

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 26 MARCH 2014

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

Members Present:

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

The meeting commenced at 7.33 p.m.

The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Lesley Pavitt, in the Chair

NOTE - AGENDA ORDER

During the meeting the Council agreed to vary the order of business. To aid clarity, the Minutes are presented in the order that the items originally appeared on the agenda. Urgent motions, moved with the agreement of the Council, without notice, are listed at Item 13. The order of business as taken at the meeting was as follows:

Items:

- 1 – Apologies for Absence

- 2 – Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests
- 3 – Minutes
- 4 – To receive announcements (if any) from the speaker of the Council or the Head of Paid Service
- 5 – Petitions
- 6.1 – 6.2 – Public Questions
- 12.3 – Motion
- And then the agenda as published.

Procedural Motion

At this point Councillor Rania Khan **moved**, and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **seconded**, a procedural motion “that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that Item 12.10 “Motion on Tony Benn” be taken as the first item of business”. Councillor Khan also called for the Council to hold a minute’s silence in memory of Tony Benn, Bob Crow and, as it was the anniversary of Bangladesh achieving independence, the many who had died in that struggle.

The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**. The Council did however agree to hold a minute’s silence, which took place immediately following the vote on the procedural motion.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Rania Khan then **moved**, and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **seconded**, a further procedural motion “that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the business be altered to extend Item 5 “Public Questions” from 20 to 30 minutes to allow all Public Questions to be heard. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

Under Procedural Rule 17.6, the following Councillors requested that their votes in favour of the procedural motion be recorded:

Councillor Kabir Ahmed
Councillor Ohid Ahmed
Councillor Rofique U Ahmed
Councillor Abdul Asad
Councillor Lutfa Begum
Councillor Alibor Choudhury
Councillor Shafiqul Haque
Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Rania Khan
Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Md. Maium Miah
Councillor Oliur Rahman
Councillor Gulam Robbani

Procedural Motion

Councillor Carlo Gibbs then **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, a further procedural motion “that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that an emergency motion about the Peabody Estate former Crown Estate tenants be considered straight after the consideration of Item 12.1”. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

[Note – the meeting reached its time limit after Item 12.1 so the Emergency Motion was not debated.]

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Shahed Ali, Fozol Miah and Helal Uddin.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were made.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the Council held on 22 January 2014 and the Budget Council meetings held on 26 February and 6 March 2014 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 HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Speaker of the Council made three announcements:

- Congratulations to Councillor Abdal Ullah on the birth of a son.
- A thank you for their hard work and dedication, on behalf of the whole Council, to those Councillors who were not re-standing at the forthcoming elections.
- On the 43rd anniversary of the independence of Bangladesh, congratulations to all those in the borough who were celebrating that anniversary.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition regarding Kobi Nazrul School

Mr Nurul Anim addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Oliur Rahman, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He highlighted that Tower Hamlets had some of the best inner city schools in the world and that working with the Local Authority was the best way to support schools. He reported that whilst the Administration did not support Academy Schools, it had limited powers to intervene. However, the Administration would continue to work to support all pupils in the Borough.

RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Education, Social Care and Wellbeing for a written response on any outstanding matters within 28 days.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved**, and Councillor Rabina Khan **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be moved to take Item 9.3 "Free School Meals for Primary Age Pupils – Virement Proposal" at this point.

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

5.2 Petition regarding illegal raves in Wapping

Mr Stuart Madewell addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He reported that the administration took the issues raised very seriously and that they worked hard, in conjunction with the police, to make sure people felt safe on the streets. He highlighted that overall crime in the Borough was down.

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 regarding road safety and traffic calming in Devons Road

The petitioners addressed the meeting on the matters set out in the petition and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Ohid Ahmed, the

Deputy Mayor, then responded to the matters raised. He promised that the administration would look into the matters raised and that they took road safety very seriously.

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

The following questions and in each case (except where indicated) a supplementary question were put and were responded to by the relevant Executive Members:

6.1 Question from Mr Geoff Juden

Would full Council agree with the residents of Weavers, Spitalfields and Banglatown that the park atop the arches, within the Bishopsgate Goods Yard development, be a park which, in all circumstances, is able to provide a cleaner air environment. A Forest Garden?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Thank you for your question.

We would absolutely support the creation of a park on top of the arches within the Bishopsgate Goods Yard development.

Not only are we in need of green space, especially in that part of the borough – but this could be a fantastic feature – similar to the highline in New York.

However, I would also like to ensure that the park would be open to all and that residents would be made to feel welcome.

Too often we have seen green space gated off or residents and children made to feel unwelcome in green space developed through new developments.

This is why when we adopted the Planning Guidance for the development of Bishopsgate Goods Yard in 2010 we included the opportunity for a new park on top of the arches.

The developer will have to consider this guidance when developing their proposal as will the Council when assessing a future planning application.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Juden

Can we have your personal support?

Summary of Councillor Khan's response to the Supplementary Question

Yes, we give you our personal support for this campaign.

6.2 Question from Ms Pawla Cottage

Does the Cabinet Member for Culture support the on-line petition, signed by 124 people, calling for the building of a Columbia Market war memorial to commemorate the air raid on Columbia Market, Columbia Rd, E2 on the first night of the Blitz, 7th September 1940, whereby a German bomb entered the ventilation shaft of the air raid shelter situated under the Great Hall of Columbia Market, which had a glass roof, causing mass devastation and the loss of 51 lives? The memorial will be dedicated to those who died as a consequence and to those who survived and still survive.

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

Thanks you for your question – yes we would absolutely support the petition and the memorial to this sad loss of life.

I am pleased that you also plan to dedicate the memorial to those who survived and continue to survive – it will be wonderful testament to the strength of the Blitz Spirit – which helped to sustain East Enders despite the heavy damage and loss of life.

I understand from my colleague Councillor Kabir Ahmed, who is the ward councillor and has been working with your campaign, that the preferred location for the memorial is in the Sivill House Rose Garden and I am happy to meet with you and my officers to discuss how we can make this a reality.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Ms Cottage

Can you confirm whether any active Council support or resources will be forthcoming?

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

The Council has a good track record on providing memorials and we are happy to put forward Council resources as necessary.

Procedural Motion

Councillor John Pierce then **moved**, and Councillor Carlo Gibbs **seconded**, a further procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that Motion 12.3 "Regarding supporting building of the Columbia Market War Memorial" be taken as the next item of business. The motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

6.3 Question from Ms Shuliy Akhter

The residents of this Borough are really concerned regarding Sex Establishment and Gambling Issues. While we understand the Council's limitation regarding Gambling because of Gambling Act but this Council could have a "NO Sex Establishment Policy" like other councils. I understand it went to Licensing Committee on 8th October 2013 but the framework was not adopted. Can the Council inform the public those councillors were in favour and against? Since the Oct 2013 how many applications this Council received and how many of these given permission? What other steps Council took to ensure this Council has No SEV policy?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Thank you for your question and like many residents you have already mentioned the real shambles that the opposition members have made of this matter.

The Mayor and I and Cabinet colleagues are committed to limiting the number of sex encounter establishments in the borough.

In Cabinet last September the Mayor and Cabinet agreed to prevent new sex encounter establishments opening in our borough. Sadly the law doesn't give us the power to close those already operating.

In October it went to the Labour-controlled Licensing Committee – where despite all parties previously agreeing with the policy – it was defeated, by 4 votes to 3.

