

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.45 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 17 APRIL 2013

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

Members Present:

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

The meeting commenced at 8.00 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 Harun Miah, Carli Harper-Penman and Oliur Rahman.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Anwar Khan **moved**, and Councillor Bill Turner **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business

be altered such that when Item 12 is reached the following motions be the first to be considered, Motions 12.9, 12.1, 12.2, 12.7, 12.4 in that order.

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

2. **DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

No declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were made.

3. **MINUTES**

Councillor Anwar Khan **moved** and Councillor Denise Jones **seconded** the following amendments to the draft unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Council meeting held on 23 January 2013:-

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

Delete:

"Unfortunately confidentiality rules mean I cannot confirm those matters." -
Due to inaccuracy

And replace with:

"[Officer note: In responding to the supplementary question Cllr Choudhury proceeded to name a member of the Council and alluded to the identify of a member of staff so as to make them easily identifiable and set out what was a highly inaccurate account of a confidential employment matter to which he, as a member of the executive, was party.

Confidentiality rules prevent the replication of Cllr Choudhury's answer verbatim.]"

Under: Summary of Supplementary Question from Ms Clare Harrison

Add before the current:

"I don't see how my time at university has any bearing on my right to come to this council as a resident of Tower Hamlets and to be honest I am accustomed to members of the public being afforded a little more respect by Councillors and members of the executive."

The amendment was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The Speaker suggested to the Council that if there were no queries in relation to the accuracy of the draft restricted (Part 2) minutes of the Council meeting of 23rd January, then the Council may wish also to agree those draft minutes

under the current agenda item so as to avoid the need to move into confidential session later in the meeting. The Council agreed the draft restricted minutes accordingly.

RESOLVED

That subject to the amendments above, the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 23 January 2013 and of the Budget Council Meetings on 27 February 2013 and 7 March 2013; and the restricted minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 23 January 2013, be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

[Note: The following Councillors each requested that their vote be recorded against the amendment of the draft minutes:- Councillors Kabir Ahmed, Ohid Ahmed, Shahed Ali, Abdul Asad, Lutfu Begum, Alibor Choudhury, Shafiqul Haque, Aminur Khan, Rabina Khan, Rania Khan, Maium Miah and Gulam Robbani.]

4. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE SPEAKER OF THE COUNCIL OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

There were no announcements.

5. TO RECEIVE ANY PETITIONS

5.1. Petition from Mr Dan McCurry and others regarding 'Putting the Bang back into Banglatown'

Mr Dan McCurry addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources, responded to the matters raised in the petition. He welcomed ideas from anyone who had enthusiasm for the area although stressed that consultation with residents would be required before any big changes such as light displays were introduced. He highlighted the money that the Mayor had already allocated and the work being done to invest in and improve the Brick Lane area.

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 Mr George Morgan and others asking the Council to stop Vodafone from erecting six mobile phone masts on James Hammett House

The petitioners addressed the meeting in support of their petition and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She emphasised that the Council had not entered into any contract with Vodafone and did not intend to do so. In light of the failed planning applications and strong local feeling the Council had decided not to pursue the matter and is under no obligation to proceed with a new lease to Vodafone at James Hammett House. Under the 1984 Telecommunications Act a telecommunication operator has the right to apply to the courts for a lease upon any property although Councillor Khan understood that had never happened to date.

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 Ahmed Osman and others against the closure of East End Life

The petitioners addressed the meeting in support of their petition and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He highlighted that local communities rely on the advice and information contained in the newspaper and that a review was to be undertaken to ensure residents views were taken into account before any action was taken.

RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to the Head of Paid Service, 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 Koyes Uddin

Can the Mayor tell us how many jobs will be lost as a result of the Labour-Conservative party's decision to close East End Life, and can he provide a breakdown of the possible equalities implications this will have?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

East End Life currently employs 8.6 full-time equivalent staff. The closure of East End Life would affect at least ten members of staff in total. Of these ten staff, the majority (seven) are women, two of whom are currently on Maternity Leave. Four of the total number of staff are from a BME background.

East End Life is delivered to 83,000 households with its total distribution points taking circulation to almost 100,000 every week. One of its key roles is to promote community cohesion and race equality in the borough. There are dedicated pages in East End Life which are translated into Bengali and Somali, making information about key council services as widely accessible to local people as possible.

A key part of the Mayor's decision to undertake a review into the implications of the closure of East End Life is to allow proper consideration of the equalities implications of its closure by Tower Hamlets Tory-Labour coalition. This will include undertaking a full Equalities Impact Assessment. In order to comply with the relevant procurement and organisational review procedures, this review will take between 9 and 12 months.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Koyes Uddin

Do you consider the proposal is an attempt to score political points at the expense of residents and a valuable community resource.

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

I suggest this highlights the disregard of the opposition who wish to keep the community in the dark.

6.2 Question from Mr Fazleh Elaahi

Dame Colet House has been closed and in a state of disrepair for many years. What plans does the Mayor have to bring this site back into community use?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

This facility has been unfit for use for many years, and I'm proud to be part of the administration that is bringing it back into use.

The council has entered into a development agreement with Guildmore Ltd for the regeneration of the Haileybury Youth centre and Dame Colet house. This redevelopment will see a new Youth and Community centre being built on the site, alongside 40 residential housing units.

The residential housing units will be socially rented and will be managed by Tower Hamlet Homes. The programme for starting works on site is December 2013, with complete in spring 2015.

This is subject to a planning consent being received by the developer and final legal agreements being completed.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Fazleh Elaahi

Can you reassure me that there will not again be a misuse of Town Hall funds as seen in 2003?

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

I can't comment on past events but under the current Leadership we hope to bring changes for the young and families who need housing and use our assets to benefit the community.

6.3 Question from Mr Abu Ahsan

What plans does the Mayor have to regenerate Whitechapel?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

The Whitechapel Vision was launched on 11th March 2013 by the Mayor following a competitive tender process under which Building Design Partnerships (BDP) were successfully procured to produce a masterplanning framework for regeneration across the Whitechapel area until 2025.

The main objectives of the Vision are to ensure the Council can positively promote the regeneration of Whitechapel by maximising the development opportunities that will arise from the opening of the new Crossrail station in 2017. The project seeks to promote inward investment through the delivery of new affordable homes, new jobs, skills and training opportunities, together with high quality public realm improvements across the area.

The masterplan will seek to build on Whitechapel's rich and diverse character, by enhancing the existing vibrant street market, support the world class facilities at the Royal London NHS hospital and Queen Mary University research institution and protect the unique historic built environment. A key role of the masterplan will be to balance the introduction of striking new architecture.

A series of consultation forums with local stakeholders and groups are scheduled to take place at the Whitechapel IDEA Store in the last week of April 2013 with a wider 6 week statutory public consultation commencing in the early Summer.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Abu Ahsan

There is some concern over the future of Whitechapel Market. How will traders and small businesses be involved?

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

There is a rich heritage of traders at the market and we want to work with businesses and the local people to enrich the area. As the area grows we want to ensure that local businesses and residents have a stake.

6.5 Question from Mr Abdul Azad

Can the Mayor tell us what he plans to do with the £800k allocated in his budget proposal for borough's street cleaning?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

This administration is committed to keeping this borough clean. We were delighted to have won two awards recently including the Keep Britain Tidy Award.

However, we are not complacent. To build on this good work our additional investment will focus on:

- More litter pickers to assist with cleaning during the summer months
- Additional graffiti and chewing gum removal
- Additional 'Find it Fix it' team
- More hot spot sweepers
- Dedicated education and awareness programme
- Find it Fix it apprentice initiative, and
- Additional waste disposal

From talking to residents we know that what makes a real difference to how clean they see their streets is:

- Having hard to reach areas.
- Targeting areas more regularly which attract a lot of rubbish
- Making sure that hard to clean graffiti and chewing gum is tackled
- Keeping parks clean in summer
- Being able to easily tell us about problems they want us to fix.

No supplementary question arising from the above question or response was asked.

