

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 26TH NOVEMBER 2014

**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY
MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE HEAD,
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

SUMMARY

1. Set out overleaf are the questions submitted by Members of the Council for response by the Speaker, the Mayor or the relevant Committee/Sub-Committee Chair at the Council meeting on Wednesday 26th November 2014.
2. Questions are limited to one per Member per meeting, plus one supplementary question unless the Member has indicated that only a written reply is required and in these circumstances a supplementary question is not permitted.
3. Oral responses are time limited to one minute. Supplementary questions and responses are also time limited to one minute each.
4. There is a time limit of thirty minutes for consideration of Members' questions with no extension of time allowed and any question not answered within this time will be dealt with by way of a written response. The Speaker will decide the time allocated to each question.
5. Members must confine their contributions to questions and answers and not make statements or attempt to debate.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

22 questions have been received from Members of the Council as follows:-

8.1 Question from Councillor Clare Harrison

Does the Mayor regret blocking Labour's attempt to recruit a new Chief Executive?

8.2 Question from Councillor Abjol Miah

After 6 months we've finally seen Eric Pickles' £1M Best Value Report. Are Tower Hamlets residents getting best value for money?

8.3 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

Will the Mayor, in view of the confirmation in section 2.112 of the Best Value Inspection by Price Waterhouse that he has "reserved to himself substantially all of the decision making powers which it is legally possible for an Executive Mayor to exercise", answer the following question with regard to the disposal of 111-113 Mellish Street, E14.

Being aware of the comments in Section 5.182 which identify a close relationship between the group seeking to secure 111-113 Mellish Street and himself, will he explain his decision to promote this acquisition by this particular group in light of the flawed process identified in Sections 5.193 to 5.216 of the PWC report?

8.4 Question from Councillor Ayas Miah

What measures will the Mayor take to ensure that when a transfer of property takes place there is a proper process set up in order to meet the council's best value duty?

8.5 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam

Can the Lead Member list the number of awards achieved by the Council since the arrival of PwC Auditors in April 2014?

8.6 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman

Will the Mayor inform the Council as to why he was absent from the Remembrance Day Commemoration on Sunday November 9th?

8.7 Question from Councillor Rachel Blake

What has the Mayor done to secure a tenant for the vacant supermarket unit on Roman Road in the former Morrison's site?

8.8 Question from Councillor Mohammed Mufti Miah

Residents of Bow will be delighted with the new secondary school on the banks of the River Lea. Can the Lead Member for Education and Children's Services update us on the progress with the rest of our secondary school buildings programme?

8.9 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood

Please explain how you the Mayor managed to keep clear from the detail of grant awards whilst also admitting to intervening in 32 cases (PwC report para 2.36)?

8.10 Question from Councillor Shiria Khatun

Will the Mayor take this opportunity to respond to the suggestion of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government that he "make a substantial contribution out of his own pocket to the (PwC) report" - surely he would not impose on the people of Tower Hamlets the heavy financial costs of his decision "not to cooperate and to obfuscate and delay" that damning report?

8.11 Question from Councillor Shah Alam

Residents of Mile End Ward were pleased to see this Administration opening a new children's centre on the Bede Estate. Can the Lead Member outline what additional activities the centre will offer to local families?

8.12 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

Will the Mayor explain para 2.33 of the PwC report where 81% of officer recommendations were revised or rejected and 33 applicants were recommended for grants despite not making the minimum criteria?

8.13 Question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed

The Mayor is used to expensive media advice – however does he agree with the now readily available and free advice that he should consider his position?

8.14 Question from Councillor Gulam Kibriya

Crime and tackling anti-social behaviour has been a key concern for our residents. Will the Lead Member for Community Safety highlight the impact of the new mobile Police Station introduced by the Mayor?

8.15 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill

Will the £407,700 paid to bodies highlighted in the PwC report as failing to meet the minimum criteria now be re-claimed so that it can be granted to organisations that do meet the criteria and do represent all of our local communities?

8.16 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Will the Lead Member provide an update on the action taken to address council leaseholders' concerns about service charges since the motion agreed by Full Council in January?

8.17 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

Will the Lead Member for Economic Development update us on the progress this Council is making with supporting our young people on the apprenticeship programme?

8.18 Question from Councillor Danny Hassell

Can the Mayor please explain why, despite some of the highest levels of child poverty in both the country and the borough, grant funding for Bromley by Bow is some of the lowest in the borough and why there were significant reductions in grant funding by this administration compared to the recommendations by officers?

8.19 Question from Councillor Ansar Mustaqim

Can the Lead Member update us on progress with implementing the recommendations from the Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission?

8.20 Question from Councillor Candida Ronald

The PWC Inspectors have found severe failures of governance.

"... current governance arrangements do not appear to be capable of preventing or responding appropriately to failures of the best value duty ..." [2.23]

Their report also details the extraordinary power of the Mayor:

"The Mayor has reserved to himself substantially all of the decision making powers which it is legally possible for an executive mayor to exercise" [2.112]

Does the Mayor accept he is personally responsible for these failures?

8.21 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

Like much of the country, during these tough economic times, many of our businesses and traders are struggling. Can the Lead Member set out how this Administration is supporting our small businesses and high streets?

8.22 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed

Can the Lead Member for Housing and Development update us on the progress with the Whitechapel Vision Regeneration and the new Town Hall development?