I believe Licensing Committee have since stated they were confused by the voting system. That is shocking and sad for our residents, but I suggest you write to Labour councillors Khaled Uddin Ahmed and Rajib Ahmed, and Tory councillors Peter Golds and David Snowdon and ask them their position, why they did not adopt the policy.

But we do have this item tonight and I very much hope all my councillor colleagues will support it.

(No supplementary question was put)

6.4 Question from Mr Mahbub Alam

The existing Town Hall at Mulberry Place has cost residents over £50 million in rent alone. Can the Lead Member tell us the progress that has been made with the proposed town hall move to Whitechapel and can he tell us why we need to move?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

It is correct that we have lost £50 million in renting the Mulberry Town Hall. The Council has had an ongoing programme of relocation which started with moving staff out of Anchorage House. This saves £7m rent and charges per year.

The relocation of the Town Hall to Whitechapel is the completion of this programme. This saves £5m in rent and charges per year. The total savings therefore at the completion of relocation will be £12m a year in rent and charges.

The Council is unlikely to be able to stay in Mulberry Place beyond expiry of the current lease in 2020. East India Dock is likely to be converted in to a residential scheme.

The landlord has already held pre-application discussions with planners and has begun the public consultation process.

The Council have secured a commercially advantageous position with NHS Barts on the purchase of the Royal London Hospital Site in Whitechapel. An offer has been made to and accepted by the board of trustees of NHS Barts.

The budget for this was agreed by full Council on 6th March 2014. Contracts for sale are due to be issued imminently and we anticipate completing on the purchase with the next three months.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Alam

I would hope that Councillors would be deciding this issue on the basis of the benefit to residents?

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

The project will be a massive regeneration catalyst delivering thousands of homes and jobs.

6.5 Question from Mr Brian Nicholson

What is the update on Watts Grove?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Thank you Brian. I'm sure you'll remember that last year Labour made a huge fuss about Watts Grove. They claimed the development had been cancelled because of mismanagement.

In fact, we simply didn't think that the scheme offered value for money for residents, so we put it on hold until a better deal could be struck.

And because we took the long view, I'm proud to say we were able to secure a grant of almost £7m from City Hall. This is money that would otherwise have come from the council so we're delivering the project at a huge saving while still delivering the same number of affordable homes.

It will provide 149 affordable rented homes of which 45% will be larger family homes.

The development will also generate £240k New Homes Bonus.

Work is now underway with a view to a start on site in early 2015.

As you can see the Watts Grove Development is policy compliant with our planning requirements both within the SPD and the LDF both which have been developed under the leadership of the Mayor.

A great deal of work goes into developing such housing projects both by officers and the executive Mayor and this administration.

So in fact we have a project just like Poplar Baths, Halieybury Centre, Blackwall Reach Regeneration worked on including securing the Section 106 well before they get to SDC to consider.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Nicholson

Do you understand that in the past the Council made promises on delivering council housing that were not kept?

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

Yes I understand that there were previous promises of 1000 council homes when none were built but this administration has delivered over 4000 all over the borough.

6.6 Question from Mr Stephen Beckett

Does the Lead Member agree with me that Tower Hamlets is one of the most diverse and cohesive communities in the UK?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Thank you for your question. With over 18 different ethnic groups and 200 nationalities, Tower Hamlets is one of the most diverse boroughs in the country.

I also believe it is one of the most unified, but we all know we have had to struggle hard for that unity.

This year is the 20th anniversary of the election of Derek Beacon, the BNP's first councillor, and of the campaign to stop Beacon and drive the BNP out of the borough. That campaign was successful and since then community cohesion in Tower Hamlets has gone from strength to strength.

One of the reasons for that is the priority given to our One Tower Hamlets strategy and the promotion of community cohesion. This work is carried out in a number of ways by working closely with our partners. These include:

- supporting for the New Residents and Refugees Forum;
- supporting initiatives such as Black History Month, Chinese New Year, Holocaust Memorial Day, St Patricks Day and Bangladeshi New Year;
- supporting a range of third sector organisations which help us better meet the needs of our diverse community.

And this work is making a real difference.

I am proud the Local Government Association has rated Tower Hamlets 'excellent' for its "high-quality" equality services which are meeting the needs of people from all backgrounds in the borough.

I am proud our Annual Residents' Survey found that 81% of residents think people from different backgrounds were getting on well together in Tower Hamlets, up from 75% in 2010.

However, strengthening community cohesion is a constant ongoing issue for us because we face constant threats.

We face threats in the form of those on the fringes like English Defence League and their friends. But we also face threats in the form of irresponsible comments from mainstream politicians and the media. When the media and local politicians make claims that a Muslim Mayor is an extremist they create fear and suspicion. They undermine community cohesion in our community.

When Robin Wales makes disgraceful and outrageous comments about 'apartheid' in Tower Hamlets he undermines community cohesion in Tower Hamlets.

And when John Biggs makes comments about the Mayor only wanting to represent one community, he undermines community cohesion in our borough.

I assure the residents of Tower Hamlets that we are committed to One Tower Hamlets. I can assure them we want our borough to be a place where all communities prosper and flourish.

And I can assure them that we will not let anyone hinder us in building community cohesion in Tower Hamlets, regardless of whether they are the likes of the EDL or whether they are desperate politicians scrambling for votes.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Mr Beckett

In the interests of community cohesion would you condemn the comments by Mr Biggs on the Sunday Politics Show about the Mayor favouring the Bangladeshi community?

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

In the weeks following his comments there were bomb scares and 'Christian Patrols' causing trouble. This is not the sort of person we want to see in office.

Questions 6.7 to 6.15 were not put at the meeting due to lack of time. The Service Head, Democratic Services indicated that written responses would be provided to the questions. [Note: the written responses are attached at Appendix A to these minutes.]

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor made his report to the Council meeting, extending a welcome to all present. During his report he thanked the Speaker for her work over the year and wished her well in her retirement from office. He also thanked officers for their help in providing excellent services for the Borough.

When the Mayor had completed his report, the Leader of the Majority Group and the Leader or Deputy Leader of each Minority Group then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following questions and in each case (except where indicated) a supplementary question were put and were responded to by the relevant Executive Member or Chair:

8.1 Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah

Will the Lead Member for Jobs and Skills apologise for the fact that under Lutfur Rahman's administration the number of 18-24 year olds claiming JSA for over a year has increased by over 110%?

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

In the last year, the number of youth Job Seeker's claimants has fallen by 25%.

Perhaps councillor Ullah has not noticed, but we have been recovering from a recession since 2008; unemployment has risen everywhere, especially for youths, and yet Tower Hamlets has performed better than the London average **and** outperformed its neighbours at combatting unemployment.

We are making sure kids are more likely to get jobs, by drastically improving educational attainment. We are helping young people to stay in school, by reinstating the Educational Maintenance Allowance which your party opposed. We are encouraging them to go to University through the Mayor's Higher Educational Allowance which you have also slated. It is programmes like these that ensure young people have the best possible chance in the labour market.

If councillor Ullah cares so much about jobs, he could spend his time better looking at his own budget – which suggested scrapping a programme helping 100 women in the borough get back into jobs. Shame!

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah

Does the Mayor regret giving jobs to the current Cabinet Members when they have failed to deliver?

Summary of Councillor Haque's response to the Supplementary Question

Councillor Abdal Ullah should join our team which is doing a great job.

8.2 Question from Councillor Zara Davis

What is the Council doing to accelerate the reopening of the Thames Path, next to Sir John McDougal Gardens?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

The path adjacent to the River Thames is the responsibility of the land owner and has been closed for maintenance.

