

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 15 APRIL 2015

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

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mayor Lutfur Rahman | Councillor Shafiqul Haque |
| Councillor Rajib Ahmed | Councillor Clare Harrison |
| Councillor Suluk Ahmed | Councillor Danny Hassell |
| Councillor Ohid Ahmed | Councillor Sirajul Islam |
| Councillor Mahbub Alam | Councillor Denise Jones |
| Councillor Shah Alam | Councillor Aminur Khan |
| Councillor Amina Ali | Councillor Rabina Khan |
| Councillor Shahed Ali | Councillor Shiria Khatun |
| Councillor Abdul Asad | Councillor Abjol Miah |
| Councillor Craig Aston | Councillor Harun Miah |
| Councillor Asma Begum | Councillor Md. Maium Miah |
| Councillor Rachel Blake | Councillor Mohammed Mufti Miah |
| Councillor Chris Chapman | Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE |
| Councillor Dave Chesterton | Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim |
| Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury | Councillor Joshua Peck |
| Councillor Alibor Choudhury | Councillor John Pierce |
| Councillor Andrew Cregan | Councillor Oliur Rahman |
| Councillor Julia Dockerill | Councillor Gulam Robbani |
| Councillor David Edgar | Councillor Candida Ronald |
| Councillor Marc Francis | Councillor Rachael Saunders |
| Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs | Councillor Helal Uddin |
| Councillor Peter Golds | Councillor Andrew Wood |

The Speaker of the Council, Councillor M. A. Mukit, MBE in the Chair

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 the business was taken at the meeting was as follows:

- Item 1 - Apologies for absence.
- Item 2 – Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.
- Item 3 – Minutes.
- Item 4 – Announcements.
- Item 5 – Petitions.
- Item 13.1 - Urgent Motion regarding Save Our Homes.

- Item 6 – Public Questions.
- Item 12.10 - Motion regarding Cambridge Heath Sixth Form Centre Special Educational Needs Unit
- Item 7 – Mayor’s Report.
- Item 12.5 - Motion regarding Barts Health NHS Trust.
- Item 8 – Members Questions.
- Item 12.2 - Motion regarding a New Deal for Leaseholders
- Item 9.1 –Pay Policy Statement 2015/16 - Reference from the Human Resources Committee
- Item 11.1 - Calendar of meetings 2015/16

The Speaker wished all a happy Bengali New Year and reported that he had attended a number of events recently in celebration of this.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed; and
- Councillor Ayas Miah.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

Councillor John Pierce declared a personal interest in item 13.1, motion regarding Save Our Homes as he was employed by a Trade Association.

Councillor Shafiqul Haque and Councillor Rachael Saunders each declared a personal interest in item 12.2, motion regarding a New Deal for Leaseholders, as leaseholders within the borough.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the ordinary Council meeting held on 21st January 2015 and the budget Council meetings held on 25th February 2015 and 5th March 2015 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

There were no announcements.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition entitled 'Save Our Homes – Enough is Enough – Brune, Bernard, Carter & Barnett House.'

Mr Shamsur Rahman addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She expressed sympathy with the petitioners' concerns about the demolition of the properties and reassured the petitioners that there would be a meeting with the Mayor to discuss the concerns.

RESOLVED

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

Procedural Motion

Councillor Rabina Khan **moved**, and Councillor Gulam Robbani **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.5, Rule 13.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion regarding Save Our Homes to be considered". The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

5.2 Petition regarding Globe Town Mosque and Cultural Centre, E2 OPG

The petition was not presented to the meeting due to the absence of the petitioners.

5.3 Petition regarding the Watts Grove development

Mr Terry McGrenera addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She advised that she had met with the Lincoln Estate Tenants and Residents Association and she would contact the Corporate Director for Development Renewal to identify how a facility could be provided as part of the development.

RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Development and Renewal, 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 Member:-

6.3 Question from Ms Shuily Akthar:

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

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Community Safety

This is a very important initiative. Since becoming the Lead Member for Community Safety I have taken very seriously the need to listen to residents' views. That is why I initiated this project. Since it began, about 500 serious issues have been dealt with across the borough. A range of agencies were involved in the initiative and have attended the walkabouts (including the Police, Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers and Registered Social Landlords) and have come forward with ideas. Councillors have also attended the walkabouts and have seen the good work done.

The Mobile Police Station has been present in each ward before each of the walkabouts in the latest round and is a place where people could come to report crime issues more easily. Residents have used this facility to raise matters of concern directly with police and it has also been utilised for a number of other partnership activities where we have been listening to the feedback.

Summary of supplementary question from Ms Akthar

Have Councillors attended the walkabouts?

Summary of Councillor Ohid Ahmed's response to the supplementary question

Yes, Councillors do attend the walkabouts.

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?

Response by Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Yes I agree with your points and would also add that the Labour Group have also proposed to cut other important services. The centre was close to the hearts of the community and should be celebrated. It was an iconic feature of the area that reflected its culture and history. However the Labour Group had no regard for this.

In view of these benefits, the administration are investing funding to re-establish services at the centre.

Summary of supplementary question from Mr Miah

Earlier on in the meeting, there was a discussion about the Holland Estate, where Members were very critical about the lack of engagement with residents. I therefore find it surprising that the Labour Group were also proposing to cut the Annual Residents Survey as part of their budget proposal. This appeared very contradictory.

Could the Lead Member comment on this point?

Summary of Councillor Alibor Choudhury's, response to the supplementary question

It is regrettable that the Labour Group wishes to pursue this approach and to cut other valuable services such as the Smoking Cessation Service. The Mayor is on your side and will continue to support the centre.

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?

Response by Councillor Abdul Asad, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services

This is a major issue for the administration and we have placed a lot of emphasis on such work. For example, the Council are providing stalls, tea parties, funding for outreach work and lunch clubs for older people and isolated groups. One of the commitments in our manifesto was to continue to provide lunch clubs and to introduce health checks at these clubs. This has already been partly rolled out.

Summary of supplementary question from Mr Chowdhury

Would you agree that that the initiative needs cross party support?

Summary of Councillor Abdul Asad's response to the supplementary question

Yes it does. The Mayor has prioritised these services and would welcome the involvement of the other political groups in such initiatives.

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?

Response by Councillor Abdul Asad, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services

The Smoking Cessation Service provides a very valuable service and, as stated at my speech at Budget Council, helps some of our most vulnerable and poorer residents to give up smoking. As well as the health benefits, the service would also save money in the long term. We have worked hard to keep this service. It is regrettable that the Labour Group wishes to stop this service.

Summary of supplementary question from Mr Miah

My biggest concern is the number of young people taking up the habit. Without this service, they would find it very hard to give up on their own.

Do you therefore agree that this whole issue shows that the Labour Group does not take seriously the issues and care more about politics?

Summary of Councillor Abdul Asad's response to the supplementary question

Yes I agree. To reiterate, it's a very important service especially for the more vulnerable residents in our Borough. The Mayor has given this issue priority.

6.8 Question from Mr 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?

Response by Councillor Shafiqul Haque, Cabinet Member for Culture

The administration are fully aware of this petition. Nevertheless, we remain concerned that the centre is now operating as a commercial enterprise at the expense of local residents contrary to the original brief.

Summary of supplementary question from Mr El Saqqa

We organise many events at the Rich Mix that benefit the local community, including cultural events that have brought international artists into the area. We are happy to continue doing this and to build on this.

Can you assure us that careful consideration will be given to such issues and that fair arrangements will be put in place?

Summary of Councillor Shafiqul Haque's response to the supplementary question.

As I have said, we have concerns that the centre is now operating as a commercial enterprise and therefore about the appropriateness of public subsidy for this.

Questions 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, were not put due to the absence of the questioners.

Questions 6.9 to 6.13 were not put due to lack of time. The Service Head, Democratic Services stated that written responses would be provided to these questions. (Note: The written responses are set out in Appendix 'A' to these minutes).

