANGLADESHI DIASPORA IN TOWER HAMLETS

Council considered a motion as printed in the agenda on the Bangladeshi Diaspora in Tower Hamlets that had been **moved** by Councillor Musthak Ahmed and **seconded** by Councillor Abu Talha Chowdhury.

Following debate, the motion moved by Councillor Musthak Ahmed was put to the vote and was unanimously **agreed**.

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

#### This Council notes:

- That Tower Hamlets has always been a place known for its tolerance and welcoming of communities from around the world.
- That one of the largest of these communities to make Tower Hamlets its home is the Bangladeshi community. Comprising over 1/3 of the borough's population, this community has made its home in Tower Hamlets for over 100 years.
- That they have continued the rich tradition of immigration to Tower Hamlets. Starting with the French Huguenots; and continuing through the Jewish; Irish; and the African Caribbean communities, the Bangladeshi population – alongside the more recent arrival of a thriving Somali community – has enriched the borough and left a lasting and positive legacy in the borough.
- The first Bangladeshis to come to Tower Hamlets were Lascars, seamen from the Indian subcontinent who served aboard European vessels. 896 of these Lascars were killed during the Great War, demonstrating the Bangladeshi community's pride in coming to Britain.
- That one of the oldest institutions of the Bangladeshi community was founded by one of these lascars, Shah Jalal Coffee House, which was

established in 1920 at 76 Commercial Street. This set the precedent for the vibrant and ubiquitous presence of Bangladeshis in the catering business – not only in Tower Hamlets, but across the UK.

- That the majority of the borough's Bangladeshi population came to London in the 1950s and 1960s, seeking better lives for themselves and their families following the partition of India. They worked in textile factories; car plants; and the rag trade, as well the now world-renowned curry-houses across the Country, and particularly in Tower Hamlets. They came to help rebuild Britain after the war.
- That this community stood against the violent racism espoused by the National Front in the 1970s that led to the tragic and callous murder of Altab Ali and continued violence and attacks against Bangladeshis. They stood alongside black; Jewish; and LGTBQ residents of Tower Hamlets to drive them out.
- That this continued against the BNP in the 1990s; and the EDL in the 2000s and 2010s.
- That this community has worked tirelessly through the voluntary and community sectors to support people – regardless of their background – to tackle poverty; inequality; and strengthen community cohesion.
- That by the 1980s and 1990s, Bangladeshis represented a key component of the cultural; social; political; and economic fabric of Tower Hamlets, with a booming business sector and representatives in Local and National government.
- That these local activists who went on to be elected representatives in Local Government in Tower Hamlets Council, contributed to the development and improvement of the social; economic; and cultural fabric of Tower Hamlets. They were and are trailblazers and provided leadership.
- That this community – just like all other immigrants who have made this borough their home alongside the working class Eastenders who accepted and coexisted alongside them – have together made a massive contribution to the cultural; social; and economic fabric – not only of Tower Hamlets and London – but the UK more broadly. They all represent what is best about Britain, and the benefits of diversity; multiculturalism; and bringing the best out each other.

**This Council believes:**

- That Tower Hamlets is the Capital of not only British Bangladeshis, with over 35% residents of Bangladeshi heritage – but of the Bangladeshi diaspora globally.

- It is also a community of firsts. The first British Bangladeshi member of the House of Lords was from Tower Hamlets. The first British Bangladeshi MP was from Tower Hamlets. And the first Executive Mayor from a non-white background in the whole of Europe was from Tower Hamlets and is of Bangladeshi heritage.
- That the innovation; entrepreneurial drive; and community spirit of the Bangladeshi people has contributed to making Tower Hamlets a 'go-to' borough – a place where visitors can enjoy the best food; sights; and cultural attractions that London has to offer.
- That this is embodied by the Brick Lane, Spitalfields and Banglatown area – the hub and heart of Bangladeshi industry and culture outside of Bangladesh in the world.
- This is reflected in the over £3billion that Bangladeshi businesses contributed to the borough's economy last year.
- That the community benefits brought by Bangladeshis to Tower Hamlets – their willingness to share; to be neighbourly; to offer support to young and old; and to work with other groups – demonstrates the best of our borough, and embodies the 'go-to' spirit that makes Tower Hamlets such a special place to live.
- That without the industry; culture; and spirit of the Bangladeshi community, Tower Hamlets – and Britain – would be much worse off.
- That we should celebrate and promote the history and contributions of the Bangladeshi community, and ensure that this promoted across Tower Hamlets; London; and the UK as a whole.
- Tower Hamlets – and all of the residents within it regardless of ethnic or religious background – are a microcosm of the best of Britain.

**This Councils resolves:**

- To host an exhibition in the Town Hall chronicling the history of Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets, and celebrating the cultural capital they have brought to our borough.
- To thank them for their contributions to Tower Hamlets, and the social; community; and economic benefits they have brought and continue to bring.
- To continue to develop and strengthen the close community ties between all groups in the borough.
- To continue to oppose negative depictions of this and all other groups, as it has always done, and will always continue to do.

**8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE****MOTION FOR DEBATE ON TACKLING POVERTY PROGRAMME**

Council considered a motion as printed in the agenda on the Tackling Poverty Programme that had been moved by Councillor Asma Islam and seconded by Councillor Amy Lee. Council also considered an amendment proposed by Councillor Asma Islam and seconded by Councillor Amy Lee and an amendment proposed by Councillor Maium Talukdar and seconded by Councillor Abdul Wahid as set out in the tabled papers.

Amendment Proposed by Councillor Asma Islam and seconded by Councillor Amy Lee.