The Head of Planning and Building Control is investigating whether the closure would constitute a breach under Section 106 of the agreement for the development and has written to the owners requesting an update for when the path will be open again for the public.

Depending on the response, matter may be referred to Legal Services to review and consider what legal action could be pursued in relation to potential breaches of the Section 106 agreement.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Zara Davis

The Council is responsible for maintaining that path. Residents are frustrated that it has been closed for 9 months what is the Council doing about it?

Summary of Councillor Khan's response to the Supplementary Question

We are pressing the Environment Agency to confirm the work to be done. The Head of Planning and Building Control will be happy to look at any additional information you may have.

8.3 Question from Councillor Judith Gardiner to the Speaker of the Council

Can the Speaker inform the Council exactly how many public and councillor questions have been asked at Council meetings since October 2010 as well as how many of these questions have been answered by the Mayor personally?

Response by Councillor Lesley Pavitt, Speaker of the Council

Since 27 October 2010 there have been 80 public and 157 member questions put to the Mayor and Executive. The Mayor has answered 4 public and 27 member questions.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Judith Gardiner

Do you agree with me that this is an insult to those he represents and to the chamber?

Summary of Councillor Lesley Pavitt's response to the Supplementary Question

As Speaker I could not possibly comment on that suggestion.

Procedural Motion

At this point Councillor David Snowdon **moved**, and Councillor Emma Jones **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.5, Rule 13.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion calling for a judicial review into Mayoral Attendance at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

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

[Note – the proposed urgent motion is listed under Item 13 below]

8.4 Question from Councillor Kabir Ahmed

Congratulations on Tower Hamlets being awarded an “excellent” rating for equalities. Can you tell us how this was achieved and how it reflects on the opposition claims that the Mayor is only for one community and Robin Wales’ scurrilous and divisive accusation that there is a form of apartheid in Tower Hamlets?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Thank you for your question councillor. I am very proud the Local Government Association has rated Tower Hamlets ‘excellent’ for its “high-quality” equality services which are meeting the needs of people from all backgrounds in the borough. I am also very proud our Annual Residents’ Survey found that 81% of residents think people from different backgrounds were getting on well together in Tower Hamlets, up from 75% in 2010.

One of the reasons we have achieved these results is because of the priority we given to our One Tower Hamlets strategy and the promotion of community cohesion. This work is carried out in a number of ways by working closely with our partners. These include:

- supporting for the New Residents and Refugees Forum;

- supporting initiatives such as Black History Month, Chinese New Year, Holocaust Memorial Day, St Patricks Day and Bangladeshi New Year;

- supporting a range of third sector organisations which help us better meet the needs of our diverse community.

And this work is making a real difference.

As regards the comments of Robin Wales, all I can say is that it’s a pity he did not join with the Mayor in Trafalgar Square on Saturday to support United Nations Anti-Racism Day, because the theme of this year’s event was to highlight the responsibility leaders have in combatting prejudice and racism. Unfortunately, Robin Wales fails that test. His comments about apartheid in Tower Hamlets were not only an insult to the victims of apartheid. They also undermine community cohesion.

We know the John Biggs is desperate for votes, but running around the borough claiming to stand for ‘One East End’ acting divide the East End is the kind of politics more suited to UKIP than Labour.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Kabir Ahmed

Congratulating the Mayor and administration on the Innovation of the Year award to Tower Hamlets from the Government would you agree that this is a beacon administration?

Summary of Councillor Ahmed's response to the Supplementary Question

I would agree. I would particularly highlight that 81% of residents feel that our communities work well together.

Procedural Motion

At this point Councillor Rania Khan **moved**, and Councillor Kabir Ahmed **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied to take Motion 12.5 ("Standing Up for Tower Hamlets") as the next item of business.

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

8.5 Question from Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman to the Chair of the Development Committee

How many social homes have been secured each year of this Council term through the planning permission process by the Labour controlled Development and SDC committees?

Response by Councillor Helal Abbas, Chair of the Development Committee

Firstly I would like to thank all Members of Development Committee and Strategic Development Committee for the hours they have devoted to attending meetings.

Until recently we had absenteeism from the Independent Councillors but I'm pleased to say that more recently there has been attendance from Councillors Miah and Ahmed, and from the Conservative group.

Labour has a proud history of supporting social housing and I'm very pleased to say that during the last three years we have delivered planning approval to more than 10,000 homes including in 2011, 786 homes for affordable/intermediate or social rent, 703 in 2012 and in 2013 also. It is important to note that some of these are under construction.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman

Can you confirm how much money has been secured through s106 agreements through the work of the committee, is it correct that the Mayor has built 4000 homes and should the Mayor be taking credit for the work of the Greater London Authority including John Biggs which has provided the £7m for the Mayor's development?

Summary of Councillor Helal Abbas' response to the Supplementary Question

The Development Committee and Strategic Development Committees have between them approved 10,000 units. But it is not sufficient to spend on homes, the related infrastructure - such as school places, jobs and environmental improvements that our community needs so badly - is just as important. During the last three years over £93 million has been secured through s106 agreements. I don't believe that the Mayor has played any role in any of this.

8.6 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

On 12th March, the Evening Standard reported that 55 towers of 20 storeys or above are in the pipeline for Tower Hamlets, almost a quarter of the London total. Will the portfolio holder for regeneration outline what steps he is taking to prevent overdevelopment on the Isle of Dogs?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Thank you for your question Cllr Golds. As my remit covers planning policy, which is what your questions is about – I will answer it.

However you may be better placed addressing your question to the self-defined "Labour controlled Development and SDC committees" – although to do so is prejudicial as the Development Committee and Strategic Development Committee are quasi-judicial committees set up by Full Council.

Whilst we are on the subject of the SDC may I just clarify that the SDC members must have regard to officer recommendations.

Officers work within the planning policy requirements and negotiate Section 106 and other infrastructure.

The SDC in coming to a determination, consider the provisions of the Council's adopted Local Plan which gives due regard to affordable rent, more open space, schools, community space, jobs and economic benefits - Plans which have been formulated under the Mayor's Leadership including the additional proviso of the SPDs.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Peter Golds

Why has the Mayor done nothing on the overdevelopment of the Isle of Dogs with little provision for education, health and transport facilities for residents?

Summary of Councillor Khan's response to the Supplementary Question

You need to have that argument with the Mayor of London as within The London Plan he identifies the north of the Isle of Dogs as an 'Opportunity

Area' – with the potential for a significant increase in new homes and jobs (minimum of 110,000 new jobs and 10,000 new homes).

Any planning application over 30m (which equates to 10 residential storeys) has to be referred to the Mayor of London.

So there seems to be a clear split in the Tory party between those nationally who want to invest money in social housing and those like you who don't.

8.7 Question from Councillor Denise Jones

What impact does the Lead Member for Regeneration believe the 2012 Olympic Games have had on the borough?

Response by Councillor Rania Khan, Cabinet Member for Culture

Thank you for your question Councillor Jones. The impact of the Olympic Games in Tower Hamlets can be felt across a wide range of areas – including employment, skills and business; transport and the public realm; and regeneration and development.

The Borough has secured significant levels of external investment and infrastructure improvements that provide real long term benefits to the local economy. For example, during the Olympics, over 4000 local residents' secured jobs because of the Mayors agreement with LOCOG, facilitated by Skillsmatch. Also, over £10m of external investment were secured to improve Whitechapel High Street.

