

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2012

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

Members Present:

Councillor Rachael Saunders
Councillor Fozol Miah
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Rofique U Ahmed
Councillor Abdul Asad
Councillor Shafiqul Haque
Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Rajib Ahmed
Councillor Ohid Ahmed
Mayor Lutfur Rahman
Councillor Oliur Rahman
Councillor Helal Abbas
Councillor Marc Francis
Councillor Peter Golds
Councillor Tim Archer
Councillor Shahed Ali
Councillor Dr. Emma Jones
Councillor Rania Khan
Councillor Shiria Khatun
Councillor Lutfu Begum
Councillor Ahmed Adam Omer
Councillor Joshua Peck

Councillor Alibor Choudhury
Councillor Bill Turner
Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Stephanie Eaton
Councillor David Snowdon
Councillor David Edgar
Councillor M. A. Mukit MBE
Councillor Lesley Pavitt
Councillor Zenith Rahman
Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Zara Davis
Councillor Kabir Ahmed
Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Kosru Uddin
Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Judith Gardiner
Councillor Amy Whitelock
Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed
Councillor Carlo Gibbs
Councillor Mizan Chaudhury
Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Gulam Robbani

The meeting commenced at 7.35 p.m.

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Craig Aston, Carli Harper-Penman, Ann Jackson, Harun Miah, Maium Miah and Gloria Thienel.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were made.

3. MINUTES**RESOLVED**

That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Council meeting held on 19 September 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

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 from Mr Franco Carrieri and residents of Brodick House regarding Decent Homes funding**

Mr Franco Carrieri 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 matters raised in the petition. She reported that the Mayor had visited Brodick House and had seen its poor condition and that there was particular concern over the heating system. She confirmed that Brodick House was scheduled to receive Decent Homes works including new kitchens and bathrooms, substantial repairs to the external fabric of the block and an upgraded heating system. She and the Mayor would work with residents and local Councillors to get the best from the Decent Homes funding.

RESOLVED

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

5.2 Petition from Tower Hamlets Labour Party regarding 'Save our Advice Centres'

Mr Abdul Kahar Choudhury addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He welcomed the constructive advice submitted by the petitioners and confirmed that no decision had been taken at that point. He stated that the process for allocating money wasn't easy and was significantly oversubscribed. The Mayor was currently reviewing the recommendations of the Programme Board and an announcement would be made soon. However, there would be no 75% cut. Councillor Choudhury expressed concern over scaremongering tactics employed by opposition Councillors particularly in relation to protests outside of the Tower Hamlets

Law Centre, which the Law Centre had confirmed were without their permission.

RESOLVED

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

Procedural Motion

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **moved**, and Councillor Shiria Khantun **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be altered to consider Member’s Question 8.11 ‘Funding for Advice Centres’ immediately”.

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

8.11 Question from Councillor M. A. Mukit MBE regarding funding for advice centres.

Can the Mayor explain why his administration proposed cutting the budgets of the borough’s vital and well used advice centres by up to 75%?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

No decision has been made. The Mayor is reviewing the recommendations of the programme board and an announcement will be made in the next few days. It hasn’t been an easy process, we’ve had a huge increase in the number of applications because unlike Newham and Lambeth and Lewisham we maintained our mainstream grants at pre-cuts levels.

We’ll be announcing in the next few days and I while I can’t go into details, I assure you there will be no 75 per cent cut. Despite this, Councillor Peck and his friends have been whipping up fear in the community while actually making it harder to make a fair decision. They called in the Cabinet decision, overlooking the fact it wasn’t the final one. In effect they wanted the Mayor not to listen to appeals from the 3rd Sector. Then Councillor Peck and his friends protested outside the Tower Hamlets Law Centre - but I have a letter from the Law Centre saying it was without their permission.

Then Councillor Peck came to Cabinet with a statement he claimed was from a Law Centre representative. The person in question is a failed Labour candidate who didn’t even turn up on the day and Councillor Peck spoke for her. Not only that, but I have *another* letter from the Law Centre stating she does not represent them.

But that’s no surprise. Cllr Peck claims to represent the people of Tower Hamlets and the Labour Party but in reality he’s leading a caucus of fantasists

and conspiracy theorists who are so obsessed by their vendetta against the Mayor that they'll scaremonger, misrepresent the facts and even tell downright porkies just so they can have a go at this administration.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor M.A. Mukit MBE

The Mayor took his initial decision almost two months ago, but he is still to announce his final decisions. How much longer will this take and will the decision be taken in public?

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

It will be soon but our job is to ensure the money goes where it is most needed and we will take the time required to get it right and make sure that this is the case.

5.3 Petition from Tower Hamlets Labour Party regarding Clean Streets

Mr Doros Ullah addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Shahed Ali, the Cabinet Member for Environment, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He stated that there were a number of inaccuracies in the petition. The Council had agreed to the budget cuts last year and income generation was important in covering some of the savings required by the Tory-led coalition government. Councillor Ali stated that neither officers nor independent monitors had found any increase in flytipping since the charge was introduced for special collections and the Mayor would keep this under review. Finally he pointed out that the administration had received awards for its good work and he thanked officers for their hard work.

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 Ms Victoria Kent regarding Ability Bow.

Ability Bow helps people with disabilities to achieve independent living through the provision of supported exercise and healthy living activities. Now all Ability Bow's statutory funding from TH has been taken away, how does the Mayor intend to support disabled residents to maintain their fitness and wellbeing and prevent them all from repeated returns to NHS services?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

First of all, let me congratulate you on the excellent work you do. It is a tragedy that as a result of the government's cuts to the NHS your organisation has lost out.

NHS Tower Hamlets funded Ability Bow during 2011-12 on a clearly stipulated non-recurrent basis with around £100,000. Because of the Tory-led government's cuts, further funding was not available for this year so the council stepped in.

We found £50,000 to take Ability Bow up to September this year. Very shortly we hope to be able to announce further funding to take you through to March 2013

We're doing all we can to fight the impact of government cuts on the community and will keep up that fight despite the propaganda and misrepresentation from the political opportunists across the chamber.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Ms Victoria Kent

We appreciate your efforts to deal with our current crisis, but what safeguards will be put in place in relation to future tendering processes?

