

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2012

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

Members Present:

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Helal Abbas	Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed	Councillor Rania Khan
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Shiria Khatun
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Md. Maium Miah
Councillor Rofique U Ahmed	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Shahed Ali	Councillor M. A. Mukit MBE
Councillor Tim Archer	Councillor Ahmed Adam Omer
Councillor Abdul Asad	Councillor Lesley Pavitt
Councillor Craig Aston	Councillor Joshua Peck
Councillor Mizan Chaudhury	Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Alibor Choudhury	Councillor Zenith Rahman
Councillor Stephanie Eaton	Councillor Oliur Rahman
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Gulam Robbani
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor Rachael Saunders
Councillor Judith Gardiner	Councillor David Snowdon
Councillor Carlo Gibbs	Councillor Gloria Thienel
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Bill Turner
Councillor Shafiqul Haque	Councillor Kosru Uddin
Councillor Carli Harper-Penman	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Sirajul Islam	Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Denise Jones	Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Dr. Emma Jones	Councillor Amy Whitelock

The meeting commenced at 7.40 p.m.

Councillor Rajib Ahmed, Speaker of the Council, in the Chair

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Lutfu Begum, Zara Davis, Ann Jackson and Fozol Miah.

RESOLVED

That the apologies for absence be noted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Stephanie Eaton declared a Pecuniary Interest in Item 12.9 (Motion – London Metropolitan University) and stated that she would withdraw from the meeting for that item.

Councillor Shafiqul Haque declared a personal interest in Item 12.14 as his son was employed as an apprentice within the Council.

3. MINUTES

The draft Restricted (Part 2) minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 11th July 2012 were tabled. Members did not consider that this allowed enough time for them to read and determine the accuracy of the draft minutes, and proposed that they be deferred to the next meeting.

Councillor Bill Turner expressed concern at the content of Councillor Ohid Ahmed's written response to public question 6.2 at the 11th July Ordinary Council meeting which was appended to the minutes of that meeting, and referred to threats alleged to have been made by another Councillor at a previous meeting. Councillor Turner stated that no charges had been brought in relation to that matter and he invited Councillor Ahmed to withdraw the response.

RESOLVED

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary and Extraordinary Council meetings held on 11th July 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and that the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.
2. That the Restricted (Part II) minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 11th July 2012 be deferred for consideration at the next meeting.

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

No announcements were made at the meeting.

5. TO RECEIVE ANY PETITIONS

- 5.1 Petition regarding 'Attack on Bengali as a mother tongue teaching-learning at Langdon Park Secondary School' (Petition from Ms Nahida Rahid, Ms Hayley Ali and others) – petition deferred from the Council Meeting on 11th July 2012.**

This petition was not heard as the petitioners were unable to be present.

The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the meeting that officers would contact the petitioners and offer them the opportunity to present the petition at the next meeting if they wished.

5.2 Petition from Mr John Baker and signed by approximately 1,000 persons against a waste transfer station in Ailsa Street, Poplar

Mr John Baker addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing, then responded to the issues raised. She reassured residents that the Local Development Framework had only designated the site as having 'potential' for a waste disposal site and this did not mean it would be used for the purpose. The Council were examining alternatives but it had to satisfy the Greater London Authority (GLA) that it had considered waste provision requirements. Indeed officers had now met with GLA colleagues and she was pleased to announce that, subject to ratification, the Council would be able to remove this designation from the site as the GLA had accepted that other facilities provided sufficient provision.

RESOLVED

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

5.3 Petition from Mr Golam Mohammed Chowdhury, Betar Bangla and others regarding the Boishaki Mela

Mr Golam Mohammed Chowdhury addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture then responded to the issues raised. She stated that the Boishaki Mela Trust was a limited company whose accounts could be accessed at Companies House. She also explained the robust, transparent processes put in place by the Council including audits of the processes now and previously by Deloitte. She acknowledged the importance of being aware of potential issues around human trafficking.

Finally she stated that more could be done to ensure the participation of local performers and that she would make recommendations for a review of how that could be achieved.

RESOLVED

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

Procedural Motion

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **moved**, and Councillor Joshua Peck **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be altered to consider Motion 12.18 ‘Review of the Contract for the BaishakhiMela’ immediately”.

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

12.18 Motion regarding Review of the Contract for the BaishakhiMela

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **MOVED**, and Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed **SECONDED**, the motion as printed in the agenda.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.
Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED**This Council notes:**

- The significant concern within the community at the way the 2012 BaishakhiMela was conducted, specifically over the process used to allocate stalls.
- The media reports that 19 people were arrested for attempted visa fraud relating to the Mela.
- The 2012 BaishakhiMela was the first under a 9 year contract awarded to the BoishakhiMela Trust.

This Council Believes:

- The BaishakhiMela is a great cultural addition to Tower Hamlets offering a wide range of cultural experiences and economic benefits to the borough.
- The BaishakhiMela should be an event open to be enjoyed by all and organised in the best interests of all in the community.
- The reputation of both the borough and the Mela is damaged by reports of fraud and that the Council should do all it can to protect its reputation and support organisers to prevent such attempts.
- Awarding the contract to run the Mela to an outside organisation bought with it significant risks and challenges and as such the running of the BaishakhiMela should be an issue of on-going independent monitoring.

