

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS****MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL****HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 22 JULY 2015****THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5  
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG****Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs	Councillor Clare Harrison
Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed	Councillor Danny Hassell
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Mahbub Alam	Councillor Shiria Khatun
Councillor Shah Alam	Councillor Abjol Miah
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Abdul Asad	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Craig Aston	Councillor Md. Maium Miah
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Chris Chapman	Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim
Councillor Dave Chesterton	Councillor Joshua Peck
Councillor Gulam Kibria 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
Councillor Shafiqul Haque	

The meeting commenced at 7.34 p.m.

**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.
- Items 5.1- 5.3 – Petitions for presentation

- Item 13.1 – Urgent Motion regarding One Housing Group
- Items 5.4– Petition for debate.
- Item 6 – Public Questions.
- Item 7 – Mayor’s Report.
- Item 8 – Members Questions.
- Item 9.1 – Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Item 11.1 - Amended Regulations: Dismissal Process for Statutory Officers
- Item 11.2 - Review of proportionality and allocation of places on the committees and panels of the Council
- Item 12.1 - Motion regarding the Constitutional Working Group

The Speaker opened the meeting and wished all Eid Mubarak following the the end of Ramadan.

Prior to commencing the Council’s formal business, the Speaker referred to two tragic events that had occurred since the last meeting of the Council.

Firstly, Members would be aware of the awful accident that occurred on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July in Mile End Park resulting in the death of a young local girl, Alexia Walenkaki. It was understood that a full investigation was underway into the circumstances of the accident.

Secondly, Members would recall the terrible event that took place three weeks earlier in Tunisia on 26<sup>th</sup> June, when more than 30 tourists, mostly from Britain, were murdered in a mass shooting.

He invited the Council to stand and observe a minute’s silence in memory of the innocent lives lost.

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Asma Begum
- Councillor Shahed Ali
- Councillor Mohammed Mufti Miah

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

Councillor Candida Ronald declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5.3, Petition entitled ‘Stop the destruction of long standing communities on the Isle of Dogs’; and a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 13.1, urgent motion regarding One Housing; as she was a tenant of One Housing and was also Chair of the Samuda Estate Local Management Organisation. Councillor Ronal left the meeting during consideration of Agenda Item 13.1.

Councillor Mohammed Maium Miah declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5.3, Petition entitled ‘Stop the destruction of long standing communities

on the Isle of Dogs'; and a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 13.1, urgent motion regarding One Housing; as he was an Area Board Member for Island Housing Group, part of the One Housing Group and a leaseholder of a One Housing property. Councillor Miah left the meeting during consideration of item Agenda Item 13.1

Councillor Oliur Rahman declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5.3, Petition entitled 'Stop the destruction of long standing communities on the Isle of Dogs'; and a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 13.1, urgent motion regarding One Housing; as he was a tenant of One Housing. Councillor Rahman left the meeting during consideration of Agenda Item 13.1.

Councillor Ohid Ahmed declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5.3 Petition entitled 'Stop the destruction of long standing communities on the Isle of Dogs' as he was a Board Member for a Registered Provider.

Councillor David Edgar declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Item 13.1, Urgent Motion regarding One Housing Group as his wife had a leasehold interest a One Housing property. Councillor Edgar left the meeting during consideration of this motion.

### 3. MINUTES

#### RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015 and 24<sup>th</sup> June 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

The Speaker welcomed to their first council meeting both the Authority's new Acting Director of Adult Services, Luke Addams; and the new Interim Corporate Director of Children's Services, Debbie Jones.

On behalf of the Council, the Speaker also thanked Meic Sullivan-Gould, who would shortly leave the Authority, for his services as Interim Monitoring Officer since January 2014

#### **Procedural Motion**

Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved** and Councillor Mahbub Alam **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.5, Rule 13.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion regarding 'Trees and Death of a Child in Local Park – Safety of Young Children and Residents in our Parks' to be considered". The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

## **5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS**

### **5.1 Petition regarding major works at Lister House and Treves House, E1**

Ms Khaleda Maleque addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Performance, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He outlined the aims of the Decent Homes Programme and the anticipated costs and the timetable for the works to the blocks. A full options appraisal had been commissioned in the interest of best value and the survey should be completed by the end of August. Every effort had been made to keep residents informed of developments. The Council was also reviewing its policy on the leaseholder repayment period. A report on this matter would be submitted to Cabinet later this year.

#### **RESOLVED**

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

### **5.2 Petition regarding the Council's service to the local community**

Mr Muhammad Haque addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members.

Mayor John Biggs then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He reported on his commitment to examining, along with the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council's democratic process to ensure that it was open to scrutiny, decision makers were held to account and to ensure services were delivered effectively amongst other aims.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the petition be referred to the Directorate of Law Probity and Governance for a written response on any outstanding matters within 28 days.

### **5.3 Petition entitled 'Stop the destruction of long standing communities on the Isle of Dogs'**

Mr Arthur Coppin addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members.

Mayor John Biggs then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He expressed sympathy for the petitioners concerns. He also reported on his plans to attend a meeting with the Chief Executive of One Housing and that

he was working with Councillors across the political spectrum to address 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 Dave Chesterton **moved**, and Councillor Andrew Cregan **seconded**, a procedural motion “that under Procedure Rule 14.1.5, Rule 13.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion regarding ‘One Housing Group’ to be considered”. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

#### **5.4 Petition Debate - TUSH Housing Co-op, Bruce Road, E3.**

An updated report for this item including officers comments was tabled at the meeting.

The Service Head, Democratic Services advised the Council that a petition containing 2,369 signatures regarding TUSH Housing Co-op, Bruce Road, E3 had been brought to the Council for debate under the provisions of the Petition Scheme. The text of the petition was set out in the report circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

Mr Andy Erlam addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and the Council then debated the matters raised by the petition.

### **Procedural Motion**

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved**, and Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed **seconded**, a procedural motion – “That under Procedure Rule 14.1.14, Rule 13.1 be suspended to allow an urgent motion regarding TUSH Housing Petition”

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

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved**, and Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed **seconded**, the urgent motion [text of motion as set out in the resolution below].

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

**RESOLVED**

This Council notes:

- That a petition was received containing 2,369 signatures on the subject of TUSH Housing Co-op in Bruce Road, E3.

This Council believes:

- That the petitioners have significant support and that therefore their case should be considered.

This Council resolves:

- To call on the Mayor to look closely at this situation and carefully consider the decision made by the previous Mayor.

**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:-

**6.1 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 Mayor John Biggs**

The formal answer is that the Council set its policy in 1996 at the Planning and Environmental Services Committee and at the Policy and Information Committee an associated decision of February 2000 amended the procedure to require periodic review and so there are periodic reviews and I certainly

have been petitioned about them by constituents down the years as well. There needs to be a process of review and also a process so you can appeal and challenge that. I think in a Borough where parking is such a massively political issue it's important that people have a right to have such decisions reviewed. It's quite wrong to say that Councillors individually make decisions about this though. It's a Council policy which is to review these allocations from time to time. I would be very surprised if large numbers were withdrawn and certainly the decision I think preceded my election but I might be wrong about that.

