

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL****HELD AT 7.34 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 23 MARCH 2016****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 Shiria Khatun
Councillor Mahbub Alam	Councillor Abjol Miah
Councillor Shah Alam	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Shahed Ali	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Abdul Asad	Councillor Md. Maium Miah
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Mohammed Mufti Miah
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Chris Chapman	Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim
Councillor Dave Chesterton	Councillor Joshua Peck
Councillor Andrew Cregan	Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Julia Dockerill	Councillor Oliur Rahman
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 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. The order the business was taken in at the meeting was as follows:

- Item 1 - Apologies for absence.
- Item 2 – Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.
- Item 13.1 - Urgent Motion Regarding Britain First and the East London Mosque
- Item 3 – Minutes.
- Item 4 – Announcements.
- Items 5 – Petitions.
- Item 6 – Public Questions. (6.1)
- Item 12.2 - Motion regarding Poplar HARCA
- Item 6 – Public Questions. (6.2 - 6.3)

- Item 13.2 - Urgent motion regarding the future of Old Ford Housing Association.
- Item 6 – Public Questions (6.4 - 6.7)
- Item 7 – Mayor’s Report.
- Item 8 – Members Questions (8.2)
- Item 13.3 - Urgent motion regarding the UK’s membership of the European Union
- Item 8 – Members Questions (8.3 - 8.6)
- Item 9. 1 - Report of the Human Resources Committee, Pay Policy Statement 2016/17
- Item 11.1 - Community Safety Partnership Plan Review and Extension
- Item 11.2 - Members’ Allowances Scheme 2016/17
- Item 11.3 - Calendar of Council and Committee Meetings 2016/17

Before the commencement of business, the Speaker of the Council expressed great regret about the terrible events in Brussels. He stated that everyone’s thoughts and prayers were with all of those affected by the terrorist attacks. He invited the Council to stand and observe a minute’s silence in memory of those killed and injured.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Amina Ali
- Councillor Gulam Robbani
- Councillor Rabina Khan
- Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury
- Councillor Craig Aston

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillors Helal Uddin and John Pierce declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 12.2 - ‘Motion regarding Poplar HARCA’. This was on the basis that the Councillors employers had a working relationship with Poplar HARCA. The Councillors stated that they would leave the meeting room for the consideration of the motion.

Councillor Joshua Peck declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 12.4 - ‘Motion regarding the Government’s attack on a Council’s right to follow an ethical policy in relation to procurement and Pension Fund investments’. This was on the basis that his employer had contracts with a number of pension funds (Motion not debated due to lack of time).

Councillor Abdul Asad declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 12.4 - ‘Motion regarding the Government’s attack on a Council’s right to follow an ethical policy in relation to procurement and Pension Fund investments’. This was on the basis that the Councillor had a Pension with the Authority. (Motion not debated due to lack of time)

Procedural Motion

Mayor John Biggs, Councillors Oliur Rahman and Peter Golds **moved** and **seconded**, a procedural motion “that under Procedure Rule 14.1.5, Rule 13.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion regarding Britain First and the East London Mosque to be considered”. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

3. MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 January 2016 and the Budget Council meeting held on 24 February 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

4. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE SPEAKER OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Speaker announced that his Charity Dinner would be taking place on Wednesday 27th April. Tickets were £30 and booking details were available from the Speaker’s Office. All were encouraged to attend these enjoyable events. The money raised would be going to the Speaker’s charities (MIND in Tower Hamlets and Newham, and the Surjamuki Project).

The Speaker also reported that Commander John Ludgate was due to retire from the role of Deputy Lieutenant for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and that this was his last Council meeting. John had been in post since 1994 and in that time had performed his duties admirably and with great dignity representing the people of Tower Hamlets.

At the invitation of the Speaker, Mayor John Biggs, Councillor Oliur Rahman, (Leader of the Independent Group) and Councillor Peter Golds, (Leader of the Conservative Group) each thanked him for all his hard work and contributions to the Borough, particularly praising his courteous approach and his application in attending so many meetings and events. This was much appreciated by all. They wished him all the best for the future and a happy retirement.