I think therefore, from what I have just mentioned, that the 2012 Olympic Games has had a positive and lasting impact on our borough.

Summary of Supplementary Question from Councillor Denise Jones

Is the Mayor concerned that although he promised increased employment in the Borough employment figures actually went down?

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

4,000 jobs were secured for residents to work on the Olympics, facilitated by Skills Match.

Question 8.8 was not answered at the meeting and Questions 8.9 to 8.23 were not put at the meeting due to lack of time. The Service Head, Democratic Services indicated that written responses would be provided. [Note: The written responses are attached at Appendix A to these minutes.]

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

9.1 Community Safety Partnership Plan 2013-16

The Council considered the proposals of the Mayor and Executive for the Community Safety Plan 2013-16.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed **moved**, and Councillor Oliur Rahman **seconded**, the recommendation as set out in the report.

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

RESOLVED

To approve the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2013-16 (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) and the priorities set out within it.

9.2 Sexual Entertainment Venues Licensing Regime, Policing and Crime Act 2009

The Council considered the report of the Head of Consumer and Business Regulations into the proposal to adopt the legislative scheme for the control of lap dancing and striptease premises in Tower Hamlets.

Further correspondence from legal representatives of local businesses was tabled along with the response of the Council's legal adviser.

Councillor Carli Harper-Penman **moved**, and Councillor Ann Jackson **seconded**, the recommendations as set out in the report.

With the agreement of the Speaker, two representatives of local businesses addressed the meeting. They were Mr David Dadds of Dadds LLP, representing Whites Gentleman's Club; and Mr Gareth Hughes of Jeffrey Green Russell Solicitors, representing Vanquish Asset Management of Astons Champagne Bar, Victory Services Ltd on behalf of The Pleasure Lounge and Mr Manpal Singh of The Nags Head.

Following debate the recommendations in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed** unanimously. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

1. To agree that it is appropriate to reconsider whether to adopt Schedule 3 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 as amended by section 27 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009.
2. To resolve that Schedule 3 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 as amended by section 27 of the Policing and

Crime Act 2009 shall apply in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets area and which shall come into force on 1st June 2014.

3. To agree the proposed standard conditions in Appendix 2 and to also agree the fee structure in Appendix 3 to the report.
4. To note that the policy in Appendix 1 to the report, which will apply on the application of Schedule 3 in Tower Hamlets, and which supports continued operation of existing premises, including the White Swan.

9.3 Free School Meals for Primary Age Pupils - Virement Proposal

The Council considered the report of the Acting Corporate Director, Resources on a proposed virement in connection with the Mayor's Executive Decision to introduce a local scheme for free schools meals for all primary age pupils.

Councillor Alibor Choudhury **moved**, and Councillor Oliur Rahman **seconded**, the recommendation as set out in the report.

Councillor Carlo Gibbs **moved**, and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded**, a tabled amendment to the recommendation. Following debate the amendment was put to the vote and was **agreed**. The substantive motion as amended was then put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- There were NO proposals for Free School Meals in the Mayor's original 2014/15 Budget, in fact, in that Budget the Mayor removed the funding already allocated for Free School Meals.
- The Labour Group's Budget amendment was the only one which contained a pledge for Free School Meals.
- Labour's Budget amendment would have fully funded Free School Meals on a sustainable basis and Labour's candidate for Mayor of Tower Hamlets, John Biggs, has pledged to ensure that Free School Meals for all primary school pupils is a priority of his administration.
- After removing funding from his original Budget, the Mayor refused to accept Labour's Free School Meals proposal and on 6th March his supporters voted to block it.

This Council Further notes:

- The Mayor opposed Labour's Free School Meals plan for purely political reasons.

- The Mayor promised to bring a fully funded proposal back to Council for two full academic years.
- The Mayor has broken his promise as the actual proposals before Council are not only for one year only, but are not funded at all.
- The proposed virement is not only totally unfunded, but it raids the Council's emergency reserves which will require over £2.5m in additional service cuts in future years.

This Council believes:

- If the Mayor wanted to invest in Free School Meals he would have included it in his original Budget rather than cutting the already allocated funding.
- Labour's campaign for Free School Meals has attracted widespread support and the Mayor is now desperately trying to save face in light of his opposition to Labour's plans.
- Whilst we welcome the Mayor's conversion to support Free School Meals, it is clear that he has absolutely no idea how to fund this and he is irresponsibly trying to buy his way out of the problem.
- The Mayor's plan to provide skills training for women to work in the healthcare sector could easily be achieved by using the power of the Mayor's office to work with business, third sector and NHS partners to deliver the project on a sustainable basis and not just as a one off.

This Council further believes:

- Budget setting is a matter for Full Council and that any attempts by the Executive to circumvent this process would be unlawful, including through cumulative virements below the £1m threshold;
- This Mayor is endangering the long term financial health of this council with his desperate actions and that it is the responsibility of the council and its elected members to protect tax payers money from this abuse;
- The financial virement protections in the constitution have been agreed by full council and it is full council that should provide clarity on their application;

This Council resolves to amend the report Recommendations to:

Delete the current bullet point and replace with:

- In order to avoid the use of further reserves, which would result in further cuts to services in later years, we will reduce the need to call on

reserves over the course of the scheme by granting the mayor the power to implement the following virements:

- A virement of £1.3m from the Healthcare employment project
- Virements of £296,000 and £30,000 from the budgets for mayoral advisors and the mayoral car respectively
- A virement to ringfence £1,050,000 from the efficiencies and any additional funding resulting from the 2015/16 public health grant.

Virement Funding source	Change
2015/16 Public Health Grant funding	£1,050,000
Healthcare employment project allocation	£1,300,000
Mayoral car allocation	£30,000
Cut the Chief Executives cost for mayoral advisors/consultants allocation	£296,000
TOTAL:	£2,675,000

- To instruct officers to bring a draft amendment to the constitution to the 2014 AGM meeting which would act to prevent the Executive from issuing cumulative smaller virements to one budget head which would otherwise exceed the £1m limit requiring approval by Council.
- In the interim, to add a paragraph to the section of the Council's constitution on virements reading:

"Virements for the same budget head, project or substantively similar purpose which are below the £1m threshold should not cumulatively (over a period of three months) exceed the £1m limit without the approval of Council."

- To highlight to all officers responsible for the interpretation and application of the Constitution that it is Council's view that using cumulative virements which exceed the £1m marker for reporting to Council intentionally breaches the spirit of the Constitution and that from henceforth these should be prevented as is the explicit will of the council.

Procedural Motion

At this point Councillor Carlo Gibbs **moved** and Councillor Sirajul Islam seconded a procedural motion "that in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.11.7 the meeting be extended for a further 30 minutes".

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

9.4 Localism Act 2011 - Pay Policy Statement 2014-15

The Council considered the reference from the Human Resources Committee on the Pay Policy Statement 2014/15.

Councillor Carlo Gibbs **moved**, and Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **seconded**, the recommendations as set out in the report.

The recommendations in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

- 1 To adopt the authority's Pay Policy Statement for the year 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 as recommended by the Human Resources Committee and presented at Appendix 1 to the Human Resources Committee report.
- 2 To agree that if any minor changes to the 2014/15 policy statement are required as a result of future government guidance, these amendments be delegated to the Head of Paid Service after consultation with the Service Head (HR and WD), the Chair of the Human Resources Committee and the Monitoring Officer. Should any fundamental changes be required, then the Pay Policy Statement be referred back to the Human Resources Committee for consideration.