Additions Underlined

Deletions Struck through

**This council notes:**

- The United Kingdom is the sixth largest economy in the world and London is the fifth wealthiest city in the world. The Borough of Tower Hamlets has faced disproportionately high levels of child poverty and deprivation for decades.
- Currently 56% of children in our borough live in poverty, the highest percentage in the UK.
- Tower Hamlets unemployment rate is at 6.3% and has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in London disproportionately affecting the BAME population.
- There have been several, high quality, pieces of research conducted on poverty in the Borough such as the LBTH 2021 Poverty Review and the Toynbee Hall Poverty Review.
- The 2021 Tower Hamlets Poverty Review found that the primary causes of poverty in our borough are:
  - Joblessness
  - Insecure, low paid work
  - Rising living costs
  - Housing costs, insecurity and undersupply
  - Inadequate and arbitrary social security system
- Pensioner Poverty has risen dramatically since 2014 especially those who live in private rental accommodation.
- It's estimated that residents of Tower Hamlets could have more than £110 million in unclaimed benefits and support.
- The 2023 O&S Review of Food Insecurity in our borough found that in 2023 there had been a rise of £643 to the annual average food shop.
- In work poverty has been on the rise since 2010 with more than 75% of children in poverty in 2023 living in a household where someone is in work.
- Over 60% of families in receipt of tax credits were in work and just under 50% of those in receipt of housing benefit were also in work.
- That 'Tackling the Cost-of-Living Crisis' is a key component of the Tower Hamlets Strategic Plan as well as other anti-poverty measures

such as Universal Free School Meals and 100% Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

- The socio-economic duty, section 1 of the Equality Act (2010) requires public bodies to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in occupation, education, place of residence or social class.

**This council believes:**

- That combatting child poverty/ poverty and deprivation should be its most important objective.
- Child poverty is linked to household income – Tower hamlets has the highest income earners (second highest in London) as well as the lowest earners or in unemployment.
- The austerity programme started under the previous government, weakened the social safety net and public services resulting in lower living standards and life expectancy for our residents.
- Brexit, Covid and the cost-of-living crisis added further economic shocks to the national economy and public services.
- Under successive governments there was significant reform of the welfare system with the introduction of Universal Credit, the ‘Under-Occupancy Charge’ (also known as the bedroom tax), the two-child benefit cap and other measures which have had a detrimental effect on the standard of living for families and individuals in our borough.
- That with political will and co-operation we can end the scourge of child poverty which is ultimately linked to tackling poverty for families in our borough.
- That this can only be achieved through long term planning and consensus building.
- That eradicating poverty is not only morally just, but also a logical way we can deliver best value for our residents.
- That this council should build on the work of successive political administrations and draw together existing work to form a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy with measurable targets and goals.
- That any comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy needs to bring together all of the council’s directorates, partner orgs (Met Police, Health and Care Partnership, Tower Hamlets Together, Faith Groups etc.) and VSCOs.
- That any strategy must centre the needs and voices of those who have experienced or currently experience poverty.
- That a comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy is complemented by the LBTH Partnership Plan and Strategic Plan.

**This council resolves to:**

- Adopt a 15-year tackling poverty strategy, with 3 phases for each 5-year milestone.



- Request that the Executive Mayor and Chief executive of Tower Hamlets explore the option for the council to begin a tackling poverty commission to produce the anti-poverty strategy.
- Request that the LBTH Overview and Scrutiny Committee, form a special 'Ending Child Poverty' Task and Finish Group that will draw membership from each scrutiny subcommittee to ensure that it's work is a collegiate and cross-party effort. T&F Group will be responsible for producing a comprehensive report and recommended strategy document to present to the Mayor and Cabinet upon completion. This will support the work of the commission as well as the overall strategy.
- Ensure the strategy is adopted at full council as an overarching policy for the entire council and our partners which should make the strategy a key priority for all council departments.
- Request that the Executive Mayor instructs the commission to identify causes and indicators, collect data and ask officers to track new changes from government so that future pressures and demands can be prepared for. Council should collect data and follow journey on how current and new initiatives are having impacts on our tackling poverty strategy.
- Ensure that the commission is asked to look at key indicators such as welfare, unemployment, debt management, council data on rent arrears, housing benefit, household money management education, mental health, substance misuse, in work poverty and education for adults and children.
- Empower council officers through education and training to look at ways to support the priority of rooting out poverty in the borough and be innovative and explore best practises from other councils and partners.
- Ensure that Tower Hamlets council will seek to work with public health, VCS, schools, residents and council to co-produce and influence tackle poverty strategy.

Amendment Proposed by Councillor Maium Talukdar and seconded by Councillor Abdul Wahid

Additions Underlined

Deletions Struck through

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- Over 60% of families in receipt of tax credits were in work and just under 50% of those in receipt of housing benefit were also in work.
- That 'Tackling the Cost-of-Living Crisis' is a key component of the Tower Hamlets Strategic Plan as well as other anti-poverty measures such as Universal Free School Meals, Education Maintenance Allowance; a generous cost of living package to support residents; and 100% Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- The socio-economic duty, section 1 of the Equality Act (2010) requires public bodies to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in occupation, education, place of residence or social class.

**This council believes:**

- That combatting child poverty/ poverty and deprivation should be its most important objective.
- Child poverty is linked to household income – Tower hamlets has the highest income earners (second highest in London) as well as the lowest earners or in unemployment.
- The austerity programme started under the previous government, weakened the social safety net and public services resulting in lower living standards and life expectancy for our residents.
- Brexit, Covid and the cost-of-living crisis added further economic shocks to the national economy and public services.
- Under successive governments there was significant reform of the welfare system with the introduction of Universal Credit, the 'Under-Occupancy Charge' (also known as the bedroom tax), the two-child benefit cap and other measures which have had a detrimental effect on the standard of living for families and individuals in our borough.