### **Supplementary question from Ms Kathy McTasney**

Why would an Officer commission an external Occupational Therapist (OT) to come and assess my daughter for her mobility when the OT arrived and saw my daughter she then said she didn't know why she was sent. I asked the Council to look at the facts. Officer trying to remove the bay, sends external OT to assess a severely disabled person who is 2-1 care. Officer wanting to refuse blue badge so as to remove the bay. This is clearly discrimination and you have to take responsibility for these actions

### **Mayor John Biggs' response to the supplementary question**

I am very happy to go away and to review the way the policy is being implemented. As I understand it, part of the driver behind this has been that the previous Mayor - and I am not making a political point about this - but he set a policy of trying to try to create additional ordinary parking spaces in the Borough which led to Officers reviewing a lot of these disabled spaces and it could be that in some cases people no longer need them. But I would be surprised if in the majority of cases they did not continue to need those spaces. So I am happy to go away and review what's happened and see if we can better implement a policy which is there to serve people, particularly vulnerable people in our community. I know Ms McTasney and I am happy to follow this up outside the meeting

### **6.2 Question from Mr Dean Morrison, representing Leaseholders of Tower Hamlets (LTH)**

Can LBTH offer the Leaseholders of Tower Hamlets (LTH), as sole representative of leaseholders within LBTH properties, a permanent venue in which to conduct their business, and can LBTH provide LTH with any grants or monies taken from the Right to Buy receipts that will enable LTH to fund its activities?

### **Response by Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management & Performance**

Thank you Mr Speaker and thank you Mr Morrison for your question. I am happy to engage with leaseholders on issues about housing services and to support them in their endeavours to improve the service. I have asked Tower Hamlets Homes to seek to facilitate LTH meetings wherever possible. The

Council has a process of advertising vacancies in community buildings which can be shared with LTH. Right to Buy receipts can only be used to fund new housing supply and therefore unfortunately cannot be used for LTH activities. However, you can apply for other relevant grants as they are advertised.

(No supplementary question was put)

### **6.3 Question from Mr Geoff Juden, Chairman, The East London Garden Society:**

I would like to put a question to full council on the advisability of felling 22 trees along the Mile End Road, by TfL, pursuant to the progress of a cycle highway.

I would request the council insist, noting the health concerns in the borough, that TfL either not fell the said trees, replace the trees, or have a concerted planting programme, with specialist plants and regular maintenance, in order to offset the air pollution created with the felling of the trees. Trees are the most effective method nature has in cleansing the air, therefore with 7,500 Londoners dying this year from air pollution, we should all do what we are able to improve our population's lung quality?

### **Response by Mayor John Biggs**

Very briefly, we discussed this before, myself and Mr Juden, and I am very pleased that he has brought this to the Council. Council Officers have been talking to TfL about replacing the trees. What he does not mention is of course is that of the 22 trees, 3 of them are actually mature trees, they were massive things which clearly can't be replaced and their loss is a greater loss, in my opinion, than the other 19 which are relatively less mature trees and can be replaced. Up until now TfL have only identified sites for 4, I think, of the replacement trees and the Council are pressing them to find the other 18 holes that they can place trees into and this may include adjoining Council land but trust me we are very committed to ensuring that the Borough maintains its tree cover and increases it.

### **Supplementary question from Mr Geoff Juden**

There are many ways in which you can plant trees. You can put trees in tubs on pavements. We can have a whole planting programme with specialist planting operations. I would urge this Council to involve the local community organisations who are also involved with the redressing of air pollution in this Borough, to have an understanding of what they can do. It's not just about replacing the trees but about having a planting programme that you can engineer a very satisfactory solution for everyone.

### **Mayor John Biggs' response to the supplementary question**

I agree with you.



### **6.5 Question from Ms Shuily Akthar**

How many Free School Dinners were served since its introduction and how many children have benefited?

#### **Response by Councillor Rachael Saunders, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services**

I hope to be able to work with Officers now to improve the tracking of free school meals. But in summary there are three schemes in operation. There is the Mayor's Meals Scheme in 2014 which provided meals for reception year one pupils; the Government's Universal Infants Free School Meals scheme also in 2014 for reception year one and two pupils; and the Tower Hamlets Universal junior free school meal scheme from the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 which was for years 3-6. Unfortunately it has not been possible to give me a cumulative figure for all of these schemes. However, in January 2015 there were 6632 pupils in years 3-6 who wouldn't normally be eligible for free school meals but who have that opportunity because of the programme that was brought in by this Council.

I was in the Labour Group in 2009 when Councillors including Carlo Gibbs and Motin Uz-Zaman and others, who are sitting here today, asked the then Leader of the Council, Luftur Rahman to include free school meals in his budget that year and he refused. He said that there was no money. I was also here when, as part of the John Biggs election campaign, we fought very hard in this Council Chamber for free school meals and after a lot of campaigning and lot of hard work, Luftur Rahman finally agreed and it was introduced. This Labour Administration is absolutely committed to continuing with the Labour Policy, implemented before us in Newham and Islington. Please be assured that this is a policy that we have fought hard for and we will continue to implement.

#### **Supplementary question from Ms Shuily Akthar**

Will the current Mayor please tell me if you intend to carry on the University Grants in Tower Hamlets?

#### **Summary of Councillor Rachael Saunders' response to the supplementary question**

The grants continue to be funded this year. We are reviewing how to make the programmes as effective as possible.

#### **Procedural Motion**

Following the consideration of question 6.5, Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved**, and Councillor Rabina Khan **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.5, Rule 13.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion regarding the 'Tory Government's Welfare Reform Bill' to be considered".

The Speaker agreed that the meeting would adjourn briefly for five minutes to allow Members to consider the tabled motion. Following which, the procedural motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

#### **6.7 Question from Mr John Allison**

Could Mr Biggs tell me the number of strategic and regeneration developments on site giving the Borough the potential for much needed housing, infrastructure and community benefits?

#### **Response by Mayor John Biggs**

It depends on one's definition, but there are at least half a dozen such regeneration schemes on site in the Borough that I am aware of and there are many others in preparation. We are happy to discuss them with local communities and their possibilities and threats at the same time.

#### **Supplementary question from Mr John Allison**

I wanted to give credit and I wonder if the Mayor would acknowledge that to the contribution that the last Lead Member for Housing made to ensuring that there are enough suitable sites for future regeneration and housing within the Borough. So it's just an acknowledgment to all the work that was done by Mrs Khan around this problem that the Borough has.