9.5 Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Council considered the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, the recommendation as set out in the report.

The recommendations in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

That the Council notes the annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2013-14.

9.6 Executive Mayor's Car

The Council considered the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee into the use of the Executive Mayor's Car.

Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, the recommendation as set out in the report.

Following debate the recommendations in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

To agree the reference report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its recommendations.

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

There was no business under this heading.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Review of proportionality and allocation of places on committees

Council considered the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services, on the review of proportionality and allocation of places on Committees and Panels of the Council.

RESOLVED

1. That the review of proportionality at paragraph 3 of the report be noted and the Council agree the unchanged allocation of seats on committees and panels established for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2013/14 as set out at paragraph 4.2 of the report.
2. That Members and deputies be appointed to serve on those committees and panels in accordance with nominations from the political groups to be notified to the Service Head, Democratic Services.
3. That the Service Head, Democratic Services be authorised to approve the appointment of ungrouped Councillors to any committee places not allocated by the Council to a political group, after consultation with those Councillors and the Speaker of the Council.

11.2 Calendar of Meetings 2014/15

Council considered the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services on the proposed calendar of Council and Committee meetings for 2014/15.

RESOLVED

To approve the proposed calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2014/15 as set out at Appendix A to the report.

11.3 Scheme of Members' Allowances 2014/15

The Council considered the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services on the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2014/15.

Officers advised that there would be a need to amend the Scheme of Members' Allowances with effect from 1st April to reflect a recent change in the law to the effect that any Councillors elected from that date onwards would not be entitled to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and existing Councillors would have their membership of the LGPS terminated at the end of their current term of office. The Monitoring Officer would make the necessary amendment to the Scheme of Members' Allowances in accordance with his powers under Article 15.01 (c) of the Constitution.

The recommendations in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

To adopt the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Members' Allowances Scheme 2014 as set out at Appendix A to the report.

11.4 Investigation into Old Poplar Town Hall - update

Council considered the update presented in the agenda on the Investigation into Old Poplar Town Hall.

RESOLVED

To note the update.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

12.1 Motion regarding Lutfur Rahman's legacy of failure

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, the motion as printed in the agenda. The motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- That under Lutfur Rahman's leadership:

Jobs

- The number of people long-term unemployed in the borough has risen 23%
- The number of young people aged 18-24 who are long-term unemployed in the borough has more than doubled. (Up 111%)
- During the Olympics there was little discernable impact in terms of the number of young people employed in the borough.

Cleaner Streets

- Residents have reported 24,000 bins as uncollected.
- The introduction of charges for bulk waste collections led to 7,000 fewer bulk collections.
- Street cleaning was cut to only two days a week

Crime and ASB

- Crime is up 1.4% since Lutfur Rahman came to power.
- Over the same period crime in neighbouring in Newham is down 8% and in Barking and Dagenham it is down 10%.
- 20,000 reports of Anti-Social behaviour last year
- Tower Hamlets has the second highest levels of anti-social behaviour in London.
- Between October 2009 and September 2012 robberies were up 50%, knife crime was up 49%
- In the 2013 Annual Residents Survey 41% of people said crime was one of their top three concerns, this was the biggest overall concern from residents.

Housing

- Lutfur Rahman has actually SOLD more Council homes than he has built
 - o 15 built since Lutfur Rahman came to power
 - o 46 homes sold off under right to buy
 - o 14 homes sold off through Lutfur Rahman's asset stripping
- There are over 20,000 families on the borough's housing waiting list
- Plans were drawn up to ship up to 500 families out of London this year.
- 94 vulnerable families have unlawfully been placed in 'temporary' accommodation for more than 6 weeks.
- Only 27 of almost 700 homes on the Olympic Park were allocated to Tower Hamlets families

Cost of Living

- 14,000 families have been hit by the Government's Benefit Cap.
- Lutfur Rahman cut the borough's stretched advice centres to the bone with cuts in their grants of up to 50%
- The cost of privately renting in Tower Hamlets now takes up 60% of the average household income.

Schools

- 30% of secondary school children missed out on their first preference school last year. 157 children didn't get any of their 6 preferences.
- The provision of school places varies significantly between areas. For example in Limehouse, last year only 54% of students got a first preference Secondary School place.
- The school place crisis has been ignored.

Council Finance

- The Council has made no progress on invest to save strategies.
- The Council has developed a budget gap of £80m in coming years.
- Over £18m has been spent on redundancy payments with countless more on out of court 'settlements'

Waste

- £42,000 a year wasted on a vanity chauffeur driven Mercedes
- £296,000 a year wasted on 'mayoral advisors'
- Hundreds of thousands wasted on unnecessary publicity

Contempt

- Residents have had their questions, petitions and expectations ignored.
- Councillors were removed from community organisations with their seats left vacant.
- A Commonwealth minister was banned from visiting the Town Hall during the Olympics

This Council Believes:

- Tower Hamlets is a great place to live and can do so much better than this.
- People feel totally let down by Lutfur Rahman's out of touch, divisive and secretive administration and that a change is needed.
- That the current Mayor is too weak to face up to the real challenges facing this council and the people who live in our borough.
- That John Biggs is the man to make that change.

This Council resolves:

- To condemn Lutfur Rahman for his four years of failure.

12.3 Motion regarding supporting building of the Columbia Market War Memorial

Councillor John Pierce **moved**, and Councillor M.A. Mukit M.B.E. **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

During debate Councillor John Pierce accepted an amendment proposed by Councillor Kabir Ahmed to add, under 'This Council Resolves',:- "To call on the Executive to provide a suitable site within the Sivill House Rose Garden for this memorial".

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

RESOLVED

This Council Notes:

On the first night of the Blitz, 7th September 1940 a German bomb entered the ventilation shaft of the air raid shelter situated under the Great Hall of Columbia Market which had a glass roof which caused mass devastation and killed at least 51 people.

This Council believes:

This tragedy should be commemorated and a fitting memorial should be erected near the site of the Great Hall to remember the 51 people who lost their lives in this tragedy.

This Council Resolves:

To commemorate the air raid on Columbia Market, Columbia Road, and to support the Columbia Market War Memorial Group with building of the Columbia Market War Memorial.

To call on the Executive to provide a suitable site within the Sivill House Rose Garden for this memorial.

Motions 12.2 and 12.4 – 12.11 were not considered due to lack of time.

The Council agreed to suspend Procedure Rule 13.1 to enable an additional, urgent motion to be included on the agenda regarding Former Crown Estate Tenants. However this urgent motion was also not considered due to lack of time.

13. URGENT MOTIONS

13.1 Former Crown Estate tenants [MOTION NOT DEBATED]

[Note: The Council agreed a procedural motion at the start of the meeting to allow Urgent Motion 13.1 as set out below to be heard. However, the meeting did not, in the event, have time to consider the motion.]

Proposed by Cllr Joshua Peck
Seconded by Cllr Carlo Gibbs

This Council notes:

- the motion it passed on 24 March 2010, opposing the proposed sale by the Crown Estate of its social housing in Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Camden and Westminster, unless it could guarantee that the new owner would safeguard tenants' rights, including security of tenure and rent levels, and ongoing provision of affordable and key-worker housing at existing levels
- the successful campaign by those Crown Estate tenants, supported by MPs and councillors of all three mainstream parties, that forced the Crown Estate to sell the properties to Peabody and not a private landlord
- the statement by the Chief Executive of Peabody at the time the sale was agreed that he was 'absolutely committed to keeping these homes affordable and available to the key workers who are so crucial to London's economy and quality of life'.