6.6 Question from Ms Pawla Cottage

Will you guarantee that no Tower Hamlets Council tenants (whose homes are managed on your behalf by THH) are threatened with eviction due to arrears caused by the Bedroom Tax and other benefit cuts?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Eviction is always an absolute last resort and approval to evict is only granted when all available methods of support and assistance from relevant internal and external agencies have been exhausted. Tower Hamlets Homes have been working closely with the Council to actively pursue a number of initiatives to advise and help residents affected by the changes introduced in the Welfare Reform Bill, including one-to-one interviews with those most seriously affected to advise the options available to them and where appropriate to make referral to other agencies.

An additional pre-eviction protocol was introduced in 2012 at the point in the recovery process immediately before approval for eviction is sought. This additional measure is designed to avoid evictions by inviting residents who are in danger of being evicted to meet with a senior officer in a final attempt to seek payment and/or resolve any outstanding issues before approval for eviction is sought.

Some financial assistance may be available to residents experiencing severe difficulties through the Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme, however it should be noted that the fund for this scheme has an overall annual cash limit per Local Authority and therefore each application will need to be carefully considered against the criteria.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Ms Pawla Cottage

Research suggests that over 70% of those classified as under occupying have lived there a long time and also that there are no single bed flats to move into, can this work?

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

Residents have a connection to their home and that is important. We are working with people affected to explore options and avoid evictions.

6.7 Question from Mr Marcus O'Mara

In which ways will this Council use its Strategic Housing role to protect tenants of RSLs and tenants of private landlords from eviction due to benefit cuts?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

The Council has been working closely with tenants and landlords in preparing for the impact of benefit cuts in the borough.

On April 2 2013 the reduction in Housing Benefit to households in Council and Housing Association properties, who have extra bedrooms came into force. Households will lose 14% of their rent if they have 1 extra bedroom and 25% of their rent if they have 2 or more extra bedrooms. The restriction on benefits is intended to pull social housing into line with private sector housing where restrictions already exist.

The reduction in benefits will affect over 3000 social housing tenants in Tower Hamlets. A significant amount of these households are likely to have a disabled person who may require a separate bedroom or require a room for a care on a temporary basis. In addition the changes from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) migrating to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) from June 2013 will also have an impact on these households. It is estimated that around 20% of current claimants of Disability Living Allowance may eventually lose their entitlements to disability benefits as a result of this change, which is estimated to be around 1,384 people in Tower Hamlets.

The Council launched a Prepare and Act Now Campaign to ensure that residents are aware of all the welfare changes and can seek advice and assistance from the Council and third sector organisations. Five events were held across the borough in November where residents could speak to Housing staff, Benefit Team staff, Skillsmatch and Job Centre Plus staff, as well as staff from third sector advice agencies. There are a further four events planned during the summer.

Private sector tenants will be impacted by the benefit cap of £500 which will be introduced later this year as a large proportion of their benefit will be required to pay their rent. The Council has been visiting these residents to explain the changes and offer advice on budgeting and alternative housing options.

The Council does have access to a discretionary housing payment fund to assist in alleviating the impact of the welfare reform changes. However the total loss from benefits will not be covered by the fund. The Council is in the process of developing its policy on how best to use the discretionary housing payment fund.

Where tenants fall into arrears and their landlords seek eviction it will be up to the Court to decide whether to serve an eviction notice. The Council will continue to work with all partners to provide advice and support for all tenants who will face financial hardship as a consequence of the welfare reform change to benefit in order to minimise evictions across the borough.

No supplementary question arising from the above question or response was asked.

6.8 Question from Mr Suluk Ahmed

Why did Peter Golds and the Tories propose to remove the contribution of British-Bangladeshis from Tower Hamlets electoral map?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Perhaps Councillor Golds did this because, and I quote him direct:-

'What will happen if every single tiny group in the country suddenly decides they want their local government ward named after it. What are we going to have, Earls Court and Kangaroo Valley for the Australians?'

That says all that we need to know about Councillor Peter Golds and the Tories.

Point of Order/Point of Personal Explanation

At this point Councillor Craig Aston rose to make a Point of Order and Councillor Peter Golds then rose to make a Point of Personal Explanation. Councillor Golds stated that he had been misquoted and asked why this question had been directed to another person as only he was in a position to answer it.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Suluk Ahmed

Will Councillor Golds say sorry to the people of Banglatown?

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

I cannot answer for Councillor Golds but I am glad that the proposal was rejected.

6.9 Question from Ms Lillian Collins

I am proud to have lived in Poplar for over 50 years, and I couldn't understand why it was proposed to remove the legacy of East End icon, George Lansbury, from the map of Tower Hamlets?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Some people are laughing because they were not born at the time when George Lansbury led and united the Labour Party locally and probably do not understand his importance. He was an iconic figure who played a key role in

Poplar and went to prison along with other Councillors fighting for a fair and just society to benefit all, not just the few, and we should honour him.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Ms Lillian Collins

I also think it's a shame that the East India part of East India and Lansbury is not being retained, but George Lansbury went to prison as part of the Poplar Rates revolt in 1921. As a he was a Labour Councillor and MP I would have thought the Labour Party would have recognised his importance. I think that children should learn about local history as there is so much to learn.

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

I see that people are laughing opposite. I your sentiments and I am surprised that the Labour Group does not take this issue seriously.

6.10 Question from Mr Ruhel Miah

Will the Mayor join me in reminding all Councillors, who are elected by the residents of this borough, to uphold the highest levels of personal and professional integrity when reporting concerns to the authorities?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

The Council adopted a new code of conduct for members in June 2012 to comply with the Localism Act. The code of conduct continues to require members to be guided by general principles of conduct in all aspects of their roles as members.

The principles require selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. The Mayor is happy to remind all members of the requirements of the code.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Ruhel Miah

[Note by Clerk:- Mr Ruhel asked a supplementary question in which he quoted from a local blog an account of alleged events which he felt was evidence that a Councillor had not maintained integrity.]

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

I have seen that story and I would again refer to the principles that I mentioned earlier which should be followed by all Councillors.

Point of Personal Explanation

At this point a Councillor who was named in the supplementary question above rose to make a Point of Personal Explanation and refuted any allegation in relation to his conduct.

Public Question 6.4 was not put at the meeting as the questioner was not present. A written response to the question was provided after the meeting and this is included in Appendix A to these minutes.

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor made his report to the Council meeting extending a welcome to all present. He began by expressing condolences to those who had family or friends who had been injured or killed in the Boston Marathon bombing.

When the Mayor had completed his report, the Leader of the Majority Group and the Leaders of the Minority Groups then each responded briefly.

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

8.1 Question from Councillor David Edgar

Could the Mayor provide an update on the consultation arrangements with local residents on the work associated with the refurbishment and redevelopment of Poplar Baths?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

The consultation carried out to date regarding the Poplar Baths includes:

- A meeting with (Poplar Baths Steering Group) on Wednesday 27th March 2013 to brief on the scheme. A second meeting is to be scheduled over the next two weeks with the developer so they can present further details.
- A meeting with Neighbours in Poplar & SPLASH, St. Matthias Tenants and Residents Association including 7 local residents was held on Monday 8th April 2013 to brief the TRA on the scheme. A second meeting is to be scheduled with the developer so they can present further details. A number of local impact queries have been raised by the TRA group to which we are currently preparing a response for.
- We have devised a Communication and Engagement Strategy outline, which identifies the process in which we will carry out the necessary consultations with an indicative time frame (ranging from March – June), this includes meetings with local residents/key stakeholders and the developer, local exhibitions, planning forums and newsletter updates. The exact dates are yet to be confirmed by the developer

(Guildmore), we hope to confirm this schedule in the coming weeks and we welcome feedback and views on that consultation.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor David Edgar

I would highlight my own involvement in the campaign over a number of years. I can provide the Cabinet Member with a copy of my election leaflet from 2010 including a commitment on this subject. Given the importance of the scheme for local residents can I have reassurance that the consultation will continue and will be thorough?