#### **Mayor John Biggs' response to the supplementary question**

I think that Councillor Rabina Khan made a very positive contribution on the previous debate about the housing co-operative and I want to take her positive contributions down the years in the light in which they were made. Clearly there are many other things that she has been responsible for which and I am less enamoured of but these meetings are not here for us to assassinate each other's characters, they are there for us to discuss the future of our Borough.

One of the things that worries me enormously about the regeneration schemes, about which there have been many boasts, is the issue of what I would call real affordability where we talk about affordable housing but very often the housing that is supposedly affordable simply isn't affordable for the people on the sorts of incomes that many people in our Borough have. So we have affordable home ownership schemes with six, seven hundred thousand pounds on their price tag and that is clearly not affordable. We have affordable rented properties at formula rents which are £200 a week or more for a one bedroom or smaller property and those properties I think we need to examine very closely our regeneration policies to ensure we are really addressing the needs and demands within our communities.

Questions 6.4, 6.6 and 6.8 were not put due to the absence of the questioners. The Service Head, Democratic Services stated that written responses would be provided to the questions. (Note: The written responses are included in Appendix 'A' to these minutes.)

## 7. MAYOR'S REPORT

### Procedural Motion

Before the consideration of the Mayor's report, Councillor Craig Aston **moved**, and Councillor Chris Chapman **seconded**, a procedural motion "that Procedure Rule 2.1.7 be suspended to enable the Mayor to address the meeting for a maximum of eight minutes and to allow Group Leaders to respond for up to three minutes". The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

The Mayor made his report to the Council, referring to his written report that was included in the agenda and summarising some his actions over the past period, current reviews and aspirations for the future

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

## 8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

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

### 8.1 Question from Councillor Danny Hassell

Does the Mayor intend to provide some form of monthly report detailing engagements and other important town hall business undertaken?

#### **Response by Mayor John Biggs**

Yes, I intend to produce a regular report to these meeting and also to work with the Constitutional Working Party to see how we can better improve the accountability of the Mayor which is after all a fairly powerful position.

(No supplementary question was put)

### 8.2 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman to the Mayor and his Cabinet

Will you be carrying on with the Whitechapel Vision project and the move of the current Town Hall to the heart of community in Whitechapel as part of key

jigsaw piece of wider regeneration, as initiated by the previous Mayor's administration?

### **Response by Mayor John Biggs**

Yes, I support the Whitechapel Master Plan and the vision for the area but we are looking at the costings and alternative proposals for a Town Hall as we think it's our responsibility to do that. We welcome that the previous Mayor secured the site at Whitechapel as it's an attractive site but we need to look at the numbers to see whether it's the best site in terms of the interests of the Borough and the other uses to which those monies could be applied as it is quite an expensive option. There may be other options which are more affordable. We need to balance questions of access and costs against each other and look at the other things that we may be able to do for local people.

### **Supplementary question from Councillor Oliur Rahman**

Would you support a new town hall in Whitechapel - yes or no? Or are you planning to move the town hall to Cambridge Heath Road, the old council building?

### **Mayor John Biggs' response to supplementary question**

If the numbers work, then yes.

### **8.3 Question from Councillor Amina Ali**

Mr Mayor, how many community events or visits have you undertaken since taking office?

### **Response by Mayor John Biggs**

By my estimate, I have attended 31 community events from 15<sup>th</sup> June 2015 to 12<sup>th</sup> July 2015 and that does not include other visits to partner organisations. I intend to try and make one visit each day but anyone who has occupied the position of Leader or Mayor will know that the demands on your time are such that this is not always possible.

(No supplementary question was put)

### **8.4 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood**

Developers are proposing to provide much needed new schools at Wood Wharf, Westferry and Wapping print works but there is no indication yet who will operate those new schools. The Mayor will be aware that current legislation requires that new school sites can only be occupied by academy and free school providers.

Will the Mayor be using his powers under Section 6A of the 2011 Education Act to encourage the highest quality applicants for these new sites or will they be left empty?

**Response by Councillor Rachael Saunders, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services**

Of course the Mayor will use every power available to him to ensure that all school provisions including the schools on this site will meet the highest possible quality standards. At present, there is no confirmed development timetable and the decision on commissioning the places will be part of the programme of decisions to procure the buildings and to mobilise for the agreed opening date of the new school places.

There is a need to bring forward development of the new schools. Any blockages under the previous Mayor need to end. Many of us don't support this ideologically drive behind the current Government agenda. We support collaboration and cooperation not competition.

Education for our children is what matters and that will never be sacrificed for political gain. The problems with school places shortages, whilst clearly acute on the Isle of Dogs, affects all of our Borough and has to be resolved.

(No supplementary question was put)

**8.5 Question from Councillor Rajib Ahmed**

Will the Mayor update the council on how he aims to build a culture of transparency within the council?

**Response by Mayor John Biggs**

In my election campaign, I gave a very clear pledge to be to be open and transparent. Indeed I've done work in this area at City Hall in my other job soon to come to an end.

This evening I presented as part of this, my first written report which I will do regularly and last week I attended my first meeting of the O&S committee which I will attend regularly, hopefully not to the point they get fed up of seeing me. But I think it's important to be transparent and that means being accountable for decisions that you will be making. I expect Cabinet Members who will be involved in decision making to do the same.

In an addition, I want to produce over the summer what I call a transparency protocol which is a description of the ways in which the Mayoralty can be more transparent. I am really keen to work in partnership with the Chair of O&S to secure this and to allow Councillors to insert their ideas into the way this works as well. I know that Councillor John Pierce as Chair of O&S wants to make this a priority for this Committee and there is room for both of us in this direction.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Rajib Ahmed**

I'm very pleased you have been speaking so many times. In the past the ex-Mayor has stopped the Speaker of Council using the Council Chamber to carry out their duties. Can you assure us that you are going to let the Speaker carry out his duties using the Council Chamber and if any Councillors need to do that?

**Mayor John Biggs' response to the supplementary question**

That is an important supplemental question. It's not one of those hard hitting Executive Functions about whether we build houses in one place or schools or whatever. But I think the dignity of the Council is very clearly represented by the Speaker of the Council and the office they hold and the way they represent the Council around the Borough. So one of the decisions that I have made is about (a) reducing the size of my office physically and also (b) re-providing a parlour for the Speaker of the Council to entertain people and which may occasionally be used by myself and other people receiving delegations.

It's important that the Council has a presentable shop front and we show respect and dignity to the office holder. In some Boroughs the elected Mayor, wears the chain I won't be doing that. I think it's a healthy relationship having a civic mayor or speaker who wears the regalia. I do quite like the Stepney one but I'm not that vain to wear it.

**8.6 Question from Councillor Abjol Miah**

Can our New Tower Hamlets Executive Mayor confirm whether he intends to continue with the long awaited demand by Tower Hamlets residents for a reduced cost Community Burial Service for the most needy poor, and if so does he intend to make any changes to the scheme?