- That with political will and co-operation we can end the scourge of child poverty which is ultimately linked to tackling poverty for families in our borough.
- That this can only be achieved through long term planning and consensus building.
- That eradicating poverty is not only morally just, but also a logical way we can deliver best value for our residents.
- That this council should build on the work of successive political administrations and draw together existing work to form a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy with measurable targets and goals.
- That while the Council currently has several mitigations in place to tackle poverty in Tower Hamlets – including the Holiday Activities Fund [HAF]; the Household Support Fund [HSF]; a £1.4million Residents Support Scheme; and the *Accelerate* programme which has a dedicated section to mitigate against and tackle poverty – more can always be done to address the challenges that economic insecurity poses to our residents.
- That any comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy needs to bring together all of the council's directorates, partner orgs (Met Police, Health and Care Partnership, Tower Hamlets Together, Faith Groups etc.) and VSCOs.
- That any strategy must centre the needs and voices of those who have experienced or currently experience poverty.
- That a comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy is complemented by the LBTH Partnership Plan and Strategic Plan.

**This council resolves to:**

- Adopt a 15-year tackling poverty strategy, with 3 phases for each 5-year milestone.
- Request that the Executive Mayor and Chief executive of Tower Hamlets explore the option for the council to begin a tackling poverty commission to produce the anti-poverty strategy.
- Ensure that these issues are properly reflected in the Equality Impact Assessments undertaken on policies and strategies proposed by the authority.
- Request that the LBTH Overview and Scrutiny Committee, form a special 'Ending Child Poverty' Task and Finish Group that will draw membership from each scrutiny subcommittee to ensure that it's work is a collegiate and cross-party effort. T&F Group will be responsible for producing a comprehensive report and recommended strategy document to present to the Mayor and Cabinet upon completion. This will support the work of the commission as well as the overall strategy.
- Ensure the strategy is adopted at full council as an overarching policy for the entire council and our partners which should make the strategy a key priority for all council departments.
- Request that the Executive Mayor instructs the commission to identify causes and indicators, collect data and ask officers to track new changes from government so that future pressures and demands can be prepared for. Council should collect data and follow journey on how

current and new initiatives are having impacts on our tackling poverty strategy.

- Ensure that the commission is asked to look at key indicators such as welfare, unemployment, debt management, council data on rent arrears, housing benefit, household money management education, mental health, substance misuse, in work poverty and education for adults and children.
- Empower council officers through education and training to look at ways to support the priority of rooting out poverty in the borough and be innovative and explore best practises from other councils and partners.
- Ensure that Tower Hamlets council will seek to work with public health, VCS, schools, residents and council to co-produce and influence tackle poverty strategy.

Following debate, Councillor Asma Islam confirmed that she was accepting both proposed amendments to her motion.

The Council therefore voted on the motion as amended which was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

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always be done to address the challenges that economic insecurity poses to our residents.

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- Ensure that these issues are properly reflected in the Equality Impact Assessments undertaken on policies and strategies proposed by the authority.
- Request that the LBTH Overview and Scrutiny Committee, form a special 'Ending Child Poverty' Task and Finish Group that will draw membership from each scrutiny subcommittee to ensure that it's work is a collegiate and cross-party effort. T&F Group will be responsible for producing a comprehensive report and recommended strategy document to present to the Mayor and Cabinet upon completion. This will support the work of the commission as well as the overall strategy.
- Ensure the strategy is adopted at full council as an overarching policy for the entire council and our partners which should make the strategy a key priority for all council departments.
- Request that the Executive Mayor instructs the commission to identify causes and indicators, collect data and ask officers to track new changes from government so that future pressures and demands can be prepared for. Council should collect data and follow journey on how current and new initiatives are having impacts on our tackling poverty strategy.
- Ensure that the commission is asked to look at key indicators such as welfare, unemployment, debt management, council data on rent arrears, housing benefit, household money management education, mental health, substance misuse, in work poverty and education for adults and children.
- Empower council officers through education and training to look at ways to support the priority of rooting out poverty in the borough and be innovative and explore best practises from other councils and partners.
- Ensure that Tower Hamlets council will seek to work with public health, VCS, schools, residents and council to co-produce and influence tackle poverty strategy.

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

### 9.1 Market Designation (Columbia Road, Watney, Whitechapel)

Councillor Shafi Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency **moved** the report on Market Designation (Columbia Road, Watney and Whitechapel). Councillor Kamrul Hussain **seconded** the report.

Councillor Ahmed said Cabinet had considered the report on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024 and he was asking Council to approve the recommendations within the report. Members added their comments. Members requested Officers to consider the suggestion to allow market traders in Columbia Road market to extend their over-hung canopies over the pitch-size, of 3m x 3m to provide shelter to visitors from the weather and allow them to display their goods more prominently.

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the report; and
2. Agreed to the market improvements as set out in the Cabinet report for Columbia Road Market, Watney Market and Whitechapel Market and asked that Officers review the suggestion put forward by members in relation to pitches for Columbia Road Market.

### 9.2 Market & Street Trading Fees & Charges 2024/25

Councillor Shafi Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency **moved** the report on Market and Street Fees & Charges 2024/25. Councillor Abu Talha Chowdhury **seconded** the report.

Councillor Ahmed said Cabinet had considered the report on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024 and he was asking Council to approve the recommendations within the report. Members added their comments. Some members argued against the increase in fees however when put to the vote Council decided to approve the recommendation within the report.

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the consultation response; and
2. Agreed to the Option 2 set out in the report, namely to increase the street traders and market fees by 3.1% from September 2024.