At the invitation of the Speaker, Commander Ludgate addressed the meeting. He reported that he had been proud to have supported the work of the many elected representatives of the Borough including Leaders and elected Mayors and Speakers/Civic Mayors. He commented that, over the last 22 years, the Borough had changed remarkably, particularly in relation to the quality of schools, which were now amongst the best in the Country and provided one of the best ways of tackling poverty. The Council should be proud of such achievements. He thanked the Council for its support and wished everyone well for the future.

Following the contributions, Commander Ludgate was presented with a certificate and gifts commemorating his service to the Borough.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition relating to Ayasofia Primary school.

Mr Mohammed Umair addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Rachael Saunders, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She considered that the petition raised two issues. The first of which concerned the OFSTED report which it was understood the school was challenging. In this regard, the Council had done its best to support the school going beyond its statutory duties for an independent school and were generally supportive of the school aims. The report raised serious issues and these needed to be addressed.

The second issue concerned the school building and the difficulties in securing planning permission for the school. Whilst it was beyond the remit of this meeting to allocate a building, she along with Officers in Children's Services would continue do all that they could to make sure the school was treated fairly in that process and would assist any bid to list the school as a community asset.

RESOLVED:

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Children's Services for a written response within 28 days.

5.2 Petition relating to the Glenkerry Co-Operative Housing Association

Petitioners addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Sirajul Islam Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management & Performance then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He stated that the Administration were committed to working with the petitioners to see how it could assist the Housing Co-Operative. To this end, the Mayor's Office would be in contact with the petitioners to commence discussions with the the Housing Co-Operative to move the issues forward

RESOLVED:

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

5.3 Petition relating to Anti-Social Behaviour on the Aberfeldy Estate

Petition not presented due to the absence of the petitioner.

RESOLVED:

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

6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The following questions and in each case supplementary questions were put and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member:-

6.1 Question on Poplar HARCA Parking Charges:**Mohbub Ali**

Will the Mayor intervene directly to stop unjustified and extortionate increase in residential parking permit for residents by Poplar HARCA?

Ruhul Tapader

Is the Cabinet Member aware of the major increases in parking charges that Poplar HARCA has implemented – and does the cabinet member have view of these?

Response by Mayor John Biggs:

I am a disappointed as you are with the massive increase in parking charges, also in the charges for pram sheds and for garages. This evening a number of you presented this petition to me which has got a massive number of signatures on it which shows the level of disquiet on this issue. My starting point is that HARCA are generally a good Landlord. They have got a good reputation, charge relatively low rents, provide a good community service and have an ambitious programme of building new homes. They have been massively affected by the government rules saying they have to cut the rents by 1% a year over the next four years which has knocked a hole in their business plan. They have to achieve savings or increase income without being allowed to put up their rent. That in no way in my view excuses what they have done. I think their behaviour has been clumsy and it has been excessive. There are a number of people in the chamber and in the gallery this evening who have come to show their displeasure and the number of signatures show how unhappy people are with this issue.

I have been meeting with Steve Stride and Paul Brickell the Chief Executive and Chair of the HARCA as have my Members and we have made it quite clear to them that we think it is not good enough. This has been very damaging to their reputation and the confidence of tenants and leaseholders as well. We have informed them that we want them to reverse these changes. They have made a proposal to us and we need to continue talking to them about that. There may be a motion on this matter on the agenda and if that is brought forward we can discuss this matter further.

Supplementary question from Mohbub Ali and Ruhul Tapader:

Poplar HARCA might be good but the fact is there has been a lack of consultation with the residents and this keeps on coming up. We would not be in this situation if they had consulted with us or consulted with the State Board who represent the residents, this is why we have to contact the Council now to try to get it reduced. Will the Mayor ask the government to allow residents of Housing Associations to ballot every 10 years to choose their Housing Association, this way they will have more accountability?

Mayor John Biggs' response to the supplementary question:

Yes I strongly support the proposal. This is being promoted by Jim Fitzpatrick your MP in Parliament, for the Government to change the law to allow people to sack their Landlord and replace their Landlord with a new Landlord, we have several Landlords in the Borough who are annoying their tenants and their leaseholders and if this power existed it would give a better balance of power.