**Response by Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management & Performance.**

Before I respond can I welcome Councillor Abjol Miah as a new independent, Independent Member of this Council.

The Mayor and I have discussed this issue. The Council has entered into long-term management agreement for a period of 125 years with the memorial property investment Ltd Kendal Park Cemetery Chislehurst, Kent which will provide 3000 burial plots and the purpose of the agreement is to provide a multi-faith burial service of reduced costs to residents in the Borough. There are no plans at this time to vary the agreement. Officers reviewing the operational implications of the agreement will advise on the specific implications shortly.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Abjol Miah**

How soon will this service be made available for Tower Hamlets residents?

**Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management & Performance's response to the supplementary question.**

The service is already operational. I have visited the site myself last month and there were already some burials taking place.

**8.7 Question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar to the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Can the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee tell the Council what themes his committee will be considering this year?

**Response by Councillor John Pierce, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

As Chair of Overview and Scrutiny this year you will hear me say mainly three words, transparency, transparency and transparency. This Council will need to make very difficult decisions over the next few years and I'm keen to ensure that O&S helps to ensure that these decisions are made in an transparent and open way in public with clear reasons provided not in private behind closed door.

All political parties made pledges during the elections we must now deliver on this. That's why on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July, O&S will launch a transparency commission working with Members, officers, political parties inside and outside of the chamber, local groups and most importantly residents. We will bring forward proposals to the Mayor and his Cabinet for a new settlement to bring this Council back on track to become a beacon of transparency in this country.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar**

Can you clarify the agenda and who will be attending the next committee?

**Councillor John Pierce, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's response to the supplementary question**

Well, I've set the agenda, and I've invited a few people to come along. When we think about transparency a few names in this Borough come to our minds so that's why I've invited citizens and journalists such as Ted Jeory and the editor of 'Love Wapping' to come along and give their views on how they have been holding us all to account and the reality of their experiences with the administration and the fun they had over the last few years.

We will also ask licensing officers to come along to discuss issues around making licensing decisions more open in public. We will also ask planning officers to come along to discuss the key issue for residents and Members of the Committee at the moment which is lack of information and lack of visual content for us to make informed decisions. But also to discuss the big issue for London and Councils like ourselves which is the viability assessments and making them in public. Freedom of information is also very important.

#### **8.8 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan to the Mayor and his Cabinet**

Will Mayor Biggs refuse a Compulsory Purchase Order for East End Homes, if they seek to demolish Holland Estate?

#### **Response by Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development**

As you probably know East End Homes has not brought forward a request for a CPO on the Holland Estate. If they did we would have to carefully consider the merits of the case put forward but if the proposal was along the lines that the residents and we have all seen, we would have to seriously question if the proposal met the regeneration, social and affordability objectives of this administration.

#### **Supplementary question from Councillor Rabina Khan**

Previously we heard from petitioners who came to Full Council regarding Holland Estate. However, the answer you have given Councillor Blake doesn't actually clarify whether if, in the event they sought a CPO for the demolition of Holland Estate, that you would reject it?

#### **Councillor Rachel Blake's response to the supplementary question**

Councillor Khan, as you know we would have to consider the merits of any request in the same way we would for any Housing Association. I haven't yet found out if you ruled it out entirely. And so as I've said we would be under an obligation to consider the full merits and we would have to seriously question whether or not the proposals that they have brought forward met the objectives of this administration.

#### **8.9 Question from Councillor Denise Jones:**

Can the Mayor update the Council on his plans to reduce the size of the Mayoral office?

#### **Response by Mayor John Biggs**

We are still consulting on a structure but it won't involve the team of advisers the previous Mayor had and in particular, if we are going to be an effective



Council, we should work with the policy advice that exists for the rest of the Council. It seems clearer to me that the previous Mayor for whatever reason almost had a duplicate set of advisers. There's a very good policy function in the Council that the Mayor should be using.

I thought you would be asking me about the money saving for the Council. I don't know what they will be but I'd be disappointed if we didn't save more than £250,000 in the running of the Mayor's Office. That's separate from the savings of the floor space in a town hall where there are only 6 desks for every 10 employees as we have a home working policy and hot desking policy. So for Members to have ostentatious accommodation which quite often they won't be in, seems silly in my opinion.

(No supplementary question was put)

### **8.10 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill**

Will the Mayor support the provision of an easily-accessible, council-run community centre/Ideas Store in St Katharine's and Wapping ward that is open and available to all residents?

#### **Response by Mayor John Biggs.**

I think the formal answer to that is the Town Hall Strategy is being reviewed and as part of that we need to look at the way in which the Council provides services to people through one stop shops and through others bases. There is not currently a formal proposal to do that but if you have a proposal then we would have look at that. I think that the problem that you will always have in Wapping, a place that I used to live in and moved back to today actually, is it's a lovely little community but it's quite small in terms of the demands for a full Council office space and so you would need to look at how people particularly excluded people in Wapping can access services. That may involve such things as making it easier to cross the highway which is a more substantial point than you might think and making Wapping feel and be to a greater extent part of the wider Tower Hamlets community.

### **Supplementary question from Councillor Julia Dockerill**

I would like to welcome the Mayor to my ward. An excellent location that he has chosen. Would you be able to provide me a list of all the Council assets in my ward and who they are run by so that we can have an understanding of what is available there as public space.

#### **Mayor John Biggs' response to the supplementary question**

I would very interested to see such a list myself so yes.

**8.11 Question from Councillor Helal Uddin**

Mr Mayor, is it your intention to attend meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee?

**Response by Mayor John Biggs**

Well I welcome your question and the answer is yes.

(No supplementary question was put)

**8.12 Question from Councillor Ohid Ahmed to the Mayor.**

I understand that the first ever staff conference of the borough went ahead on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015 despite it falling within the holy month of Ramadan. I believe that morning breakfast was offered amongst refreshment breaks to staff with much pomp and grandeur to the behest of those who were observing their faith and those who felt left out and demotivated and somewhat belittled by the event taking place when they are obligated to fast. As a borough that is home to the largest proportion of Muslims in London, I find it troubling that basic etiquettes have been forgotten. Do you agree with this sentiment? If so why what did you do to stop this happening?

**Response by Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Resources**

I will respond as Human Resources falls within my remit. The conference was one that was organised and publicized widely before the Mayoral election took place and it was seen important to have that conference shortly after the election because clearly there were a number of things that members of staff might want to talk about and raise. I am told that the Head of Paid Service wrote to the Mayoral candidates before the election to tell them that the conference was going to take place and to invite them to speak if they were successful in that election.

I am also told that the Head of Paid Service wrote to Group Leaders explaining about the conference given the rationale for the conference and telling them about the format and date of the conference and that no representations came from Group Leaders or Mayoral candidates about the date. There were no concerns expressed about the date of the conference.