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

This is on our radar and is something that we can consider as the public health function moves to the Council.

6.2 Question from Ms Shuily Akthar (put by Mr Rahman in Ms Akthar's absence) about the Mayor's view on Free Schools and Academies.

What is the Mayor's view on free schools and can he update us on the status of Culloden School on becoming academy status?

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

The Mayor and Cabinet Members do not support the establishment of academies or free schools as we believe our state schools offer an outstanding service. However if schools do become academies we will work closely with the schools and the DfE to ensure a smooth transition and minimum disruption for pupils and staff, in this case at Culloden and Old Ford Primary Schools.

This administration's view of Free Schools and academies is that they are not the best way to provide an inclusive education that allows young people to

fully experience the social and cultural diversity of the borough. This administration believes that the way forward is increased investment in the current model.

It is clear that some Labour Councillors are supporting this defying their national party's policy. For example the minutes of the Planning Committee show that Councillor Denise Jones advocated the establishment of a free school.

Given the excellent progress made by the borough's students in the last few years – especially last year's the 8.6 per cent rise in GCSE results that's put us 2.1 per cent above the national average - it is clear that the borough's state schools are not just working but delivering excellence.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Rahman

The Deputy Mayor attended the consultation meetings regarding the change of status for Culloden School and met with parents to discuss their concerns. Where were the other two ward Councillors and why did they not attend?

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

I do not know. Perhaps they were busy on other business. It will be for the electors of East India and Lansbury Ward to draw their conclusions.

[Following the above question and response Councillor Denise Jones gave a point of personal explanation. She stated that she had spoken at the Development Committee on behalf of her constituents who were seeking to establish a free school.]

6.3 Question from Mr Brian Nicholson about the use of the proceeds from the Henry Moore statue sale.

How will the Mayor use the proceeds from the Henry Moore statue?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

At September's Cabinet meeting, the Mayor indicated he wanted to spend this money on social housing, heritage and culture, young and older people's projects.

We don't know exactly how much will be raised so it is hard to be precise but there are a couple of items on tonight's agenda that might benefit - Cllr Snowdon has a question about War Memorials ahead of the Centenary of the First World War and Cllr Theinel has one about 'Cockney Day.'

While Councils like Labour-led Newcastle are having to slash arts and culture funds, this sale would let us use Henry Moore's legacy to safeguard ours in

tough times. And of course, the Mayor is committed to using some of the funds for new social housing.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Brian Nicholson

Can the Mayor assure us that the legacy of Henry Moore will live on to benefit local people?

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

Yes I can. The proceeds from the sale will be used to benefit local people. Old Flo was meant to improve people's lives and she will do that much better if she is used to fund a Henry Moore House providing good quality social housing than if she is tucked away in a museum or in the grounds of a university.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Rabina Khan **moved**, and Councillor Shahed Ali **seconded**, a procedural motion – "That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be altered to consider Motion 12.6 'Increasing affordable housing provision in Tower Hamlets' immediately".

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

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 12.11 'Motion on the sale of Henry Moore Sculpture' immediately".

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

12.11 Motion on the sale of Henry Moore Sculpture

Councillor Denise Jones **moved**, and Councillor Anwar Khan **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Peter Golds **moved**, Councillor David Snowdon **seconded**, an amendment to the motion, adding in three bullet points from motion 12.1 on the same subject, under 'This Council notes'. The amendment was accepted by Councillor Denise Jones and Councillor Anwar Khan.

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

RESOLVED**This Council believes:**

- That the sculpture Draped Seated Woman ('Old Flo') belongs to the people of Tower Hamlets and should be retained by the council and displayed in a public place in Tower Hamlets
- That the sculpture was sold at a discounted price to the London County Council by the artist Henry Moore because he believed that art is beneficial, and should be accessible, to all, including the East End's working class, not just those rich enough to be able to afford to own it
- That Moore based the sculpture on his Wartime Shelter drawings of East End resident sheltering in the Central Line at Liverpool Street and elsewhere, and this gives the sculpture even greater connection to the people of East London, where thousands of people died during the war and 172 were killed in the Bethnal Green tube disaster.
- That the council should respect the wishes of the artist that it should be displayed for public enjoyment as a symbol of peace.
- That the sculpture is part of Tower Hamlets' cultural and heritage legacy and once sold will leave a void in that legacy

This Council notes:

- That at a Full Council Meeting in 2010 the Council unanimously agreed a motion proposed by Cllr Archer to bring the statue back to Tower Hamlets and display it for the benefit of all local residents.
- That Mayor Rahman now plans to sell the statue, following no consultation with the people of this Borough
- That the Mayor, by selling the statue, is riding roughshod over the unanimous Overview and Scrutiny Committee decision that he must think again, and the unanimous Full Council Motion from 2010 demanding the statue be moved back to Tower Hamlets.

This Council further believes:

- That despite the huge funding challenges facing the Council, a £5-20million capital receipt from this sale will make little impact on a £44million deficit predicted in 2016/17.
- As a capital receipt this money cannot in the long-term be used to fund on-going service provision, or fill the gap created by Government cuts.

- That the Mayor tried to sell the sculpture when he was Leader of the Council, before the Council faced its current budget cuts, and so he cannot claim that this is his motivation.
- That the Mayor's claims that the sculpture cannot be safely returned to Tower Hamlets have been proved to be untrue, as a number of organisations – including the Museum of London at Docklands, Queen Mary University, the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields and a local school – have all offered to house it in publicly accessible places, with other organisations including the Art Fund and Whitechapel Gallery offering their expertise in transporting and maintaining the sculpture.
- That the relocation of the sculpture in Tower Hamlets could be a boost to tourism in the borough, and bring economic benefit to local businesses.
- That the Council owns numerous pieces of public art that could be at risk of sale after the decision to sell this sculpture.
- That, whilst housing, education and health are important priorities, they should not be at the expense of the cultural wellbeing of the borough and its residents.

The Council resolves:

- To condemn the Mayor's proposed sale of the sculpture, to request that he halts it and secures its return to public display in Tower Hamlets, either on Council land or at one of the institutions which have offered to house it.