## 10. OTHER BUSINESS

### 10.1 London Legacy Development Corporation - Interim Delegation Schemes

Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding **moved** the report and Councillor Amin Rahman **seconded** the report.

Members of the Council commented on the report.

Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Enter into the first Interim Delegation Scheme with the London Legacy Development Corporation (under Section 203 of the Localism Act) to perform planning functions on behalf of LLDC limited to determining planning applications on their behalf, as submitted from the 1 September 2024 to 30 November 2024 or until planning powers are formally transferred through legislation.
2. Enter into the second Interim Delegation Scheme with the London Legacy Development Corporation (under Section 203 of the Localism Act) to perform all planning functions on their behalf from 1 December 2024 until planning powers are formally transferred through legislation.

## **10.2 Tower Hamlets Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2023/24**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning **moved** the report. Councillor Bodrul Choudhury **seconded** the report.

Members of the Council commented on the report.

Council **RESOLVED** to:

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

## **10.3 Proportionality and Allocation of Places on Committees of the Council 2024/25**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning **moved** the report. Councillor Bodrul Choudhury **seconded** the report. Council also considered the tabled nomination of Councillor Sabina Akhtar to fill the ungrouped committee vacancy on the Licensing Committee.

Members of the Council commented on the report.

Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Consider the review of proportionality as at Section 3 of this report and the allocation of seats on Committees and Sub-Committees for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2024/25 as set out at paragraph 3.6.
2. Note the Committees set out for the municipal year 2024/25 listed in paragraph 3.6 as agreed at the Annual Council meeting held on Wednesday 15 May 2024.
3. Agree the appointment of Cllr Sabina Akhtar to the vacant ungrouped position on the Licensing Committee.
4. To agree that the Monitoring Officer is delegated to approve the appointment of Councillors required to fill positions during the municipal year in line with the proportionality arrangements set out in this report on the nomination of the respective group leaders.



5. Agree that the Monitoring Officer be delegated to approve the appointment of ungrouped Councillors to any committee places not allocated by the Council to a political group, after consultation with those Councillors and the Speaker of the Council where there is only one application for the position (where there is more than one application these will be presented to Council for decision).

## **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 Amin Rahman**

Could the Lead member provide an update on the council's outstanding accounts requiring sign off? These accounts were left unsigned for 6 years under the previous administration.

#### **Response of Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost-of-living**

All previous outstanding accounts from 2016/17 to 2019/20 have been prepared, published, inspected as required, and signed off by the external auditor. The accounts for 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2022/23 have also been prepared and published and are now awaiting audit opinions. For the first time in several years, the 2023/24 accounts were published on time, meeting the statutory deadline of 31st May 2024.

#### **Supplementary question from Councillor Amin Rahman**

How long were the delays and what has been done to mitigate against this?

#### **Response of Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost-of-living**

The delays varied from year to year. For example, in 2020-21, the deadline for submission for the accounts was 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021 but they were submitted on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2022. There were delays upon delays. However since then we now have a permanent Section 151 officer and have a very capable finance team who are working tirelessly to resolve the backlog.

### **11.2 Question from Councillor Mufedah Bustin**

The Mayor's Budget for 2024-25 included targets for generating income from the island's parks and open spaces. Could the Lead Member provide an update on these plans including what resident engagement has taken place or what is planned?

#### **Response of Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost-of-living**

There is an income target of £522k for the Arts, Parks and Events (APE) team for 2024-25. These were approved as part of a three-year income target of £854k in line with the MTFS period. The APE team manage the parks and open spaces across the borough including the spaces on the Island.

The council does generate income from hiring out the sports pitches and this income contributes towards the income target as well.

The council has an events hire policy and a Major events policy to guide any larger events. These would have a consultation process as part of the licensing process, giving local residents 28 days' notice of any activity. Currently, there are no large event applications pending for any of the parks and open spaces on the Island.

### **Supplementary question from Councillor Mufedah Bustin**

In the budget, specific reference was made to Milwall Park and for concession stands for vendors in the Island parks. What is happening with these?

### **Response of Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost-of-living**

Local residents will be consulted by the Arts, Parks and Events (APE) team in relation to any events planned. They will be consulted as part of the licencing process as well as other processes the APE follows. The Scheme was evaluated in 2017 and is a plan for the next 10 years. Local residents will be consulted in regard to any programmes or planned events.

Questions 11.3 to 11.24 were not put due to lack of time. The written responses are attached to at **Appendix A**.

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

There were no additional motions submitted for Council to consider.