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

I thank you for your part in the campaign but I would highlight that it is the current Mayor who is delivering this long awaited project for the community. Many residents in the area of Poplar Baths have already been included in the consultation and this will continue as I have outlined.

8.2 Question from Councillor David Snowdon

On how many occasions over the past year has Tower Hamlets council conducted testing of food at restaurants to ensure that the meat served to customers is the same meat as has been ordered?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

No problems have been encountered.

The food safety officers routinely carry out traceability audits on the origin of foodstuffs when they carry out food standards or food hygiene inspections. These checks are carried out to ensure that customers are not being misled and follow the product back through the supplier chain.

During 2012/13 the Council has carried out 1007 food hygiene inspections and 597 food standards inspections to ensure retail standards are maintained locally.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor David Snowdon

I understand that many Councils only check the genome against a limited range of other animals. Can you provide me with a list of how many and which animals are tested against in Tower Hamlets?

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

I don't have that information to hand but I will collate it information and forward it on to you.

8.3 Question from Councillor Lesley Pavitt

What is happening to Old Flo? Where is she? Has the question about who owns her been resolved and what is the Mayor's plan for her?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

There has been no legal challenge to the Council's ownership and we remain certain that we do own it. Anything to the contrary was nothing more than a publicity stunt

The plan remains as stated in the Cabinet decision to sell this asset and reinvest the funds for the benefit of Tower Hamlets residents.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Lesley Pavitt

Even in the face of the outcry you will be selling the statue. When will this plan be implemented?

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

A poll of local people showed a majority were in favour, only the cultural elite are unhappy and if they want the statue they are welcome to buy it.

8.4 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani

Can the Mayor tell us his opinion on the Boundary Commission changes?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

We are delighted that the Commission has seen sense and rejected all the divisive proposals and reinstated Banglatown on the electoral map.

We are equally pleased that the historic contribution of East End and Labour movement icon, George Lansbury, has been reinstated along with St Dunstan's - a name that means so much to Stepney residents and we could never understand why the Labour group wanted to get rid of it.

We are proud to have led a campaign that has seen local people standing together to defend the modern inclusive borough that we take pride in.

We are grateful to everyone who has supported us. This is truly a victory for community spirit.

No supplementary question arising from the above question or response was asked.

8.5 Question from Councillor Joshua Peck

What plans does the Mayor have to transfer the old caretaker building on Arbery Road to Old Ford Housing?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

The Mayor has no plans to transfer the unit at this time.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Joshua Peck

If that is the case, why was Old Ford Housing told the building would be transferred and why would you want to sell the site rather than allow them to build nine social housing units there?

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

The Mayor is currently considering options for the site for future housing. When the Parkside Estates were transferred to Old Ford in 2007 the documents stated that the Council would give due consideration to the association's proposal for 73 Strahan Road to be transferred for use as a community hall once it was no longer used for office purposes. The office remains in the Council's ownership. No commitment was ever made to transfer it at nil value to Old Ford Housing.

8.6 Question from Councillor Zara Davis

Will the Mayor join me in encouraging Tower Hamlets schools to bid for a share of Boris Johnson's £24m London Schools Excellence Fund, which has been created to help drive up standards across the capital? With the first round of applications for the funding closing at the end of April, will you be actively promoting the fund to schools in our borough?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

[In the absence of Councillor Oliur Rahman, Cabinet Member for Children's Services]

We have an excellent family of schools in the borough delivery some outstanding GCSE and A Level results.

The council has already alerted schools to this opportunity and schools and the council have attended briefings from the Mayor's office about the fund.

The council is encouraging schools to group together to bid for the excellence fund. The bid needs to come from the schools rather than the council.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Zara Davis

The Schools Excellence Fund is part of a wider Mayor of London scheme called the Gold Club to encourage schools to share best practice and help other local schools. Will Tower Hamlets encourage schools to take part?

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

Please write to the Lead Member for Children's Services with details, I am sure he will be interested.

8.7 Question from Councillor Anwar Khan

Has the Mayor applied to DCLG for an exemption from the new rules allowing conversion from business to residential use without planning permission?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Yes the Council has submitted an exemption application.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Anwar Khan

Do you accept that the loss of business units to residential use would reduce job opportunities for local people? What lobbying are you undertaking to secure the exemption?

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

We are lobbying and I would hope that you are lobbying too. We have applied for a blanket ban highlighting the number of town centres in the borough.

8.8 Question from Councillor Kabir Ahmed

Now that the Electoral Commission, Police and the Council have completed their investigations into alleged electoral fraud, can the Mayor tell us what their findings were and how much this has cost the ratepayers?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

The Electoral Commission published a 46-page report few weeks ago setting out its conclusions and recommendations based on the investigation carried out by the Metropolitan Police Service.

Of the astonishing 154 allegations of electoral fraud reported by Opposition councillors, the Police found no evidence of any offences having been committed.

The Electoral Commission made some recommendations for action by the Council, the Police, elected representatives and others involved in the political process in Tower Hamlets.

We estimate that the cost for the investigation by three agencies to be at least 100k of public funds; money anyone could ill afford at a time of austerity.

This is yet another distraction from the work of the mayor to deliver for the residents of this borough.

The Council is not complacent and we know it is vitally important to make sure our processes are robust. But at the same time it is simply not good enough for people to bring the entire electoral process into disrepute when results don't go their way.

No supplementary question arising from the above question or response was asked.

8.9 Question from Councillor Ann Jackson

Following the recent landmark vote to legalise gay marriage will the Mayor confirm that, once the Bill is enacted, he will allow gay marriages to take place in appropriate council premises?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

There has never been any suggestion that the Mayor would do otherwise and I wonder what has prompted Cllr Jackson to ask this question. The legislation would apply to all our venues and we welcome it.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Ann Jackson

I am pleased to hear it confirmed. The Mayor has regularly supported other equality issues and I would like to hear from him personally that he supports gay marriage.

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

As the Lead Member I and the Executive fully support all forms of equality.

8.10 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

Will the Mayor please inform the council what additional posts are to be created (both directly employed and contractors) within the Mayor's Office as a result of the Mayoral Decision to increase the budget of his office by £296,000 against the democratic will of Full Council?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

You are asking the wrong question to the wrong person! I think what you should be asking is Boris Johnson about his advisers who have costs Londoners hundreds of thousand of pounds to no benefit. In contrast let me confirm for the record that our advisers actually add value to the business of the Council, playing an important part in the delivery of local services and the Mayor's priorities. Advisers cover public policy, localism, regeneration and there is more to come and I am happy to make you fully aware of what they do.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Peter Golds

I have an agenda for a Mayoral meeting held in the Town Hall which shows that one of his advisors was organising the election campaign. Are these funds to be used for the next election campaign?

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

You cannot prove that what you have there is authentic.

8.11 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

What action the Mayor is taking to deal with the persistent problems of anti-social behaviour in Grove Hall Park?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Thanks for bringing this matter to our attention Marc.

There have been few reports to the Council regarding ASB in Grove Hall Park in the past twelve months.

If you know of other incidents, please encourage the victims to report them so the police and Council have a greater body of evidence to act on.

The issue was also raised at the senior operations with the Police last week.

In addition to the patrols planned by the local Bow East SNT, the THEOs have been tasked to patrol the park and local area and engaged with a group of 15 young people found in the park after closing last week.

The officers will continue to patrol the location for the next two weeks and youth services are proactively engaging with local youngsters in the area as a priority to help the local community address this issue.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Marc Francis

I am surprised that there are few reports. I would highlight that there are significant numbers of incidents including for example the war memorial being vandalised and Bow East Safer Neighbourhood panel have consistently said it is a priority. Will you consider installing temporary CCTV in the park to tackle the problem?

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

I would urge people to report incidents to the police or they do not know there are problems. CCTV can help and if we become aware of more incidents then we will respond.