6.4 Question from Mr Shamsur Rahman regarding the Holland Estate.

We are concerned about the high service charges and the poor quality of maintenance work in the Holland estate; will the Mayor take our concern up with East End Homes?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Yes, the Mayor has instructed that this issue is raised with the Chief Executive of East End Homes. East End Homes has issued the following statement:

“Following the identification of ‘patterns of failure’ and higher than anticipated repairs expenditure relating to defects around the parapet and parapet gutters on several blocks on the Holland estate, East End Homes have commissioned external consultants (EDA) to work in liaison with East End Homes building surveyors and project management to carry out investigative surveys to a number of blocks on the estate, notably Brune, Bernard, Carter and Barnett Houses. The location of the defects at roof level necessarily

requires scaffold access, which unfortunately substantially increases the costs of the work.”

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Shamsur Rahman

Will the Mayor ask the East End Homes board to review the contract?

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

Yes, we will be looking into a review of contracts and the Mayor has instructed that this and other matters relating to the works and service charges are raised with the Chief Executive of East End Homes.

6.5 Question from Mr Mosrur Ahmed about the Decent Homes initiative in relation to Bancroft and Rogers estates.

Is the Decent Homes initiative still in place, if so when will the Bancroft Estate and Rogers Estate areas be worked on?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

The Decent Homes initiative is still in place for both Bancroft Estate and Rogers Estate. You will get new kitchens and bathrooms.

This is part of an £168m investment that has already seen more than 1000 properties brought up to the Decent Homes Standard with more due by 2014. The precise dates for the work will be announced as soon as possible.

Of course, keeping homes decent is an ongoing process and as many are brought up to standard, others fall out of repair.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Mosrur Ahmed

What support will be available to young people of Tower Hamlets who want to gain work experience and training with the contractors to improve themselves?

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

The Decent Homes programme is being used to help young people with apprenticeships and the Council is working hard to ensure best value is obtained from these opportunities.

It is very important that we achieve value for money and undertake the works as efficiently as possible. To that end we have re-tendered the contracts – the specification for the works is the same but we are aiming to achieve better prices by packaging the works differently and also improve the economic

benefits such as employment for local people and increasing the number of apprenticeship places.

6.6 Question from Mr Abul Bashar about the Decent Homes initiative in relation to the Bancroft estate.

Is the Decent Homes initiative still available in Bancroft Estate?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Yes, as I have already told the Council, the Decent Homes initiative is still in place for Bancroft Estate and it will be delivered in partnership with residents. I visited the estate and spoke to residents and it seems that some people have been spreading misinformation on this matter.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Abul Bashar

I have lived on the estate for 30 years and want residents to benefit from the initiative. There have been a lot of rumours and stories in the press causing confusion for residents. Can anything be done about that?

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

I sympathise about the confusion that is being caused by these untrue stories and I can assure you that the Mayor will continue to do everything possible – despite the climate of cuts and austerity – to make sure that the Bancroft Estate and all other social housing across the borough is at the standard our residents deserve.

6.7 Question from Ms Tessa Horvath regarding violence against women.

We are pleased that the council has recently committed to recognising prostitution as a form of violence against women. We are concerned however that women in street-based prostitution continue to be punished through police arrests which is exacerbating the victimisation these women face. Will the council therefore commit to including an outcome in the new Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy to significantly reduce the number of arrests of women involved in prostitution?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

We agree that arresting women is not the best way to help them exit sex working. That's why we've developed the Violence Against Women strategy that you mentioned and why it recognises prostitution as a form of violence against women

We're working with partners, including the 3rd Sector to set up clear alternatives to arrest. This is combined with a renewed focus on pimps and on the buyers of sex- these are the people we need to go after, not vulnerable women.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Ms Tessa Horvath

I am concerned about a lack of support services, particularly outreach, to help women exit prostitution, what will be in the strategy to help on that front?

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

We will be working with our partners to develop an effective strategy and I look forward to talking to all interested parties including yourself in this regard.

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor made his report to the Council meeting, extending a welcome to all present. He began by paying respects to those who had lost loved ones in the factory fire in Bangladesh.

The Mayor reported that he had joined with the Deputy Lieutenant of Greater London for Tower Hamlets, Commander John Ludgate, in the Remembrance ceremony to remember the dead of the two World Wars and other conflicts. He also reported that the Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission was starting work and that he looked forward to receiving their recommendations.

The Mayor then highlighted a number of achievements within the Borough, including work the new Bow School, an 8.6% increase in GCSE results (above the national average) and that Victoria Park had been voted the nation's favourite park.

The Mayor congratulated the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Shahed Ali, on being voted Environment Lead Member of the Year by Keep Britain Tidy.

Turning to other issues the Mayor raised a number of issues of note including that:

- The Faith Based Buildings Initiative was now open to receive bids for funding from all faiths.
- The Leader of the national Labour Party's recent endorsement of the Living Wage Campaign was welcome and that the Mayor would be encouraging all local schools to adhere to the scheme.
- The Mayor would be opposing proposed cuts to Fire Services outlined by the Mayor of London.
- He welcomed the motion on the agenda to support the building of an energy cooperative to reduce charges to residents.

Finally, he highlighted the Ward review being undertaken by the Boundary Commission and urged Members to support the campaign to retain the Banglatown and Lansbury ward names. However, he noted that the Council did have the power to change ward names at a later date should it so wish.

The Leader of the Majority Group and Leaders of the Minority Groups each responded briefly to the Mayor's report. In particular thanks were offered to the Corporate Director of Resources, Chris Naylor, who was leaving to take a post at Barnet Council and condolences were offered to those affected by the recent factory fire tragedy in Bangladesh.

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

8.1 Question from Councillor Lesley Pavitt regarding Decent Homes work on the Bancroft estate.

Will the Mayor explain why he secretly cancelled the Decent Homes work due to take place this year on the Bancroft estate in my ward?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Cllr Pavitt's party are quick to assume "secrets" and conspiracies. Well, there is no "secret" here. The Decent Homes initiative is still in place for Bancroft Estate and all residents will receive decent kitchens and bathrooms.

This is part of an £168m investment that has already seen over 1000 properties brought up to the Decent Homes Standard with many more due by 2014.