This Council resolves:

- To call upon the Mayor to undertake a full independent review of the 2012 BaishakhiMela to ensure that it met all of its contractual obligations and provided a service which best served the community.
- To call upon the Mayor to make public the findings and report of the independent review in to the 2012 BaishakhiMela and to report back to Full Council on 23rd January 2013 on the findings.

5.4 Petition from Ms Kathy McTasney and others regarding Millwall Park

Ms Kathy McTasney addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor, responded to the issues raised. He welcomed the strong local engagement in the area and the work that had been undertaken with local Councillors. He stated that he was working with officers to examine this issue and that he was happy to work with local residents and ward Councillors to try and address the problems raised.

RESOLVED

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

6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**6.1 Question from Mr Akther Zaman about the Leader of the Labour Group's timesheets.**

I read in this week's Private Eye that the Labour group leader had claimed on his time sheet for a party-political stunt, cleaning the streets. Is this true?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

It looked like a good gesture of Councillor Joshua Peck to go out with a bin bag out of the goodness of his heart. However having had a look it appears he did record this on his time sheet for that month.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Akther Zaman

Looking at the work he listed on his time sheet that gives an hourly rate of £41/hr. Is that a competitive rate for a street cleaner?

Summary of Councillor Shahed Ali's response to the Supplementary Question

There are hard working people cleaning our streets every day of the year. They would find it disheartening that a Councillor is trying to give some peculiar statement that they are not doing their job correctly. Our workers get just under ten pounds an hour and do a brilliant job as shown by third party monitoring which showed that 97.7% of residents recently thought our streets were the cleanest they have been for a long time. I hope that Councillor Peck regrets his actions and he should pay that money back.

[Note: Following the above question and response, Councillor Joshua Peck rose to give a point of personal explanation. Councillor Peck stated that he was not going to apologise for cleaning up an area that had not been cleaned for many months. He pointed out that he would not receive any additional allowance for this work and that many Councillors, and the Mayor, do not even publish timesheets.]

Procedural Motion

Councillor Helal Abbas **MOVED**, and Councillor Bill Turner **SECONDED**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.14, Rule 13.1 be suspended to allow an urgent motion regarding Payments to Gulam Robbani to be debated.”

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

Urgent Motion re: Gulam Robbani's Timesheets

Councillor Helal Abbas **MOVED**, and Councillor Bill Turner **SECONDED**, a tabled urgent motion as set out below.

Following debate, the urgent motion as tabled was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- The recently released FOI response from the Council which details payments made to and invoices submitted by Gulam Robbani during his time as a Mayoral advisor.
- The multitude of discrepancies between the timesheet invoices submitted by Mr Robbani and those of the councillors who he was claiming to meet, including:

- On the 25th October Mr Robbani submitted a timesheet for a 9 hour meeting with Cllr Asad and officers. Yet the timesheet submitted by Cllr Asad registered this meeting as only 1 hour.
 - On the 26th October Mr Robbani submitted a timesheet for a 9 hour MAB meeting with Cllr Asad and officers. Yet the timesheet submitted by Cllr Asad registered this meeting as only 2.5 hours.
 - On the 8th November Mr Robbani submitted a timesheet for 9 hours "Meeting with Cllr Asad and Officers and Director of LMC regarding Social Care". Yet the timesheet submitted by Cllr Asad did not register any meetings that day.
- That the above examples of discrepancies are only 3 of 24 serious individual incidences over 4 months.
 - That contractors working for the Council are monitored to ensure all of their claims are accurate and that in this case this monitoring and sign off was conducted by the Mayor's office.

This Council Believes:

- That there are serious questions to answer regarding the scale and number of discrepancies between the timesheets submitted by Mr Robbani and those of the people he was claiming to meet.

This Council Resolves:

- To require that the Head of Paid Service request that the Corporate Fraud Manager investigates to ensure that all invoices have been properly claimed and paid and report back.

6.2 Question from Mr Salah Uddin Salam about the Special Responsibility Allowance of the Chair of the Pensions Committee

Is it true that last year, the council's chair of the pensions committee was paid nearly £6,000 for two meetings that lasted less than two hours?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources:

Unfortunately it is true. There were only two meetings held in 2011/12. £6,000 allowance for not much work.

These are dodgy expenses and at a time when ratepayers are struggling to cope with crippling austerity measures he should really consider whether it is right for him to have accepted the money.

No supplementary question was put.

[Note: Following the above question and response, Councillor Anwar Khan rose to give a point of personal explanation. He explained that although he had been available, two meetings had been inquorate and so could not take place. There was also a large amount of background work required on technical issues and the Member's Allowance was reasonable for the work undertaken.]

6.3 Question from Mr Scott Stuart about the Olympic legacy in Tower Hamlets

The Olympics were a once in a lifetime opportunity to showcase Tower Hamlets to the world, bringing their celebration and economic benefits to residents. Instead we were stripped of the marathon and there has been little other than the underperforming Live Sites in the borough. Why has the Mayor failed to stand up for residents and let this Olympic opportunity pass us by?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

The People of Tower Hamlets have played a full and active part in celebrating and participating in the Games experience whilst the Borough has secured significant levels of external investment and infrastructure improvements as a result of the Games that provide real long term benefits to the local economy.

For example over 1700 local residents secured jobs as a result of the Mayors agreement with LOCOG and over £10m of external investment was been secured to improve Whitechapel High Street.

Almost five thousand residents of all ages have been able to go to the Olympics, Paralympics, Olympic Park and Olympic test events free. As an example 1000 tickets were delivered to us at 5pm one day. Officers worked hard to ensure residents could pick these tickets up by 9am the next day. Neighbouring boroughs gave the tickets to their staff instead.