Procedural Motion

Councillor Danny Hassell **moved** and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that Motion 12.10 'Motion regarding Cambridge Heath Sixth Form Centre Special Educational Needs Unit' be taken as the next item of business." The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Noting that a public question (6.10) had been submitted but not reached regarding the subject matter of motion 12.10, the Speaker permitted Ms Emma Price to make a short statement about the services provided by the Special Educational Needs Unit at the sixth form centre and in support of a campaign to keep the unit open.

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor made his report to the Council.

The Mayor also paid tribute to Mr Ataur Rahman, Chair of the Brick Lane Mosque, who had sadly passed away, and to the huge contribution that Mr Rahman had made to the local community.

When the Mayor had completed his report, at the invitation of the Speaker the Leaders of the other political groups each then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

Procedural Motion

Following Councillor Rachael Saunders' speech in response to the Mayor's report and before Councillor Peter Golds' speech, Councillor Saunders **moved** and Councillor Danny Hassell **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that Motion 12.5 'Motion regarding Motion regarding Barts Health NHS Trust' be taken as the next item of business." The motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following question and a supplementary question were put and were responded to by the relevant Executive Member.

8.1 Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam

Does the Mayor support Rushanara Ali and Jim Fitzpatrick's campaign to secure a new deal for leaseholders – including calling for an extension to the current repayment period for major works from 12 months to 10 years and providing much greater transparency on all charges and proposed major works?

Response from Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing & Development

In contrast with the MPs, the Mayor had been pursuing these particularly issues since 2014 when there was a petition submitted to get the issues solved. Your candidates have only very recently joined the campaign in the run up to the election.

We have held several meetings with leaseholders and officers and have begun to investigate policies in the area. The Mayor would not support MPs who have little regard for housing issues. Adding their names to the campaign would undermine the hard work done by the people in the community.

Summary of supplementary question from Councillor Islam

The MPs have written articles about the campaign and in August 2014, Labour Councillors raised a motion at Full Council on the issues. The Best Value Audit highlighted a number of failing in this area, and in light of this, we

were always raising concerns on these issues. Does the Mayor support the campaign – yes or no?

Summary of Councillor Rabina Khan's response to the supplementary question

The Labour Group motion was not about major repair works. I support the Mayor's review of the issue.

Questions 8.2 to 8.25 were not put 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 included in Appendix A to these minutes).

Procedural Motion

Councillor John Pierce **moved** and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that Motion 12.2 'New Deal for Leaseholders' be taken as the next item of business." The motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Extension of time limit for the meeting

Councillor Rachael Saunders **moved**, and Councillor Danny Hassell **seconded**, a procedural motion that "under Procedure Rule 15.11.7 the meeting be extended for up to an additional 30 minutes to enable the consideration of the Motion 12.8 regarding Social Landlords".

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

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

9.1 Pay Policy Statement 2015/16 - Reference from the Human Resources Committee

Council considered a reference from the Human Resources Committee (19th February 2015) regarding the Pay Policy Statement 2015/16.

Due to lack of time, under the guillotine procedure the recommendations were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

1. To adopt the authority's Pay Policy Statement for the year 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 as attached as Appendix 1 to the reference from the Human Resources Committee.

2. To agree that if any minor changes to the 2015/16 policy statement are required as a result of future government guidance, authority to make such amendments be delegated to the Head of Paid Service after consultation with the Service Head (Human Resources and Workforce Development), 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.

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

There was no business to transact under this agenda item.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Calendar of meetings 2015/16

Council considered the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services on the proposed calendar of Council and Committee meetings for 2015/16.

A revised 'Appendix A' to the report, setting out an amended draft programme of meetings, had been tabled.

Due to lack of time under the guillotine procedure the recommendations were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

That the Council approve the proposed calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2015/16 as set out in the revised Appendix A to the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services as tabled at the meeting and attached as Appendix B to these minutes.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

12.2 Motion regarding a New Deal for Leaseholders

Councillor John Pierce **moved**, and Councillor Rachel Blake **seconded**, the motion as printed in the agenda.

During the debate, Councillor Rabina Khan indicated that she wished to move an amendment to the motion in the following terms:-

"The Council Notes;

In the mid 1990s and into early 2000 under the Labour administration there was a programme called the Five Year Rolling programme which included major and capital works.

The Five Year Rolling Programme did not use stock condition surveys and did not have a comprehensive repayment options with leaseholders been charged 9% interest after two years of been sent a bill.

It was only in 2012 with the Cabinet Report that the Mayor took the initiative to introduce comprehensive repayment options with a view to review the options during the course of the Major Works.

The, hard work of the Mayor and his administration of working since August 2014 to review the repayment options following petitions and individual issues raised by leaseholders regarding Major Works.

The Council believes that;

That THH and the Tower Hamlets Council had already begun the review process for repayment options back in August 2014.

That in the last major works charges completed under a Labour administration such measures were never brought forward and that leaseholders faced hefty bills were issued during that time.

The Council Resolves;

To only bill on completion of works after all works have been signed off with leaseholders, contractors and Tower Hamlets Council.

To continue to the review of repayments which began in August 2104 with a paper for Cabinet to extend from 3 years and 5 years repayment options for resident leaseholders up to 10 years.

To offer 3 years interest free repayment to non-residents subject to qualifying circumstances.

To, explore the potential to offer no interest charge to resident leaseholders if paid within 10 years.

To explore the potential to offer 7% discount if paid within the first year to all leaseholders.

To ensure that the financial and inclusion officer at THH pro-actively works with leaseholders who qualify for the discretionary cap.”

Copies of the amendment were circulated. However due to time constraints the amendment was not considered and the motion as printed in the agenda was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

1. The hard work done by MPs Rushanara Ali and Jim Fitzpatrick to support leaseholders in the borough
2. Leaseholders across Tower Hamlets have been sent bills by Tower Hamlets Homes for as much as £40,000 for major works as part of the Decent Homes Programme
3. Leaseholders have been given 12 months to repay these hefty and unmanageable bills
4. Leaseholders feel that Tower Hamlets Homes and Tower Hamlets Council have not adequately engaged, consulted or responded to their concerns

This Council believes that:

1. It is unacceptable for leaseholders to be hit with such extreme bills and under such a short repayment timescale
2. The repayment period for major works should be extended to 10 years
3. Greater transparency is necessary, particularly relating to all charges and proposed works
4. There needs to be an open and fair dialogue between leaseholders and Tower Hamlets Homes

This Council resolves to call on Tower Hamlets Homes and Tower Hamlets Council to:

1. Extend the current repayment period for major works from 12 months to 10 years
2. Provide much greater transparency on all charges and proposed major works
3. Adopt a pro-active approach when responding to, engaging with and consulting leaseholders

12.5 Motion regarding Barts Health NHS Trust

Councillor Asma Begum **moved**, and Councillor Rachel Blake **seconded**, the motion as printed in the agenda.

During debate, Councillor Abdul Asad **moved** and Oliur Rahman **seconded** an amendment that:-

“The Council recognise, support and help build on the hard work that the Council and CCG are doing to:-

Oppose Conservative detrimental policy – such as the removal of the Minimum Practice Income Guarantee;

Open more GPs surgeries to ensure that residents have access to a GP; and

Secure funding to provide routine and urgent care access to Primary Care 12 hours a day, 7 days a week in the future.”

Councillor Asma Begum indicated that she accepted the amendment proposed by Councillor Asad and altered her motion accordingly.