Part of the reason for the delay is to allow local contractors to bid for work and ensure that residents are employed wherever possible. The precise dates for the work will be announced as soon as possible.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Lesley Pavitt

We all understand that programmes of work can change. However, residents became concerned when information about the building works was removed from the Council website, could communications not have been better?

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

Following the last Council meeting you e-mailed me to ask me to accompany you on a walkabout, which I did on 15th October. I asked if you had any particular issues and if you had any concerns about this matter you could have raised them with me at that time but you did not. It is not the Council but Labour Group members who are giving out misinformation.

8.2 Question from Councillor Peter Golds regarding the sale of the Henry Moore statue.

In affirming the decision to sell our Henry Moore statue, Mayor Rahman spoke for just 97 seconds. This was before he had even heard the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's report from Cllr Jackson, which called on him to think again. Can the Mayor tell me why he treated the Overview and Scrutiny committee report on the sale of 'Old Flo' in such a dismissive manner?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

Cllr Golds' timing is remarkably precise for someone who wasn't at the meeting.

The Mayor did not treat the views of Overview and Scrutiny Committee in a dismissive manner. Several Cabinet Members were at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including myself, and we gave him a full report of the Committee's deliberations prior to Cabinet meeting. Having heard this report he was in no doubt what his decision should be and made it swiftly and decisively.

It is touching to see Cllr Golds standing up for Cllr Jackson – and yet more evidence of the close collusion between the two parties. While in the rest of the country Labour are rightly attacking the Tory-led destruction of the state and civil society, here in Tower Hamlets they are too busy in their vendetta against the Mayor to remember they're supposed to be on different sides.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Peter Golds

I spoke to colleagues who were present at the Cabinet meeting. I will ask again why did the Mayor dismiss the report so quickly in such an outrageous fashion?

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

You would be better advised to concentrate on your own motion rather than flirting with the Labour Party.

8.3 Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam regarding the number of homes falling below 'decent' standard.

At the last election the Mayor pledged to halve the number of homes that fall below a decent standard, yet figures from the Council have shown that last year there were over 1,700 more indecent homes than when he was first elected in 2010. Can the Mayor explain why the number of indecent homes has increased?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

I'm sure Cllr Islam means "non-decent" an "indecent home" is something entirely different – although as the Deputy Mayor mentioned in response to a public question, we're doing all we can to crack down on brothels and sex-establishments as well.

By the end of 2014/15 there will only be 1359 non-decent homes i.e. 10% of the stock. Any apparent rise is due to the fact that homes that were once decent fall into disrepair over time and the works programme is not yet complete.

Cllr Islam should know this, I'm sure he does know this, but instead of congratulating the administration on their excellent work, he's too desperate to have a dig at the Mayor to give the true picture. Just like people age, buildings also age, Cllr Islam and need attention.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam

You must realise that many more families are living in unacceptable conditions due to the delays. What will the Mayor do about that?

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

The Mayor and myself are working tirelessly despite the difficult conditions to lobby for more funding including, for example, meeting with the Mayor of London's housing advisor earlier today.

8.4 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani regarding the Banglatown Ward name.

Given that residents from Spitalfields and Banglatown are up in arms about the Tory proposal to obliterate Banglatown, the spiritual home of Bangladeshis in Britain, can the Mayor tell us what action he is taking and whether he will publicly condemn this shameful proposal, if he hasn't done this already?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Thank you Councillor Robbani, you have done a good job campaigning on this issue. The removal of the word "Banglatown" is a blow to community cohesion and sends a clear message to the British-Bangladeshi community that their contribution to the life of the area is being airbrushed from history.

The change will be a blow to the restaurant industry in the area which has built its branding on the name and that rebranding is an expense that small and medium-sized business cannot afford in these times of Tory-led austerity.

The removal of social justice campaigner and Labour Party Leader George Lansbury from the ward map of Tower Hamlets is similarly a blow against the East End's culture and history.

The Mayor has written on behalf of the residents of Tower Hamlets, to the LGBCE, urging them to reinstate 'Banglatown' and 'Lansbury' in their final review of historic ward names and boundaries

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani

Will the Chamber support our motion later on the agenda to bring the name back?

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

I hope so. Councillor Golds and the Conservative Group should be ashamed for what they have done in trying to get the Boundary Commission to delete 'Banglatown' and 'Lansbury'.

I am surprised though that the Labour Group do not seem to have noticed the loss of Lansbury at all – that is further evidence that under Councillor Peck they have more in common with the Tea Party than the Labour Party.

[Following the above question and response Councillor Peter Golds gave a point of personal explanation]

Procedural motion

Councillor Ohid Ahmed **moved**, and Councillor Alibor Choudhury **seconded**, a procedural motion:- "That in accordance with Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied to enable Motion 12.3 'Motion against erasing the history of Tower Hamlets' to be debated immediately". The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

8.5 Question from Councillor Amy Whitelock about recent muggings on the Regent's Canal footbridge.

Is the Mayor aware of the recent muggings that have taken place on the Regent's Canal footbridge which connects Mile End Park and Meath Gardens, and if so, what steps is he taking to improve safety and protect residents in the area?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

This is a police matter and they are aware of the recent offences committed along the canal footbridge.

The issue has been raised by Council officers with senior police officers. As a result the area has seen an increased focus of Police resources including targeted activity by the Robbery Squad.

The Council is in discussions with British Waterways who own and manage the canal to encourage them to urgently consider what measures can be taken to increase visibility and make it less attractive for criminals to operate on their land.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Amy Whitelock

This is not just a Police matter - I think that the Council has a greater responsibility here as it owns the bridge. Should action not be taken, particularly to improve the lighting. Residents have raised this matter but have not received an adequate response.

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

As Lead Member I have initiated walkabouts in each ward. We have already announced that we will improve CCTV in your ward. I am more than happy to arrange a ward walkabout to look at any further issues and hope that you will attend.

8.6 Question from Councillor Zara Davis regarding school places on the Isle of Dogs.

What action is being taken to address the severe shortage of school places on the Isle of Dogs?

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

Action has been taken to provide more school places by expanding Arnhem Wharf School and St Luke's School. Proposals are being developed to expand Woolmore School. Further existing school sites are being investigated for potential to expand.