8.12 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

Following the recent allegations and reports of an attempted break-in on the first floor of the Town Hall, can the Mayor update us on progress with the inquiries?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

On the morning of 12th March officers identified that the locked door to an office in Mulberry Place may have been interfered with.

An investigation has been completed and no conclusive evidence was found to confirm that a break-in had been attempted.

Nevertheless, the Mayor shares the concern of officers and members that effective security is essential in all parts of council buildings and especially in areas where private and sensitive material may be stored.

Officers are therefore considering options as to how security in that particular part of the building, might be improved. Initial proposals have been shared with and endorsed by the Police.

May I just say this is yet another example of crying wolf, on the part of the opposition councillors, and going public before reporting any alleged wrong doing to the relevant authorities.

No supplementary question arising from the above question or response was asked.

8.13 Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah

With crime reported to be increasing in the borough can the Mayor say what steps he has taken to ensure that burglary and theft from homes and small

businesses is reduced? These are crimes which can have a devastating impact on those affected.

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

The Mayor is increasing the number of police officers and enforcement officers on the streets of Tower Hamlets.

The Mayor has funded 34 additional police officers and 10 enforcement officers.

But Boris Johnson's policing plan shows he has cut the number of police in Tower Hamlets by 93 since 2010.

The Mayor is campaigning against these mindless cuts.

The Mayor also supports the Police in their fight against Crime by:

- Drug and Alcohol Action Team and Drug intervention team,
- Providing funding for additional targeted operations that address the priorities of local people. Prime examples are The Dealer a Day initiative which led to over 365 arrests a year and the partnership task force which led to 800 arrests and 200 vehicle seizures
- Providing civil enforcement officers to deal with ASB problems and therefore freeing up the Police to focus on Crime.
- Linking the Police through the Councils CCTV network in order that an immediate response can be made.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Abdul Ullah

I am glad you note my success from my time as the Lead Member. There is an outcry that the CCTV cameras installed to target crime are now being used to issue fixed penalty notices.

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

Officers can respond on any detailed queries. As a borough we are committed to CCTV which has been very successful. Many people come here to see our CCTV operation.

8.14 Question from Councillor Tim Archer

Will the Mayor detail how the Council is supporting the community right to acquire principles as enshrined in the Localism Act?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

We have of course fulfilled our obligations towards this new government policy.

You will of course be aware that this is not so much a right to acquire, as a right to bid.

Any individual or organisation is free to nominate a building or place to be included in the Assets of Community Value register, which is held at the Town Hall and available for inspection.

They can do this by contacting the Asset Management Team and following the advice on the “my community rights” website.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Tim Archer

Have any potential assets been detected and are we in any discussions with local groups? Do you regret the previous sale of assets for knock down prices?

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

The policy is very new and so it is just bedding in. I can provide more information in due course if you would like.

8.15 Question from Councillor M. A. Mukit MBE

How many people in Tower Hamlets will be affected by the Government’s Benefit Cap and what impact does the Mayor expect this to have?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Based on data provided by the DWP in January, the Benefit Cap will impact on approximately 1,355 households – though we need to treat this estimate with some caution given our experience of issues with previous DWP information.

We anticipate an average shortfall of £101.00 per week for these households. The Mayor and I have been campaigning against this measure and working to prepare residents for the changes.

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

What actions has the Mayor taken to ensure good quality advice is being given to families affected by the cap?

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

We have run a Prepare and Act Campaign to alert residents. We have worked with voluntary and Women's organisations and have carried out around 1000 home visits. Next Tuesday we are meeting with the Fawcett Society to discuss the impact of the reforms on women. You are welcome to join us.

Members' Questions 8.16 to 8.24 were not put at the meeting as the time allowed for Members' Questions had expired. Written responses were provided to the questions after the meeting and are included in Appendix A to these minutes.

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

Procedural Motion

Councillor Anwar Khan **moved** and Councillor Joshua Peck **seconded** a procedural motion: - That under Procedure Rule 14.1.12 the meeting be adjourned for a period of half an hour to allow for officer advice to be obtained.

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

The meeting adjourned at 21:55 and resumed at 22:35.

9.1 Gambling Act 2005 - Three year review of Gambling Policy

The Council considered the report of the Head of Paid Service and Corporate Director Communities, Localities and Culture on the review of the Gambling Policy.

Councillor Anwar Khan **moved** and Councillor Ann Jackson **seconded** an amendment to the recommendations to the report:

"To add to the report recommendations section:

That the Council note:

- That the Sustainable Communities Act allows councils to put forward proposals to Government for their consideration.
- That Mayor Jules Pipe of Hackney has written to borough leaders asking their support for a proposal to re-establish a specific planning class for betting shops which would allow local authorities greater opportunity to shape their high streets in accordance with the wishes of local residents.

- Currently the London boroughs of Hackney, Barking and Dagenham, Brent, Camden, Greenwich, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Newham, Redbridge, Southwark, Sutton, Waltham Forest and Westminster have already signed up to support this joint proposal.
- Were this proposal enacted the Council would be granted additional powers to protect against the proliferation of gambling establishments which could damage the economic viability of our high streets by restricting the available retail space.
- That legislation also allows Council's to adopt 'no casino' policies as part of their policy frameworks

This Council resolves:

- To call upon the Mayor to support Mayor Pipe's initiative and to sign the Council up to joint application under the Sustainable Communities Act
- To call upon the Mayor to conduct a review of evidence on the social and economic impact of casinos as well as a consultation on whether to adopt a ban as part of the Licensing Policy review currently underway.

Following debate, the amendment was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The recommendations in the report, as amended, were then put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

1. To agree the proposed Gambling Policy for adoption.
2. That the Council note:
 - That the Sustainable Communities Act allows councils to put forward proposals to Government for their consideration.
 - That Mayor Jules Pipe of Hackney has written to borough leaders asking their support for a proposal to re-establish a specific planning class for betting shops which would allow local authorities greater opportunity to shape their high streets in accordance with the wishes of local residents.
 - Currently the London boroughs of Hackney, Barking and Dagenham, Brent, Camden, Greenwich, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Newham, Redbridge, Southwark, Sutton, Waltham Forest

and Westminster have already signed up to support this joint proposal.

- Were this proposal enacted the Council would be granted additional powers to protect against the proliferation of gambling establishments which could damage the economic viability of our high streets by restricting the available retail space.
- That legislation also allows Council's to adopt 'no casino' policies as part of their policy frameworks

3. This Council resolves:

- To call upon the Mayor to support Mayor Pipe's initiative and to sign the Council up to joint application under the Sustainable Communities Act
- To call upon the Mayor to conduct a review of evidence on the social and economic impact of casinos as well as a consultation on whether to adopt a ban as part of the Licensing Policy review currently underway.

9.2 Queen Elizabeth II Olympic Park - Proposed Byelaws

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Communities Localities and Culture and the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services) on proposed by-laws for the Queen Elizabeth II Olympic Park.

Councillor Ann Jackson **moved** and Councillor Joshua Peck **seconded** an amendment to the report recommendations:-

"To add to the report recommendations section:

This Council Notes:

- that some of our smallest 'pocket parks' are made unsuitable for use by residents, particularly children, as a result of dogs and their use as dog toilets
- that despite requests from members over many years, the Council continues to have no bye-laws that enables it to prohibit the use of unsuitable parks for the exercise of dogs.

This Council Resolves:

- To ask officers to develop and consult upon suitable bye-laws that would enable the consideration, on a case-by-case basis, of the prohibition of dog exercising in small pocket parks which, through

consultation with local residents, are deemed unsuitable, and to bring this forward for decision by Council within six months.”

Following debate, the amendment was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The report recommendations, as amended, were then put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

1. To approve the making of the two sets of byelaws for Queen Elizabeth II Olympic Park which are set out in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to the report of the Corporate Director, Communities, Localities and Culture and the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services).
2. This Council Notes:
 - that some of our smallest ‘pocket parks’ are made unsuitable for use by residents, particularly children, as a result of dogs and their use as dog toilets;
 - that despite requests from members over many years, the Council continues to have no bye-laws that enables it to prohibit the use of unsuitable parks for the exercise of dogs.
3. This Council Resolves:
 - To ask officers to develop and consult upon suitable bye-laws that would enable the consideration, on a case-by-case basis, of the prohibition of dog exercising in small pocket parks which, through consultation with local residents, are deemed unsuitable, and to bring this forward for decision by Council within six months.