I have also been told that the Head of Paid Service discussed the consequences of holding the conference during Ramadan with the Chair of the Muslim Staff Forum before the event was publicized and the Head of Paid Service asked for any suggestions about anything that could be included in the event that could make it easier for Muslim staff to attend.

As it happens, it seems that the event was seen as very successful by the majority of staff. 82% of staff rated the conference as excellent or very good or good. And I think all those staff attending it did find it very helpful event at

that particular point and they found it very helpful I think to ask questions of the Mayor who had been elected.

### **Supplementary question from Councillor Ohid Ahmed**

Yes. I have the e-mail. Thank you Mr Mayor. I had a response from him and very quickly this is what he said in his short response. I was not convinced though. The reason I was not convinced was that one thing I was told that all candidates were consulted. Clearly, Councillor Rabina Khan was not consulted. I did not know anything about it as a member of the previous administration. Otherwise, I would not be raising this question because this did not happen in the past. I know former leader Councillor Denise Jones, she respects all. We work together to bring harmony amongst our staff and it is important that we have a staff force who actually works shoulder to shoulder to make our Borough better. We cannot as politicians do it without their support. You cannot expect Muslim staff to come and complain. It is quite frustrating.

I want an assurance that this will not happen again.

### **Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Resources' response to the supplementary question**

I am certainly told that the Head of Paid Services did write to all the Mayoral candidates. If the e-mail did not reach any of those Mayoral candidates then clearly that's unfortunate. But that's what I have been told about the process that was followed. It seems to me that it was a good idea to follow that process. It was a good idea to consult with people to give them the opportunity to air any concerns they had about the date of it. It does seem to me that it was a format for a conference event that worked well.

Staff, as I have said did respond very positively to it. If there is anything that can be learned about from the way in which it worked then I am sure that the Council would be very keen to learn them and if there were people who were offended in any way by the timing of the event or the way in which it was arranged in the organisation, I am sorry that they were offended. But I think that the Council took the right steps to think about an opportunity for people to ask questions and to hear from a new Mayor, whoever that Mayor was going to be, we didn't know in advance of the election clearly and to discuss those issues and it was very well attended.

To the extent that there are any lessons that can be learnt, but am sure that staff will have thought about the points that had been made and will use those points in the thinking about planning of the similar conferences.

### **8.13 Question from Councillor Andrew Cregan**

Can the Deputy Mayor for Education and Children's Services outline some key priorities for this year?

#### **Response by Councillor Rachael Saunders, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services**

My key priorities will be working with the Mayor to deliver his manifesto commitments including improving our high quality early years provision to ensure it delivers the most for the children who need it most; strengthening our schools including the role of governors; sorting out school places; continuing to provide free school meals and the Education Maintenance Allowance; reviewing the youth service to make sure that our youth services are even across the Borough and delivered properly fairly within the law and are of high quality.

#### **Supplementary question from Councillor Andrew Cregan**

Thank you Councillor Saunders for that answer which is very encouraging. More specifically on a matter relating to my ward, could you say how you might be able to support improvements to George Green School.

#### **Councillor Rachael Saunders' response to the supplementary question**

George Green is an excellent school and has been a real team player. The Head Teacher gave the opportunity for a building project to another school in Bethnal Green rather than take it for themselves so I think we should be very grateful to the contribution that George Green has made to our family of schools. They are improving their results and doing well. I met the Head Teacher there a couple of weeks ago and I would be very glad to continue to work with George Green and with communities on the Isle of Dogs in continuing the improvements in that school.

The remaining questions 8.14 - 8.22 were not put due to a lack of time. The Service Head, Democratic Services stated that written responses would be provided to the questions. (Note: The written responses are included in Appendix 'A' to these minutes.)

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

### **9.1 Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor John Pierce, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the committee's Annual Report for 2014-15. Councillor Pierce **moved**, and Councillor Peter Golds **seconded**, the recommendation contained in the report.

**RESOLVED**

That the Council note the contents of the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2014-15.

**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 Amended Regulations: Dismissal Process for Statutory Officers**

The Council considered the report of the Interim Monitoring Officer and Service Head, Human Resources and Workforce Development, proposing amendments to the Council's Officer Employment Procedure Rules to provide a new process for the dismissal of Statutory Officers as required by legislation.

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

**RESOLVED**

1. That the new process for dismissal of a statutory officer be noted.
2. That the Officer Employment Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution be amended as set out in Appendix 1 to the report of the Interim Monitoring Officer and Service Head, Human Resources and Workforce Development to reflect the change in process.
3. That a further report be considered by the Human Resources Committee that deals with the detail of the process and makes proposals on the outstanding issues as identified in the report.

**11.2 Review of proportionality and allocation of places on the committees and panels of the Council**

The Council considered the report of the Service Head, Democratic Services, setting out the position regarding proportionality and the allocation of Committee places following a change in the political composition of the Council.

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

**RESOLVED**

1. That the review of proportionality as at section 3 of the report be noted and the allocation of seats on committees and panels be agreed for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2015/16 as set out at paragraph 4.1 of the report.
2. That Members and deputies be appointed to serve on those committees and panels in accordance with nominations from the political groups to be notified to the Service Head, Democratic Services.
3. That the single ungrouped Councillor be appointed to the vacant position on the Appeals Committee remaining after the allocation of places to the political groups.

**12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL****12.1 Motion regarding the Constitutional Working Group**

Councillor Craig Aston **moved**, and Councillor Peter Golds **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

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

**RESOLVED:**

This council notes that:

1. Since October 2010 the council has operated under an Executive Mayoral model in which most functions of the council are in the hands of the Executive Mayor.
2. The size of the council was reduced from 51 to 45 in 2014, in part due to arguments about how the work of councillors and the structure of the council could be revised with fewer members.
3. Apart from necessary changes to the constitution to account for the transfer of executive powers, no thorough revision of the structures of the council was carried out, and no such revision has been carried out since.
4. Tower Hamlets is one of only 9 boroughs in London out of 32 with a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee as opposed to a number of scrutiny bodies.

This council notes further:

1. Although a formal scheme of delegation exists, executive powers have never been formally delegated. Responsibility for executive actions therefore rests exclusively with the Executive Mayor.

2. The outgoing Executive Mayor had not answered a single question at Full Council since 2012 and usually his only interaction with Full Council meetings was his 5-minute report, where he generally talked about matters irrelevant to his duties as Executive Mayor.

3. The outgoing Executive Mayor attended just 4 Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings in a tenure of four and a half years.

4. The council further notes that the newly elected Mayor, attended and responded to a call in at the most recent Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This council notes further:

1. The intervention of the Department for Communities and Local Government in sending the auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers, to this council.

2. The subsequent report of PricewaterhouseCoopers, which made severe criticisms of the actions and lack of accountability of the outgoing administration.