To date it has not been possible to identify any other Council-owned assets in the area which could be used for school purposes. The need for additional school places and sites to accommodate them has been part of the Council's longer term planning.

The Council will continue to monitor the projected child yield from emerging development proposals across the borough, including on the Isle of Dogs, and additional education provision will be sought if necessary.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Zara Davis

Thank you but I am also concerned about secondary school provision. In Millwall Ward only 67% of secondary school students got their first preference. What is being done to address that issue?

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

A significant number did get their first choice and it will not be possible to meet every request. Nevertheless we are doing our best to increase provision despite your government scrapping the Building Schools for the Future programme.

8.7 Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah about fire station closures.

At this month's London Councils Leaders Committee the Mayor had the opportunity to raise residents' concerns about the closure of Bow and Whitechapel fire stations with the Chair of the London Fire Authority. Will the Mayor explain why he sat in absolute silence and didn't speak out against these savage cuts which will put lives in danger?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Councillor Peck's Tea Party are trying to catch the Mayor out but while they've been running around playing student politics, the Mayor has been working on behalf of the community.

He issued a statement against these cuts on 18th October, a full week before Councillor Ullah's colleagues and he has met with the Fire Brigade Union and agreed a course of action.

The question of cuts was raised at this meeting by a Tory Council leader and he was told in no uncertain terms that it was not on the agenda.

Given these facts, I'm not sure what Cllr Ullah is complaining about.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah

Should the Mayor not speak on these matters in the appropriate place – at the London Councils Leaders Committee – and not just on television? Would the Mayor like television cameras to accompany him to the next London Councils meeting to give him the confidence to speak?

8.8 Question from Councillor Kabir Ahmed regarding special responsibility allowances for opposition Members.

Can the lead member tell us what the special responsibility allowances are for opposition members and what this equates to as an hourly rate when compared to their timesheets?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

There is some interesting reading just for 2011/12 figures alone. For example Councillor Shiria Khatun, Chair of the GP Committee was paid £1607 per hour. Councillor Abdul Mukit, Chair of Human Resources was paid £1795 per hour. And Councillor Anwar Khan, Chair of the Pensions Committee and spokesperson for finance, wait for this ladies and gentlemen, was paid a whopping £2989 per hour.

I can't comment on Councillors Bill Turner and Ann Jackson because they have not filed any timesheets since 2010.

When our hard working council staff are paid nowhere near these amounts, what message does this send to the public for attending a handful meetings during the year.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Kabir Ahmed

Would it not be sensible to consider combing the roles into one Chair to make a saving of £31,000?

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

I would welcome the convening of a working group to consider your proposal as a helpful idea to reduce waste.

8.9 Question from Councillor Joshua Peck on the renaming of the Council building on Ewart Place in memory of John Onslow.

Can the Mayor please tell me why, despite Council's resolution of 13th April 2011, he has yet to rename the Council building on Ewart Place, in memory of GMB official John Onslow?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

It is right and proper that John Onslow's memory should be honoured. We have agreed to do this and the Mayor has instructed the officers.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Joshua Peck

Why has it taken 19 months for anything to happen to action this?

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

Why did you wait 19 months to ask?

Time limit for item

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

The remaining questions 8.10 and 8.12 to 8.24 were therefore not put 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]

[Note: Question 8.11 was put during Item 5 'Petitions' and can be found at that point in the minutes]

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

9.1 Recruitment of an Interim Chief Executive - update

Unrestricted item withdrawn. An exempt/restricted report was presented under Item 15.

9.2 Treasury Management Outturn Report 2011/12

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Resources on treasury management activity for the financial year ended 31 March 2012, as required by the Local Government Act 2003.

Councillor Alibor Choudhury **MOVED** and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **SECONDED** the recommendations contained in the report.

RESOLVED

To note the content of the report.

9.3 Revised Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2012/13

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Resources in relation to the review of the three treasury management strategy documents, in line with the CLG and CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice.

Councillor Alibor Choudhury **MOVED** and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **SECONDED** the recommendations contained in the report.

RESOLVED

That the Council adopt:-

- a) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, as set out in Sections 6-10 of Appendix 1 to the report of the Corporate Director, Resources;
- b) The Revised Annual Investment Strategy, as set out in Section 11 of Appendix 1 to the report; and
- c) The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement, as set out in Section 12 of Appendix 1 to the report.

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

There was no business under this heading.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Calculation of Non-Domestic Rates Income

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Resources on new arrangements for planning for non-domestic rates income and consequent changes to the statutory framework governing the setting of the Council's budget.

Councillor Alibor Choudhury **MOVED** and Councillor Kabir Ahmed **SECONDED** the recommendations contained in the report.

RESOLVED

1. That the duty to calculate the Council's non-domestic rates income for the coming year and to notify preceptors and the Government as set out in the draft Non Domestic Rating (Rates Retention) Regulations 2012 be delegated to the Council's statutory chief finance officer.

2. To note that if the draft regulations are not approved in the form set out in the report of the Corporate Director, Resources, a further report will be submitted to the Council.

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 14.1.3 the order of busienss be altered to consider Motion 12.2 ‘Council Finances’ now, followed by Motion 12.5 ‘Banglatwon Ward Name’ and then item 13 and the Part 2 agenda items.” The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

12.2 Motion on Council Finances

Councillor Carlo Gibbs **moved**, and Councillor Joshua Peck **seconded**, the motion as printed on the agenda.

Councillor Shahed Ali **moved**, and Councillor Alibor Choudhury **seconded**, an amendment to the motion calling on the Mayor to recover a ‘soft loan’ of £850,000 from the Rich Mix Centre. The amendment was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

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

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- The devastating ideological cuts by the Conservative - Liberal Democrat Government include a reduction to the council’s grant formula funding by over 17% since 2011.
- Changes to welfare benefits including cuts to housing benefit, council tax benefit and the introduction of the universal credit amount to an unprecedented attack on the most vulnerable in our society and will lead to a greater demand on council resources.
- In a further attack on vulnerable people, the Chancellor pledged at Tory Party Conference to cut welfare benefits by a further £10bn, while at the same time giving tax breaks for millionaires by cutting the top rate of tax to 45p.
- The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government’s austerity measures have resulted in a double dip recession, continued high unemployment and little economic growth.