There is an offer at present from the HARCA which is that the car parking charges were £1.96 and they had proposed £7.00. They are now suggesting that they can reduce that to £4.00 from £7.00. I appreciate that you will be unhappy with that but I have a duty to share that information with you.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Rajib Ahmed **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that item 12.2 Motion regarding the Poplar HARCA be taken as the next item of business." The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Following consideration of the motion, the Speaker adjourned the meeting at 21.05pm. The meeting reconvened at 21:15pm

6.2 Question from MD Sumsul Talukder:

How much savings did the Mayor made by cutting burial subsidy for poor residents in his budget?

Response by Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Resources:

The burial subsidy scheme was established a few years ago in recognition that there were not enough burial places in the borough. It was seen as a good thing to do to subsidise the costs of burial, particularly as those costs could be higher as they might be if they were in the borough. The actual scheme itself was closed by the Commissioners on the basis that these subsidies were grants, the Commissioners were given authority to deal with this and decided to suspend the scheme as they did not think that it was an appropriate scheme. What happened is that the Council bought a burial site in Kemnal Park, which is a site available and subsidised. We have moved to a situation

where there was an original need for a burial subsidy scheme, to one where there is an actual burial site which is subsidised. One of the things we do need to do is to make sure that people are much more aware of that option and that we increase the number of people who are able to use that site.

On the particular question on savings that have been made, the savings made were £20,000 from a scheme which had in effect already been closed by the Commissioners.

Supplementary question from MD Sumsul Talukder:

Was there consultation about the closing down? Was there communication with the residents and what action did the Mayor take?

Mayor John Biggs' response to the supplementary question:

The grant was cancelled by the Commissioners who were appointed by the government so we could not stop it. What I did say I would do during the budget, this needs to be in this year's budget is to review the various subsidies and support we give to bereaved families, whether that is by better promoting the new burial ground on the Sidcup By-pass in Bromley or whether it is by re-introducing a subsidy scheme, in which case we would have to persuade the Commissioners that it is a fundable scheme. I am happy to take it away. I promised we would look at this and we will do that.

6.3 Question from Jamir Chowdhury:

Is it wise to spend £100k for Head of Mayor's office, £25k for personal publicity and £60k for new vanity manager in his office - on top of £100k for Head of Marketing while the Mayor cuts vital services and whacks up Council Tax by record 4%?

Response by Mayor John Biggs:

I am very pleased you asked this question because it is a question that the opposition members quite like asking as well. I am pleased to say that we have made a saving of over £300,000 on the cost of the Mayor's office from the previous Mayor. The suggestion that we spend £100,000 on the cost of the Head of the Mayor's office – he does not get anything like that sum of money. We will continue to look at the costs, my office gets about 2000 emails a week and we need to have staff to respond to those, we need to have people to liaise with the policy section of the Council to make sure that we are carrying out things like the HARCA. In answer to the question we need to make sure we have a properly staffed office in order to serve you effectively. I will make sure that we do not have staff in that office who are not doing any work. If I find any I will sling them out immediately.

Supplementary question from Jamir Chowdhury:

In the past Mayor Biggs criticised such spending as unnecessary. How is this different when he is spending £605k on his personal office in addition to

£25,000 on personal publicity? Is this not hypocrisy? Why are those who opposed it silent now? Is it because the Mayor got into power due to Tory votes as publicised by a local blogger?

Mayor John Biggs' response to the supplementary question:

I am very happy to respond to that, the difference is that first of all I promised and I agreed and I am to be very transparent as Mayor and to be open about how my office is funded. I am willing to share that information and publish it. Councillor John Pierce (who is sitting between you and me), chairs the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and has produced a scrutiny report on transparency. I will make sure that this information is published. Secondly, an example of lack of transparency is that the previous Mayor had about half a dozen staff in his office who he pretended were not in there. He had them funded by parts of the Council and that cost about £200,000. When I came in I could not understand who these people were or why they disappeared, how they were funded or where the money had gone. In the end we realised that there was a bit of laundering going on if you like, which allowed people to be employed in one place whilst they pretended that they were not working in the Mayor's office. I am transparent and happy to be transparent. I am happy to meet you and discuss it with you. I do not need anything in return from you.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Marc Francis **moved** and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.5, Rule 13.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion regarding the future of Old Ford Housing Association to be considered". The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

6.4 Question from Ms Tahera Ayazi:

Regarding the Incontinence Laundry Service, what has the council done to make sure people can make alternative arrangements, and can it say what measures are now in place to guarantee that no-one requiring help is left without assistance?

Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs, Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Services:

I want to reassure you that people with assessed incontinent needs who are using that service up until now will not have that service stopped until an alternative is in place. To give you a bit more detail those who are currently receiving their incontinence laundry service should have been seen by the NHS to ensure that the reason for their incontinence is properly established and that they are given the right incontinence products such as pads and other things if they need them. Additionally those who are receiving the service at the moment are being assessed and reviewed by our social work teams, some of those assessments have happened and for the others they should all be done by the 31st March 2016. Where an individual has clear needs that relate to incontinence, those needs might be addressed through

the social work assessment, through such things as a one off payment to buy a washing machine or additional home care support – so that is people going into the home and supporting that person. As I said in the beginning the service will only be terminated once those assessments have happened and once alternative assessments are in place for their assessed needs.

Supplementary question from Ms Tahera Ayazi:

A washing machine is insufficient because they have long-term needs, they cannot even do their own washing, somebody has to come in and do the washing for them. How do you propose that their needs can be met?

Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs' response to the supplementary question:

I cannot comment on each individual because the way the assessment works is that it is different for each individual. Where someone needs additional support to manage their washing or any of their other day to day needs they would be given home care support as well, that is where people going in and do day-to-day support with the family and provide that care. All of that gets done in the assessment and as much support as they need through that assessment, will be provided.

6.5 Question from Emma Adams:

I have had a letter from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) asking if they can close my son's CAMHS support for the time being. When he was first diagnosed with autism in 2013, when he got his diagnosis I was told he would have a CAMHS support worker until he reached 16 and then it will go over to the adult mental health services if he needed it.

I want to know:

- How many other parents have had similar letters like mine?
- Has there been a sudden change of policy to what support Autistic children get from CAMHS?
- Is the proposed change to my son's support related to the £200,000 council voted cut to CAMHS funding on 24 February?

Response from Councillor Rachael Saunders, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services:

Thank you for coming and thank you for waiting so long as well. We do not have access to all of the detailed information that you have asked for because the service is delivered by the East London Mental Health Foundation Trust. I would be really happy to work with you if you wanted to contact me directly to speak about your son's particular service needs. I am afraid that we do not hold that information whether anyone else has been affected in the same way. In terms of the reduction in CAHMS funding it is part of a significant change programme which is intended to make sure that the service is better at supporting the borough's most vulnerable children, the reduction hasn't yet been made so your son's service is not being affected by that particular reduction because the reduction has not yet been made yet. I will be happy to

Speak further outside the meeting if we can give any support at all in talking to the Foundation Trust and to CAMHS about your son's service.

Supplementary question from Emma Adams:

The CAMHS worker my son has only deals with Autistic children, she works in Phoenix School as well and she deals with other children with developmental delays. Does that mean when these reductions get taken off, she will have more workload from other CAMHS cases?

Councillor Rachael Saunders response to the supplementary question:

We work in partnership with the Foundation Trust to try and improve the CAMHS service so I am not personally responsible for the delivery of the service because it is a contractual issue with the Foundation Trust. I would suggest that if you wanted to work with me we could talk to them together and get some detailed answers. I am really sorry I am not able to give you that information right now.

6.7 Question from Jack Beaken:

Hereford Estate is part of Tower Hamlets Council's new build infill programme. The consultation process run by Tower Hamlets Homes has been seriously flawed and inadequate: incorrect dates, cancellations of meetings with no notice, incorrect information and ignoring resident's concerns.

In view of the flawed consultation process, will Tower Hamlets Council intervene and restart the process so ensuring residents' views are given a proper hearing?