3. The further intervention of DCLG in sending Commissioners into this borough to exercise certain executive powers.

This council believes that:

1. The structures left in place at the transfer to an Executive Mayoral model in 2010 are, and were, not sufficient to ensure genuine scrutiny and accountability of an Executive Mayoral administration.

2. Those structures have plainly failed, resulting in DCLG intervention.

3. A revision of those structures is both necessary and desirable.

The council resolves that:

1. The Constitutional Working Group be convened to consider revisions to the constitution which would strengthen scrutiny, oversight, and executive accountability.

2. The legal department provide all necessary assistance to the Constitutional Working Group.

3. That proposals for revisions to the constitution should be brought back to Full Council within six months of the date of this meeting.

### **Procedural Motion**

Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved** and Councillor Rabina Khan **seconded**, a procedural motion “that under Procedure Rule 15.11.7 the meeting be

extended to enable the consideration of Motion 12.3 regarding Safeguarding against radicalisation

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

Motions 12.2–12.6 were not debated due to lack of time.

### 13. URGENT MOTION

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

#### 13.1 Motion regarding One Housing Group

Prior to the debate on this motion, the Interim Monitoring Officer advised the Council. He noted that a number of Members had declared a personal interest in Petition 5.3 arising from a connection of some kind with One Housing. He reminded Members of the provisions of the law and the Council's Code of Conduct regarding declarations of interest and stated that all Members would need to consider for themselves whether any interest they may have in the urgent motion to be debated represented a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.

Councillors David Edgar, Mohammed Maium Miah, Candida Ronald and Oliur Rahman left the meeting during consideration of this urgent motion.

Councillor Dave Chesterton **moved**, and Councillor Andrew Cregan **seconded**, the motion as **tabled**.

Councillor Peter Golds **moved** and Councillor Chris Chapman **seconded** an amendment to include in the motion a resolution 'That a meeting should be arranged with Brandon Lewis MP, Minister for Housing to brief him on this motion'.

Councillors Dave Chesterton and Andrew Cregan indicated that they accepted the amendment, and altered their motion accordingly.

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

#### **RESOLVED**

This Council notes that:

- Following a stock transfer ballot in 2005, Toynbee Island Homes (a subsidiary of Toynbee Housing Association) took over four local authority estates on the Isle of Dogs: Samuda, St Johns, Barkantine and Kingsbridge. These four estate comprise 2,027 homes;



- In their offer document, Toynbee Island Homes promised that the transferred homes would be run by a board with residents in the majority: 15 members of which eight would be elected residents.
- In 2007 Toynbee Housing Association merged with Community Housing Association. The merged organisation, One Housing Group (OHG), took control of the four Island estates;
- In 2012 OHG wound up Island Homes and introduced area resident boards, with no decision-making powers;
- Residents on the four estates found their homes being owned by a very different landlord from the one which they had been promised and they still feel quite aggrieved;
- OHG has consistently performed poorly in terms of repairs, refurbishments, improvements and accounting. Leaseholders are particularly concerned that OHG is deliberately running down the estates in order to reduce property values;
- In 2014 OHG produced a 52 page report 'Project Stone' setting out proposals to replace all 2,027 homes with up to 10,000 properties, the majority for private sale. OHG still hasn't adequately informed residents of these proposals;
- Following the 2014 council election the repairs and maintenance problems raised by residents were so bad that Island councillors agreed to work on a cross-party basis to tackle OHG;
- In January 2015 OHG embarked on a 'Cross Island Conversation' asking residents what they thought of their homes, estates and living on the Island. No mention was made of their proposals to redevelop the four estates; they wrote to residents saying "As yet – and despite the many rumours you may have heard – One Housing Group does not have a plan in place";
- In spite of OHG's persistent denials, it has held meetings with planners in both the GLA and Tower Hamlets to discuss Project Stone & the submission of a planning application, possibly by the end of 2015;
- A recent interim report of the 'Cross Island Conversation' revealed:
  - Residents have no trust or confidence in their landlord;
  - Inflexibility and lack of respect on the part of OHG – residents do not feel supported or cared for;
  - Problems with repairs, and the high cost and poor management of major capital works;
  - Poor, inconsistent, inaccurate unfriendly communications;
- In 2012 OHG agreed to purchase 123 S106 units at Indescon Court on the Island from the developer. The original S106 agreement in 2008 had assumed that these units would be available at social rent. OHG negotiated with the developer on the basis that higher affordable rents could be charged. These rents range from £977.99pcm for a 1 bed to £1126.92pcm for a 4 bed. The Council has made it clear to OHG that rents at this level are against the spirit of the original S106 agreement;
- Under current legislation, tenants of stock transferred properties have no right to a re-ballot and choose an alternative Registered Provider.

This Council believes that:

- OHG has failed to deliver on the promises made in the stock transfer offer document by its predecessor Toynbee Island Homes;
- OHG has a poor record of managing its major works programme as well as its maintenance and repairs services;
- OHG has developed proposals to redevelop the 2,027 homes that make up its four Island estates, but has steadfastly refused to inform its residents about these proposals;
- OHG's own consultation exercise shows residents have little trust or confidence in their landlord;
- OHG's proposed rents at Indecon Court have the potential to increase profit (possibly substantially) for the developers, at the expense of social housing tenants paying much more than was envisaged when the scheme was consented. This is not the behaviour expected of a Preferred Partner;
- Tenants should have a choice and where Registered Providers are performing poorly should have the right to demand a re-ballot and chose an alternative landlord.

This Council resolves:

- To request the Mayor to write to the Homes & Communities Agency, calling for the regulator to investigate whether:
  - OHG residents have suffered serious detriment as a result of the failings of the Repairs & Maintenance service;
  - OHG has been dishonest with residents over its plans to redevelop the Island estates;
  - The 'no confidence or trust in OHG expressed by residents through OHG's own 'Cross Island Conversation' places the organisation in a position where it is no longer fit to carry out its functions as a landlord;
- To support OHG residents in preparing their own submission to the Homes and Communities Agency;
- To request the Mayor to suspend OHG as a Preferred Partner in Tower Hamlets with immediate effect. The council will not support them as a S106 partner with any developer and will not support them for any grant bids to the GLA;
- To request the Mayor to instruct officers to explore options for legal proceedings against OHG for breach of the Transfer Agreement and to report back to Full Council on the possibility of such proceedings by 16<sup>th</sup> September;
- To support Jim Fitzpatrick MP in his efforts to change legislation, to enable tenants whose homes have been subject to stock transfer the right to a re-ballot where their Registered Provider is performing poorly;
- To request the Mayor to seek a meeting with Sir Anthony Meyer, Chair of OHG, to address the failures of leadership within his organisation.

- That a meeting should be arranged with Brandon Lewis MP Minister for Housing to brief him on this motion.