This Council also notes that the Council:

- Has a responsibility to our residents to manage our finances efficiently and deliver a balanced budget.
- Is showing in its Medium Term Financial Plan a deficit of £9.5m in year 2014/15, £28m in 2015/16 and £44m in 2016/17.
- Will be spending on average £16m more per year than it is expecting to receive in after 2014/15.
- Is in such a desperate financial position that the cabinet is having to sell the Henry Moore statue of the draped woman, despite this being gifted to the people of Tower Hamlets, and various other council owned properties.

This Council notes that the Mayor:

- Is using £9.5m from reserves to cover the deficit in the 2014/15 budget, to be agreed ahead of the next local elections, and has no plans to deal with the deficit after that time.
- Has a number of big spending proposals including a fund for restoring religious buildings, the Mayor's educational award and funding to replace the cut in council tax benefit, which are not funded after the 2014 elections.
- Failed to protect the most vulnerable when he proposed to needlessly slash funding for welfare advice services, some as much as 75%, which would likely increase the financial risk faced by the council.

Further notes the Mayor continues to waste the Council's finances, including:

- Spending £38,000 sending a letter to update to 100,000 residents about his latest policy, despite spending £1m per year on East End Life, which is sent to every door on a weekly basis;
- Wasting £120k that was meant to promote businesses during the Olympics, including spending £40k alone on an "app", following which businesses in Brick Lane faced one of their worst summers of trading;
- Spending £32k on Council banners including £21k with the Mayors face on;
- Wasting £54,000 per year on a rented Mercedes and driver to drive the Mayor around the borough;
- Spending 119,000 on a range of Mayoral advisors and consultants.

- Wasting over £7,000 on taxis for his Cabinet members since October 2010.

This Council believes:

- That the use of reserves to cover deficit spending in 2014/15 is unsustainable.
- That any available resources must be used to build capacity and resilience in the community, as we anticipate further cuts.
- The Mayor is failing to show leadership in the face of the Conservative - Liberal Democrat Government's cuts by ignoring the council's difficult financial state until after the next election;
- The Mayor continues to spend significant amounts of council tax payer money on his own self-promotion and needlessly wastes money on expensive travel for himself and his cabinet, which would be better spent on services;
- The Mayor should be honest with residents about how he will deal with this deficit now, including whether this will include large tax rises or service cuts.

This Council calls on the Mayor to:

- Bring forward a proposal in the up-coming budget process about how the he will deal with the council's deficit from 2014-2016/17;
- Ensure that all decisions regarding service cuts include meaningful consultation with all council members, service users, unions and staff potentially affected;
- Work with community groups, RSLs, other public sector bodies and local business to ensure the most effective way of delivering council services as possible;
- Enact a total ban on the use of Council resources for self-promotion, including a ban on sending policy related letters to residents and moratorium on any further publicity with the Mayor's face on them;
- Enact a total ban of first class travel and the use of taxi's for Councillors (excluding the Speaker and Deputy Speaker) and senior staff before 10pm;
- Agree to a moratorium on new policy announcements that are not fully funded for the entire proposed length of their operation;
- Explain to the people of Tower Hamlets how he intends to fund his spending commitments after 2014/15.

- Immediately review the Council's virements procedures and in the interim agree to bring all £200k virements through full Council.

Procedural motion

Councillor Joshua Peck **moved**, and Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **seconded**, a procedural motion to extend the time limit for the meeting by up to 30 minutes, to enable motion 12.5, agenda item 13 and the part 2 agenda items to be debated. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

12.5 Motion on Banglatown Ward Name

Councillor Joshua Peck **moved**, and Councillor Helal Abbas **seconded**, the motion as printed on the agenda with the addition of a further bullet point under 'This Council Resolves', to read:-

"For the Council to write to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on behalf of residents calling on them to reverse their decision to reduce the number of councillors from 51 to 45."

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

RESOLVED

This Council Notes:

- The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has recently released its draft recommendations for new ward boundaries and names in Tower Hamlets.
- That the LGBCE is recommending renaming the successor ward for the current 'Spitalfields and Banglatown' as 'Spitalfields' doing away with the 'Banglatown' name.
- That the LGBCE made its decision following the Conservative Group submission which argued that: *'the Bangladeshi community lives across the borough' and that to include 'Banglatown' in the name 'implies that the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets is restricted to the Spitalfields area alone'*
- The strong local public opinion in support of the retention of the Banglatown ward name.

This Council believes:

- The Banglatown name was introduced to reflect the significant Bangladeshi population and the cross-cultural nature of our community.
- Removing the name would be entirely wrong, especially as local residents have not been consulted by either the Conservative Group or the LGBCE.
- The Banglatown name reflects not only the geographic location but the role of Brick Lane as the cultural heart of Britain's Bangladeshi community.
- The Mayor's proposal, adopted by the Boundary Commission, to reduce the number of councillors from 51 to 45 was a mistake and that with the fastest growing population in the country Tower Hamlets will suffer as a result of the reduction in councillors.
- Were the number of councillors still set at 51, then Spitalfields and Banglatown may have remained a three member ward and the debate over the name could have been avoided.

This Council resolves:

- To call on all political parties to argue in any further submissions to the LGBCE for the reinstatement of the Banglatown ward name.
- To support residents in making appeals to the LGBCE not to abolish the Banglatown ward name.
- For the Council to write to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on behalf of residents calling on them to reverse their decision to reduce the number of councillors from 51 to 45.

Motions 12.3, 12.4, 12.6, 12.7, 12.8, 12.9, 12.10, 12.12, 12.13, 12.14, 12.15 and 12.16 were not considered due to lack of time. Motion 12.1 was partially dealt with in the form of an amendment to motion 12.11.

[Note – Motion 12.11 was taken after Item 6.3 and can be found at that point in the minutes]

Procedural motion

Councillor Joshua Peck **moved**, and Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **seconded**, that the meeting adjourn prior to the part 2 section of the agenda. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Accordingly the meeting was adjourned at 10.40 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 11.10 p.m.