Response from Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development:

At the Mayoral Assembly a couple of weeks ago the Mayor has agreed to revisit this scheme and pause the scheme in order to have a closer look at it. I know that there was a workshop last weekend to consider the scheme itself. The scheme going forward will be subject to full consultation with you and the organisation that you have now set up.

Supplementary question from Jack Beaken:

Tower Hamlets Homes wishes to create a working group with the residents to discuss landscape and gardening matters, we as a residents association and as an estate feel that it is completely inappropriate to set up a working group about gardening when the residents have very important outstanding concerns. Just a few being: a proposed roof terrace, the size of the new build and anti-social behaviour and these are just a few of the concerns. Will the Council intervene and ensure that this proposed working group when set up deals with the important issues, a few of which have just been raised rather than very superficial issues such as gardening and landscaping? I was even

asked will I prefer an apple tree to a pear tree. We want to get to the core of the issues that the residents have.

Councillor Rachel Blake's response to the supplementary question:

Yes I am aware of some of those more detailed issues that you do want to know more about and I have asked that you should have a clear response on those prior to the workshop going ahead. In addition to that there is a concern about how you approach Vallance Road and the overall access to the building, the passive surveillance that you are looking for around access to Vallance Road. What I would add is that I do think the landscaping issues are important and we get them right should there be some new schemes on there. I don't want them to be entirely dismissed as superficial but I would say that I recognise those real concerns that you have about passive surveillance of the building, about anti-social behaviour, about how all residents will be affected by the new build. Yes we will get you a response on those prior to that workshop.

Question 8.6 was not put due to the absence of the questioner. A written response would be provided to the questions. (Note: The written response is included in Appendix 'A' to these minutes.)

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor made his report to the Council, referring to his written report circulated at the meeting, summarising key events, engagements and meetings since the last Council meeting.

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 a supplementary question were put and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member.

8.2 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman:

What is Mayor John Biggs' view and stance on academies and free schools?

Response by Mayor John Biggs:

You want to know my stance on academies and free schools. Well the answer is I like you are a parent and my primary motive is to ensure that any child of mine or any child of my constituents gets an excellent education. I would say tribally and instinctively I tend to be not that happy with academies and the free schools programme. But we live in the world that we live in and it is very much the determination of the Government to turn all schools into academies or free schools and my responsibility as Mayor is to work to support school improvement. I think that I would just add to what I have said is there are free

schools and free schools, the same way as there are maintained schools and maintained schools. It's the quality of the education that is really important. I think we need to wake up to the fact that although we may politically exchange barbs with each other and we may disagree with Government policy, as a Local Authority we need to work with the network of schools as they are and we need to attempt to influence and improve the educational outcomes for our kids.

Supplementary question from Councillor Oliur Rahman:

Mr Mayor when it comes to Education that is one thing that everyone in this Chamber would agree that the future of our children is far more important than our political views. However, with the Shadow Education Secretary of the Labour Party saying that she may bring in academies and free schools and, on the other hand, the Leader of the Labour Party saying he opposes free schools and academies and, I think the simple question that I am asking and I would be grateful if you could possibly give me a yes or no answer to, do you support academies and free schools - yes or no?

Mayor John Biggs response to the supplementary question:

I support an excellent education for our kids and I think there is a problem actually which is that the free school and the academy programme achieved one thing, whatever your views of it was, when schools could choose to be part of it and a small number did. But the Government's current determination to turn all schools into free schools and academies will immediately or very rapidly highlight a whole number of problems in terms of support, special needs, admissions and exclusions policy and in terms of whether those schools actually have a connection to the communities they are in. There is a theme running through tonight's meeting which is that I want schools to be very much part of the communities that they are based in. I am very nervous about schools that are part of multi academy trusts that are national chains, for example, just as I am very nervous about people becoming tenants of social landlords whose head office is in Birmingham or somewhere. I think we need to have public services rooted in our community accountable to Local Authority and we need to have public spirited people running those institutions whether they are schools or indeed housing providers who have very much got their feet on the ground and are dedicated to serving the people of Tower Hamlets. So in that sense, I am a dangerous pragmatist but I don't think that it is actually dangerous to stand up for the best possible standards to try to work with people to achieve those and to use our influence as a Council and our power as a Council Chamber when we speak with a strong voice to help influence the best outcomes for our kids.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Andrew Cregan **moved** and Councillor Danny Hassell **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.5, Rule 13.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion regarding the UK's membership of the European Union to be considered". The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

8.3 Question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed:

School admission statistics show that many children applying for secondary school are being rejected from schools close to their home and being allocated to schools that are a great distance from their homes – what does the Lead Member think this says about the effect of Tory education policies on our Borough?