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

RESOLVED

This Council notes that:

1. Barts Health NHS Trust has been put into special measures, after a Care Quality Commission found a culture of bullying and low morale among staff at Whipps Cross Hospital
2. The coalition government scrapped Labour’s guarantee of a GP appointment within 48 hours
3. The coalition government cut funding for Labour’s GP extended opening hours scheme, and as a result fewer practices are open at evening and weekends
4. Over 20,000 signed the petition to ‘Save our Surgeries’ – calling on NHS England to reverse the withdrawal of the minimum practice income guarantee, which changed the funding formula and is taking money away from deprived areas
5. The Labour Group is fighting locally for local workers and to ensure that the best talent is available to the Trust

This Council believes that:

1. Labour’s policy to guarantee that you can get a GP appointment within 48 hours is vital
2. Barts Health NHS Trust should employ more local workers, creating local jobs and using local skills

3. The Tories have wasted £3 billion on a top-down reorganisation which puts competition and profits before co-operation and patient care, and ties hospitals up in competition law
4. The unaffordability of housing is becoming a barrier to recruitment and retention of key NHS workers

This Council resolves to:

1. Call on Barts Health NHS Trust to use trust assets to enable the provision of affordable, local housing for local staff
2. Call on Barts Health to fully utilise the resource of local workers
3. Call on Barts Health to work with housing providers and the council to prioritise provision of local housing for key workers

That the Council recognise, support and help build on the hard work that the Council and CCG are doing to:

1. Oppose Conservative detrimental policy – such as the removal of the Minimum Practice Income Guarantee;
2. Open more GPs surgeries to ensure that residents have access to a GP; and
3. Secure funding to provide routine and urgent care access to Primary Care 12 hours a day, 7 days a week in the future.

12.10 Motion regarding Cambridge Heath Sixth Form Centre Special Educational Needs Unit

Councillor Danny Hassell **moved**, and Councillor Marc Francis **seconded**, the motion as printed in the agenda.

During debate Councillor Gulam Robbani **moved** and Councillor Rabina Khan **seconded** an amendment:-

“That the Council recognizes that transition units for SEN is a nation-wide issue and whilst the amendments to the Children’s and Family’s Act recently does not still meet the needs of SEN children and young people;

That this Council shares the sentiments of the parents and carers campaigning for a quality transition SEN unit to remain within the borough;

In particular to explore how the Sixth Form unit might be able to keep the SEN provision open;

That a delegation of a cross party group support the campaign group meeting with each of the school’s Governing Body and their Chairs;

That, whilst the Council has no direct power to ensure that the unit stays open, the Mayor will explore how best to ensure there is appropriate provision for SEN students in the borough.”

Councillor Danny Hassell indicated that he accepted the motion moved by Councillor Robbani and altered his motion accordingly.

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

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

1. The Cambridge Heath Sixth Form Centre was founded to provide a centre for further education for 16-18 year-olds from Morpeth, Swanlea and Oaklands Secondary Schools with the support and encouragement of LBTH;
2. The centre currently includes a separate unit for 21 youngsters with Special Educational Needs, which is based in two of the classrooms;
3. Parents of these children have been told that the SEN Unit will be closed from April and that there has been no consultation with those parents over this proposal, only very belated discussion over alternative arrangements for the continuing education of individual children.

This Council believes that:

1. Good quality teaching for children with Special Educational Needs within a strong learning environment is a vital part of our educational system;
2. Parents and other stakeholders, including LBTH should be consulted meaningfully before any decision is taken to reduce education provision.
3. The impact of these proposals on affect pupils and their families could be incredibly damaging to their education and their wider wellbeing.
4. Tower Hamlets schools should be leading London with high quality provision for children and young people with a range of needs.

This Council resolves:

1. To call on the Heads and Governing Bodies of Morpeth, Oaklands and Swanlea Schools to reconsider the decision to close the Cambridge Heath Six Form SEN Unit;

2. To call on the Mayor to support the campaign by parents to keep the Cambridge Heath SEN Unit open.
3. To request officers engage with Cambridge Heath Sixth Form to explore support for the SEN unit. For officers to provide proactive support to young people and their families who could be affected by these proposals.

That the council recognizes that transition units for SEN is a nation-wide issue and whilst the amendments to the Children's and Family's Act recently does not still meet the needs of SEN children and young people.

That this council shares the sentiments of the parents and carers campaigning for a quality transition SEN unit to remain within the borough.

In particular to explore how the Sixth Form unit might be able to keep the SEN provision open,

That a delegation of a cross party group support the campaign group meeting with each of the school's Governing Body and their Chairs.

That, whilst the council has no direct power to ensure that the unit stays open, the Mayor will explore how best to ensure there is appropriate provision for SEN students in the borough.

Motions 12.1, 12.3, 12.4, 12.6 - 12.9 and 12.11 – 12.13 were not debated due to lack of time.

13. URGENT MOTIONS

The Council agreed to suspend Procedure Rule 13.1 to enable the following urgent motions to be debated without notice:

13.1 Motion regarding Save Our Homes

Councillor Rabina Khan **moved**, and Councillor Gulam Robbani **seconded**, a tabled motion on the above matter.

Councillor Rachael Saunders **moved** and Councillor Shiria Khatun **seconded**, an amendment to insert 'Wheeler House' to the first and sixth bullet points of the motion; 'the LBTH Mayor' to the final bullet point; and an additional bullet point under 'this council notes' to read:- 'The support of Rushanara Ali MP for the local residents.' Following debate the amendment was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

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

RESOLVED

The Council notes

The petition submitted by residents on Bruce, Bernard, Carter and Barnett Houses expressing strident opposition to the proposed demolition of their homes

The allegation by residents that East End Homes are in breach of the stock transfer agreement signed with the Council and considerable turnout at a march opposing demolition last week

The importance of consultation and involvement of residents in all decisions made that affect them

This Council believes

That where redevelopment occurs, it should always occur in the interests of residents

That the petition brought to Council and action by BBC Residents shows the strength of feeling and community among many residents on this estate

This Council resolves

To support the residents of Bruce, Bernard, Carter and Barnett Houses in asking that East End Homes sticks to the terms of the stock transfer agreement

To insist upon transparent and genuine consultation in keeping with government guidelines

To continue both supporting and holding to account all Social Landlords that we work with

To ask the Lead Member to meet with EEH and representatives of petitioners to discuss the situation

The meeting ended at 10.35 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

**APPENDIX A – WRITTEN RESPONSES TO PUBLIC AND MEMBERS’
QUESTIONS THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE MEETING**

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?

Response by Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Clean and Green

It is quite wrong to suggest that any decision has been made to remove all personalised disabled bays in the borough. The Planning and Environmental Services Committee Report of 20th March 1996 set the criteria for personalised disabled bays.

The Policy and Implementation Committee Report of 23rd February 2000 amended the procedure such that every year all residents to whom bays have been assigned will be required to complete the [appropriate application] forms to ascertain whether the bay is still justified.

The Council continues to properly police this dispensation arrangement to ensure that it remains free from abuse that those who need it are provided with it and that parking bays that might otherwise be made available to residents, businesses or people who meet the criteria are not claimed by those who do not. The Council is fully aware of the Equality Act and is satisfied that the criteria set out in the reports and associated review processes conform to it.

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?

Response by Councillor Oliur Rahman, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Economic Development (Jobs, Skills and Enterprise)

In the last year we have seen the highest rates for employment ever recorded in the borough but we are still around 3.5% under the London Average.

The employment rate within Tower Hamlets ethnic minority communities has increased from 48.6% to 58.6% between 2010 and Sept 2014 and for young ethnic minority people it has moved from 11.7% upwards to 14.1% in the same period. (Latest figures available)

Teams across the council are supporting local residents to overcome barriers so that they can access skills and training; and then be more competitive at job interviews. They deliver a range of services for specific groups of young people including those who are: making the transition from education to employment; not in education, employment or training; leaving care; looking for experience opportunities; or just looking for their first job.

Between April and December 2014 our own internal job support services, Skillsmatch has advised around 1250 young people with over 85% of those (1061) being from ethnic minority communities. From this group 155 have moved into further training and skills development and we have assisted 386 to start a job and we continue to work with many individuals to find the right pathway towards a new career.

Going forward the council has a number of plans for increasing this success rate.