The Borough hosted the American Olympic Track and Field Team who upgraded the Mile End Track Surface to Olympic Standards free of charge and donated weights, cardio vascular training equipment and athletics equipment to the Borough.

I accept that more could have been done and we have learnt a lot.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Scott Stuart

The Mayor said that we would show the world what Tower Hamlets had to offer but Tower Hamlets unemployment claimants went up during the Games but fell significantly in the other host boroughs. Why?

Summary of Councillor Rania Khan's Response to the Supplementary Question

There is a national employment crisis which affects everyone however Tower Hamlets residents did manage to secure jobs at the Games.

6.4 Question from Mr Afzalur Rahman about the lack of trade in Brick Lane during the Olympics

Earlier this year the Mayor declared Brick Lane to be the Country's Curry Capital and promised that businesses would reap great rewards from the Olympics. It was reported that £120,000 had been allocated to promote Brick Lane as part of London 2012, yet many restaurants saw massive drops in trade despite being urged to take on extra staff for the Olympics. What happened to the publicity budget and why did the Mayor not deliver for Brick lane businesses?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Tower Hamlets was not unique in suffering a lower turnout and one of the main reasons was the hysteria of the Mayor of London in urging the public to avoid public transport.

There was no external funding given to the council to promote Curry Capital 2012. Tower Hamlets Council had to identify resources from existing funds. This was done following consideration by the Mayor of the need to promote Brick Lane and Banglatown Brick Lane as a key visitor destination. Brick Lane was featured in media as diverse as the New York Times to China Daily.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Afzalur Rahman

£120,000 was promised by the Mayor and he failed to deliver. It was our worst experience for years. How will the Mayor learn from this?

Summary of Councillor Alibor Choudhury's Response to the Supplementary Question

We are suffering from a national downturn caused by the policies of the national government.

6.5 Question from Ms Shumi Shabiha on the armed forces parade

Why did the Labour and Tory group leaders not turn up to the armed forces parade in Wapping garden?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

The Mayor does not know why the Labour and Group Leaders did not turn up to the armed forces parade in Wapping Garden.

They missed one of the best events this Borough has hosted and of which all residents can be proud.

It is a pity that the Labour and Tory Group leader could not join the Mayor and residents including some of our more famous residents such as Dame Helen Mirren, to thank our troops and volunteers for their wonderful contribution to the Olympics and Paralympics and enjoy the fine curry lunch and music from the Royal Marines band.

It was a wonderful occasion that like the Olympics and Paralympics unified the whole community - it is a pity they could not join us.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Ms Shumi Shabiha

Did the leaders of the Labour and Tory groups apologise in advance?

Summary of Councillor Rania Khan's Response to the Supplementary Question

As far as I know they did not send their apologies in advance.

[Note: Following the above question and response, Councillors Joshua Peck, Peter Golds and Rachael Saunders rose in turn to give points of personal explanation. They each stated that very short notice had been given of the event in question. The Councillors understood that preparatory work for the event had been underway for at least a week before the invitations were issued and that despite final approval for the event being given on 8th August and others being invited shortly afterwards, invitations to Councillors were not issued by the Communications Team until 6.15 p.m. on Friday 10th August.]

6.6 Question from Junyied Ahmed Sundor on the proposed reduction in Councillors at Tower Hamlets Council

Can the Mayor explain why he put a submission to the Boundary Commission to reduce the number of councillors from 51 to 45? Why does he think Tower Hamlets needs less Councillors?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

It is for the Boundary Commission to determine the number of Councillors that are appropriate for Tower Hamlets, not the Mayor.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Junyied Ahmed Sundor

There are over a quarter of a million residents in Tower Hamlets, what procedure was undertaken for a thorough consultation?

Summary of Councillor Ohid Ahmed's Response to the Supplementary Question

It was for the Boundary Commission to organise the consultation exercise but I understand they spoke to all political groups on the Council as well as considering responses from the community.

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor made his report to the Council meeting, extending a welcome to all present.

He looked back over the summer's sports and celebrations at the Olympics and Paralympics and of the unparalleled success of the British team. He paid tribute on behalf of all residents of Tower Hamlets to all the athletes who had taken part and in particular to Team GB.

He highlighted how the games could inspire a generation of young people in the borough showing that a disadvantaged background could be overcome. He also noted how the Paralympics had changed the perception of disability and disabled sports. It was important to secure a legacy for the borough and that significant investment had been secured on the back of the games.

He thanked the young people who participated in the opening and closing ceremonies and the armed forces for stepping into the breach at the last moment, noting that you could always count on public servants.

Turning to other matters the Mayor briefly reported on a number of issues including:

- His support for campaigners calling for a fresh review of the 1943 Bethnal Green tube disaster.
- How government policies were continuing to hit residents and his backing for the national TUC march.
- Fantastic local GCSE results, bucking the national trend. He also attached the proposals for abolishing GCSEs as ill thought out and called for better consultation.
- That an additional 175 primary school places had been provided to help ensure children had the best possible chances.

The Leader of the Majority group and Leaders of the Minority Groups each responded briefly to the Mayor's report. In the absence of Councillor Fozol Miah (Leader of the Respect Group), Councillor Harun Miah responded on behalf of that group. All endorsed the Mayor's thanks to those who had contributed to the success of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

[Note – following the Mayor’s Report, and as proposed by Councillor Harun Miah during his response, the Council held a minute’s silence in memory of WPCs Nicola Hughes and Fiona Bone who had been shot dead whilst on duty in Manchester.]