The meeting ended at 10.39 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

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

**6.4 Question from Mr Gilbert Lindsell:**

Can Mr Biggs explain how he will address further welfare reform from the Tory Government in particular the cap to 23k which will have an enormous impact on our young people, vulnerable adults and families? (Question not put at the meeting as the questioner was not present)

**Written response by Mayor John Biggs**

There are currently around 600 families affected by the current benefit cap of £26,000 per year. This is estimated to rise to 1,000 families, once the cap falls to £23,000.

The Council currently receives around £2m in Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) funding from central government and this was augmented over the last two Council budgets by additional funding. The Council uses this DHP funding to bridge the gap between resident's benefit payments and their rents, thereby helping to prevent homelessness and mitigate the impact of the reforms.

However, supplying this level of financial support is not viable over the longer term, especially as the cap is reduced and Central government is likely to reduce the amount of DHP funding available to Councils.

A more sustainable solution is to support residents into employment or more affordable housing, so that they are no longer impacted by the cap.

Once residents are in employment (for 35 hours a week for a couple or 28 hours a week for a single person) the benefit cap lifts. To support residents into employment, we are working to enable residents affected by the benefit cap to access targeted employment support.

The other way of addressing the impact of welfare reforms, over the long term, is through the building of truly affordable homes, either Council homes or at target rents. The building of 1,000 Council homes is a key priority for the Mayor.

In addition the Council currently has a strong partnership approach, through the Welfare Reform Task Group, which works with housing colleagues, advice agencies, and employment support services which will continue its programme of informing residents and monitoring the impacts to provide a coordinated response to the impact of these new changes.

**6.6 Question from Mr Mamonur Rashid:**

The parking transfer scheme has many strings attached with the idea of car free zones and confuses many of the locals. In some cases even the officers from the One Stop parking shop have given misleading advice, perhaps

because there are strings attached to the car free zones which creates confusion.

Can the Council make clear if residents who have three bedrooms and over are allowed permits in car free zones. Also to minus any conditions attached to it?

(Question not put at the meeting as the questioner was not present)

**Written response by Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development**

The Permit Transfer Scheme was introduced by the Council in September 2010. It is designed to help some families moving into 3 bed+ social rented car free homes to retain one on-street resident car parking permit, subject to the following published criteria:

- 1) targeted at social rented housing residents moving to car-free homes
- 2) applies to residents moving to 3+ bedroom social rented car-free homes
- 3) 1 x on-street resident parking permit per household
- 4) parking permit must have been held for at least 1 year prior to moving home
- 5) parking permit must be renewed and not lapse to remain eligible under the scheme
- 6) it will be the responsibility of the social rented housing tenant to provide proof that they are eligible under the scheme for a permit to Parking Services (in the form of a duly signed, and dated, THH or RSL social rented housing approved tenancy agreement)
- 7) the scheme applies from the date of introduction (05 September 2011) by Tower Hamlets Council's Parking Services and is not retrospective.

The Council's Parking Services Team administer this scheme and use these criteria in determining eligibility.

**6.8 Question from Mr Moynul Hoque**

Under the previous administration we have seen levels of safety increase in our borough. In 2011 when most of London was in anarchy due to the dreadful riots, Tower Hamlets remained calm and our young people stayed indoors. The level of crime has also fallen substantially as well as our THEOs and Police Officers leading an example for boroughs across London. We are

seen to be one of the safest boroughs in London. These are some of the many shining examples left behind by the previous administration.

How can you ensure that safety will still remain a key priority under your mayorship and that the lead member you have appointed will work vigorously like her predecessor? (Question not put at the meeting as the questioner was not present)

**Written response by Councillor Shiria Khatun, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety**

Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour are vital elements in the Council's priorities. The annual residents' survey is an excellent indicator of how important our community consider this aspect of liveability is to them and it remains the most important aspect of liveability in respect of the core business of the Borough as defined by this survey.

In common with most other urban local authorities the sense of feeling safe within one's community is considered to be one of the keystone indicators upon which other quality of life determinants rest. The Community Safety Partnership develops its strategy on a three year basis for approval by the full Council. It is reviewed every 12 months by the partners and cabinet. At present we are in year three of the current plan.

**8.14 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman**

Is the Mayor able to update the council as to what efforts have been made by this authority, to work with the Royal Borough of Greenwich Council in order to minimise the impact of noise and air pollution resulting from the proposed Greenwich cruise terminal? (Question not put at the meeting due to lack of time)

**Written response by Mayor John Biggs**

As a local planning authority the Council receives requests for planning for observations from adjoining boroughs on planning applications which that borough is considering. Officers from Development Management team follow the guidance from the Tower Hamlets Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (2012) when providing planning observations. Paragraph 1.5 of Attachment C of the SCI states that:

*"The onus is on the borough within which the property lies to carry out all statutory and neighbour publicity/consultations. Where the proposal would significantly affect the interests of another section of the Council (e.g. highways on traffic matters), Development Management will consult the relevant section within the Council prior to formally responding to the adjoining borough".*

Tower Hamlets has been consulted on the planning application of the proposed Greenwich cruise terminal since January 2011. In the recent

consultation response (dated 18<sup>th</sup> May 2015), the Council has raised concerns over significant environmental effects on Tower Hamlets in terms of changes to air quality, noise and vibration as a result of construction work.

The EIA officer has drafted a formal response to the latest submission of the planning application to request further information with respect to noise as part of the planning application submission, to ensure that the effects on LBTH receptors are fully understood.

The original planning application and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), covering noise and air pollution amongst other issues, was submitted to Royal Borough of Greenwich in 2010. This covered the docking of cruise ships as well as an extensive mixed use development.

A further planning application and EIA was submitted to the Royal Borough of Greenwich in relation to the cruise terminal and residential development on 31.3.15.

Environmental Health provided comments on these at the following points :

- January 2011 (full planning application – noise and air quality comments made)
- February 2015 (scoping report – noise concerns raised, additional information requested)
- May 2015 (full planning application – LBTH OBJECTS, additional noise information requested).

We will continue to engage Greenwich Council on this matter as necessary to ensure that the interests of Tower Hamlets Residents are properly considered and taken in to account but the Council has no authority to determine the planning decisions or the outcome of related discussions between Greenwich Council and the developers.