- We continue to see the increasing academic achievement in schools;
- We are strengthening the coordination of our jobs and apprenticeships services by bringing together the information and delivery teams of these services,
- We are investing in our work placement programme,
- We are developing our Business Charter project which will see businesses opening up their recruitment opportunities more locally,
- We are piloting job advice staff into two ideas Stores,
- We continue to build economic requirements into all council contracts;
- We are continuing to promote the London Living Wage
- We are continuing to promote apprenticeships as a first step to a career.

The council will be continuing with the successful programmes it already has in place and is working to ensure we support everyone in the borough to reach their full potential, particularly those who find it more difficult to get a job because of their personal situation.

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?

Response by Councillor Oliur Rahman, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Economic Development

An independent report, commissioned by the Council and which was presented to Cabinet in October 2014, stated that:

'By that point (2015), we estimate that the cumulative financial impact of welfare reforms in Tower Hamlets will mean that households claiming benefit will be on average £1,670 per year (£32 per week) worse off than would have been the case without reform. This is in the top 10% of impacts nationwide, and equates to a reduction in welfare support of £68 million per year.

We estimate that this will be felt by 40,600 households in Tower Hamlets, around 45% of all households of working age (where the head of the household is aged 16-64). This is in line with the national average and marginally above the London average (42%). We also estimate that just over half of these (20,800 households) will be households where someone is in work. This is a much lower proportion than for London and England as a whole, where we estimate that 59% of those impacted will be households in work.'

In terms of specific impacts of reforms, the Council and Partners' latest monitoring shows:

- As of January 2015, 682 residents are impacted by the Benefit Cap,
- As of January 2015, 2,220 residents are impacted by the "Spare Room Subsidy / Bedroom tax"

In terms of cuts to the Education Maintenance Allowance, following the abolition of the government's scheme, the Council has invested approximately £1 million per year to support local young people through the Mayor's Education Award and the Mayor's Higher Education Award.

Approximately 1,700 young people will be supported this year by the Mayor's Education Award, who would have previously been eligible for the government's scheme.

Overall the Council, since 2010, has had to address a funding gap of over £100m. Whilst this has meant difficult budget decisions, the Council has sought to protect front-line services.

It's not possible to quantify the impact of welfare reform on unemployment levels – given the likely impact of other factors, which have contributed to a growing employment rate, such as a growing economy and work undertaken locally to support people into employment. In-line with national trends, employment figures are increasing, with 68.1% of residents now in work, the highest it has ever been, and there has been a reduction in applicants for Job Seeker's Allowance.

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?

Response by Councillor Gulam Robbani, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services

A senior officer has spoken with the school about these concerns. She has reported that the school is amending its policy regarding the wearing of a face veil. Anyone visiting the school will be required to provide ID and then will be able to visit. Initially they will be escorted to where they need to go within the school.

6.10 Question from Ms Emma Price:

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

Response by Councillor Gulam Robbani, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services

The re-organisation of the provision for post 16 provision entry level, level 1 and level 2 courses at Cambridge Heath Wessex Centre is a decision for the three schools' governing bodies to make.

As a Council we have no jurisdiction over the schools to make provision. However, officers are working with the schools involved in the Cambridge Heath provision to ensure that there is support for the families involved with students having special education needs.

The headteachers of the three schools involved, Morpeth, Swanlea and Oaklands have met with parents and are helping them in making alternative choices.

As for future provision the schools are in consultation with staff about possible proposals for the future. This has to go through due process.

Parents will be informed, by the schools, about the outcomes of the consultation which should be within the next two weeks.

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?

Response by Councillor Abdul Asad, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services

Politicians from across the spectrum talk about the need for people to lead independent lives. But reality doesn't match up with that. The Tories' decision to axe the Independent Living Fund is one such example. Independent Living does what it says on the tin- equip disabled people with the resources they needed to lead happier, healthier, freer lives.

What the ILF cut shows is that the powers that be don't care too much about people, or even about saving money- cuts like this fund or the bedroom tax make only a small change to national finances. Tory governments have been happy to let the benefit bill soar by institutionalising unemployment, underemployment and pitifully low wages, and let the housing benefit bill soar by breaking up social housing.

We've seen a heartfelt letter from a lifelong Labour voter begging his leader to save the Independent Living Fund – yet Labour haven't pledged to reintroduce the ILF. When writing disability policy we should start by listening to the wants and needs of those affected, like campaigner Jane Campbell who says that ILF 'was a beacon of good practice that placed the independence of disabled people at the heart of its purpose.' That's something the main parties seem to have forgotten to do. This Council has built bespoke homes for disabled people, campaigned against cuts to disability support and worked to enshrine equality of access in all it does. We are happy to bring what pressure we can to save and reinstate the ILF and support you in your efforts.

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?

Response by Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Community Safety

Safeguarding is a statutory duty. The Local Authority work in supporting schools and parents about keeping children safe has been long-established and successful.

Since the disappearance of the girls from Bethnal Green Academy the Local Authority has received many concerns from schools and families asking our advice about what to do.

It was decided to combine advice and resources used currently with parents and with schools and create an advice booklet for the community. This booklet was put together in order to support parents and schools who were anxious. Before the booklet was distributed it had been endorsed by the LSCB, the Prevent Board (where the Home Office was present) and the British Council of Mosques. The responsibility to sign off the advice booklet lay with the Corporate Director for Children's Services within his statutory role for safeguarding children.

The feedback the LA has received about the booklet has been very positive; schools and families have been relieved to have information to hand so they feel confident in talking with children about keeping safe. In addition we have had requests from other LAs, a range of academies and independent schools and other organisations to use this booklet.

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?

Response by Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

Mr Westlake's estimate comes from the s20 process, this is an initial estimate of the cost of works, and the s20 process is not an invoice for payment but an initial notification of the potential charge. Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) have amended their billing process to ensure that the invoice for works will be issued once THH have received practical completion certificates for the works, at this point the known costs for only necessary work, which is deemed to have been of acceptable quality, is recovered from leaseholders.

The estimates are derived from a joint assessment of investment need and it is this estimate which is shared for consultation. However, the Regulations governing the consultation process require the consultation to be completed before any costs are incurred. For this reason the inclusion of Provisional sums against some elements of the proposed works are necessary as a full survey and measurement of affected areas cannot be done until scaffolding is in place. During the course of resident consultation, and the validation activities scheduled above, the scope of work and therefore the attributed costs can decrease.

The process for generating leaseholder recharge costs is intended to be as transparent and accurate as possible, the costings are always provided by professional companies of repute in this case Mace have provided technical assistance.

The works due to be carried out on blocks in the Parkview Estate have been deemed necessary through a technical survey, which has been validated by both Mace, an independent consultancy, and by THH's qualified surveying staff. Costs generated by these required works are priced according to contract schedules, which have been tested through a competitive tender process. Comparison with the index maintained by the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) demonstrates that these scheduled rates offer excellent value for the borough and for the leaseholder.

8.2 Question from Councillor Mohammed Mufti Miah

Does the Cabinet Member for Resources accept a local Labour politician's comments in the Court that Tower Hamlets Council is a 'generally well-run council' and has 'some good policies'?

Response from Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Yes.

8.3 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

Would the Mayor confirm that his executive decision of March 6th, which was completely restricted, was to continue to contest the case with the London Borough of Bromley over ownership of 'Old Flo', that the hearing is taking place today (April 15th), and if so what the total costs of this case will be to the borough?

Response from Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

Having taken advice, a decision was made on the 6th March that agreed the Council should continue to trial in the High Court on the 15th April 2015 to demonstrate that it is the owner of Old Flo rather than Bromley.

The Council's total disbursements are expected to be £65,000 to the conclusion of the trial. This provides for any additional disbursements from now until the trial. Bromley's estimate of costs at the end of the trial is £183,406.18.

The Court has discretion whether to order one party to litigation to pay the other party's costs. However, the usual rule is that costs follow the event, so that the losing party is usually ordered to pay the winning party's costs. Should the council be unsuccessful at trial, it will likely be liable to pay Bromley's costs in addition to its own.