This Council further notes that:

- Peabody classified the ex-Crown Estate tenants as intermediate tenants, not social tenants
- rents for ex-Crown Estate tenants have been increased by Peabody by 9% in both 2011/12 and 2012/13 and by 7% in both 2013/14 and 2014/15 – a total increase of 36% on 2010 rent levels in just four years
- these tenants are either key workers or pensioners, who have received public sector pay rises of just 4% over the same period, or state pension increases of just 15.8%
- many tenants are facing hardship as a result of these rent increases, with some even having to consider leaving their homes
- Peabody has defended these increases as 'in accordance with Peabody policy' and claimed, wrongly, that residents' groups agreed them.

This Council believes:

- Annual rent rises of 7-9% are unacceptable, and do not meet the Chief Executive's stated aim of keeping these homes affordable and available for key workers.

This Council resolves:

- To censure Peabody for these unacceptable rent rises
- To refer the matter to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to ask it to invite the Chief Executive of Peabody to appear in front of the Committee to account publicly for this policy.

13.2 Judicial Review into Mayoral attendance at O&S [MOTION NOT DEBATED]

[Note: A procedural motion was proposed to allow Motion 13.2 to be tabled as an urgent motion. However, Council did not agree the procedural motion.]

Proposed by Cllr David Snowdon
Seconded by Cllr Emma Jones

This council notes

- That section 9FA(8)(a) of the Local Government Act 2000 provides that an O&S committee may require members of the executive to attend before it to answer questions
- That subsection 9 provides that it is a duty of any member of the executive to comply with such a requirement (including the executive Mayor)
- The Mayor's failure to do so over the course of this municipal year, despite numerous requests from O&S
- That section 9FA(8)(a) of the Local Government Act 2000 is enforceable by judicial review

This council resolves to instruct the Monitoring Officer to prepare a report outlining the council's options with regards to potential launch of a judicial review to instruct the mayor to fulfill his obligations and attend O&S.

The meeting ended at 11.03 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

APPENDIX A – WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PUBLIC AND MEMBERS' QUESTIONS NOT PUT AT THE COUNCIL MEETING**6.7 Question from Mr Gary Reddin**

Will the Lead Member for Resources tell me how much money, resources and officer time has been spent on various investigations instigated by full Council motions?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Opposition councillors are constantly wasting Council time and resources asking them to investigate misleading allegations.

Since 2012 there have been 12 investigations ranging from looking at the correction of a Mayor's press statement to investigating the sale by London Metropolitan University. A building that the Council did not own!

Every single one of these investigations have found that there was no wrong doing.

46 days of officer time has been spent on this and £8000 on external investigators. This is a waste of council resources.

It is clear from the fact that these investigations have found no wrong doing that these investigations are politically motivated.

This is a waste of council resources for political purposes. Resources that could have been used to deliver for our residents. Shame.

6.8 Question from Mr Suluk Ahmed

Does the Lead Member agree with me that Tower Hamlets is rich in its diversity and culture due to the contributions of all communities that have settled here?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Tower Hamlets population includes 18 different ethnic groups, and over 200 nationalities. This puts Tower Hamlets amongst the 5% most ethnically diverse boroughs in the country. 43 per cent of the Tower Hamlets population were born outside the UK.

Those of Bangladeshi origin are the largest group and the Census identified a further 20 groups with significant populations of more than 1,000. The largest

were from: India, China, Italy, France, Somalia, Ireland, Poland, Australia, Germany, the US and Spain.

One of the authority's five key priorities is to work to achieve One Tower Hamlets. The Council also actively seeks to promote cohesion including through working closely with partners

This work is carried out in a range of ways including support for the New Residents and Refugees Forum; supporting and promoting key events celebrating and recognising our local diversity such as:

Black History Month, Chinese New Year and Holocaust Memorial Day; St Patricks Day and Bangladeshi New Year, and supporting a range of third sector organisations which meet the needs of these diverse communities.

As a result of this active support for diversity, community cohesion is strong. This work has been recognised by our peers.

Tower Hamlets Council is the first Council in the UK to be reassessed against local government Association's framework as excellent, the highest award.

Residents agreeing that this is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together has increased from 69% 5 years ago to 81%.

Other projects include: bringing various ethnic communities together, with a focus on the hard to reach Chinese community; a project based on an estate in Mile End bringing residents from different backgrounds together to develop a history of the changing communities living on the estate; and a programme of meetings and seminars for people from different faith backgrounds in the borough to promote inter-faith dialogue and develop relationship between people from different backgrounds and religious and non-religious.

6.9 Question from Ms Sabia Kamali

Can the Lead Member outline the role and purpose of the Local Ward Forums?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Local Ward Forums are a means for residents to work with the Mayor to make Tower Hamlets a better place.

The purpose of Local Ward Forums is to engage and empower local residents.

Each ward is provided with a budget of £10,000 which is allocated and spent according what residents agree.

Residents are able to voice their ideas and obtain funding for projects that will

benefit the community. Eighty six Community Champion Coordinators have been appointed as volunteer across the wards to facilitate the discussion process.

6.10 Question from Ms Fatima Khatun

I was deeply concerned to see the rise of media attacks on our community recently, targeting the Council and certain sections of our diverse community. What is the Council doing to address these attacks and protect the reputation of the borough and its people?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

As a borough we have a long history of diversity and of welcoming people from different parts of the world.

As a council we promote and celebrate this history and it informs everything we do.

I am proud that Tower Hamlets Council is the first council in the UK to be reassessed against the Local Government Association's Equality Framework and has received an 'excellent' rating – the highest award available.

I am proud too that with the findings of our residents survey which shows that over 80% of residents feel residents get on well together.

Our vision of 'One Tower Hamlets' to actively ensure the rights of all groups are respected and that we live together in harmony.

Central to this is our work with groups such as the Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum working with our diverse faith communities.

We know that Robin Wales and John Biggs are happy to do UKIP's work for them by claiming that non-Bengalis are discriminated in this borough.

We know it's a desperate smear. And we know the electorate will tell them so on May 22.

6.11 Question from Ms Jusna Begum

As local women we are deeply concerned at the proposals of Tower Hamlets Labour Party to axe funding for the women into health jobs project. We call on Labour Councillors to urgently overturn such plans. We value the importance of such a unique project which will help women in the borough to access flexible employment and training opportunities, especially for those affected by welfare reform and benefit changes. With Government cuts affecting women the hardest, we ask that Mayor Lutfur Rahman ensures that funding for the women into health jobs project in the borough is retained?

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

Jusna, it was shameful for the Labour Party to put this in their budget proposals this year. Luckily, their budget was not passed and so the project is still set to go ahead.

But who know what they would do if elected.

We are talking about 100 real, paid placements, with flexible working in Maternity and Early Years so that even more parents can go back to work as well.

It is shameful that a party can stand for scrapping something like that.

They don't care whether or not women have jobs – they'd rather use the money to pay for election stunt policies. Shame on them!

But I promise to deliver for women. The programme is in my budget and I guarantee that, if re-elected, 100 more women will be in jobs because of Mayor Lutfur Rahman.

6.12 Question from Mr Mohammed Mufti Miah

Can the Lead Member confirm the purpose of Council assets and how often they are audited?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

The Council's overarching policy for holding property assets is to support service delivery.