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

8.1 Question from Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman on the promotion of the ‘Curry Capital’ during the Olympics

What steps did the Mayor take to promote Curry Capital during the Olympics? What was the total budget allocated to promoting Curry Capital and Brick Lane and will the Mayor provide a breakdown of what this budget was spent on?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

The Mayor was successful in ensuring Brick Lane and Spitalfields received the honour being designated Curry Capital 2012. This was in addition to ensuring local businesses had an opportunity to access the procurement processes set out by Locog.

As already set out in the public questions there was no external funding given to the council to promote Curry Capital 2012. Tower Hamlets Council had to identify resources from existing funds which was also used to promote other businesses. This was done following consideration by the Mayor of the need to promote Brick Lane and Banglatown Brick Lane as a key visitor destination. Brick Lane was featured widely in media as diverse as the New York Times to China Daily.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman

Is the Mayor aware that some businesses are now at threat of closure because of his failure to properly promote Brick Lane?

Summary of Councillor Rania Khan’s response to the Supplementary Question

I am saddened to hear about any businesses potentially closing down however I disagree about the cause. A major cause was the failure of the Mayor of London in scaring off people from going out in London during the Games.

8.2 Question from Councillor David Snowdon about the new ‘Paths to Gold’ smartphone app

Regarding the borough's mobile phone 'App' entitled 'Paths To Gold', seemingly produced by an outfit called Captive Minds on behalf of Tower Hamlets Council, may I please be informed:

A) Whether this application was in fact written by Tower Hamlets, and if so, who authorised expenditure on it?

B) How much was spent on this 'App'? Please detail both in house and out of house costs, and who the contractors were.

C) What was the rationale for developing it?

D) What benefits are expected to accrue to Tower Hamlets Council or the Borough more widely?

E) Was this 'App' linked to a payment of £54,000 by the Communications Team for Software to Captive Minds Communications Group in May 2012, as published on the Tower Hamlets website:

[http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgsi/800001-](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgsi/800001-800100/800043%20transparency/payments%20to%20suppliers-1.aspx)

[800100/800043 transparency/payments to suppliers-1.aspx](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgsi/800001-800100/800043%20transparency/payments%20to%20suppliers-1.aspx) If this payment is not linked to this 'App', what was it for?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

The Council has developed the App for smartphones to promote the borough. It is designed to help promote the borough's attractions which will benefit from the increased exposure the Olympics has brought to Tower Hamlets and East London in general.

Captive Minds is a Tower Hamlets based business who built the App and generated some of the content at a cost of £54,000. The App has been accessed 7,000 times since launch in July 2012 and will continue to be used as a tool for our promotion of the Borough and the visitor opportunities.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor David Snowdon

When I was provided with this information in a Members' Enquiry I was told that I could not reveal it. Why is the Cabinet Member allowed to reveal this information tonight?

Summary of Councillor Alibor Choudhury's Response to the Supplementary Question

Officers will be able to respond to that question outside of the meeting however I note Councillor Snowdon's continued desire to keep the people in the borough in the dark. New technology can be used to take the borough forwards.

8.3 Question from Councillor Carlo Gibbs on the medium term budget outlook

How does the Mayor plan to fill the budget deficit in the medium term financial plan, with tax rises or service cuts? When will he outline these plans?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

As you rightly identify, the onslaught of budget reductions from the Coalition government is continuing.

Whilst the budget we all agreed in February provides us with a balanced budget for both this year and next.

We are concerned that the strange profile of government cuts, does leave us with savings to be found after that date.

We have already started to plan for how we will steadily resolve this budget reduction over the next few years and this will be developed through the usual budget process, which I am sure we can all agree, worked so effectively last year.

I would like to reassure residents and Councillors that any measures put in place will still be in line with our existing principles to protect frontline services, low paid staff and vulnerable residents.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Carlo Gibbs

The Council has a duty to balance the budget and on current projections could have a potential black hole of up to £100 million. Is the Mayor's pledge not to cut front line services still deliverable?

Summary of Councillor Alibor Choudhury's Response to the Supplementary Question

The Mayor is still aiming to meet this pledge.

8.4 Question from Councillor Fozol Miah on the withdrawal of London Metropolitan University's licence

The questioner was not in attendance so this question was not put. A written answer would be provided after the meeting.

8.5 Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam on work undertaken to bring properties up to Decent Homes standards

What was the average cost per home for the Decent Homes work undertaken in the borough each year between 2008 and 2012?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

The Decent Homes Pilot programme commenced in 2009-10 (not 2008) followed by the Decent Homes Backlog Programme which began in 2011-12.

Under the pilot scheme the Council was provided with £7.3 million in funding which was a very small amount for the work that was needed. That is a small figure to cover a marginal number of homes. Only 504 homes had work done, of which 349 were made decent. This gave an average of £13,300 per home.

In 2010 £94.5 million was provided which covered 8,400 homes although the gap in funding had to be made up by the Council through other schemes. The large contract entered into by the Council gave the best value for money at an average spend of £9,785.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam

I am concerned about the balance between quantity and quality of work as a number of my residents have complained about the quality of the work. Does the Cabinet Member have any comment on that issue? Also, can you confirm that the Decent Homes work is still going to plan?