The meeting ended at 10.03 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

### Item 11: Member Questions and Answers

<p><b>11.1</b></p>	<p><b>Question from Councillor Amin Rahman</b></p>	<p>Could the Lead member provide an update on the council's outstanding accounts requiring sign off? These accounts were left unsigned for 6 years under the previous administration.</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>All previous outstanding accounts from 2016/17 to 2019/20 have been prepared, published, inspected as required, and signed off by the external auditor. The accounts for 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2022/23 have also been prepared and published and are now awaiting audit opinions. For the first time in several years, the 2023/24 accounts were published on time, meeting the statutory deadline of 31st May 2024. See table below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="512 808 1498 1346"> <thead> <tr> <th>Financial Year</th> <th>Due date (for submission to the auditors)</th> <th>Publication date of draft</th> <th>Public inspection date completion</th> <th>Date audited accounts approved</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2023-24</td> <td>31/5/24</td> <td>31/5/24</td> <td>12/7/24</td> <td>With EY</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022-23</td> <td>31/5/23</td> <td>2/2/24</td> <td>15/3/24</td> <td>With Deloitte</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>31/5/22</td> <td>18/1/24</td> <td>7/3/24</td> <td>With Deloitte</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>31/7/21</td> <td>27/2/22</td> <td>10/3/22</td> <td>With Deloitte</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019-20</td> <td>31/8/20</td> <td>28/8/20</td> <td>12/10/20</td> <td>30/11/23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018-19</td> <td>31/5/19</td> <td>31/5/19</td> <td>12/7/19</td> <td>30/11/23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017-18</td> <td>31/5/18</td> <td>1/6/18</td> <td>13/7/18</td> <td>31/7/18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016-17</td> <td>30/6/17</td> <td>30/6/17</td> <td>11/8/17</td> <td>27/9/17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015-16</td> <td>30/6/16</td> <td>30/6/16</td> <td>11/8/16</td> <td>27/9/17</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Financial Year	Due date (for submission to the auditors)	Publication date of draft	Public inspection date completion	Date audited accounts approved	2023-24	31/5/24	31/5/24	12/7/24	With EY	2022-23	31/5/23	2/2/24	15/3/24	With Deloitte	2021-22	31/5/22	18/1/24	7/3/24	With Deloitte	2020-21	31/7/21	27/2/22	10/3/22	With Deloitte	2019-20	31/8/20	28/8/20	12/10/20	30/11/23	2018-19	31/5/19	31/5/19	12/7/19	30/11/23	2017-18	31/5/18	1/6/18	13/7/18	31/7/18	2016-17	30/6/17	30/6/17	11/8/17	27/9/17	2015-16	30/6/16	30/6/16	11/8/16	27/9/17
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<p><b>11.2</b></p>	<p><b>Question from Councillor Mufeedah Bustin</b></p>	<p>The Mayor's Budget for 2024-25 included targets for generating income from the island's parks and open spaces. Could the Lead Member provide an update on these plans including what resident engagement has taken place or what is planned?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>There is an income target of £522k for the Arts, Parks and Events (APE) team for 2024-25. These were approved as part of a three-year income target of £854k in line with the MTFs period. The APE team manage the parks and open spaces across the borough including the spaces on the Island.</p> <p>The council does generate income from hiring out the sports pitches and this income contributes towards the income target as well.</p>																																																		

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<p>11.3</p>	<p><b>Question from Councillor Ahmodul Kabir</b></p>	<p>Can the Lead Member feedback on progress with the recommendations following the LGA Corporate Peer Review that took place in September last year?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The Local Government Association undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge (LGA CPC) for the Council in September 2023. The report, published in December acknowledged the many positive aspects of the organisation's performance and the motivated and focused staff who work for it. The report made 18 core recommendations. These and over 70 suggestions for improvement or review embedded within the text of the LGA CPC report were brought together to comprise the content of the Council's response as set out in its LGA CPC action plan. This was also published in December.</p> <p>The Action Plan is a live document and additional actions can be identified and added at any time. All political groups and single representatives of Parties represented within the Council were briefed on the findings of the review and the action plan by the Chief Executive and all Parties continue to be free to suggest additional content. Following a suggestion by the LGA the Councils Transformation Advisory Board, Chaired by the Mayor, has taken on the role of advising and supporting the Council's CPC programme.</p> <p>A considerable amount of progress has and continues to be made in delivering against the actions identified. Priority focus fell on a number of critical problem areas of governance that had persisted for a number of years. These covered areas such as the backlog of council accounts awaiting external auditor sign off and the absence of published annual governance statements. These were critical issues that were prioritised by the LGA and identified in the Action Plan and have all now been addressed.</p> <p>58% of the total number of actions identified by the Plan have now been completed (up from 50% since the May 2024 update). All of the listed actions have been completed for 28% of the core recommendations (5 of 18). The Council is on track to have completed 73% of all currently listed actions by the end of August 2024. The LGA CPC team had been scheduled to return to review progress in August. They have recently advised of a delay as members of the review team will not now be available in August. We are looking to reschedule the revisit for the earliest date</p>

		possible. All target dates within the Plan may be subject to movement as individual projects develop.
11.4	<b>Question from Councillor Marc Francis</b>	<p>Further to the answer to my question at Full Council on 8th May confirming that the mayor cancelled the proposed changes at the junction of Fairfield Road and Tredegar Road to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, will be Lead Member now instruct the Highways Team to implement these changes?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>Officers are aware that the existing layout at the Fairfield Road and Tredegar Road junction could potentially be improved to improve pedestrian and cycle safety. This location had been considered previously as part of the Liveable Streets programme for the Bow area. Further plans to implement changes at the junction are not currently on any work programmes. However, officers will continue to explore opportunities for progressing designs and subsequent delivery for improving this junction, subject to available funding.</p>
11.5	<b>Question from Councillor Bodrul Choudhury</b>	<p>I want to start by thanking the Mayor for delivering his manifesto pledge to create extra parking spaces in my ward Bromley South, especially on Devons Road and Empson Street. However, can the Lead Member tell us what he will do to help local residents who although grateful, have raised issues with the high curbs which can damage cars driving on to and off the raised parking spaces on Empson Street.</p> <p>Furthermore, I have seen there is more room for additional car parking spaces that could benefit my constituents.</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>We have made good progress in rolling out additional residential parking spaces throughout the borough. In Bromley South we have completed additional parking facilities to Devons Road and Reeves Road in the Spring. Parking improvements in Empson Street have been designed and will be implemented on site from 22 July 2024. The project addresses the places where kerb height is excessively high by reducing this and making complimentary repairs to the adjacent footpaths.</p>
11.6	<b>Question from Councillor Asma Islam</b>	<p>Can the lead member update me on the progress of the changes being made to the housing options service?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p>