8.4 Question from Councillor Asma Begum

TfL is carrying out works along Whitechapel, Mile End and Bow Roads to implement the CS2 Cycle Superhighway upgrade. These works have put the safety of pedestrians at risk. What is the Council doing to resolve this and will Council officers meet with TfL urgently to address the risks to pedestrians?

Response from Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Clean and Green

The road in question is the responsibility of Transport for London as Traffic and Highway Authority and they have complete responsibility for the management of safety during construction works.

Council officers have raised issues of concern regarding risks to pedestrians which have been brought to their attention with TfL to ensure that TfL managers are fully aware of the problems being experienced.

TfL's response to the questions is :-

"Safe crossing routes were planned and implemented at every phase of the works, including across Mile End Road at the junction. Upon installing the pedestrian routes it has become apparent that pedestrians are, at their own risk, choosing to cross the road at undesignated crossing places to save time, rather than take the longer safe designated routes. TfL have reacted to this and have installed additional crossings. We will review if the crossing provided at Mile End Station can be widened as suggested.

TfL is monitoring pedestrian movements continually on site and at our control centre. As a result of this monitoring we closed Greatorex Street last Friday due to unacceptable levels of pedestrians crossing at this gap in the pedestrian barriers. We opened a new crossing at Fieldgate Street (opposite the Whitechapel Bell Foundry) on the 02/04/15. Our contractor has now been asked to assess the impact on the progress of the works of keeping crossings open on all four arms of each junction during construction. This requires moving crossings through works areas and may not be feasible.

TfL fault control reacts immediately to signal faults, especially at Burdett Rd junction which is a high priority junction. Engineers have attended the site quickly to rectify faults. In this instance the diagnosis and sourcing of replacement parts caused delays. It is now hoped that the junction will experience less problems, but unfortunately large junctions with signals put in temporary blocks during construction is prone to more frequent faults. We agree that the recent outages of the crossing are unacceptable and we will seek to address this issue with new technical solutions if this problem is repeated.

The crossing at Coburn Street has been lengthened to allow for large volumes school pupils crossing at peak times. It has to be at this location to fit between side roads and footway obstructions. Our control centre has not reported any problems since it was lengthened.

TfL (in partnership with Ringway Jacobs) carry out Health and Safety checks along the site every day. This is to ensure that our sites comply with the high standards that we set ourselves with regards to the public's and our staffs safety. Our traffic management is also evaluated every day to make sure that it is safe and fit for purpose.

TfL are happy meet local councillors on site to review our current arrangements. We welcome any feedback or suggestions that would assist in reducing the impact that our works are having on our local Stakeholders."

8.5 Question from Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury:

Could the Lead Member for Housing inform us as to when did the Mayor request you to investigate longer repayments for leaseholders in relation to Major Works Charges?

Response from Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

Discussions on extending leaseholder repayment terms from the current 5 years to a 10 year term were first initiated in August 2014. Leaseholders were informed of this process at meetings in January 2015.

In addition, the Mayor also agreed to:

- review the current repayment period for major works, currently at 12 months, with resident leaseholders able to extend for up to 5 years depending on ability to pay.
- provide much greater transparency on all charges and proposed major works including working with independent surveyors on the works commissioned;
- started a pre-consultation engagement process with leaseholders on the Decent Homes programme;
- Introduced a Financial Inclusion Officer to help Leaseholders who receive high bills.

8.6 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill:

Is the Mayor aware that a significant number of major developments are either underway or at planning stage on both sides of the Highway, including the London Dock, the Topps Tiles and Alan Day sites, Tobacco Dock Hotel and the Thames Tideway Tunnel. Is the Mayor also aware that at peak construction, the Thames Tideway tunnel alone will lead to an extra 82 HGV movements per day. What work has the authority carried out with TfL to assess the cumulative impact of major construction works over the next five years on the Highway in terms of traffic volume and access to Wapping, and is a clear timeline of those works available?

Response from Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

There is a significant amount of development coming forward across the Borough as a whole, and impacts on the Highway Network are robustly assessed. Each major planning application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment which assesses the impact additional trips will have on the Highway Network – both during construction and post completion. Significantly large schemes (including London Dock, Topps Tiles and Thames Tideway Tunnel) are also accompanied by an Environmental Statement, which includes a Cumulative Assessment taking into account other developments which have either been consented or are currently submitted for Planning.

Transport for London are closely linked into negotiations regarding those applications, and full details for each application in terms of construction timetable are outlined within each publicly available Environmental Statement.

It should also be noted that in terms of the proposed Thames Tideway Tunnel, the scheme has been designed to maximise the use of the river to limit the amount of heavy goods vehicle traffic using neighbourhood roads.

There has been a particular issue with construction vehicles parking and waiting in Pennington Street which Highways and Planning Officers are working to address together with major developers in the immediate area.

8.7 Question from Councillor Amina Ali

At a meeting of the Audit Committee on the 17th of March, members heard that the review of the council's contract with Veolia found there were no key performance indicators included. Does the Mayor accept that the lack of performance indicators has contributed to failings in local waste management provision?

Response from Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Clean and Green

The Council has a robust performance management contract monitoring system for its waste management functions. This was identified by Audit as an area of good practice.

The audit report was focussed on the Bulky Waste Service which forms a very small part of the contract value with Veolia that is approximately £70k per annum. The audit report assigned the service as 'substantial' assurance rating.

The Council publishes detailed performance management information on its web pages. We will continue to increase the amount of information published to demonstrate both transparency and good practice.

8.8 Question from Councillor Mohammed Ansar Mustaqim

Can the Deputy Mayor update us on the work of the appointments Committee in complying with the Secretary of State's direction on appointing the 3 statutory officers of the Council?

Response from Councillor Oliur Rahman, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Economic Development

The Appointments Sub Committee has currently dealt with the appointment of two of the statutory officers of the Council in accordance with the Secretary of State's direction. These are the Corporate Director Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the Director of Law, Probity and Governance (Monitoring Officer).

Preliminary work to recruit to these posts had been carried out by Officers but

the process was temporarily halted at the request of the Secretary of State to avoid the risk of limiting the options open to any future Commissioners appointed to oversee the recruitment process.

Following their appointment, the Secretary of State's Commissioners were given the opportunity to review the process carried out to date in respect of appointment to these two statutory posts and the process was recommenced.

This process culminated in final interviews being held on 10th March by the Appointments Sub Committee in the presence of Commissioners, and I am pleased to announce that appointments have been made to both posts.

Officers are now in the process of securing the final clearances required. Given notice periods it is expected that our new Directors will be in a position to start working with us at Tower Hamlets by mid-Summer.

With regard to the third Statutory Officer role, again a process had been started by the HR Committee but was halted at the request of the Secretary of State. Active discussions within the Council were taking place to achieve an appointment to meet the requirements of the directions, but the DLGG have written to the Council proposing a new direction and this is being awaited.

8.9 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood

Last year government launched a fair funding consultation for schools; the result is that Tower Hamlets gets more money per pupil in the next financial year than any other borough in the country at £7,007 per pupil, which is 5% or £334 more than the next highest borough Hackney. How is the Mayor intending to use the highest funding per pupil in the country?

Response from Councillor Gulam Robbani, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services

Since the introduction of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) the distribution of funding between local authorities has varied by pupil numbers and some specific targeted resources, but largely the distribution has been based on historic deprivation indices and Tower Hamlets benefitted from a higher level of per pupil funding. The Department for Education (DfE) perceive that this has produced an "unfair" distribution because the prevailing demographic circumstances for individual authorities has not been refreshed for many years, and plan to gradually move to a fairer funding formula.

In 2014/15, £350m has been allocated nationally to close the gap between authorities. In London 8 boroughs out of 32 benefitted from this, the remaining 24 boroughs including Tower Hamlets did not benefit from this as they already receive higher levels of per pupil funding. Decisions on how the DSG is spent and distributed are taken at the Tower Hamlets School Forum in line with DfE guidance, the Schools Forum is made up of governor and headteacher representatives from all the relevant sector schools (Secondary, Primary, Academy, Nursery, Special etc.).