Summary of Councillor Rabina Khan's response to the Supplementary Question

I am concerned that you have waited until full Council to raise concerns about the building work. If any resident or Councillor has any concerns they should contact me straight away and I will look into it. The Contractors must deliver the work and we will monitor that.

8.6 Question from Councillor Craig Aston regarding Barbican College who were occupying the old Poplar Town Hall

At the last Council Meeting a question was asked regarding the current occupiers of the old Poplar Town Hall, 117 Poplar High Street. The response was that the building was unoccupied. Will the Mayor explain his relationship to the so called Barbican College who were and are occupiers of the old Poplar Town Hall?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

At the time of the last meeting the Mayor was not aware that the building was occupied. However, we are now aware that it is occupied by Barbican College and that they have outstanding issues that officers are attempting to resolve.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Craig Aston

Information from Companies House suggests that Barbican College registered address and staff names are similar to those of Channel S. Can the Mayor confirm if he has any relationship to Barbican College?

Summary of Councillor Alibor Choudhury's Response to the Supplementary Question

The Mayor has no relationship, and has never had any relationship, with Barbican College.

8.7 Question from Councillor Amy Whitelock about action being taken to tackle child sexual exploitation

Can the Mayor/lead member advise on what action the council is taking to tackle child sexual exploitation in the borough? What systems are in place to monitor the number of young people at risk of sexual exploitation, and what support is available to children who suffer this horrific abuse?

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

I take this issue very seriously as do all Members and officers.

Local action to tackle child sexual exploitation in Tower Hamlets includes:

- Raising awareness of child sexual exploitation; seminars and workshops are regularly held with parents; carers and faith and community leaders.
- LSCB Multi-Agency Training is provided on Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking.
- Sexual Exploitation Multi-Agency Practitioner's Forum – lead by Children's Social Care and coordinates intelligence sharing and multi-agency case response.
- The NSPCC Street Matters Service works with over 250 girls who are victims of or at risk of child sexual exploitation identified through individual, group, school-based work in Tower Hamlets and across London.
- Options Sexual Health Service is a lead agency in early identification of victims
- Children's Social Care provides a Lead Officer for Child Sexual Exploitation to centralise local knowledge, act as a consultant on child protection cases where abuse is suspected and chairs child protection case conferences.
- The Integrated Pathways & Support Team has a designated social worker for sexual exploitation.
- Independent Reviewing Officer – designated IRO with specialist knowledge to review looked after children plans where sexual exploitation risk and indicators is a feature.

- Social Care Outreach Team has substantial local expertise on working with CSE and has been further strengthened to facilitate rehabilitation of young people back to their families and communities.

I pay tribute to the work our officers do to tackle this issue and the successful Ofsted report reflects that could work.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Amy Whitelock

I also congratulate officers on their Ofsted report. Will the Council commit to Barnardo's 'Cut them free' campaign? Also, when will a Service Head of Children's Social Care be appointed?

Summary of Councillor Oliur Rahman's Response to the Supplementary Question

We will support any initiatives in this field. In respect of the Head of Service post, the Council will have to go through the usual process to appoint a Service Head.

8.8 Question from Councillor Harun Miah regarding the interview process for Work Capability Assessments

Would the Mayor agree with me that the current process of interviewing for the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) by employees of ATOS places those suffering mental health conditions at a very substantial disadvantage and that this is adversely affecting a significant number of Tower Hamlets residents and would he agree to write to the relevant ministers urgently to ask them to instruct or legislate to require independent medical evidence to be sought at an early stage in the WCA process?

Response by Councillor Abdul Asad, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing

The Mayor shares your concern and is willing to write a letter expressing this to the Minister for Disabled People but he does not have any confidence that she will listen.

It is clear that the Work Capability Assessments are not working. The Mayor has previously highlighted the Trades Union Congress's national campaign on this issue and he is supporting it. He encourages residents to do the same.

(No supplementary question was put)

8.9 Question from Councillor Ann Jackson about One Housing Group

The questioner was not in attendance so this question was not put. A written response would be provided after the meeting.

8.10 Question from Councillor Peter Golds about the Armed Forces event on Sunday 12th August

Would the Mayor provide details to the Council of the dates and times of the invitations that were sent out regarding the thanks to the Armed Forces event on Sunday 12th August?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

All Members already have the information requested.

The Communications team sent out the invitations to all members by way of an email, which had a date and time stamp.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Peter Golds

Why did the Mayor use council facilities (his blog) to launch a smear attack on other Members of the Council which demeans us and his office?

Summary of Councillor Rania Khan's Response to the Supplementary Question

I am sorry that you were not able to attend. Local residents were informed of the event on the Saturday and turned up in numbers as did public sector workers. We are grateful for their attendance.

8.11 Question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed on the reduction in flower beds

How many flower beds in the borough have been grassed over due to budget cuts and how much is this estimated to have saved?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

In the course of this year 8 flower beds have been grassed over out of a total of 79.

Should this remain the case it would result in a total budget saving of £13,613.

(No supplementary question was put)

Time limit for item

At this point the Speaker informed the meeting that the time allocated for Members' Questions had expired.

Questions 8.12 to 8.21 were therefore not put at the meeting due to lack of time. Written responses would be provided to these questions after the

meeting. [Note: the written responses subsequently provided are appended to these minutes as Appendix 'A'.]