		<p>A full report was presented to cabinet on 10th July 2024, setting out the detail of the actions taken, and progress made to date following the additional investment of £1.93 million per annum agreed at the previous cabinet meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ending 43 temp / fixed term contracts and moving to permanent.</li> <li>• Hosted a successful recruitment drive for 30 new frontline operational roles, this first of 2 planned events attracted more than 500 attendees.</li> <li>• Hosted a webinar with a further 47 attendees about careers in our housing team</li> <li>• Completing and publishing a full staff feedback document setting out clear actions with allocated owners</li> <li>• Recruited an interim dedicated homelessness director.</li> <li>• Launched an internal recruitment programme for 2 specialist operational management roles.</li> </ul>
11.7	<b>Question from Councillor Jahed Choudhury</b>	<p>Can the Lead Member provide an update on the current Best Value Inspection?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>On 22<sup>nd</sup> February the Secretary of State (SoS) for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities instigated a Best Value Inspection in Tower Hamlets</p> <p>‘to provide direct, independent assurance that the Authority is continuing to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness’...</p> <p>More to follow</p>
11.8	<b>Question from Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury</b>	<p>There has been an increase in knife and gun crime incidents over the last few weeks, including in Mile End, could the lead member inform me what the council is doing to prevent this?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The Community Safety Partnership Plan for 2021-24 focuses on tackling violence and the root causes, with a priority area of ‘safeguarding those at risk of violence and exploitation’.</p> <p>With regard concerns around increase in the number of incidents, we can report that knife crime in June has actually decreased by 5.8% (49 reports)</p>

compared to the previous month where there were 52 reports. Knife crime with injury has decreased by 56.3% with 7 reports compared to 16 in May.

In respect of gun crime – there have been 5 more offences in June than were reported in May (11 compared to 6) but only one report involved a lethal barrelled discharge. Other firearm offences may include possession of imitation firearms and the increased use of ‘gel guns’.

In terms of the work that has been recently undertaken to prevent these offences this has been focused on partnership work with our community and young people.

For example:

- The two MyEnds projects within the Isle of Dogs and Bethnal Green areas, led by a consortium of partnership agencies, and supported by the council works in those areas and with young people impacted by violence and knife crime to directly tackle some of the key issues they face.
- Weapon sweeps carried out by police and partnership teams to remove knives stored in parks and estates to be used by individuals and criminal gangs and knife bins are placed throughout the borough to take knives off the streets. This is supported by police Safer Schools Officers engaging with students regarding the dangers of knife crime and how to keep safe.
- A new Violence Reduction Unit funded initiative to tackle after school robberies will be launched within the next 4 weeks by the Council and will see the deployment of a range of resources from community safety, the youth service, schools and police to tackle this issue.
- The Hospital Navigator who is based in A&E at the Royal London hospital works with young victims of violence, their families, offenders and other key partners to mitigate the causative factors of violence and divert young people away from crime.
- We work closely with our police colleagues who hold fortnightly ‘Precision Focused Performance Knife Crime Meetings’ that tackles emerging issues through the Pursue, Prevent, Protect, and Prepare process.
- A knife summit, “Knives Down: A Tower Hamlets Summit for Preventing Knife Crime,” will be held soon. This will be a unique and groundbreaking response to knife crime, with a charter enacted to clearly commit the local authorities' response to knife crime.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Operation Continuum, a police intelligence-led operation targeting drug dealing and associated criminality, extends into gun crime. Run by the police and fully supported by Tower Hamlets Council, it has led to numerous arrests and convictions across the borough.</li> </ul>
11.9	<p><b>Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed</b></p>	<p>Can the Lead Member update the council on the work of the Women's Commission to date?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Women's Commission was launched on 26th March 2024</li> <li>2. The Commission has 4 key focus areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employment</li> <li>▪ Health</li> <li>▪ Women's Safety</li> <li>▪ Women's Leadership</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. The Women's Commission hosted IWD Achievement Awards on the same day (26<sup>th</sup> March 2024). Celebrating the contribution and achievement of local women and acknowledging their tireless work and dedication in supporting local communities.</li> <li>4. A dedicated Women's Commission Webpage has been launched on Council website, which will provide update information on all Commission activities.</li> <li>5. 8 Female Commissioners have been appointed by the Mayor Tower Hamlets</li> <li>6. An open and extensive recruitment campaign was conducted to recruit 2 Resident Women Commissioners, to be the voice of local women and supporting commissioners in driving this initiative.</li> <li>7. The first inaugural meeting of the Women's Commission was hosted by CEO Stephen Halsey and Cllr Wahid Ali Cabinet Member for Customer Service, Equalities and Social Inclusion. Baroness Pola Uddin has been appointed Chair of Commission</li> <li>8. A second meeting with the Commission has been held to finalise the Women's Commission's ToR and fully agree on the work plan.</li> <li>9. A commissioners away day is scheduled for 20th July.</li> <li>10. The First Stakeholders Evidence Gathering session is to be held In late July or early September 2024.</li> <li>11. Further details available from here: <a href="https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/womens-commission">Women's Commission (towerhamlets.gov.uk)</a></li> </ol>
11.10	<p><b>Question from Councillor Amy Lee</b></p>	<p>There have been recent reports of a harrowing and complex court case that received attention from the national press, in which the council was named and criticised by the East London Family Court for its conduct in failing to protect a mother and her children. Can the lead member inform me as to</p>