8.10 Question from Councillor Joshua Peck

How much income was made from the use of Victoria Park for commercial events in 2014?

Response from Councillor Shafiqul Haque, Cabinet Member for Culture

The total income from commercial events in Victoria Park for the financial year 2014-15 was £409,661.

8.11 Question from Councillor Abjol Miah:

Since Labour's shameless proposals to cut funding to our valuable smoking cessation service, what actions has the Lead Member taken to promote and encourage residents to quit smoking?

Response from Councillor Abdul Asad, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services

The Lead Member for Health and Well Being portfolio includes the commissioning of stop smoking services. Following the transfer of the commissioning responsibilities for public health services to the council in 2013 all commissioned services, including the stop smoking services, were reviewed and then re-commissioned. The Lead Member for Health and Well Being has taken an active role throughout this process.

In addition the Lead Member for Health and Well Being has attended and promoted the Stop Smoking campaign launches including New Year Stop Smoking Campaigns, National Stop Smoking Days and has been invited to the re-launch of the newly commissioned services. The Lead Member has taken an active role in promoting the availability of Stop Smoking services through press releases supporting the national and local campaigns and has also attended and signed the Tobacco Declaration on the 10th March- more details of the declaration can be found here http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/news_events/news/march_2015/hwbb_sign_s_tobacco_declaration.aspx

8.12 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman

Would the Mayor inform the council how many residents used FiFiLi in the last six months, and how that compares to expectations when it was set up?

Response from Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Clean and Green

In the past six months 455 residents have utilised the FiFiLi smart phone app. This initiative is part of an on-going Council channel shift programme developed using entirely in-house expertise at no additional cost to the

council. Expectations were modest with initial first year use estimates being circa 200 users. The use of the app continues to be promoted using existing low cost / no cost channels and is assisting in reducing response times and costs where it is used.

This approach has attracted the positive attention of the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) as the Council was a finalist in this year's annual awards. In addition to this the Council has also been shortlisted for the Municipal Journal award for Innovation of channel shift.

8.13 Question from Councillor Clare Harrison

Does the Mayor support the Labour Group's campaign to ensure proper, local provision of waste management services and does he agree with the Labour Group that all options should be considered, including the possibility of bringing some parts of the waste management contract in-house?

Response from Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Clean and Green

The Council is currently developing the Waste Management Contract tenders which are due to start in 2017. These contracts will provide the best value for money service that meets the needs of our communities.

8.14 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam

Will the Lead Member for Resources note that after the criticism made about organisations receiving grants that allegedly did not meet council criteria, only three of these thirty organisations, have now judged to be underachieving, and the Commissioners have agreed to continue funding twenty-three of them?

Response from Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

As part of the original approval a number of projects (now 26 as 4 have closed) which had scored below the threshold of 40 points, within the assessment process, were awarded funding. It was agreed that these projects would need to be reassessed (and must score 40 or more, in order to determine whether they can be extended. Of the remaining 26, 16 were able to be funded following a reassessment of their scores, 10 remained unfunded.

8.15 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

Will the Mayor comment on the purpose of 4 Tower Hamlets First councillors visit to Greece, and further inform us as to why the Greek government is taking lessons in economic illiteracy from members of the Mayors economically and morally bankrupt administration?

Response from Councillor Oliur Rahman, Deputy Mayor

We know that Peter Golds and the Tories don't care about the victims of austerity in this country, so it's no surprise that he doesn't care for those worst hit by austerity elsewhere in Europe. But the facts are that across the UK and Europe there is a growing reaction to austerity politics.

We see it here with the emergence of SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon because of her anti-austerity politics, and we see it in the emergence of similar politicians and parties in other parts of Europe.

Nowhere is this as evident as in Greece where the new Syriza government has been elected on an anti-austerity programme. And it's not hard to see why. Greek society has been ripped apart by austerity: unemployment, poverty and racism had soared in Greece as a result of ordinary people being made to suffer for an economic crisis caused by a tiny elite of rich bankers and the politicians in their pockets.

One of the responses of the new Greek government is to say that citizens of Europe need to unite to make an out of touch political system in Brussels be more responsive to our needs. They are calling for a solidarity movement that stands against austerity and stands for a vision of a European Union that puts the needs of ordinary people more to the forefront.

That's why a group of councillors, trade unionists and community activists from Tower Hamlets, at their own expense and at no expense to the Council went to Greece as part of a delegation organised by the Greece Solidarity Campaign.

We are an anti-austerity council committed to joining with others in Europe to build the politics of solidarity. We want to sideline those who like immigrant bashing and want to take Britain and Europe back to the 1950's.

The visit was very informative. We met with representatives of the Greek government, anti-racist campaigners and community activists trying to rebuild Greek society that puts the needs of people before the bankers. We received a very warm response and have come back more committed to do what we can to turn the tides of austerity.

8.16 Question from Councillor Danny Hassell:

Can you confirm how many young people including those over 18 the council believe are in Syria from Tower Hamlets – what steps are being taken to prevent young people from travelling to Syria?

Response from Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Community Safety

As has been reported in the press, 4 young people from Bethnal Green Academy are believed to be in Syria. There are no other young people from Tower Hamlets that we have been made aware of being in Syria, however, the Council would only be aware that a young person was in Syria if this was reported to us. If a young person goes missing and is believed to be in Syria, and Police, parents or schools report this to us we would become aware of it at that point. Adults over 18 are unlikely to be reported missing in the same way.

The Council has promoted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice on travel to Syria and the Home Office's key messages around travelling to Syria and other conflict zones.

We have worked with Imams from local mosques who have promoted messages to parents and others advising that travelling to Syria to engage in violence goes against Islamic teachings.

Our work to try and prevent people in Tower Hamlets going to Syria includes providing training and information. This includes information packs provided to schools. There is also training coverage as part of safeguarding training to schools, and educational institutions as well as specific prevent training. The prevent training has also been delivered and is available to community groups. A tailored programme of training for youth service staff has begun and is due to be rolled out further this year. We also have an officer who works specifically with schools around extremism to ensure preventative messages are built into the school curriculum.

Casework is undertaken around individuals and families of concern via the Social Inclusion Panel (for children) and the Safeguarding Adults Risk Panel. A range of agencies and individuals can make referrals of individuals to these panels. This allows for interventions from social care, Police or other agencies to take place in order to safeguard those individuals and others.

Our 'Building Community Resilience Project' undertakes outreach and engagement work with young people to support them to develop critical thinking skills in rebutting extremism, particularly through theological counter extremist narratives

We work with mosques and madrassahs to empower and support them in safeguarding, protecting young people from extremism and challenging extremist networks. Last year, we commissioned Faith Associates to deliver specialist madrassah management and safeguarding course to over 70 local madrassah teaching staff.

We have a member of staff devoted to the parenting side of preventing extremism, enabling parents to recognise the signs of radicalisation and how they can play a crucial role in protecting their own children.

We have also produced a booklet "Keeping children and young people safe against radicalisation and extremism", which has been distributed widely amongst schools, mosques and parents and has been very well received. We have also undertaken wider promotion of the confidential Syria hotline that features in this leaflet.

Subject to funding being confirmed, we hope also to develop new pieces of work, first - projects to engage women in preventing and challenging extremism, in conjunction with our existing Violence Against Women and Girls work protecting young women from all forms of grooming and exploitation and second – projects to address the online nature of radicalisation.

As has been reported in the press, 4 young people from Bethnal Green Academy are believed to be in Syria. There are no other young people from Tower Hamlets that we have been made aware of being in Syria, however, the Council would only be aware that a young person was in Syria if this was reported to us. If a young person goes missing and is believed to be in Syria, and parents or schools report this to us we would become aware of it at that point. Adults over 18 are unlikely to be reported missing in the same way.

The Council has promoted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice on travel to Syria and the Home Office's key messages around travelling to Syria and other conflict zones.

We have worked with Imams from local mosques who have promoted messages to parents and others advising that travelling to Syria to engage in violence goes against Islamic teachings.