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

9.1 Local Development Framework: Fish Island Area Action Plan Adoption

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Development and Renewal as included in the agenda papers (with additional appendices included in the supplementary pack), recommending the adoption of a Fish Island Action Plan as part of the Local Development Framework.

Councillor Rabina Khan **MOVED** and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **SECONDED** the recommendations contained in the report.

Following discussion, the recommendations were put to the vote and were **agreed** unanimously. Accordingly, it was: -

RESOLVED

- 1 To agree the Inspector's Decision Statement, including his main modifications relating to FI AAP.
- 2 To adopt the FI AAP, including the Inspectors main modifications, as a Development Plan Document which forms part of the Council's LDF.
- 3 To agree a number of minor modifications which were suggested by Officers as part of the proposed modifications, (appendix 1 of the Full Council report). These modifications do not affect the soundness to the FI AAP and have not formed part of the Inspector's main modifications, but are required for accuracy. These minor modifications are summarised below:
 - Amend paragraph 1.21 and 1.28 to update the status of the ODA planning application for Fish Island East and the London Mayor's Olympic Legacy Supplementary Planning Guidance (OLSPG);
 - Amend reference in figure 4.1 "Waterfront character predominantly residential character" to extend to the LIL waterfront boundary.
 - Include photographs on page 82 to illustrate active waterway uses;
 - Amend the size of Opportunity Site 1 (White Post Lane from "0.5Ha" to "0.1Ha of which is in Tower Hamlets", and;
 - Update paragraph 6.40 reference to British Waterways to state "Canal and River Trust".

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

There was no business under this heading.

Procedural motion

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **moved** and Councillor Joshua Peck **seconded** a procedural motion:- 'That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be changed so that after items 11.1 and 11.2, the Council shall debate motion 12.10, then motion 12.13, then motion 12.16 and then the other agenda items in the printed order.' The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Appointment of Chief Executive - update

The Council considered the tabled report of the Appointments Sub-Committee on progress and the proposed process for recruiting an Interim Chief Executive.

Councillor Joshua Peck **MOVED** and Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **SECONDED** the recommendations contained in the report.

Following discussion, the recommendations were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly, it was:-

RESOLVED

- 1 That the Council note the proposed process and timetable for the recruitment of an interim Chief Executive as at section 4.2 of the report.
- 2 That accordingly the interim appointment of Stephen Halsey as Head of Paid Service be extended subject to his agreement until 29th November 2012 or until a new Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service takes up post, whichever is sooner.
- 3 That the Job Description and Person Specification for the recruitment of the Chief Executive be agreed as attached at Appendix 'A', and that the salary for the role remain as previously agreed.
- 4 That the post of interim Chief Executive be recruited to on the basis of a fixed term contract to 1st November 2014.

11.2 Information report on Executive decision(s) precluded from 'call-in' on grounds of urgency

The Council received the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services reporting on the preclusion from 'Call In' of the decision taken at the Cabinet meeting on 25th July 2012 regarding the One Housing Group.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

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

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **moved** and Councillor Joshua Peck **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.13 the meeting be extended to allow for the consideration of Motions 12.10, 12.13 and 12.16”.

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

12.10 Motion regarding Mayoral apology to the Honourable Syed Ashraful Islam MP

Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed **MOVED**, and Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **SECONDED** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Following debate, the motion as printed in the agenda was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly, it was:-

RESOLVED**This Council notes:**

- That the Mayor personally intervened to block an event on the 9th August with the Honourable Syed Ashraful Islam MP from taking place in the Council Chamber.
- That following the Mayor’s decision the Council was forced to offer to hire an outside venue for the Speaker’s official function which would have come at significant tax-payer cost.
- That the Honourable Syed Ashraful Islam MP is an elected representative of a Commonwealth country and had been formally welcomed in other London boroughs.
- The high level of community interest in Mr Islam’s visit and the many people who wanted to attend the event.

This Council believes:

- That the Mayor did intentionally abuse his position to attempt to block the Speaker of the Council from carrying out his constitutional duties.
- The Speaker of the Council is a prestigious role steeped in a history which should be respected and that the office holder should be

supported to carry out their civic duty to serve and represent the entire borough.

- The Mayor failed to meet the standards expected of him by residents and tarnished the reputation of the borough with his petty actions.
- The Mayor should make a public apology to all of the Speaker's guests, including the Honourable Syed Ashraful Islam MP, for any offence he caused.

This Council resolves:

- That use of the Council Chamber should not be a matter for the Executive or subject to Executive decisions and that all councillors should have access and use of the Council Chamber for the purposes of carrying out their roles as elected representatives

Procedural motion

At this point Councillor Alibor Choudhury **moved** and Councillor Kabir Ahmed **seconded** a procedural motion:- 'That Procedure Rule 13.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion regarding the position of Speaker of the Council to be debated.'

The Monitoring Officer advised the Council that the proposed urgent motion was not in order and the procedural motion was therefore not put to the vote.

Procedural motion

At this point Councillor Joshua Peck **moved** and Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **seconded** a procedural motion:- 'That under Procedure Rule 23.2, Councillor Alibor Choudhury be not further heard.' The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

12.13 Motion regarding Mattress Recycling in Tower Hamlets

Councillor Shiria Khatun **MOVED**, and Councillor Joshua Peck **SECONDED**, the motion as printed in the agenda.

Following debate, the motion as printed in the agenda was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly, it was:-

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- That across the borough unwanted mattresses are frequently fly-tipped in streets and public places at the detriment of the natural environment

and local residents.