9.3 Local Development Framework (LDF): Managing Development - Development Plan Document Adoption

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director Development and Renewal on the Local Development Framework.

During discussion a number of Members expressed disappointment that the Council’s proposal for an Affordable Rent Policy had not been accepted. There was support expressed for officers to review this at the earliest opportunity and requests for Members to lobby in support.

Following debate, the recommendations in the officers’ report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

1. To agree the recommendations stated in the Inspector's Report.
2. To adopt the MD DPD, including the main modifications recommended by the Inspector and the minor modifications, as a Development Plan Document which forms part of the Council's 'Local Plan'.
3. To authorise officers to prepare and publish an Adoption Statement as set out in regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
4. To agree to the removal from the Council's Local Plan of the superseded:
 - § Unitary Development Plan (1998), its retained policies and Proposals Map (as stated in Appendix 5 of the Core Strategy (2010)); and
 - § Interim Planning Guidance Core Strategy and Development Control Plan and Proposals Map (2007), City Fringe AAP (2007), Leaside AAP (2007) and Isle of Dogs AAP (2007).
5. To agree to the name change from 'Managing Development – Development Plan Document' to the 'Managing Development Document' to ensure compliance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

9.4 Localism Act 2011 - Pay Policy Statement 2013/14

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Resources on the Pay Policy Statement 2013/14.

Following debate, the recommendations in the officers' report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

To adopt the authority's Pay Policy Statement for the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 as recommended by the Human Resources Committee and attached at Appendix 1 to the report of the Corporate Director, Resources.

9.5 Review of Virement Rules

The Council considered a **tabled** reference about the Council's virement rules from the General Purposes Committee. The reasons for urgency as stated in the reference were accepted, namely that:

"This report was not circulated with the Council agenda nor available for inspection within the timescales set out in the Authority's constitution because

of the short period available to compile the report following the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 10th April 2013. The report is nevertheless recommended for consideration at this meeting in order to fulfil the instructions of the General Purposes Committee and ensure that there is no delay to the review of Virement Rules previously agreed by Members.”

A number of Members expressed concern that in the absence from the meeting of the Monitoring Officer, they understood that the meeting did not have access to an officer with delegated powers to advise on behalf of the Monitoring Officer on any proposed changes to the Constitution.

Councillor David Edgar **moved** and Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed **seconded** an amendment to the report recommendations:-

“To delete recommendation 2 in the report and replace with:

- Refer recommendations 1 to 4 in paragraph 2.3 of the report and the issue of virement limits more generally to a working group as previously agreed by the Council.
- The working group to be composed on a proportionate basis with expert input from a CIPFA advisor and an LGA advisor.
- The report from the working group to be received by the General Purposes Committee on 17th June with recommendations going to Council on 26th June.
- To refer the issue of virement rules to the LGA governance review.”

Following debate, the amendment was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The report recommendations, as amended, were then put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

1. That the Council consider the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee as set out paragraph 2.3 (1-10) of the reference from the Committee in the light of the officer advice at sections 5-8 of the reference.
2. To refer recommendations 1 to 4 in paragraph 2.3 of the report and the issue of virement limits more generally to a working group as previously agreed by the Council.
3. The working group to be composed on a proportionate basis with expert input from a CIPFA advisor and an LGA advisor.

4. The report from the working group to be received by the General Purposes Committee on 17 June 2013 with recommendations going to Council on 26 June 2013.
5. To refer the issue of virement rules to the LGA Governance review.

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 Calendar of Meetings 2013/14

The Council considered the report, and tabled amended update report, of the Service Head, Democratic Services proposing a Calendar of Committee meetings for 2013/14.

RESOLVED

To approve the proposed calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2013/14 as set out at Appendix A to the updated amended report of the Service Head, Democratic Services and as attached to these minutes at Appendix B.

11.2 Members' Allowances Scheme 2013/14

The Council considered the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services proposing the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2013/14.

RESOLVED

That the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Members' Allowances Scheme 2013 be adopted as set out at Appendix 'A' to the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

12.9 Motion regarding the bedroom tax

Councillor Rania Khan **moved** and Councillor Aminur Khan **seconded** the motion as printed on the agenda.

Councillor John Pierce **moved** and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded** an amendment to the motion:-

“Under ‘This Council notes that’:

Add a bullet point which reads:

Some Councils around the country are investigating the redesignation of homes, where practical, in a bid to stop residents being penalised for living in ‘under-occupied’ homes.”

Under ‘This Council resolves’:

Add a bullet point which reads:

To call upon the Mayor to investigate the cost of redesignating homes, where possible, and the impact that this would have on the Housing Revenue Account and the Council's ability to build new homes in the future, and to report back to Council at its next ordinary meeting.”

Following debate, the amendment was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

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

RESOLVED

This Council notes that:

- On April 2 2013 another of the Government’s Welfare Changes came into effect.
- The Bedroom Tax is a reduction in Housing Benefit to households in Council and Housing Association properties, who are deemed to have extra bedrooms.
- Households will lose 14% of their rent if they have 1 extra bedroom and 25% of their rent if they have 2 or more extra bedrooms.
- The Bedroom Tax will affect thousands of residents in Tower Hamlets.
- Last month the government U-turn exempted Foster Carers, families of disabled siblings and families of service men and women from the tax.
- The Government’s own figures suggest that 420,000 disabled adults will be affected by this tax.
- The Council has launched a Prepare and Act Now Campaign to ensure that residents are aware of all the welfare changes and can seek advice and assistance from the Council and third sector organisations. Five events were held across the borough where residents could speak to Housing staff, Benefit Team staff, Skillsmatch and JCP staff, as well as staff from third sector advice agencies. There are a further four events planned during the summer.

- Some Councils around the country are investigating the redesignation of homes, where practical, in a bid to stop residents being penalised for living in 'under-occupied' homes.

This Council believes that:

- The government's U-turn demonstrates that this is a misguided policy
- These measures will have an adverse and disproportionate effect on Tower Hamlets residents, especially those already living on a low income.
- The Bedroom Tax disproportionately affects disabled residents, many of whom need an additional bedroom for medical reasons as well as due to large medical equipment and supplies.
- These measures will increase poverty, and reduce the ability for residents to adequately heat their homes and feed and clothe their children.

This Council resolves:

- To lobby against the coalition's policies which clearly have a discriminatory affect on the residents of Tower Hamlets.
- To call on the government to also except disabled adults from the Bedroom Tax.
- To continue to offer support and guidance to any families who find themselves in financial difficulties due to these changes
- To call upon the Mayor to investigate the cost of redesignating homes, where possible, and the impact that this would have on the Housing Revenue Account and the Council's ability to build new homes in the future, and to report back to Council at its next ordinary meeting.

12.1 Motion regarding Car Free Developments

The Legal Officer advised the Council that the existing Car Free Developments Policy was part of the Council's statutory Development Plan. The Permit Transfer Scheme was an operational change to that policy which was made following an investigation by officers of the perceived need and the impact it would have on the Council's parking network. It was likely that any extension of the Permit Transfer Scheme would need to be subject to a similar investigation.

Councillor M.A. Mukit MBE **moved** and Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed **seconded** the motion as printed on the agenda.