Our work to try and prevent people in Tower Hamlets going to Syria includes providing training and information. This includes information packs provided to schools. There is also training coverage as part of safeguarding training to schools, and educational institutions as well as specific prevent training. The prevent training has also been delivered and is available to community groups. A tailored programme of training for youth service staff has begun and is due to be rolled out further this year. We also have an officer who works specifically with schools around extremism to ensure preventative messages are built into the school curriculum.

Casework is undertaken around individuals and families of concern via the Social Inclusion Panel (for children) and the Safeguarding Adults Risk Panel. A range of agencies and individuals can make referrals of individuals to these panels. This allows for interventions from social care, Police or other agencies to take place in order to safeguard those individuals and others.

Our Building Community Resilience Project undertakes outreach and engagement work with young people to support them to develop critical thinking skills in rebutting extremist narratives.

We work with mosques and madrassahs to empower and support them in safeguarding, protecting young people from extremism and challenging extremist networks.

We have a member of staff devoted to the parenting side of preventing extremism, enabling parents to recognise the signs of radicalisation and how they can play a crucial role in protecting their own children.

We have also produced a booklet "Keeping children and young people safe against radicalisation and extremism", which has been distributed widely amongst schools, mosques and parents and has been very well received. We have also undertaken wider promotion of the confidential Syria hotline that features in this leaflet.

All of our activities in this area are set in the context of our wider work to ensure that our borough is No Place for Hate and to tackle extremism and hate crime in any form. Much of this activity is undertaken in partnership with the Police and community leaders, including the East London Mosque and Council of Mosques. We also have a strong track record of working with schools and community groups, including the Interfaith Forum and Rainbow Hamlets, promoting messages of community cohesion and celebrating our borough's diversity through the communications channels we have available to us.

Subject to funding being confirmed, we hope also to develop new pieces of work, first - projects to engage women in preventing and challenging extremism, in conjunction with our existing Violence Against Women and Girls work protecting young women from all forms of grooming and exploitation and second – projects to address the online nature of some radicalisation.

8.17 Question from Councillor Shah Alam

Can the Cabinet Member for Resources update us about council services provision for residents on Fish Island area of the borough?

Response from Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

The Council adopted the Fish Island Area Action Plan in September 2012, immediately before the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) became the local planning authority for this part of the borough. An examination in public has recently concluded into the LLDC's own proposed Local Plan for this area. The borough made representations to the examination with regard to the provision of infrastructure, schools, housing and waste management. The Examiner's report is now awaited.

There are many council services that operate not just in the immediate area of Fish Island but also in local adjacencies that are available to all LBTH residents. As part of the Council's Strategic Planning there is a site allocation for a new primary school in Neptune Wharf.

The residents of Fish Island enjoy the same services / service provision as residents across the borough.

Improving access and safety through pedestrian and road safety measures and environmental improvements including:

- Footway improvements such as those at Dace Road and Monier Road
- Resurfacing and installation of illuminated handrails to the Fish Island footbridges
- Underpass works and new zebra crossing to Wick Lane

Victoria Park is a key green space for Fish Island residents. There has been significant investment in the park, its facilities and recreational provision, with works continuing through 2015. These include:

- Lakes cleaned, replanted and restocked, reinstated cascade, wind powered oxygenation system and new boreholes for water supplies
- Boat hire re-established on the west lake
- New disabled parking bays around east lake
- New signage with information display panels at all entrances
- Re-designed and re-stocked old English Garden with water feature
- New bedding plant areas and mirror pools water feature created around the restored Burdett Coutts memorial
- Creation of an outdoor classroom and beehive workshop
- Restoration of the Bonner Bridge and Dogs of Alcibiades all with new information panels
- New designed and refurbished Pools and V&A playgrounds both with water play features
- Refurbished west pavilion toilet block
- New designed & constructed Hub Building with public toilets, restaurant and community hall
- New designed V&A building with community hall
- New designed and constructed Chinese pagoda west park
- Two resurfaced and bay marked out car parks one east one west
- Carriageways resurfaced
- Major events which in turn generate income supporting 70 free community events throughout the year such as the 'Great Day Out'
- CCTV installation throughout the east park. Phase two west park being carried out 2015/16
- 70 new trees planted. Phase 2 planting being carried out 2015/16
- New park bench and bin installation programme completed
- Upgrading of cricket, tennis
- Newly installed Wheel Park Arena
- Football / cricket changing room being demolished and rebuilt on existing footprint starting July 2015.

8.18 Question from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs:

What are the levels of council tax arrears experienced by families in Tower Hamlets and what measures has the lead member put in place to safeguard children from damaging debt collection practices?

Response from Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

The Civica Open Revenues system does not hold details of the makeup of households so levels of arrears of these particular cases cannot be reported.

However, the collection process includes a number of notices that provide details of where help can be obtained to understand the process and what can be done to come to an arrangement to pay what is owed. The council will also make arrangements to avoid any enforcement action being taken.

The Council's Corporate Debt Recovery Policy also details what action must be taken in cases where vulnerability is identified.

Bailiffs must follow a strict code of conduct agreed with the Council and act in accordance with the National Standards for Enforcement Agents and Tower Hamlets Bailiff Code of Practice.

Bailiffs must seek approval from the Council prior to the removal of goods from a debtor's home.

We will follow the **principles of enforcement** outlined below:

- our action will be **proportional** – we will strike a balance between the potential loss of income to the Council and the costs of taking a course of action
- our approach will be **consistent** – with the aim of achieving consistency in the advice we give, the use of our powers and in the recovery procedures we use
- our actions will be **transparent** – to help customers to understand what is expected of them and to explain the reasons for taking any enforcement action

It must be remembered that the Council has a statutory duty to collect Council Tax but where any type of vulnerability is identified, all reasonable offers of payment will be considered and will be preferred to any enforcement action.

8.19 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed:

Will the Lead Member concerned commend the Council for upholding the Joiners' Arms Asset of Community Value status in spite of reported pressure from external bodies, and reaffirm this administration's commitment to preserving the heritage of all communities in our borough?

Response from Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

The application to have the Joiners Arms listed as an Asset of Community Value was dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act.

8.20 Question from Councillor John Pierce:

What investigations have the Council carried out on the impact of providing another 1,000 parking spaces on its pledge to make Tower Hamlets London's most cycle friendly borough?

Response from Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Clean and Green

The introduction of the additional parking spaces is being managed to ensure that road safety is not compromised. Safety assessment is built in to every new bay proposal and this includes impact on cyclists. Parking provision is not intrinsically unsafe and under-provision of parking in areas of high demand can encourage dangerous parking behaviour and increase risk to cyclists and pedestrians. In a borough experiencing unprecedented levels of growth the challenge is to strike a balance between vehicle parking provision and sustainable transport promotion.

In parallel, additional cycle parking facilities continue to be introduced at a rate of over 150 p.a. helping to improve convenience for cyclists and work towards making the borough London's most cycle friendly borough. The majority of these are on the footway or in private spaces, rather than in the carriageway itself.

8.21 Question from Councillor Mohammed Maium Miah:

Could the Lead Member for Housing inform us if there is a relationship between the major repair works and other issues being faced by Leaseholders and Housing Stock
Transfer decision taken by a previous Council administration in the Borough?

Response from Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

In the past the Council as a public body, was subject to restrictions on how much it was able to borrow to fund housing refurbishment and maintenance projects. As a result, in the 1980's and 1990's the investment in the maintenance of the housing stock was limited to the funding available.

In July 2000, following its spending review, the national government announced a significant increase in resources for housing, laying the foundation for the Decent Homes programme.

The Housing Choice programme (2001 to 2008) of stock transfer to Registered Social Landlords, who have more freedom to borrow money to pay for these works, was the Council's favoured vehicle for delivering Decent Homes and securing service improvement for residents. Housing choice levered in £440m for improvement works on transferred estates. However

residents on over 90 estates opted to remain with the Council.