- The Mayor's introduction of a £15 charge for bulk waste collection in Tower Hamlets.
- That a number of other London Councils have in place schemes offering free mattress collection and recycling. Labour run Lewisham council for example recycles over 9000 mattresses each year resulting in 307 tonnes saved from landfill last year.
- 10 million mattresses are landfilled every year in the UK and the annual contribution of mattresses to the nation's waste stream is estimated to rise from 160,000 ton to 245,000 ton by the year 2016.
- That the Council incurs significant cost collecting and landfilling fly-tipped mattresses in the borough.

This Council Believes:

- That where possible recycling is a preferable alternative to landfill as it helps to protect the environment, creates jobs and saves money on landfill.
- With its dense urban population mattresses are regularly to be found dumped and fly-tipped in Tower Hamlets.
- Lewisham's scheme of mattress recycling is a progressive and innovative scheme which has received significant uptake throughout the borough.
- A similar scheme in Tower Hamlets would allow the council to increase the amount of waste it recycles, reduce fly-tipping and better meet resident's needs.

This Council resolves:

- To call upon the Mayor to conduct a feasibility study into introducing in Tower Hamlets a mattress recycling scheme similar to that operated in Lewisham.
- To call on the Mayor report back to Full Council on the outcome of the study and to include the scheme in his next budget.

12.16 Motion regarding Social Fund – Coalition Reforms

Councillor Carlo Gibbs **MOVED**, and Councillor Marc Francis **SECONDED**, the motion as printed in the agenda.

Following debate, the motion as printed in the agenda was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly, it was:-

RESOLVED**This Council Notes**

- The Social Fund was set up in 1988 to provide financial assistance predominantly to people on low incomes;
- It includes a regulated element, comprising Winter Fuel Payments, Cold Weather Payments, Funeral Payments and Sure Start Maternity Grants.
- The conditions for receiving these payments and grants are set down in regulations.
- It also includes a discretionary element, comprising Community Care Grants, Crisis Loans and Budgeting Loans, where awards are made at the discretion of Job Centre Plus;
- Social Fund Community Care Grants (CCGs) are available to homeless people, care leavers, ex-offenders leaving custody and others with an institutionalised background to help them with the costs of setting up home;
- Funding for CCGs was increased by around £10 million a year between 2002/03 and 2006/07, but has remained at a total of £141 million since then;
- The Coalition Government's proposal to reform to Social Fund, including the replacement of the CCG and Crisis Loans with locally-based provision;
- Ministers have refused to commit to ring-fence funding for this local provision or issue guidance to those authorities to ensure vulnerable people are helped;
- While there were many problems with the discretionary Social Fund, particularly as a result of its cash-limited nature, no organisation has called for it to be abolished;
- The de-ring fencing of Supporting People funding for vulnerable homeless people and others requiring housing support has resulted in cutbacks to those services in many authorities.

This Council Believes

- These reforms undermine the principles of the Welfare State and leave vulnerable people at the mercy of a postcode lottery of local authority provision;
- The Labour Government's previously published plans to modernise the Social Fund within the same basic structure as exists at present would provide for a much stronger safety-net for vulnerable people.

This Council Resolves

- To call on the Mayor of Tower Hamlets to voice opposition to these changes and give a commitment to ring-fence any funding received for the purposes of replacing CCGs with locally administered grants/loans for those same purposes.

- To call on the Mayor to prioritise developing a new system to replace CCGs in order to allow full scrutiny before its introduction in April 2013.

Motions 12.9 and 12.15 were withdrawn

Motion 12.18 had been considered earlier in the meeting

Motions 12.1, 12.2, 12.3, 12.4, 12.5, 12.6, 12.7, 12.8, 12.11, 12.12, 12.14, 12.17 and 12.19 were not considered due to the time limit for the meeting being reached.

13. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

No motion to exclude the press and public was considered.

14. EXEMPT MINUTES

The exempt minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 11th July 2012 were deferred for consideration at the next meeting (see item 3 above).

The meeting ended at 10.59 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

APPENDIX A**WRITTEN RESPONSES PROVIDED AFTER THE MEETING TO MEMBERS' QUESTIONS (MINUTE 8 REFERS)****8.4 Question from Councillor Fozol Miah**

Would the Mayor agree with me that the decision by the UKBA to peremptorily withdraw the licence for London Metropolitan University, a university at which many Tower Hamlets residents have received and continue to receive higher education, to register international students places in jeopardy thousands of bona fide international students who have paid tens of thousands of pounds for their education here and jeopardises the very future of London Met which has specialised in broadening access to higher education for those from less privileged backgrounds and that the government should reverse this decision and would he agree to write to the Education Secretary and the Prime Minister urgently to convey the profound concern here in Tower Hamlets over this decision by UKBA?

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

Thank you for your question.

As a Local Authority we have no jurisdiction over higher education institutions. However, I share the concerns of student and teaching unions at London Met that if the university's administration has failed, then it is the administrators who should be punished, not 2,000 innocent students. I gather this issue is currently the subject of a legal challenge.

The Home Office's own analysis indicates that university-sponsored students are no less than 98% visa-compliant, and very likely more. The tiny fraction of fraudulent student visas must be balanced against the huge cost of alienating foreign applications wholesale and the damage done to one of Britain's most valuable exports – its education system.

I support the recommendations of the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee which come out strongly in favour of recording overseas students in a separate classification and not counting them against the overall limit on net migration. That would be the right decision, recognising the vital importance of the international student to our economy.