Procedural motion

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **moved**, and Councillor Joshua Peck **seconded**, a procedural motion that the meeting be adjourned for a further 30 minutes. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Accordingly the meeting was adjourned at 11.16 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 11.45 p.m.

13. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That, under the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the business to be transacted contains information defined as Exempt in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

14. EXEMPT MINUTES

The exempt (restricted) minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 11 July 2012 were not agreed. Members raised a number of points of accuracy and the draft minutes were deferred for consideration at the next meeting.

15. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE (HEAD OF PAID SERVICE) - UPDATE

The Council considered a report of the Service Head, Human Resources and Workforce Development on the above matter. The special circumstances and reasons for urgency were agreed as set out in the report.

Councillor Joshua Peck moved, and Councillor Rachel Saunders seconded, an alternative recommendation to those in the report of the Service Head, Human Resources and Workforce Development as below. This was put to the vote and was agreed.

RESOLVED

That the recommendations set out in the report be not agreed, and that the Council extend the existing interim Head of Paid Service appointment for a further 14 days for officers to advise on the way forward.

The meeting ended at 11.58 p.m.

Chair,
Council

APPENDIX A**WRITTEN RESPONSES PROVIDED AFTER THE MEETING TO MEMBERS' QUESTIONS (MINUTE 8 REFERS)****8.10 Question from Councillor Tim Archer**

London City Airport has announced plans to upgrade its terminal to increase the number of flights from 70,000 to 120,000 flights per year. What will the Mayor be doing to ensure that Tower Hamlets and Isle of Dogs residents do not suffer from increased noise pollution resulting from over flights?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

First of all Cllr Archer, the Isle of Dogs is in Tower Hamlets.

The CAA and Newham have powers on this issue. We are making representations. We are making sure CAA are aware of all our residents who will be affected on the Isle of Dogs and demanding that they provide insulation to those residents' properties.

Perhaps the Councillor can raise the issue with his London Mayor about his plan to address this issue – what some have dubbed Boris Island.

8.12 Question from Councillor Cllr Maium Miah

Can the lead member tell us what has been achieved towards the Mayor's affordable housing target?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Figures on the supply of new affordable homes currently show that 2,763 new homes have been delivered and residents will now have keys to those properties.

A further 987 are due to complete shortly, 281 further affordable units have been granted planning permission and are already on site and further schemes are expected to start soon.

8.13 Question from Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman

At our last meeting Council agreed that the Mayor should issue an apology to residents and Minister Syed Ashraf Islam MP for his decision not to allow this meeting to be held in the Council Chamber, forcing him instead to hold his meeting outside. Can the Mayor read the Council the apology he has made? If he has not apologised can he explain why?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

The Mayor has a duty to the council taxpayers to ensure resources are not used for private and party political functions.

The constitution recognises that the Speaker performs civic and ceremonial duties as a council representative and attends civic and ceremonial functions.

It is quite clear that the Speaker is supposed to be non political in exercising this function on behalf of the whole Council and the residents of this borough.

The meeting in question was a private meeting organised at the invitation of the Speaker, it was not an official delegation to the Council or organised through official channels within the Council.

The use of the Council chamber was properly refused but alternative venues which were more suitable and are also owned by the Council were offered to the Speaker so as not to embarrass this last minute request.

In addition the council's facilities staff were instructed to make every effort to ensure that appropriate facilities were provided for the event.

8.14 Question from Councillor Dr Emma Jones

How is the Council working with health partners in the Borough to improve dementia diagnosis rates?

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

We are working very closely with NHS Tower Hamlets and we have a joint Commissioning Strategy for People with Dementia and their Carers in place, which can be found on our website.

The Strategy lays out the partnerships clear ambition to improve early detection and diagnosis. Both NHS Tower Hamlets and the Council have through the Strategy invested significantly in community dementia services.

A new community dementia pathway has been developed including a new Diagnostic Memory Clinic (provided by East London Foundation Trust). As part of the specification for the Diagnostic Memory Clinic, a clear function was identified for a senior nurse in the team to work with GP practices to improve referral processes and recording of diagnosis.

There has been further investment by the CCG in this function this year. As a consequence, we have seen the number of people recorded as having dementia in GP practices increase from 464 to 578 from 2010/11 to 2011/12, and the referral rate to the Diagnostic Memory Clinic increase from 190 to 335 from 2010/11 to 2011/12.

8.15 Question from Councillor Denise Jones

Islington Council - who invented the Fairness Commission model that you have copied - found that two principles were key to its effective operation: the establishment of political consensus on the need for the Commission, and the inclusion of cross party councillors. Why have you not sought to do either?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

There are four other commissions across the country and each has adopted a distinctive approach.

The number and background of commissioners has varied, for example – in Islington there were 20 commissioners including senior officers and elected members, in York there were just four commissioners all independent of the council and public services, in Newcastle there were 20 commissioners, all independent of the Council.

The Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission was agreed in Cabinet in April 2012 and endorsed by a wide range of Councillors in attendance, and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny.

Councillor Jones for your information, using examples from elsewhere in the country is called drawing upon Best Practice, and of course you're not interested in that but would rather attack the Mayor.

All Councillors were invited to the launch and I'm surprised that Cllr Jones is complaining when she couldn't be bothered to attend the launch herself.

8.16 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan

We have learned recently that the big energy companies may have been engaging in price-fixing. Can the Lead Member tell us what local residents can do to lower their energy costs?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Energy bills in Britain are among the highest in Europe. Rises in fuel costs are eating away at people's earnings and forcing many to make really difficult choices about whether to have a warm home or put food on the table.

That's why Tower Hamlets is the first Local Authority in the UK to set up an energy co-operative (T.H.E Community Power). This will allow us to barter with energy companies on the best deals for residents as well as helping reduce bills.

We will provide free energy efficiency advice to all householders as well as an assessment of energy grants and funding available for improving the energy efficiency of homes. In addition, T.H.E Community Power provides benefit entitlement checks, support for those who have fuel debts and ensuring

households claim “energy discounts” they are entitled to such as the Warm Homes Discount.

By contrast I know that Councillor Joshua Peck’s Labour party decided at their recent General Committee meeting to avoid supporting this measure because it was proposed by the Mayor. It is sickening that they’re willing to play politics with such an important issue when Labour Leader Ed Miliband has supported the Co-op movement as a key weapon against Tory-led cuts.