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

The recently published statistics on secondary school transfers show that over three quarters of Tower Hamlets children secure a place at their first choice school, with 95% securing a place at one of their top three choices. These outcomes could be better - it would be great to have 100% but they are amongst the best in London and well above the London average. I am glad that Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed in his tabled question asked about the Tory education crisis, because we were already hugely fearful at the last full Council meeting about the modelling of approximately 20% of cuts to our schools budget. The government haven't yet quite had the guts to tell us exactly how much they are going to cut but the modelling has been around 20% which is massively worrying for parents and young people in the Borough. The Deputy Lord Lieutenant mentioned earlier the extraordinary achievement of young people, their teachers, families and communities in terms of educational attainment and how that has been transformed over the last 20 years. That is at risk because this Government is taking money from those who don't vote for it and giving money to people who do and they should be ashamed. This is no better than the politics of Lutfur Rahman that they so enthusiastically opposed to take money from the poorest children and to give it to children in the leafy suburbs that no doubt deserve it but our children need that support and investment as well.

Supplementary question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed:

Do you agree with me that it is not fair that only 95% secure a place at one of their top three choices.

Councillor Rachael Saunders response to the supplementary question:

I absolutely agree with you that the 5% that do not secure one of their top three choices remains a huge concern. We will do everything that we can for them. Of course we aim to get to 100%. 95% is pretty good but 100% would be great. But this will get harder because, although as the Mayor described previously, we are pragmatic and we live in the world as it is and academies and free schools are being pushed very hard by this Government. We are absolutely determined to, despite this Government's approach, to get the best deal for young people in the Borough. The fact that the Government is trying to acadamise every single school, whether head teachers and governors want

it or not, puts a further strain on school budgets and on the budgets and capacity of this Council. Capacity, knowledge, time and energy frankly, that would have been focused on school improvement and on broader issues, will be spent on a completely fruitless procedural ideological exercise which does nothing to help children and young people in the Borough. So attainment is at risk, that level of 95% is at risk as we are being cut and we are being driven by a completely fruitless and not evidence based but a purely ideological agenda to transform the way in which schools work in this Borough. The schools in this Borough are spectacular. They do not need this ideological attack from this Government.

8.4 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill:

Does the Mayor have any comments regarding a recruitment consultancy engaged by the council, under the previous administration, which failed to disclose important information concerning a candidate that could have affected the decision as to whether to make an appointment? It should be noted that this failure resulted in a course of events that cost Tower Hamlets Council thousands of pounds of taxpayers money, therefore will the Mayor assure the council that this will not occur again?

Response by Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Resources:

As Councillor Dockerill will be aware, it's not the case that we can enter into any conversation which refers to or implies a particular individual. In terms of the process that we go through in order to get our recruitment consultants, we go through an open tendering process, there is a competitive process and recruitment consultants are appointed at the end of that process, and it is also the case, and I think that this has been made a bit more explicit in recent times maybe as a result of the incident that you may be talking about, that the recruitment consultants, used for senior appointments are required to carry out appropriate due diligence checks on an applicant's career history and that this information is to be provided to Councillors at the point when they are making their decision.

I have also dug around a little bit on what might be in the background to this question and I am reassured that that requirement is now very clear, if it was unclear in the past, that the recruitment consultants are required to do those sorts of checks and to provide that information. So that when an Appointments Committee makes a decision, it has full information available to it. But it has also become clear to me from some of the information that has been given is that your suggestion that the Council has lost many thousands of pounds as a result of some potential incident in the past is not at all clear. I think there is a view that the course of events would have been likely to have been very similar to those which actually took place and there isn't the sort of loss of money that you are suggesting that has taken place.