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

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- The Permit Transfer Scheme (PTS) which allows some families to move to larger social rented homes in car free developments by allowing them to retain one on-street resident car parking permit.
- This scheme is designed to help to reduce the levels of overcrowding in social rented housing in the borough by enabling residents to move to properties which were previously off limits as they need access to a car.
- The Permit Transfer Scheme is only eligible to residents moving to three+ bedroom social rented car free homes

This Council further notes:

- According to the Tower Hamlets Housing List there are:
 - o 11,532 residents in need of a one bed property
 - o 5,093 residents in need of a two bed property
- Together these two categories represent 69% of those on the borough's housing waiting list.
- The Budget amendment presented by Councillors Khan and Gibbs in 2012 that proposed extending some Car Free Development permits to 1 and 2 bedroom properties
- That the Council resolved at the 2012 Budget meeting:
 - o That the Council further notes that residents are often forced to refuse much needed new homes in Car Free developments because they need a car.
 - o That the Council resolves to call on the Mayor to implement extended car free developments to one and two bedroom properties.

This Council Believes:

- The excluding one and two bedroom properties from the Permit Transfer Scheme means that many residents have to turn down one and two bedroom homes due to the lack of parking provision.
- That the inequality of access to the Permit Transfer Scheme between one/two bed properties and three+ bedroom families unnecessarily penalises smaller families.

- Extending the PTS would help to enable more residents to move into more appropriate property including downsizing, which in turn would create new opportunities to house larger families as well.
- That residents needing one and two bedroom properties may have as great a need for a car - because of age, disability, ill health, work or children for example - as those needing larger properties and is therefore discriminatory

This Council Resolves:

- To reissue our call on the Mayor to extend the Permit Transfer Scheme to one and two bedroom properties.

12.2 Motion regarding Mayor's Group Meeting

Councillor Peter Golds **moved** and Councillor David Snowdon **seconded** the motion as printed on the agenda.

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

RESOLVED

This Council notes the Minutes of the Mayor's Group Meeting, as published on a recent local blog, held in the Mayor's Office on 19th May 2012.

This meeting also notes:

- That the substantive subject of the Group Meeting regarded the organisation and funding for the 2014 election campaign.
- That the Mayor is asking each ward councillor "to seek out, identify local level multicultural issues and, in the words of the agenda, deliver", and that this group is to be a "parallel campaign for the ward councillors and Mayor"
- That the Mayor's Community Liaison Officer, a PO6 grade council employee, on the staff of the Mayor's office is listed as campaign Leader whose tasks include "identifying a team to collect data and identify Vote ID", preparing calling cards and literature "per ward" and setting up a bank account.
- That 10 ward supporters/stakeholders are to be identified in each ward and that the Mayor is to "lead induction/training" for these stakeholders.
- This Council further notes that it is illegal to use council facilities and staff for electoral and partisan political purposes.

The Council calls upon the Head of Paid Service to appoint an independent investigator into this and subsequent meetings of this group in order to identify all misuse of public funds by using council facilities and officers for political campaign activity.

The Council expects this investigation be undertaken promptly and a full report, including recommended actions be submitted for consideration by the full council.

That a copy of the Agenda for the 19th May Mayoral Group Meeting be sent to the District Auditor along with this resolution, to ensure that any potentially improper use of facilities and officers is fully investigated."

12.7 Motion regarding the Women's Library

Councillor Denise Jones **moved** and Councillor Rachel Saunders **seconded** the motion as printed on the agenda.

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

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- In 1997, the Council agreed to the disposal of land at Oldcastle Street to the London Guildhall University/Fawcett Library to support the conversion of the old Bath Houses into the Women's Library building. The Fawcett Library collection then expanded into the new building.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund donated over £4 million, being 75% of the costs of the land and development of the building. The council donated 25% of the land value and the University paid the balance of 25%.
- As a result of this financial support and commitment, the Council is represented on the Women's Library Council. It was agreed that Library facilities should be made available free of charge at all opening times to Members and officers of the Council, local school use, students in the Borough, a defined list of Local History Societies and Charities in the Borough, all residents with Library/Leisure passes for 20 days a year. The disposal was conditional upon a separate agreement to ensure the University provided the existing Barrow Store for Petticoat Lane market and the Community School.
- In the spring 2012, London Metropolitan University Trust (previously Guildhall University) agreed they could no longer find the revenue costs to operate the Women's Library and started a process to dispose of the Collections. Most Members of the Women's Library Council were not

informed of the process until the press carried the announcement that LSE had agreed to take the collections.

- In mid-summer, MPs, Lords, London Assembly Members, Local Councillors, Residents, Trade Unions, Academics, Architects and local residents formed the 'Save the Women's Library Campaign' with the campaign objective of keeping the collections in the building.
- Save The Women's Library Campaign called on the Heritage Lottery Fund to intervene, in line with the original objectives of its grant, to keep the library in its home. To date the Heritage Lottery Fund has not intervened to this effect.
- While the collections have been preserved, London Metropolitan University made no attempt to keep them in its own building.
- The Women's Library collections have now been taken on by London School of Economics and are currently being transferred there.
- Whilst the Women's Library building has been registered as a Community Asset with the council, the future of the building in Oldcastle Street is uncertain.

This Council believes:

- The Women's Library collections belong in Tower Hamlets with its proud women's history.
- The Women's Library Council, on which Tower Hamlets Council is represented, was not adequately consulted about the disposal of the collection or the future of the building.
- The Council made an investment in the Women's Library building in good faith that the building would remain in women's and community use.
- It would be wholly inappropriate for the investment made by Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund to be lost and for the Women's Library building to revert to generic university use.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund should be asked to intervene to ensure that the Women's Library Building retains a community use.

This Council resolves:

- To formally investigate the conditions attached to the sale agreement of the old bath houses by Tower Hamlets Council.
- To call on the Heritage Lottery Fund to claw back the grant that it made in the building, should the building revert from women's and community use.

- To recognise the Women's Library as a community asset for women's and community use.

12.4 Motion regarding Open Spaces Strategy

Councillor Amy Whitelock **moved** and Councillor Carlo Gibbs **seconded** the motion as printed on the agenda.

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

RESOLVED

This Council Notes:

- The motion passed by Council on the 16th May 2012 which resolved:
 - o To amend the Open Spaces Strategy to include a section on Commercial Events in parks, to reflect the prior decisions of Council, that:

In regards to Victoria Park:

- Limits the number of large commercial music events in the park to six days each year;
- Prevents the park being used for commercial events on consecutive weekends throughout the summer, with at least two weekends free after a weekend of events;
- Sets a closing time for events to 10pm;
- Sets a reduced noise levels for commercial events.

In regards to Sir John McDougal Gardens, Millwall Park and Island Gardens:

- Prevents the holding of commercial events.

In regards to the gardens at Trinity Square:

- Allow the use for weddings but prevent the holding of other commercial events.

- o To exclude the Live Site events in Victoria Park in 2012 from the above.
- The resolution of Council on 8 December 2010 calling on the Mayor to put limits on the use of Victoria Park for commercial events, whilst still recognising that some events should still be allowed
- The resolution of Council on 21 December 2011 asking that Sir John McDougal Gardens, Millwall Park and Island Gardens should not be made available for commercial events.

- That over 400 residents signed a petition presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, calling for the number of events to be reduced.
- That no amended Open Spaces Strategy has been presented to Council even though it is included in the list of policies reserved for Council who have expressed a will to see the policy amended.
- The serious damage done to the park by last Summer's commercial events and the continued degradation of the park.

This Council Believes:

- That the Mayor should respect the democratic mandate of the Council and the wishes of residents and bring forward a revised Open Spaces Strategy which reflects the stated position of Council.
- That a failure to do so not only fails to show regard for the Council's democratic ruling but also leaves the Council open to unnecessary legal challenge.
- That the adoption of this amendment would be in the interests of local residents and those visiting the borough as it would provide a sustainable and manageable basis on which to hold commercial events.
- The events in excess of the cap proposed by Council will have a detrimental effect on local residents and users of the park.

This Council Resolves:

- That the Mayor should bring forward a renewed Open Spaces Strategy to the next ordinary Council meeting including within it the amendments set out above.

[Note: Motions 12.3, 12.5, 12.6, 12.8, 12.10, 12.11, 12.12, 12.13 and 12.14 were not considered due to lack of time.]

13. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

No motion to exclude the press and public was passed.

14. EXEMPT MINUTES

The Exempt minutes of the Ordinary Council meeting held on 23 January 2013 had been agreed under Item 3 above.

The meeting ended at 11.40 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

APPENDIX A – WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PUBLIC AND MEMBERS' QUESTIONS THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE MEETING

6.4 Question from Ms Denisa Limani

Will the Mayor tell us the impact of Labour party's decision to cut funding to engage with disabled, elderly and hard-to-reach community groups will have on the council's long term finances?

[This question was not put at the meeting as the questioner was not present.]

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

In amongst Labour's chaotic response to the Mayor's budget, was the decision to reduce the funding for events for the disabled, the elderly and the third sector from £150k to £39k. They chose to make this cut instead of using money available for this purpose from Council reserves. The £111k they've taken out represents 0.3% of reserves and 0.03% of the overall Council budget. And will have very little impact on the council's long term finances.

It will play absolutely no role in helping to solve the so called "black hole", which will instead be managed by sensible long term financial planning. What it will do is reduce the ability to deliver high quality events to the most vulnerable and isolated in our community.

This is not an outcome we would ever advocate, but you will have to ask our colleagues on the Labour benches, why they chose this course of action.

8.16 Question from Councillor Lutfa Begum

Given the draconian welfare reform measures the Tory-led Government has introduced from 1st April, can the Mayor tell us what he is doing to support Tower Hamlets residents?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

The Mayor has established a Tower Hamlets Welfare Reform Task Group. Led by the Local Authority, it brings together representatives of services from within the Council and from partners from across the borough, including the NHS, housing providers and advice and support agencies. We have also formed strong links with local colleagues from DWP with regular engagement and attendance from JobCentre Plus at the Task Group and in delivering outcomes for residents.

This has allowed us to coordinate key actions and initiatives across the local area, which will allow us to be well placed to lead on a local response to the wider reforms.

Key actions so far include;

- home visits to every household significantly affected by the benefits cap,
- all households impacted by the under occupation charge otherwise known as the “bedroom tax” have been contacted by the Benefits Service,
- the Benefits Service have also liaised with all Social Sector Housing providers to notify them of the households affected,
- an ongoing range of welfare benefits drop in events, where residents are able to seek advice from a range of Council and third sector services;
- a training programme for front line Staff and practitioners across health, social care and education;
- a range of localised resources on our dedicated website www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/welfarereform; and close working with JobCentre Plus on helping residents to get residents into work.

8.17 Question from Councillor John Pierce

What locally based provision will be delivered by the Mayor through the newly devolved Social Fund?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Crisis & Support Grants have replaced the DWP’s Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants. The criteria for eligibility and awards have not been changed, so residents can apply in the same circumstances to receive support with no need to repay anything.

To qualify, applicants must be 16 or over and not subject to immigration controls. Usually they must also be resident in the borough and receiving Housing Benefit and they must not be subject to welfare sanctions (unless their application is submitted by a support worker from the council or one of its partners).

Crisis & Support Grants are targeted at the most financially vulnerable residents who find themselves under additional pressure, and need support so they and their families can continue to live safely and independently. Although many of these people will be affected by the government’s wider welfare reforms, Crisis & Support Grants will not replace any lost benefits and are only awarded according to individual circumstances.

For further information and online applications, please see www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/crisisandsupport or email enquiries to crisisandsupport@towerhamlets.gov.uk

8.18 Question from Councillor Gloria Thienel

What is the Mayor doing to prevent and clear up Dog Fouling on the Isle of Dogs?

Written response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

The Council street sweeping contractor clears all dog fouling from our streets. All incidents of dog fouling should be reported to the Council's 'Streetline' number on 0207 364 5004.

The Council's animal wardens deal with stray dogs and enforce legislation concerning fouling. Patrols are targeted in areas where fouling is persistent. Education initiatives are undertaken to improve behaviour, and awareness roadshows have been undertaken on the Isle of Dogs. Island Homes also commissions the service to provide extra patrols and initiatives on the Island.

Dedicated Children's play areas in Borough Parks are designed as dog free and Park Wardens seek to educate dog owners who do not clean up after their dogs.

8.19 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders

What impact does the Mayor expect his decision to cut 5% from the staffing budgets of the borough's adults and children's social workers, to have on the delivery of services to the most vulnerable in the borough?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

The vacancy factor is an adjustment to budgets to reflect the actual level of vacancies that exist at any point during the year. There is no reduction in the number of posts on the establishment. It is not expected that the introduction of a 5% vacancy factor in the staffing budgets for the Education, Social Care and Wellbeing Directorate will have any impact on the delivery of services to the most vulnerable in the Borough. Firstly, the vacancy factor has been introduced across the entire Directorate, i.e. support staff as well as operational staff and secondly, over the course of a year, vacancies in operational social work posts are usually in excess of 5% as a consequence of normal staff turnover. This initiative simply removes the flexibility that has previously existed in staff budgets and discourages the excessive use of agency staff for cover during the recruitment process, although it has been set at a level that acknowledges that in certain services this is unavoidable. There will be no reduction in posts as a result of this saving.

8.20 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan

With the Tory-Labour coalition's continued obsession with the Mayor; what steps is the Mayor taking to ensure that he continues to deliver for the residents of this borough, which he was overwhelmingly elected to do, despite the divisive rhetoric from the opposition?

Written response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

While the Tower Hamlets Tory-Labour coalition work hand in glove against the democratic wishes of the people of Tower Hamlets, this Mayor is getting on with the business of delivering on his priorities.

Here is an overview of what the Mayor is doing to improve residents' quality of life:

1. a new £1 million scheme to protect vulnerable residents in temporary accommodation from the impact of central government's welfare reforms.
2. free school meals for all reception and Year 1 pupils in primary schools for two academic years starting from September 2013, providing free and healthy lunches for an extra 3,943 children.
3. a new higher Mayor's education bursary worth more than £1 million in total, to help students with the burden of university costs.
4. 10 extra THEOS – Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers – and additional CCTV surveillance for two years.
5. £200,000 to repair potholes on roads across the borough to make roads safer for cyclists.
6. £100,000 for measures to promote cycling safety, with cycle routes for example.
7. £3million towards a multi-faith burial site, to reduce the financial burden residents currently face when burying loved ones outside the borough.
8. £1 million towards the borough's Community Faith Buildings scheme, to fund building improvements and repairs to places of worship of all faiths.
9. £800,000 for a borough-wide deep clean and education programme to include extra litter pickers and a greater focus on removing graffiti and chewing gum.
10. £355,000 to improve four of the borough's business and shopping areas: Roman Road market, Brick Lane, Bethnal Green market and Burdett Road.

8.21 Question from Councillor Carlo Gibbs

Does the Mayor believe a £1m discretionary payments fund will be sufficient enough to mitigate the impact of welfare cuts?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

No-one knows what the impact of welfare cuts will be, although it is estimated that the amount of benefit lost to residents in the Borough will be around £14.7m. There is a real risk that many of the most vulnerable residents of the Borough are among those likely to be hardest hit. The intention is not to assist every household affected, which would be unaffordable, but to target the most exceptional cases.

The Mayor's allocation focuses on the impact on households in temporary accommodation and involves a decision to set aside funding for various actions to bridge the gap between households' disposable income and rental payments. Spending will be directed towards those people who occupy temporary accommodation in consequence of the Council having accepted a housing duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act. The funding would be directed towards rental bridging in the most exceptional cases and is expected to assist on average two in every fifteen households.

There are two other 'pots' available to support those affected by welfare reform;

- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) funding of £2.2m, provided through the benefits system in special circumstances to support those entitled to housing benefits who are unable to pay their housing costs. This funding from the Government has been increased in recognition of benefits reform but is not considered to be in any way adequate to the purpose.
- Crisis and Support Grants (Social Fund) of £1.4m, which is a responsibility taken over from DWP for providing 'stop-gap' funding for essentials to those in need of emergency support. This is not new money but more of it is likely to be directed towards those affected by welfare reform.

