

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 15th APRIL 2015

**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY
MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

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

SUMMARY

1. Set out overleaf are the questions submitted by members of the public, for response by the Mayor or appropriate Cabinet Member at the Council Meeting on 15th April 2015.
2. The Council's Constitution sets a maximum time limit of twenty minutes for this item.
3. A questioner who has put a question in person may also put one brief supplementary question without notice to the Member who has replied to his or her original question. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply. Supplementary questions and Members' responses to written and supplementary questions are each limited to two minutes.
4. Any question which cannot be dealt with during the twenty minutes allocated for public questions, either because of lack of time or because of non-attendance of the questioner or the Member to whom it was put, will be dealt with by way of a written answer.
5. Unless the Speaker of Council decides otherwise, no discussion will take place on any question, but any Member of the Council may move, without discussion, that the matter raised by a question be referred for consideration by the Cabinet or the appropriate Committee or Sub-Committee.

QUESTIONS

13 public questions have been submitted as set out below:-

6.1 Question from Ms Kathy McTasney:

Who made the decision to remove personalised disabled bays, and are they aware of the Equality Act and the right of the person with disability to access, especially to their home? I understand from officers that, I quote, "It was the Councillors that made the decision". So who was the person responsible for this?

I have a personal issue that officers were responsible for removing my daughter's bay because I have a front drive. They clearly weren't interested in the adaptations for the car. As officers made clear there were people not using their bays. Then common sense would be to write a letter and if no response at all, remove the bay. Not threaten disabled people that can't speak for themselves.

In conclusion I ask that you withdraw the removal of all personalised disabled bays and send out letters for reply instead of reapplying, as personally there was never an application made as LBTH (Social Services) and the Ambulance service many years ago applied for this to be allocated because of my daughter's disability?

6.2 Question from Miss Ghulshana Begum:

Some commentators have dubbed the long-term BAME (ethnic minority) youth unemployment figures as the "race penalty" facing young people from BAME communities in modern Britain. Is it not shameful that BAME unemployment for young people soared under Labour Government earlier and has now risen to 50% under Tories, since 2010. How does the Mayor intend to address equality concerns with his plan for secure jobs?

6.3 Question from Ms Shuily Akthar:

Can the Lead Member update us about the effectiveness and the success of the Community Safety walk-abouts? How successful is the Council innovative initiative "Mobile Police Station"?

6.4 Question from Mr Musthak Ahmed:

Could the Mayor or the Lead Member update us about the impact of Tory Government's welfare reforms as well as cuts to Education Maintenance Allowance and other funding for Tower Hamlets in general, and particularly, in relation to its impact on unemployment in Tower Hamlets?

6.5 Question from Mr Aulad Miah:

As a local resident, I, and others in the Spitalfields and Banglatown Ward were astonished to learn that Labour Party Group in Tower Hamlets Council wanted to cut funding for our much loved local cultural and community asset, the Kobi Nazrul Centre.

Could the Executive explain why would Labour want to unfairly attack, cut funding for Kobi Nazrul Centre with potential consequences for people who work there, their jobs and the service users - local residents and stakeholders - in such a disrespectful way? Would it be true to say that once you start going down such a slippery slope as proposed by Labour, the future of the Centre could be put at risk in future years?

6.6 Question from Mr Jamir Chowdhury:

What is the Tower Hamlets First administration doing to support elderly and isolated groups in the community and does the Mayor find time to visit some of these groups in person?

6.7 Question from Mr Shamim Miah:

Could the Executive help explain why Tower Hamlets Labour Group think that cutting funding for Smoking Cessation Service in Tower Hamlets is a good idea when it is one of the biggest – if not the biggest – concern and potential killer for the people of Tower Hamlets and has the Council under this administration done anything to help our residents to quit smoking?

6.8 Question from Aser El Saqqa:

Is the Council aware of the important role played by Rich Mix in the life of the Borough and of the high regard of it from artists, audiences and other public funding stakeholders? And is the administration aware of the large number of people have signed a petition calling on the Council not to put Rich Mix at risk as a result of the Council-instigated litigation?

6.9 Question from Mr Koyes Ahmed:

Why is Sir John Cass adopted a new policy disallowing female visitors to the School (parent, guardians) from wearing a face veil? The safety element to this would be to ask visitors to show their faces at the front desk, which parents are happy to do?

6.10 Question from Ms Emma Price:

Will the Council save Cambridge Heath sixth form for young people with special needs?

6.11 Question from Mr Gilbert Linsdell

Many of the Borough's disabled tenants were helped to live fulfilling lives by the independent living fund, which the Tories have scrapped and Labour have refused to promise to return. Will councillors be pressuring central government to reinstate this vital support fund?

6.12 Question from Raihan Islam:

A brochure for parents on "Keeping children and young people safe against radicalisation and extremism" was produced last month. It was based on the three school girls who left for Syria. The leaflet is a disgusting way to isolate Muslims and has created fear within the community. It almost suggests that parents should prevent children from being good citizens or prevent children from embracing their religion peacefully without being harassed. A key point in this brochure:

"Sometimes those at risk may be encouraged, by the people they are in contact with, not to draw attention to themselves. As part of some forms of radicalisation parents may feel their child's behaviour seems to be improving: children may become quieter and more serious about their studies; they may dress more modestly and mix with a group of people that seem to be better behaved than previous friends".

Tower Hamlets Council has faced its fair share of Islamophobia and racism so it's such a shame that they have given into far right agendas to produce offensive literature like this. Was the lead cabinet member Cllr Gulam Robbani consulted because it seems that the council felt the right to intervene in a manner that is cringe worthy for the community and extremely divisive?

6.13 Question from Mr Steve Westlake

Many leaseholders on the Parkview Estate have received very large estimates from Tower Hamlets Homes for refurbishment work - for example in the region of £27,000 in my case.

The basis of these estimates seems to be deeply flawed, highly inflated and inaccurate. Much of the work that purportedly needs to be done bears no resemblance to the condition of the buildings, indicating the estimating process has not been carried out with any level of appropriate diligence or professionalism.

Most, if not all, of the figures appear to be wildly inflated and inappropriate to the level of work that needs to be done. Would you agree that this disregard for correct process and accuracy is unacceptable, and that estimates should be produced by independent surveyors, rather than contractors who have an obvious interest in charging as much as possible for works?