At the time the only other route to achieving the Decent Homes Standard was to establish an ALMO, and following resident consultation which was broadly in support, the Council established Tower Hamlets Homes and applied for a place on the Governments ALMO funding programme. The estimated cost of refurbishing the remaining stock to meet the Decent Homes Standard was projected to be £444m, with only half covered by available Council funding.

Following Audit Commission inspection in November 2010, which assessed the housing service provided by THH as a good 'two star' service with promising prospects for improvement, the Council was awarded £94.5 million towards its Decent Homes works, and has since been awarded a further £13 million in backlog funding.

Leaseholders are required to contribute their share of the cost of Major Works under the terms of their lease. The Council and THH do understand, however, that the cost of these works can be onerous and offer a range of payment options including interest free payment periods, extended payment periods and service charge loans.

8.22 Question from Councillor Helal Uddin:

Does council have any predictions of how many families will be affected once Universal Credit is operating in the borough?

Response from Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources

The DWP originally estimated that just under 2,500 live Universal Credit claims would be made in the first year of rolling out Universal Credit within our area.

However, since then some Tower Hamlets postcodes originally proposed to be included in the roll out have now been left out which may mean less Universal Credit claims than originally estimated by DWP will be made.

The initial roll-out will only involve single adults (rather than families) who make a new claim for an unemployment benefit on or after 2nd March 2015.

However, not all single adults will be affected and the following residents will not claim Universal Credit:

- Carer's, couples, or anyone with dependent children.
- People making a claim for Employment and Support Allowance or anyone appealing a decision, or in the mandatory reconsideration period.
- People who have left the UK for a continuous period of more than four weeks in the last two years (habitual resident test).

- People who do not have a current account with a bank, Post Office or credit union.
- People who are homeless or living in supported or temporary accommodation.

The Tower Hamlets postcodes where Universal Credit will apply include

City Tower Job Centre:

Universal Credit Postcodes:

E1 0, E1 1, E1 2, E1 3, E1 4, E1 5, E1 7, E1 8

Poplar Job Centre:

Universal Credit Postcodes:

E14, E3 4, E3 5, E3 9

8.23 Question from Councillor Marc Francis:

Will the Lead Member for Housing & Development set out the action she has taken since the Full Council meeting in September 2014 agreed that it did not support Gateway Housing's proposed redevelopment of Vic Johnson House and what the outcome has been?

Response from Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

The Lead Member for Housing has met with the Chief Executive of Gateway Housing Association to discuss their plans for Vic Johnson House. Gateway set out their plans for the block which they have committed to revise following the concerns raised at September 2014 Full Council.

Since the Full Council meeting in September 2014 the following developments have taken place:

Gateway held a positive meeting with residents in January 2015 and the meeting covered the following areas:

- Update from the architects on how the previous points raised by the residents have been integrated into the new plans.
- Comments were taken on board about too many doors to the bedrooms and it was agreed to go away and review this in light of what is required to ensure all residents have as much flexibility on the use of space in the future;
- Comments were taken on board about good sized windows for west facing flats;
- It was understood that there was a need to retain some form of laundry facility during the construction process;
- Tenants have been offered indicative information on rents and service charges for the new flats;

- The layout in the communal room on the ground floor of VJH was set out to help residents visualise the size of the rooms;
- A visit for residents to a new older persons scheme has been organised to review the specification and quality of flats and communal areas to help influence for the look and feel of VJH;

Gateway intends to submit revised plans for Planning permission in June 2015.

8.24 Question from Councillor Rachel Blake:

What has the Mayor done to secure a supermarket on Roman Road at the former Safeways/Morrisons site?

Response from Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing and Development

The original planning permission was granted for the redevelopment of the Safeways/Morrisons site in 2009 and various applications have been made to discharge conditions attached to that consent until the summer of last year.

Officers are working to secure the expeditious opening of the new supermarket.

8.25 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders:

What more can the Mayor do to stop constant fly tipping on glass, bricks and other building materials at the corner of Ropery Street, very near a local school?

Response from Councillor Shahed Ali, Cabinet Member for Clean and Green

The Council is committed to reducing fly tipping and takes action against those who commit environmental crimes. In the past year the council has issued 2,808 Fixed Penalty Notices for such offences as littering and fly tipping.

There have been four reports in the past year for fly tipping in Ropery Street. Only one of which related to glass, bricks and other building materials. Unfortunately there was no evidence found to pursue enforcement action.

The Council's 'Find it Fix it Love it' smart phone app is a quick and easy way to report these types of issues to facilitate any clean up and we would encourage residents to use it. Similarly if residents have any information regarding the perpetrators of dumping in any location they are invited to provide it to the Council and it will be followed up.

Appendix B - Agenda Item 11.1: Revised draft programme of meetings 1 May 2015 - 30 June 2016

| | (Usual Day) | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN |
|---|---------------------|----------|-----------|--------|-----|-----------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|-------------|--------|----------|-----|
| Appointments Sub-Committee | 5:00 pm Monday | | | 14, 28 | | 28 | 12 | 23 | 7 | | 1, 15 | | 25 | 9 | |
| Audit Committee | 7.00 pm Tuesday | | 30 | | | 24 | | | 8 | | | 22 | | | |
| Cabinet | 5.30 pm Wednesday | 13* | 24 | 29 | | 2 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 11 | 22+ |
| Council | 7.30 pm Wednesday | 20 (AGM) | | 22 | | 16 | | 18 | | 20 | 24 | 3, 23 | | 18 (AGM) | |
| Corp. Parenting Steering Group | N/A | | | 9 | | | 8 | | | 14 | | | 21 | | |
| Development Committee | 7.00 pm Wednesday | 14* | 10 | 8 | 6 | 3, 30 | 28 | 25 | 16 | 13 | 10 | 9 | 6, 27 | | 1+ |
| Employee Appeals/ Sub Committee | 6.00 pm Monday | 11* | 15 | 27 | | 7 | 12 | 16 | 14 | 18 | 22 | | 11 | | |
| General Purposes Committee | 6.30 pm Wednesday | | 24 | | | 24(Th) | | | 9 | | | 16 | | | |
| Health Scrutiny Panel | 6.30 pm Tuesday | | 10 (W) | | | 9 (W) | | | 9 (W) | | 17 (W) | | 20 (W) | | |
| Human Resources Committee | 7.30 pm Wednesday | | | 1 | | | 28 | | | 27 | | | 13 | | |
| King George's Field Charity Board | Afternoon Wednesday | | | 29 | | | 21 | | | 13 | | | 6 | | |
| Licensing Committee | 7.00 pm Tuesday | | 9 | | | | 6 | | 8 | | | 8 | | | |
| Licensing Sub Committee | 6.30 pm Tuesday | 12* | 2, 16, 30 | 14, 28 | 18 | 1, 15, 29 | 13, 27 | 10, 24 | 3 (Th), 15 | 12, 26 | 9, 23 | 10 (Th), 22 | 5, 19 | 10, 31+ | |
| Overview & Scrutiny Committee | 7.15 pm Tuesday | 12* | 23 | 28 | | 1 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 5, 18^ | 2, 8^ | 1 | 5 | 10 | 21+ |
| Pensions Board | Same night as PC | | 11 | | | 17 | | 26 | | | | 10 | | | |
| Pensions Committee | 7.00 pm Thursday | | 11 | | | 17 | | 26 | | | | 10 | | | |
| Standards (Advisory) Committee | 7.30 pm Tuesday | | 2 | | | 8 | | 24 | | | | 15 | | | |
| Strategic Development Committee | 7.00 pm Thursday | | 4 | 16 | 27 | | 8 | 19 | | 7 | 18 | 31 | | 12 | 23+ |
| Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board | 5.00 pm Tuesday | | 16 | | | 15 | | 17 | | 12 | | 15 | | | |
| Provisional Member Development Training Dates | 6:30pm Tuesday | | | 7 | 11 | 22 | 20 | 10 | 15 | 19 | 9 | 29 | 19 | | |