		<p>how the council is responding to the instructions of the court and what actions it is taking to ensure that an incident like this does not happen again?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>We have accepted the outcome of the court order regarding this difficult case and are complying with the court order. The safety and wellbeing of families is our priority, and we are continuing to provide suitable support and intervention.</p>
11.11	<b>Question from Councillor Iqbal Hossain</b>	<p>Can the Lead Member update the council on the delivery of the Mayor's Education Maintenance Allowance and University Bursaries for the next academic year. It is understood from various media sources these provisions have not been delivered to date.</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>For the upcoming academic year 2024/25, the application window will open in September 2024, with grants scheduled to be awarded from March 2025. Since the 2022/23 academic year, through the current application round of 2023/24, all eligible students who have met the criteria for the Mayor's Education Maintenance Allowance and University Bursary have successfully received or will receive grants.</p>
11.12	<b>Question from Councillor Sabina Khan</b>	<p>Would the chief executive provide council with the membership list of the LBTH Women's Commission</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chair - Baroness Manzila Pola Uddin</li> <li>2. Vice chair - Cherifa Atoussi - Operational Manager at Account 3</li> <li>3. Sufia Alom - Head of Programmes and Maryam Centre</li> <li>4. Fatuma Hassan - Young Mayor Tower Hamlets</li> <li>5. Safia Jama - CEO Women's Inclusive Team</li> <li>6. Aneta Sabik - Special Needs Teacher &amp; Community Organiser in TH</li> <li>7. Kathleen McCarthy - Director of Queen Mary University Language Lab</li> <li>8. Nazia Khatun - CEO of Fitness Reborn</li> <li>9. Pamela Kakoy - Resident Women's Commissioner</li> <li>10. Chiho Sharp - Resident Women's Commissioner</li> </ol>
11.13	<b>Question from Councillor Ahmodur Khan</b>	<p>Can the Lead Member tell us how the council has ensured that the essential works required to Wood Wharf School will be completed on time and within budget given the historic issues with delivering these works?</p>

		<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>LBTH Capital Delivery have undertaken a procurement process alongside the LBTH Procurement Team to ensure that a suitably sized contractor who is familiar with working within a distressed environment have been appointed. This contract has been agreed on a fixed price design and build basis.</p> <p>The contractor has commenced on site on the 17<sup>th</sup> June and is working collaboratively with both LBTH and Mulberry Trust (the School Operator) to ensure a phased occupation is achieved and therefore ensuring that the September 2024 pupil intake requirement is being facilitated.</p> <p>There is recognition from all parties that this programme is challenging, however, the contractor has had early and transparent engagement with the Approved Inspector who will be providing building control sign-offs to ensure all risks are mitigated so far as reasonably practical. The Capital Delivery Team continue to monitor this process with weekly progress meetings.</p> <p>A number of site visits between LBTH, the contractor and Mulberry Trust have taken place on site in order to ensure all items are being coordinated transparently. The most recent site visit took place the morning of Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> July.</p>
11.14	<p><b>Question from Asma Begum</b></p>	<p>Would the lead member consider meeting with Victoria Park Friends in order to receive feedback and coordinate how they can work together during and after the summer festival season.</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The Lead Member will arrange a meeting with the Friends of Victoria Park in Autumn to talk about the various activities at Victoria Park including the summer festival and other opportunities.</p>
11.15	<p><b>Question from Councillor Abdul Mannan</b></p>	<p>Can the Lead Member update the council on what is being done to tackle the worrying levels of crime and ASB in and around Rounton Road?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>Empowering Communities and Fighting Crime is one of the top priorities for the Mayor. As one of the lead agencies in tackling crime and ASB, the Council are at the forefront of ensuring safety, security, and quality of life for our residents and visitors.</p>

		<p>The ASB Team work very closely with a range of partners and key stakeholders, including the police, different council departments, drug and alcohol support agencies and registered social landlords to help us breakdown and resolve issues around ASB and Crime via a multi-agency approach.</p> <p>Each area has a designated THEO and SCO team to conduct local patrols in hot spot areas and locations of concern to identify alleged perpetrators and to take appropriate enforcement action against them and to prevent and deter ASB by conducting hi-visibility patrols within the area. THEO/SCO are tasked to the areas via the intel that we receive from our ASB reporting systems along with Police data, the information is then discussed in our cluster tasking meeting and tasked appropriately.</p> <p>We have received very few reports from residents or directly from our THEO patrols regarding ASB in the vicinity of Rounton Road and surrounding areas. However, in April 2024, the council received four enquiries from residents concerning an increase in crime and ASB on Swaton Road and nearby streets which covers Rounton Road area. The ASB officer initiated a formal investigation into these issues. The ASB officer completed preliminary assessments, conducted risk evaluations, and coordinated action plans in collaboration with Poplar Harca Housing Association, as the main problems were within their managed properties. Poplar Harca are exploring what action they can take to address the issues as the landlord responsible. Additionally, the designated THEO enforcement team were assigned to patrol the area, address any incidents, and share intelligence with relevant partners. The ASB officer also communicated with the local Safer Neighbourhood Police Team and requested increased patrols in the area which have been occurring over recent weeks.</p> <p>We strongly encourage all residents to report ASB/Crime to the Police and the council so we can take the appropriate action to resolve the issues as they arise.</p>
11.16	<p><b>Question from Councillor Amina Ali</b></p>	<p>Could the lead member inform me as to how many residents have been able to access the new council tax relief scheme?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>150 claims have been received with 144 processed and 39 awards made with a value of £1,102.91. 105 claims didn't qualify.</p>
11.17	<p><b>Question from Councillor Abdul Malik</b></p>	<p>Can the Lead Member update us on the decision taken last September to open up our roads?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p>