Supplementary question from Councillor Julia Dockerill:

I think there is a probably a problem that we also need to explore about our legal services department in that latter regard. What worries me is that in this

instance we went on to use the same recruitment agent again and I just wonder and I probed the Committee about this and was told that there is only one of two people that we can use. I would just like to know whether you would consider widening the field or the pool of recruitment agencies which we use the future as a result of this incident.

Councillor David Edgar response to the supplementary question:

If we go through a tendering process then I imagine that all suitable qualified consultancy firms are able to make an application to be our consultants for any particular point of recruitment. If there is some limit I would be surprised but I would be very happy to look into that and I am also happy to have a discussion with you outside of this meeting as I don't think there is any more I can say by way of response other than I am reassured that there is a proper tendering process, as one would expect, and that recruitment consultants are in all cases, expected to give Councillors on Appointments Committees all of the information which they might want to have at the point of making the decision about whether to appoint a particular candidate. But as I say, I am happy to talk outside this meeting as, as always, discussions in this meeting are fairly elliptical and we can't really get to the heart of the issues that you may think are existing in a public Council Chamber.

8.5 Question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar:

Can the Cabinet Member update me on the number of families housed in B&Bs for over 6 weeks at the end of February 2016 – and can a figure for the same period in 2015 be provided for comparison?

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

You want to know the number of families housed in B&Bs over 6 weeks in February 2016 and comparatively for 2015. In February 2015, we had 92 families living in B&B over the 6 week period and the same for the end of February 2016 - we had 13 families in B&Bs exceeding the 6 weeks. These figures relate to family households with dependent children and pregnant women.

Supplementary question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar:

How many families were placed in B&Bs for over 6 weeks since Mayor John Biggs has taken office.

Councillor Sirajul Islam's response to the supplementary question:

When Mayor Biggs came into office, we had 154 families living in B&B exceeding 6 weeks. As I said before, this figure has now come down to 13. That is due to the strong leadership of this Mayor and working very hard with Council Officers to make sure we have a responsibility to people living in B&B. The previous Administration did not take very much notice at all of this issue. They just left people there and they still think that it is funny and it is not.

People live in very difficult conditions in B&B hotels. So through our commitments and continued commitments we are able to bring that figure to 13 and we are very committed to bringing the figure to zero

8.6 Question from Councillor Maium Miah:

Will the Mayor agree to look into and personally intervene, wherever possible, to ensure that the terrible traffic chaos and gridlock faced by the residents of Isle of Dogs in general but particularly between 5 & 7 March are never repeated. Will he confirm that robust and proactive measures are in place by the Council which has the responsibility to oversee agencies, contractors and developers to ensure that the essential needs of the local residents and local businesses - their ability to travel/move and go about their daily life without unnecessary, non-compliant blockages and obstructions – are paramount in planning and risk assessment of such activities, issuing of permits, deployment of enforcement action together with consultation and communication with the residents?

Response by Mayor John Biggs:

I spoke about this briefly in my report and have written on it in my report as well. I think the events between 5 & 7 March should not be repeated and we need to ensure that we better manage the road restrictions and closures on the Isle of Dogs which is incredibly sensitive to them. For that reason, I have undertaken to hold a meeting with all the Councillors on the Isle of Dogs and I am happy for us to do public meetings if there is demand for that. But we need more importantly to get a proper response from our Officers. We have a new Service Head of Public Realm starting who will have responsibility in this area, and as I said earlier, we need to look also in terms of our developing Borough plan whether there are other things that we can do that will improve the capacity of the road network on the Isle of Dogs because we can't have people who live on the Island held to ransom by closures. Leaving aside road works and crane removals, the Canals and Rivers Trust has the ability to open and shut the blue bridge more or less at their whim and that does create a problem and uncertainty in the Borough that we need to manage better as well.

Supplementary question from Councillor Maium Miah:

It was a disaster for the residents of the Isle of Dogs. Will you apologise for turning the Isle of Dogs into the Isle of clogs and ensure that this won't be repeated again.