8.17 Question from Councillor John Pierce

What plans does the Mayor have to introduce income limits so that people earning over a certain amount cannot join the housing list?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

The Council is currently consulting on this. However, it is interesting to see that Councillor Pierce is standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the Tories on this issue.

If the figures in the Tory motion 12.10 are correct then only 50 households in the borough will be affected. When there are 24,000 people on our waiting list and thousands living in overcrowding we need to direct our resources accordingly.

8.18 Question from Councillor David Snowdon

How many war memorials are there in Tower Hamlets? Will the Mayor please give a commitment to ensure that funding is available so that any repairs can be carried out ahead of the 100 year anniversary of the start of the Great War in 2014?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

As a number of war memorials are located in church yards and on other private land or on or in buildings for which the Council is not and has never been responsible, a definitive number for the Borough cannot be given.

The largest memorial in Tower Hamlets is the Merchant Seaman’s Memorial at Trinity Garden, Tower Hill. The memorial itself is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the council maintains the surrounding gardens in partnership with the Corporation of London.

Funding is being sought to carry out minor restoration works to the Wick Memorial in Victoria Park.

If additional works are required on any memorials owned by the Council, every effort will be made to secure external funding to carry out necessary

restoration projects. The Mayor believes that this is exactly the kind of project that could be supported by the money generated by the sale of Old Flo.

8.19 Question from Councillor Kosru Uddin

The Office for National Statistics recently announced that youth unemployment had reached a staggering one million, what is the Mayor and Council doing to reduce youth unemployment in Tower Hamlets now that the Olympics are over?

Response by Councillor Shafiqul Haque, Cabinet Member for Jobs & Skills

The British economy is suffering some of its most challenging impacts with the result that employment rates are low and unemployment rates are growing. The Tory-led government is plunging local people into poverty at an unprecedented rate through its policies on welfare reform, forced work experience programmes and sanctions against those on benefits.

Tower Hamlets is doing better than neighbouring areas:

- For the 12 month period to June 2012 the unemployment rate for 16 to 24 year olds in Tower Hamlets for the same period is 23.1%, compared to 33.1% in Waltham Forest and 25.7% in Newham.
- We have had huge success with 527 local people getting work with LOCOG during the Olympics and 30% of those were under 30 yrs old.
- Additionally of the 3438 local Tower Hamlets people who took up an opportunity of working for one of the 26 Games contractors around 63% were aged under 30 yrs old.

We have also secured 200 apprenticeships with Agylisis and 170 apprenticeships with Decent Homes contractors.

We are also creating an Employment & Enterprise Board with local business leaders and experts to ensure we capture the maximum opportunities for local residents.

This is in addition to the Council's ongoing programmes including:

- Pre Apprenticeships
- Apprenticeships
- Internships
- Graduate Management programmes
- Trainee schemes
- Work placement schemes
- Finance training
- Social worker training
- Teacher training

- Schools career service; and
- Skillsmatch, which has placed at least 250 young people into work.

8.20 Question from Councillor Lutfa Begum

Can the Lead Member tell us how many young people attended the Mayor's Education Awards, how many received awards, what the cost of the event was and how it was met?

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

The Mayor's Education Achievement Award 2012 took place on Tuesday 20th November.

The event celebrates the achievements of our children and young people and reinforces the importance of hard work, commitment, civic duty and pursuit of excellence.

241 young people secured awards for academic excellence and progress, and contributions to the community of which 235 confirmed their attendance along with family members prior to the event.

The event costs were entirely covered by private sector sponsorship and it did not cost the borough's Council Tax payers a penny.

8.21 Question from Councillor Anwar Khan

What is the council's policy on offering work experience for students post 18? How many has been offered in the last 12 months?

Response by Councillor Shafiqul Haque, Cabinet Member for Jobs & Skills

At present no up-to-date figures are available, we will provide the Councillor with them as they become available.

However, the council has been supporting students undertaking work experience and internships for a number of years. Managers and departments have provided young people with the opportunity to learn and develop skills and knowledge within the organisation.

To ensure a consistent approach is taken that supports managers and individuals the Council has in place an internship, work experience and work placement policy. Individuals who undertake this opportunity need to be affiliated to a recognised body such as colleges, schools, leaving care service and Pupil referral units.

8.22 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

Tower Hamlets CCTV cars have been photographed parked in bays marked as only for "Doctors", and on double yellow lines. Does the Mayor believe that this sets a bad example for local residents irrespective of the legal position?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

The bad example is set by motorists who disregard parking restrictions, obstruct traffic, abuse parking attendants who have a difficult job to do and put other road users' or pedestrians' lives at risk.

These vehicles are clearly marked and only park in such spaces when it is necessary for enforcement.

I'm sure Councillor Aston wouldn't claim that the police or ambulances set a bad example when they run red lights in an emergency. He needs to credit the people of Tower Hamlets with the intelligence to know the difference between an official vehicle engaged in important enforcement work and a member of the public breaking the law.

8.23 Question from Councillor Shiria Khatun

What steps has the Mayor taken to undertake a feasibility study into a mattress recycling scheme along the lines of the one operating in Labour controlled Lewisham and as proposed by Labour councillors and agreed by Council in September this year?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Officers are currently using existing waste disposal data to quantify the number of mattresses that are collected by the authority and to identify the additional cost involved in transporting the materials to south London. This data will comprise part of the feasibility study.

Officers are to raise the issue with colleagues from local Registered Providers at the next meeting of the Public Realm Sub Group to gauge interest from key partners and are also looking at alternative methods of recycling these bulky items.

8.24 Question from Councillor Gloria Thienel

In the article in the 23 July 2012 article entitled 'Cockneys campaign to protect rhyming slang from extinction' in the *Evening Standard* the Mayor stated "It's really important we keep the older traditions alive and support them, not as fossils, but as living traditions."

Can the Mayor tell me what he and the council are planning to do to keep these old East End traditions alive? In particular would he support an annual Cockney Heritage Day starting in 2013?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

The Mayor absolutely supports such an event and feels that this is exactly the kind of project that can be funded using the money generated from the sale of Old Flo.