		<p>The decision that we took at September 2023 Cabinet to withdraw from aspects of the Liveable Streets programme is subject to a judicial review. The legal case was due to be heard in the Summer. This case has been deferred to November 2024.</p>
11.18	<p><b>Question from Councillor Rebakah Sultana</b></p>	<p>Could the lead member inform me how many bin collections have been missed in the last 12 months?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>Waste services make 4,095,294 collections in a year, of which 99.6% are collected on time. There have been 15,119 missed collections in the last 12 months. The missed collections are attributed to various challenges including access to estates, access to bins and parked vehicles blocking access.</p>
11.19	<p><b>Question from Councillor Harun Miah</b></p>	<p>Can the Lead Member set out what action is being taken to address traffic issues on Whitethorn Street which is a very narrow two-way road with parking on both sides?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The revised options to improve traffic flow and for parking arrangements in Whitehorn Street and Fern Street are currently going through design and internal approvals. We aim to carry out a local consultation after which the preferred solution may be delivered later in the Summer/ Autumn 2024.</p>
11.20	<p><b>Question from Councillor Shubo Hussain</b></p>	<p>Many residents have contacted me worried about increased costs for their leisure services and loss of access to other leisure facilities – could the lead member inform me as to how many people have cancelled their memberships and does the council have any mitigation measures to retain customers who may consider leaving?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>Since the Be Well leisure service came in-house on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 3,545 new members have joined (as of 5<sup>th</sup> July) with 1,999 leaving. This represents a net gain of 1,546 new members and a total of 17,730 total members across the 6 leisure facilities. This is better than expected and encouraging performance.</p> <p>The service is looking to set up a dedicated team to contact and encourage customers to remain as members as well as sign up new members.</p> <p>The prices of memberships have remained the same and represent better value for money for customers as they can be used at all of the council's</p>

		<p>leisure centres. Looking at the prices charged in neighbouring boroughs, prices in Tower Hamlets are between 15% and 30% cheaper for comparable memberships.</p> <p>We are also continuing to offer 1/3 discounts for a range of concession customers. This is in addition to the investing £248k on the new free-swimming programme for women and girls over 16 and men over 55 launched this month.</p> <p><b>Background information: - Price comparison information</b></p> <p>Be Well membership all facilities(adult): £42.50, concession: £32.90  LB Hackney (adult) all facilities (adult): £57.80, concession: £46.20  LB Newham (adult): £50.00, concession: £35.00  LB Islington (adult): £60.00, concession: £48.00</p>
11.21	<b>Question from Councillor James King</b>	<p>Could the lead member inform me as to whether there has been progress or discussions with the Tower Hamlets Archives regarding the need to protect the archives and ensure that they are in a suitable and secure space?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>Discussions on the best way of ensuring the preservation of heritage assets for posterity at the Tower Hamlets Local History Library &amp; Archives are ongoing. We are exploring a few options to ensure the balance between the financial investment and venue requirements are met. This includes exploring other sites to weigh up the option that would provide Best Value and meet the needs of the service.</p>
11.22	<b>Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam</b>	<p>Could the mayor inform me as to whether the council has been able to make progress on the release of LIF funding from TfL?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>We assume the question relates to Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding. Officers have been able to secure an increase in TfL LIP funding for 2024-25 compared to the previous year and are liaising regularly with TfL officers on securing further funding for 2024-25 and future years from LIP.</p>
11.23	<b>Question from Councillor Nathalie Bienfait</b>	<p>I was recently shocked to learn that in the period between 1 April 2022 and 28 February 2023, we employed a total of 335 individuals with an average of 5214.80 hours were worked by staff on zero-hours contracts per month. How is the Administration is supporting workers on zero-hours contracts to</p>

		<p>ensure that they are given proper notice of cancelled shifts and for them to receive sick pay, and how it is working to bring all staff onto safer and more appropriate contracts?</p> <p><b>Response</b></p> <p>The Council issues zero hours contracts for staff who work on a casual or sessional basis as, and when needed, for certain job roles, for example, music and lifelong learning tutors and holiday play scheme workers. 85% of casual/sessional workers are tutors. Where there is work available, the relevant service will offer work and it is the decision of the worker as to whether they take the work offered. There is no obligation to accept the work offered and staff can work elsewhere for other employers.</p> <p>With regard to the figures provided in the question, they have been reviewed and updated as follows:</p> <p>As at June 2024, 311 staff were engaged on a casual basis, which is a slight decrease in the numbers reported between April 2022 and February 2023.</p> <p>Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, the average number of hours worked by casual/sessional staff per month were as follows:</p> <p>Minimum per month: 3049  Maximum per month: 7124.08  Average per month: 5226.85</p> <p>In relation to pay, all casual/sessional workers receive holiday pay. Whilst it is the responsibility of the Service to advise the Payroll Team whether any casual worker has been unable to carry out work due to sickness absence, HR colleagues advise managers that casual workers are to be paid sick pay if they are unable to work as scheduled. Additionally, HR colleagues advise managers to provide sufficient notice if shifts have to be cancelled, although this may be due to reasons beyond the control of the Service.</p> <p>A review of the management of hours worked by casual/sessional workers will be undertaken by the HR Department in conjunction with relevant managers as soon as is practicable, to ensure that the contractual nature of the workers' engagement is appropriate.</p>
11.24	<b>Question from Councillor Peter Golds</b>	<p>Has the council met or arranged to meet representatives of Transport for London with reference to the provision of bus routes in the borough, and in particular the threatened D7 route which is a vital link for Poplar, Cubitt Town and Island Gardens and Burdett Road.</p> <p><b>Response</b></p>

		<p>During 2022 TfL had been considering making changes to the bus network across London, including within Tower Hamlets, as part of the Central London bus review. Following a consultation and subsequent feedback from officers, Members and other local stakeholders TfL decided not to proceed with changes to the D7 and other local routes – see Central London bus review 2022 report.</p> <p>Officers continue to liaise regularly with the TfL buses team regarding opportunities for developing the network (e.g. Superloop routes) on a regular basis.</p>
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