### **8.15 Question from Councillor Marc Francis**

Will the Mayor / Lead Member set out what action has been taken since 11th June to minimise the disruption to local residents of the commercial events in Victoria Park? (Question not put at the meeting due to lack of time)

#### **Written response by Mayor John Biggs**

The review and planning processes around the major music festivals are year round with multi agency involvement and specific areas such noise management addressed in detail in order to minimise negative impact to local residents. Since the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015 we have had confirmation from the Lovebox producers that we will see in response to concerns raised by residents and local Cllrs:

- Additional temporary toilet facilities outside the fenced event site and on routes to tube station. Total units 47 an increase of 27 from 2014
- Stewards outside the event site 172 from 8pm for egress (people leaving), an increase of 58 on 2014
- 3 response teams covering Old Ford Road East, Old Ford Road West, top of Grove Road.
- 40 volunteers to help monitor people arriving and give directions to event and toilet facilities
- Extent of external cleaning on streets doubled with an earlier start and more streets covered.
- Additional barriers to discourage festival goers from straying off main routes to transport
- Repeating and fine tuning of measures to manage noise levels that saw significant reduction in noise complaints in 2014

#### **8.16 Question from Councillor Shafiqul Haque to the Mayor and his Cabinet:**

Could you tell the Chamber how many houses were built in Tower Hamlets between May 2010 and June 2015? Please provide detailed breakdown by Wards and affordable housing provision? (Question not put at the meeting due to lack of time)

#### **Written response by Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development**

Officers are currently compiling and reviewing the housing completions figures to include the most recent years, but accurate data is not readily available on completions of sale units.

Over the time period from May 2010 to July 2015 affordable housing numbers have averaged 875 a year with a total over that period of 4,376. These units have been provided in a variety of developments across the whole of the borough and data will be available in the near future on the breakdown of affordable units by ward.

#### **8.17 Question from Councillor John Pierce**

When will Tower Hamlets Homes complete the Decent Homes Works programme? (Question not put at the meeting due to lack of time)

#### **Written response by Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Performance**

The Decent Homes Works Programme - Year 5 - is scheduled to be completed by March 2016, this will bring 1487 homes back into decency and reduce the remaining housing stock non decency to 10%. Discussions are underway however to maximise the existing economies inherent in the



existing Decent Homes contractor framework and extend the works to accommodate newly arising need for the final year of the contract.

### **8.18 Question from Councillor Craig Aston**

Residents of the Isle of Dogs, Limehouse and Wapping are subject to increasing noise from late night party boats. Will the Mayor inform the council what discussions he proposes to undertake with the relevant authorities to help alleviate this situation? (Question not put at the meeting due to lack of time)

### **Written response by Councillor Ayas Miah, Cabinet Member for Environment**

Noise from party boats is an ongoing issue that is being addressed on both a case-by-case and strategic basis. For the past 2 years the Councils Pollution Team Leader has been Chair of the Riparian Boroughs' Party Boat Noise Steering Group, which has produced guidance to party boat operators and co-ordinated investigations into party boat complaints across the group's wide membership (LA's, TfL, PLA, Passenger Boat Association, MPS).

Noise from late night party boats remains a priority for the Noise team. There is a hierarchy of complaint response now in place and agreed with Riparian Boroughs ranging from informal intervention with individual boat operators by the Passenger Boat Association, to escalation using Licensing and/or Statutory Nuisance legislation which Borough Officers ensure is fully implemented for each complaint, for the benefit of the borough's residents.

### **8.19 Question from Councillor Mohammed Maium Miah to the Mayor and his Cabinet**

Could Mr Biggs provide status update about the multi-faith Burial ground project initiated by the previous Mayor Lutfur Rahman's administration? (Question not put at the meeting due to lack of time)

### **Written response by Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Performance**

The Council has entered into a long term management agreement, for a period of 125 years, with Memorial Property Investments Limited-Kemnal Park Cemetery, Chislehurst Kent, who will provide 3000 burial plots.

The purpose of the agreement is to provide a multi faith burial service, at a reduced cost, to the residents of the borough. There are no plans at this time to vary this agreement at this time. Officers are reviewing the operational implications of the agreement and will advise the Mayor on matters specific to implementation shortly.

**8.20 Question from Councillor Peter Golds**

Will the Mayor outline the timeline for revising the South Quay Master Plan?  
(Question not put at the meeting due to lack of time)

**Written response by Mayor John Biggs**

I consider that more time is needed to review the content of the South Quay Masterplan SPD before progressing it for adoption. Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development is assisting me with this work and will ensure that the points raised will be considered, as appropriate before the SPD is considered for adoption by the Executive.

**8.21 Question from Councillor Shahed Ali to the Mayor and his Cabinet:**

Could you provide the overall borough-wide levels (in terms of percentage and numbers) - for cleanliness, trees planted and recycling between 2010 and June 2015? (Question not put at the meeting due to lack of time)

**Written response by Councillor Ayas Miah, Cabinet Member for Environment**

The Council carries out tranche surveys each year to measure the cleanliness of the streets within the Borough. The surveys measure the percentage of streets and areas that were found to be predominantly free of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting, and the percentage of streets/areas that failed to be. The results since 2010 can be found in the tables below.

Level of street cleanliness: Tranche Survey (Passes)				
	Litter	Detritus	Graffiti	Fly Posting
2010-2011	93.9%	93.7%	97.4%	91.5%
2011-2012	98.0%	96.0%	94.0%	98.0%
2012-2013	94.0%	93.0%	94.0%	98.0%
2013-2014	98.1%	97.6%	93.8%	98.0%
2014-2015	97.2%	98.2%	94.9%	99.1%

Level of street cleanliness: Tranche Survey (Failures)				
	Litter	Detritus	Graffiti	Fly Posting
2010-2011	6.1%	6.3%	2.6%	8.5%
2011-2012	2.0%	4.0%	6.0%	2.0%
2012-2013	6.0%	7.0%	6.0%	2.0%
2013-2014	1.9%	2.4%	6.2%	2.0%
2014-2015	2.8%	1.8%	5.1%	0.9%

The amount of household waste that has been collected for recycling and composting since 2010 is shown in the table below:

	Recycling Rate
2010-2011	24.6%
2011-2012	27.1%
2012-2013	27.6%
2013-2014	28%
2014-2015	28.1%

The table below details that number of trees planted each year from 2010:

	Number of trees planted
2010-2011	650
2011-2012	200
2012-2013	150
2013-2014	150
2014-2015	1000
2015 (to date)	75

## **8.22 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam to the Mayor and his Cabinet:**

What facilities, staffing, allowances and any other support will the three Deputy Mayors appointed by John Biggs will receive. Could you provide a detailed breakdown and cost for all such provisions, for all three appointees? (Question not put at the meeting due to lack of time)

### **Written response by Mayor John Biggs**

I thank Councillor Alam for his question.

Whilst I have appointed three Deputy Mayors, only one of these is the Statutory Deputy Mayor – Cllr Sirajul Islam, who will also receive the Special Responsibility Allowance associated with the role of Deputy Mayor.

The three Deputy Mayor's will share one PA. The previous Mayor's Office allocated a PA for the use of one Deputy Mayor.

Each Deputy Mayor will be allocated an office, which they have agreed to share with a hot desk for other Cabinet Members to use. These three offices are the only ones available to the Cabinet Members. The three offices already exist and their reallocation is part of the general reorganisation of the first floor, which will result in a smaller Mayor's office, re-provision of a Speaker's Parlour and space for opposition parties.

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