The Council's asset base is continually reviewed and the use of assets challenged in order to meet four key objectives:

- service support
- meeting statutory obligations
- value for money
- sustainability

We have rigorous audit processes in place for all aspects of asset management:

- Our Council assets form part of our annual external audit.
- The council has a robust process for the allocation of property, including an independent assessment process as well as a separation of duties between the assessment and the final allocation.

- Once allocated, officers will carry out checks to ensure the building is being used and maintained in line with any lease or agreement to occupy. These checks include, for example, fire risks assessments, health and safety audits and checks on the actual use of the buildings.

6.13 Question from Mr Mickey Ambrose

The Mayor's record of investing, £17 million to provide free home care to vulnerable residents, £380m in education making Tower Hamlets schools standing in the top ten in the country, building the most affordable homes in the UK should be commended. I also note his investments in high street market to support small high street businesses through these tough times including our markets. Will he commit to continuing to support these initiatives to support local residents like those in Bow?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

I am glad our local residents in Bow and all Tower Hamlets residents have benefitted from the things you have mentioned Mickey, such as the MEA , university bursaries, free school meals and investment in our youth services.

We are also proud of the establishment of a new school site at Bow Locks for the relocation and expansion of Bow Secondary school.

Also on the site of the former St Andrews Hospital in Bow residents have benefitted from the new health centre opened by the Mayor in 2012.

Under this, £150,000 has been allocated to Roman Road in Bow providing a town centre manager for Roman Road, as well as other activities to support the town centre. And a further £388,000 of S106 funding has also been allocated to town centre regeneration in Roman Road.

Also, The High Street 2012 programme included a £375,000 investment in the restoration of historic buildings in Bow, delivered in 2011.

We are proud of all areas in our Borough and the Mayor is working hard so all residents benefit from investments across the whole borough.

6.14 Question from Mr Abjol Miah

Does the Lead Member agree with me that all Members within the Council have a right to be heard?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Yes

6.15 Question from Ms Kathy McTasney

Will the Mayor consider extending Free School Meals at our Primary Schools all year round and not just before an election like the Labour Party?

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

Thank you for your question Kathy. I understand why you are concerned, since it was revealed that the Labour Party had lied by trying to win parent's hearts with the promise of Free School Meals and then budgeting for them for only half the year. Shame!

The Mayor has a commitment to Free School Meals which is why he was the first to bring it in last year.

96% of children took up his free meals, helping parents with their budgets and ensuring that kids are eating properly.

And you can be assured that, if re-elected, he will deliver yet again. For the whole year, not just for an election.

8.8 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani

Can the Lead Member give some examples of the events delivered through the Mayor's Community Events Grant that was so strongly opposed by the Labour Party in last year's budget?

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

The Mayor's Community Events Grant is to ensure that our residents can stage their own events and promote and celebrate our different communities. Their contribution to the whole of TH and promote community cohesion. Events range from:

- Morpeth Community Table Tennis Club organised table tennis where over 70 children participated in;
- Winter Wonderland was recreated for a weekend in December 2013 at Mudchute City Farm which over 500 residents enjoyed;
- JMC Youth Lounge organised a football tournament for 180 young people; and
- The Somali Development Association organised a discussion which to consider the impacts of Welfare Reform where over 150 people attended.

From the examples given, the benefits which our community obtain from the Mayor's Community Events Grant cannot be measured. But what we can

conclude is that this is a positive and engaging policy which the Labour Party tried to venomously prevent.

8.9 Question from Councillor Ann Jackson to the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Given that the Mayor has chosen not to delegate any of his powers, can the Chair of the O&S Committee tell us how many meetings his Committee has held during this Council term and how many of those the Mayor has attended to account for his administration's decisions?

Response by Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

In relation to 2013/14 only, 12 meetings of the committee have been held. The Mayor has not attended the O&S Committee so far during 2013/14 as of 26th March 2014.

8.10 Question from Councillor Gloria Thienel

Residents and visitors to Island Gardens are being directed to the London Borough of Greenwich for public lavatories. Will the Mayor or portfolio holder for regeneration explain why this is happening when perfectly usable lavatories transferred to East End Homes are kept locked up, despite their being no future plans for them?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

These public toilets were transferred to East End Homes as part of the stock transfer but there were no contractual arrangements in place for East End Homes to open or manage them as a public facility. It is understood that East End Homes only open them on the day of the London Marathon.

East End Homes have also explored an arrangement with a third sector organisation to take over the running of the public toilets but that did not reach a successful conclusion.

8.11 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders

Will the Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing tell us what assessment he has made of the impact of the Mayor's 5% cut to the social worker staffing budget last year?

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

Let me be completely clear Councillor Saunders and yet again present the true picture.

This saving reflected the money that could be saved through not filling vacant posts during recruitment processes. This practice was already happening in ESW, but instead of being used as a saving, helping us to meet the huge challenge set by government, it was kept underused in team budgets.

There have been no permanent reductions in staffing levels or levels of service provided to the community. The 5% reduction is a Directorate target so it is accepted that some services will achieve more and others less, depending on the levels of turnover in their teams.

Sufficient staff are in post to meet service needs across ESCW. Managers are able to request during recruitment processes when it is considered necessary to do so.

8.12 Question from Councillor Lutfa Begum

Can the Lead Member tell us what is being done to get more people, especially women, into work?

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

The Mayor has created two innovative specialist projects to help women into work:

The Women into Health Jobs Programme will create more than 100 flexible opportunities for women from the borough in health and early years childcare services. The Economic Development service continues to support local residents to access a range of opportunities.

The Work 100 project is targeted to help particularly women who find it difficult to enter the job market. And we have worked with these sorts of women to ensure that the programme is suited to their specific needs – with over 100 attending our outreach day.

It is schemes like these that have help us to secure 600 jobs and apprenticeships for the next five years, specifically targeting areas within the borough where it has been consistently difficult for people to find work. For example the Raising Aspirations pilot programme – which targeted 3000 households in East India and Lansbury.

We have a track record in delivering and have agreed to concrete assurances that we will continue to do this in the next term, unlike the Labour Party who promise to scrap initiatives like these that help women. Shame!

8.13 Question from Councillor John Pierce

What has the Mayor done in the last four years to reduce street urination in the Brick Lane area and the Shoreditch fringe?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

The Mayor has introduced a pop up toilet 5 months ago in Brick Lane, which I am glad to see your party were a fan of and have now started petitioning for more of them to be rolled out.

As much as we are flattered by your endorsement of this initiative, there is no need to worry about petitioning anymore – we are already planning to deliver a wider selection of temporary and permanent facilities in the area.

And that's not all. We have also made a total of 814 prosecutions for urination and have specifically tasked THEOs with protecting the area at night time on the weekends.

8.14 Question from Councillor Tim Archer

Before Christmas, a quote released in the name of Mayor in relation to Anjem Choudary had to be withdrawn after being released without authorisation.

In relation to Cllr Alibor Choudhury's "black cardigan" comment the East London Advertiser quoted the Mayor's office on 28th February as saying "The Labour and Tory groups used their majority in the council chamber to stop the lead member for finance from speaking for part of the budget meeting. This is how the Tower Hamlets Labour-Tory coalition stifles dissent."