8.9 Question from Councillor Ann Jackson

What is the current situation with One Housing? The Mayor's decision was made urgently on this issue which came to Cabinet on 25th July and thus disallowing a call-in to Overview and Scrutiny.

Have the Mayor and Director now verified these reasons with One Housing, primarily that the bank foreclosure on major loans was imminent and forced the finalisation by Tower Hamlets of assignment of pension rights by the 31st July?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Thank you for your question.

The pension rights transfer follows the transfer of the assets to One Housing.

The Mayor's position on One Housing has always been and remains that he supports RSLs that represent the interests of their residents first and foremost, that can demonstrate that they represent their tenants by having tenant representatives on their boards and deliver.

The Mayor knows that One Housing has not had the best record in these areas. There has been criticism in the past about BME representation on their Board; that consultation has lacked transparency and that widening tenant representation has been blocked.

8.12 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

How will the Mayor ensure that the legacy from the Olympic Games continues to benefit Tower Hamlets for years to come?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

Thank you for your question.

The Mayor is working closely with East London Housing Partnership and the Mayor of London to ensure that Tower Hamlets can benefit from the 2012 Olympic Games legacy.

The council will have access to a proportion of the social rented homes on the East Village and Triathlon scheme.

Residents will be able to apply for the 700 FIRSTSTEPS low cost homeownership homes on the site.

High Street 2012 is bringing £12million infrastructure improvements to the borough.

The Mayor will continue to make the case for Tower Hamlets residents as a board member of the London Legacy Development Corporation

8.13 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders

We have been told that youth service provision will not change once services are taken out of community management and into Mulberry Place. Please itemise all youth services sessions and activities that have been run over the last year, where they were run, (venue, ward and LAP) and how many young people attended, broken down by race and gender. Please itemise all qualifications achieved, broken down by contractor, LAP, race, gender. Please also publish data covering the last 5 years. Please circulate in advance of the meeting due to detail required?

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

Thank you for your question.

Youth service provision will not change by bringing it in house but rather offer a better value for money to the Council and ratepayers.

This is not a question but is a detailed information request. I will ask the relevant director to provide to you the information requested.

8.14 Question from Councillor Gloria Thienel

Can the Cherie please tell us if he is looking forward to his Duke by the electorate in 2014?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Not on your Nellie!

I know it's all going a bit Pete Tong for the Tories,
But I'm always happy to sit down with me old china
And have a cup of rosie.

Use your loaf, the Tories will be brown bread after the next election

8.15 Question from Councillor Md Abdul Mukit

What specific steps has the Mayor taken to reduce the excessive noise, anti-social behaviour and public urination which takes place outside bars on and around Brick Lane. This anti-social behaviour is a significant concern to residents who live in the area and one we have raised with the Mayor many times before. When will he act?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Thank you for your question.

The Mayor is acting now, Councillor Mukit!

The last time you raised the issue, you were trying to get rid of the THEOs, who are in the business of preventing anti-social behaviour.

I'm glad that you did not succeed, because in the past twelve months the THEOs dealt with 81 incidents of public urination, which resulted in 35 successful prosecutions and 44 pending cases.

We'll take no lectures from the Labour group on preventing anti-social behaviour.

8.16 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan

Can the Mayor update us how successful Live Site was during the Olympics and his plans for the post Olympics clean up?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

Thank you for your question.

Residents were able to enjoy viewing the games in a great atmosphere at the Livesite.

However, the extortionate food available at the Livesite was peddled by rip-off merchants, none of whom were from Tower Hamlets.

They were carpet-baggers and the Labour controlled licensing committee should not have allowed them onto the site,

They should have required that local traders were given pitches to sell refreshments thus boosting the local economy.

8.17 Question from Councillor John Pierce

How many Tower Hamlets Homes Board meetings has Cllr Rania Khan attended since being appointed in December 2011?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Thank you for your question.

Cllr Rania Khan has attended 2 meetings of the Tower Hamlets Homes Board.

8.18 Question from Councillor Tim Archer

How many library books are currently over one month overdue. How many were borrowed by someone living outside the Borough. How many books are so overdue that they have been "written off" over the past year? How many were borrowed by someone living outside the Borough?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

Thank you for your question.

Councillors are only permitted to ask one question each, yet you have asked four.

The officers have not been able to produce the answer to your question in time for Full Council. Please submit a member's enquiry.

8.19 Question from Councillor Lutfa Begum

Why was there lower than expected footfall for local traders during the Olympic Games?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Tower Hamlets was not unique to low visitor numbers.

It has been accepted that this was due to the Tory Mayor of London's hysterical warnings on the tube.

8.20 Question from Councillor Dr Emma Jones

Do this year's GCSE results in Tower Hamlets show improvements in science subjects?

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

Thank you for your question.

I can confirm that GCSE results have improved significantly since last year. However a breakdown of results have not yet been confirmed. We expect these to be confirmed and published by mid October.

8.21 Question from Councillor Zara Davis

In the light of the significant volume of incidents during the Olympics that were dealt with by the Council's Noise Nuisance team, would the Mayor consider permanently reverting to a seven day a week Noise Nuisance service?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Thank you for your question.

The Council's Noise Nuisance team's seven days a week during the Olympics were an exception for the Olympics.

Now the Olympics is finished there is no exceptional need and the team will revert back to its normal operation.