The Mayor is also funding the Council Tax Support scheme at the level of the former Council Tax Benefit Scheme, despite the £2.7m cut in Government funding. Finally the budget also earmarked £1m of the authority's general contingency with a view to using this to support the impact of welfare reform.

It needs to be emphasised that this funding may prove inadequate in the face of the impact of benefits change but the Council can- only do so much in the face of Government policy while dealing with a reducing budget itself. It is important that the funding we have available is targeted at those who are

most in need. In the event that further costs arise for the Council as a result of welfare reform, which may include indirect costs arising from the impact on, for example, family breakdown and child welfare, Council contingencies and reserves would need to be called upon.

8.22 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

Why is the Mayor carrying out a second costly review of East End Life, which Government legislation will abolish before this end of the Parliament, given one was carried out in 2011, and how much will this review cost?

Written response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

The Council adheres to Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, which was published by the Government in 2011.

Further to the publication of this Code, a review was taken into East End Life which found that 72 per cent of respondents supported the publication. It also concluded that a weekly publication was the most cost effective way of fulfilling the council's legal duty to inform the local community and promote race equality, healthy lifestyles and positive change such as recycling.

At the close of this review, the council stated that it would continue to monitor the financial performance of East End Life to ensure that it continues to fulfil the needs of our local community.

A new review of the paper will specifically respond to the issues raised as a result of the Budget Council decision in March 2013 to cut funding to the paper. This includes undertaking an Equalities Impact Assessment on the options, considering the financial and contractual implications of closure, consulting with staff and unions, considering alternative procurement arrangements and considering the impact of the change on the council's duty to promote social cohesion.

In order to comply with the relevant procurement and organisational review procedures, this review will take between 9 and 12 months.

It is not currently anticipated that there will be any additional costs for this review to be undertaken.

8.23 Question from Councillor Denise Jones

The Women's library is an important community resource and one which the Council actively supported when negotiating the transfer of the Old Baths building to house the collection. Does the Mayor agree with me that now the London Metropolitan University Trust have decided to give the collection to

the LSE the building should be retained as a community and specifically women's resource?

Written response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

Yes the Mayor agrees that the building should be retained as a community resource for women.

The Council successfully listed the building as an Asset of Community Value under the Localism Act 2011 which means it cannot be sold by London Metropolitan University Trust without first giving community interest groups an opportunity to buy it at market value.

8.24 Question from Councillor Dr Emma Jones

Will the Mayor please comment on the High Court's decision on March 8 that Tower Hamlets council was following an unlawful policy in discriminating against family and friends carers as they were not eligible to be paid the fee/reward part of the fostering allowance paid to professional carers?

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

Tower Hamlets has a published policy and schedule for the remuneration of foster carers approved by the council and caring for children looked after by the council. These will have been some of the documents considered by Ofsted when they inspected the fostering service in May 2012 and evaluated the service to be "good" with outstanding features. In common with other local authorities, the policy sets out eligibility for the payments described within the schedule which contains a number of elements which are related to the needs of the child and the status of the foster carer. Also, in common with other local authorities, the policy and schedule differentiate between foster carers who are approved to look after children in general (i.e. children that are not related to them) and those who are approved for specific children who are related to them. The Tower Hamlets schedule includes the following elements:

- the boarding out allowance (an age related payment made per child and intended to cover the costs of the day to day care of the child);
- enhanced allowance (which may be paid in recognition of ongoing additional needs of the child, e.g. a disability);
- additional allowances paid for a specified reason (holiday, birthday, celebration);
- a reward (the fee paid to unrelated foster carers in recognition of them taking in unrelated children, attending training courses, availability etc).

The boarding out allowance paid to all foster carers by the council is in line with the minimum payment recommended by the Department for Education and intended to cover the total payment to a foster carer for the care of a

looked after child. In addition, foster carers all receive enhanced / additional payments according to the needs and circumstances of the child. The payment of the reward to unrelated foster carers is intended to provide an incentive to those carers to encourage them to develop their skills and expertise in looking after vulnerable children and in recognition of their availability to look after these children. The council believes that, whilst it is appropriate to support those who are assisting with the care of children from their extended family, it is appropriate to reward those who are willing and able to look after children from the community in general and to treat that as a career.

The decision of the court in this case concerns the interpretation of government regulations which, the court acknowledged, are by no means absolutely clear. The court has ordered that the council review the remuneration policy in order that it does not distinguish between foster carers solely on the basis of whether or not they are related to the children that they are looking after. Whilst officers have commenced this work, consideration is also being given to an appeal against the decision of the High Court on the basis that the council believes that it is appropriate to be able to reward those who are extending their role to providing a service to the community in general.

APPENDIX B - CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2013/2014 MUNICIPAL YEAR

	USUAL MEETING DAY	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL
Audit Committee	7.00 pm Tuesday		25			17			17			18				
Cabinet	5.30 pm Wednesday	8	5	3 24		11	2	6	4	8	5	5	2	28*	25*	
Council	7.30 pm Wednesday	22	26			18		27		22	26	6 (Thu)% 26		14 (AGM) *	11 (AGM) *	
Development Committee	7.00 pm Wednesday	15	19	17 (5.30 pm)	14	12 (Thu)	9	14 (Thu)	11	15	12	12	9	7	4	
Appeals/Sub Committee	6.30 pm Monday	14 (Tue)	10, 24	22	19	23	14	18	16	20	17	24	28	12	16	
General Purposes Committee	7.00 pm Wednesday		17 (Mon)			25			18			19				
Health Scrutiny Panel	6.30 pm Tuesday		11			3		19		28		11				
Human Resources Committee	7.30 pm Wednesday			2 (Tue)			30			29		12				

	USUAL MEETING DAY	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL
King George's Field Charity Board	6.30 pm Wednesday		12				16			29		19				
Licensing Committee	7.00 pm Tuesday		4				8		10			11				
Licensing Sub Committee	6.30 pm Tuesday or Thursday	2 (Thu) 16 (Thu) 30 (Thu)	11 25	16 23	6 20	3 17	1 17 (Thu) 29	12 26	12 (Thu) 19 (Thu)	14 28	11	4 13 (Thu) 25	8 22	8 (Thu) 20	3 17	1
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	7.30 pm Tuesday	7	4	2 23 (5.30 pm)		10	1	5	3	7 20 (Mon) ^	4	4	1	27*	24*	
Pensions Committee	6.30 pm Thursday		13			19		14			25 (Tue)					
Standards (Advisory) Committee	7.30 pm Tuesday		18				24 (Thu)			14		18				
Strategic Development Committee	7.00 pm Thursday		13	18 (5.30 pm)	29		10	21		9	25 (Tue)		10	15		3
Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board	Dates set by the Board		20 (Thu)			30 (Mon)			19 (Thu)							

Key to Symbols

* These dates are dependent on the date of the 2014 local elections

^ Additional Overview and Scrutiny Meeting specifically to consider the draft budget proposals

% Provisional second budget Council date if budget not agreed at first meeting

NOTES:

- OTHER MEETINGS including Appointments Sub-Committee arranged on an ad hoc basis as required. Investment Panel meetings will be scheduled on the same day as Pensions Committee (after Pensions Committee on 13 June and before it on the other dates)
- BUDGET & COUNCIL TAX SETTING: Statutory deadline 10th March. Date of meeting set to enable receipt of GLA precept information.
- ELECTIONS: Local Government Elections – 1st May 2014 or combined with European Elections (likely 22nd May 2014)
- RAMADAN provisional dates: 9th July 2013 – 8th August 2013 (to be confirmed) and 18th June – 17th July 2014 (to be confirmed)
- ROSH HASHANAH - 5th & 6th September 2013; YOM KIPPUR – 14th September 2013
- EID-UL-ADHA provisional date: 15th October 2012, ASHURA: 13th November 2012
- EASTER 2013: Good Friday 18th April 2014, Easter Monday 21st April 2014.