Does the Mayor wish to withdraw these comments too?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

No

8.15 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Will the Mayor be installing CCTV in Grove Hall Park to address the persistent problems with anti-social behaviour there in recent years, including vandalism of the war memorial?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

As you're aware, we take a lot of things into consideration when deciding where CCTV in this borough is targeted. This includes balancing resources, the number of complaints in that area as well as actual crimes. You'll be happy to know that Grove Hall Park is a low ASB area, with THEOs/the NPT only being called out twice due to complaints.

However, our CCTV programme is regularly updated and we are watching Grove Hall Park closely so that we can change arrangements immediately if need be.

8.16 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

Can the Lead Member tell us what is being done to support residents with the cost of living?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Thank you Cllr Maium for your question. The Mayor has done a lot to support the cost of living.

- To help young people learn well and stay on in education:
 - EMA reinstated
 - 1,500 University Grant to 400 students
 - Free School Meals introduced and now extended to all Primary School Children
- To help the elderly:
 - The only Council to still provide Free Home Care
 - £950k Funding for Free Lunch Clubs
- To help keep housing affordable and prevent homelessness:
 - £2m preventing homelessness fund
 - Launched JR against Boris's plans to increase rents in the capital
- To help people in a crisis:
 - Crisis loans maintained and protected despite government cut.
- To ensure Council Tax is never a burden:
 - Council tax frozen for 4 years
 - Haven't passed on the cut in Council Tax benefit
 - £25 rebate for all residents on partial council tax benefit – helping 23,000 residents.
- To help with bills:
 - 4.5% average reduction in leaseholder charges.
 - Introduced the first energy scheme in the country to help residents reduce energy bills – residents have been saving on average between £122 and £135 a year.

8.17 Question from Councillor M. A. Mukit M.B.E.

Too many families and businesses emerge every weekend to find their streets used as a rubbish dump by the revellers the night before. Whilst we should encourage a vibrant night-time economy, this cannot come at the expense of those who work and live there. Can the Mayor tell us why his complacency has meant little has been done to tackle the problems caused by the night time economy?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Councillor Mukit doesn't know what he's talking about. The borough is the cleanest it's ever been.

We are funding frontline cleaning services through the Mayor's Accelerated Delivery Programme. And we've even got staff solely dedicated to problems caused by the night time economy patrolling the streets at night.

They are doing an incredibly good job and Labour Councillors need to stop insulting them and their hard work.

8.18 Question from Councillor David Snowdon

Will the Mayor please outline why his Cabinet opposed Conservative budget plans to prioritise repairing potholes, dealing with dog's mess and keeping our parks clear of commercial and private events?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

The budget amendments were considered unnecessary.

On Potholes, in last year's budget we included additional funding of £200k to replace the cuts made by central government. This has enabled us to fix 1,700 potholes, in addition to the 3,000 carriageway repairs funded through revenue spending.

On dog mess, the Council already has processes in place to reduce dog mess, which is why there were only 135 complaints about dog mess in the last year and our borough is 97% free of litter and refuse.

On Parks, there has been much concern over the so-called 'commercialization of public parks'.

We have continued to hold a limited number of events in parks, none of which close any of our parks to the public, in order to raise the money needed to improve our parks and deliver services. Following reductions in government funding we have had to ensure all our assets contribute towards the Council's finances.

The council continues to invest in its parks and improve quality for all users, which can be seen by the £10million that we invested in the restoration of Victoria Park, the 3.3m for the redevelopment of Bartlett Park and the 1m spent on Altab Ali Park.

That is why Victoria Park was voted the UK's Peoples Park in 2012.

8.19 Question from Councillor Helal Abbas

Does the Lead Member for Environment think it is acceptable that 24,000 bins have been reported uncollected since the Mayor came to power?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

We are performing so much better since the Mayor came in that I find it embarrassing you are still asking these questions.

Are you aware that within one year of being in power, our administration improved the record of miscollections by 33%?

We have made over 18 million collections in the last four years. The proportion of miscollections is 0.1%. Stop going on about it and trying to make the facts look bad when we have improved so much. You are deliberately misleading people. Shame on you.

Yes I agree that no collections should be missed, but there is always human error, so if we're performing at 99.9% then we're doing a bloody good job.

8.20 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan

Can the Deputy Mayor tell us how many Members' Enquiries the Mayor and his administration have raised since 2010 and how this compares to neighbouring Mayors and GLA member John Biggs?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Deputy Mayor

Our Mayor has raised over 8000 MEs in the past 3 and a half years. This is 10 times more than what was raised under the Leadership system where only 800 MEs were raised over a comparative period of time.

The Mayor's Office has also organised 81 surgeries where the Mayor has personally seen hundreds of residents at those surgeries. John Biggs, however, in over 13 years has only raised a measly 18 enquiries through the Council's ME system.

8.21 Question from Councillor Shiria Khatun

What response has the Mayor given to Boris Johnson's recent statement that children being radicalised at home should be taken in to care?

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

Thank you for your question Councillor. We are aware of Boris Johnson's comments. They stand out for being both ignorant and dangerous at the same time.

The research into people who become violent extremists shows that typically their parents were completely unaware of their activities.

The research also shows that these people were usually not from religious backgrounds. Most had a history of involvement in gangs and criminality. Most were disconnected from their families and vulnerable.

It is exactly that vulnerability that is exploited by those who recruit to organizations with a violent agenda. And the way they do so is by fostering a sense of grievance and injustice about the way Muslims are treated in the world.

I cannot think of anything more likely to add to that sense of grievance, I can't think of anything more likely to play into the hands of the genuine extremists, than the state being empowered to remove children from Muslim households.

Would anybody suggest that social services remove children from Catholic or Protestant families in Northern Ireland, where there is actually a tradition of political beliefs being passed down through the generations? Would anybody suggest social services remove children from the families of those who vote BNP or attend EDL demonstrations?

Of course they don't because such measures are guaranteed to add fuel to the fires of violent extremism.

This suggestion from Boris Johnson has nothing to do with actually undermining the threat of violent extremism and everything to do with his campaign to become the next leader of the Tory Party.

8.22 Question from Councillor Dr Emma Jones

What has the Mayor done to improve road safety on zebra crossings?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment

Over the past four years the Council has delivered a programme of fitting LED flashing halos around the Belisha Beacons to make their presence more obvious. These are largely focussed on crossings near schools, where safety concerns have been raised or where pedestrian casualties have been happened.

In other cases raised traffic tables have been incorporated at existing crossings to help calm traffic speeds and improve accessibility.

We have also re-marked crossings to improve visibility.

It is also worth noting that a number of new zebra crossings (approx. 12) have been installed during this period throughout the borough where the public perception of road safety risks gave cause for concern.

The Council is not responsible for TfL crossings.

8.23 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

In the opinion of the Cabinet Member for Jobs and Skills, what is the acceptable waiting time for ESOL classes?

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

In an ideal world there should be no waiting time for ESOL classes. As a result of additional funding from the Mayor in 2012/13 and 2013/14, the numbers of learners on the waiting list have been significantly reduced and most learners are now assessed and placed within 12 weeks or sooner of enquiring at an Idea Store.

Note: In Tower Hamlets the demand for free or low cost ESOL classes has constantly outstripped the number of places available.

The most common reasons for learners having to wait are:

- Learner's decision regarding access (Usually due to the location of the class, days and times of current programmes or lack of affordable child care)
- The learner is not eligible for a free place
- All the classes are full

The largest funder of ESOL in the borough, the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), has criteria about residency which mean some learners are not able to access ESOL provision until they have been resident in the UK for 3 years. For these reasons it will not be possible to eradicate ESOL waiting times altogether.

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