Mayor John Biggs response to the supplementary question:

I am tempted to answer by saying that the day that you apologise for your conduct as highlighted in recent legal action is possibly the day, when I should consider reflecting on this. I regret that this happened and I think that it highlighted that within part of the Highways Department we didn't seem to have the communications in place to ensure that it did not happen. Further to that, we have done a lot of work to identify whether we can push back the

road encroachments from developments particularly City Pride. I am very anxious that the Canary Wharf development has led to one of the access roads from the Isle of Dogs being closed now for many, many months, and will continue to be closed although it is on private land. Like I say I think the best way of dealing with this is to learn from it. To sit down with local residents and to be honest that we did not get it right but in some ways due to factors outside our control.

Extension of time limit for the meeting

The Speaker of the Council, Councillor M. A. Mukit **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, a procedural motion, that “under Procedure Rule 15.11.7 the meeting be extended for 10 minutes, to consider and vote on the reports for consideration (Items 9.1,11.1-11.3). The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

Question 8.1 was withdrawn as the issue had already been dealt with at the meeting. Questions 8.7- 26 were not put due to a lack of time. 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 Report of the Human Resources Committee, Pay Policy Statement 2016/17

The Council considered the report from the Human Resources Committee meeting of 21 January 2016 regarding the adoption of a Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17 as required by the Localism Act 2011.

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

RESOLVED:

1. That the Authority’s Pay Policy Statement for the year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 be adopted as recommended by the Human Resources Committee and attached at Appendix A to the report.
2. That it be agreed that if any minor changes to the 2016/17 pay policy statement are required as a result of future government guidance, these amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Service Head (HR and WD), the Chair of the HR Committee and the Monitoring Officer. Should any fundamental changes be required, the pay policy statement will be sent back to the HR 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 Community Safety Partnership Plan Review and Extension

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director Communities, Localities and Culture in respect of the Community Safety Partnership Plan Review and Extension.

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

RESOLVED:

1. That the content of the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2013-16 Revised for Year 3 (Appendix 1 of the report) be noted;
2. That the content of the report and the decision made under the relevant legislation by the CSP to extend its current CSP Plan by 1 year, so that it remains aligned with MOPAC's Police and Crime Plan 2013-16 and expires on 31.03.17 be noted;
3. That the CSP's extension of its Plan term for a further year until 31st March 2017 be agreed for the reasons set out in the report.

11.2 Members' Allowances Scheme 2016/17

Council considered the report of the Director, Law, Probity and Governance in respect of the Members' Allowances Scheme 2016/17.

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

RESOLVED:

That the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Members' Allowances Scheme 2016 as set out at Appendix 'A' to the report be adopted.

11.3 Calendar of Council and Committee Meetings 2016/17

Council considered the report of the Director, Law, Probity and Governance setting out the proposed dates of Council and Committee meetings for 2016/17.

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

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposed calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2016/17 as set out in Appendix A of the report be approved.
2. To delegate to the Director, Law, Probity and Governance the authority to agree meeting dates for any new Committees or Panels that are set up subsequent to this report being presented to Council, subject to appropriate consultation with Members.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

12.2 Motion regarding the Poplar HARCA

Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Rajib Ahmed **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 while rent cuts are of course popular for tenants they are in reality a cynical move by the Government to reduce its Housing Benefit bill by transferring costs to housing providers. Poplar HARCA, like many Registered Providers, faces a challenging time financially as a consequence of the year-on-year 1% rent cuts imposed by Government. However, the draconian decisions taken by the HARCA in part-response to this have caused massive disquiet, particularly as they have hit the pockets of residents through increased charges.

We acknowledge:

1. Poplar HARCA has increased charges for parking and hire of sheds on their estates.
2. Parking spaces have increased in cost from £1.96 per week to £7 per week.
3. The price of hiring a shed has also increased from £1.96 to £7 per week.
4. Residents do not believe that they have been properly consulted, or forewarned, about the increases in charges.
5. We note that there have been a series of other cuts, less immediately affecting residents but which will also severely affect the services they receive.

This Council believes:

1. While recognising the challenges faced by the HARCA, the costs of hire for parking spaces and sheds should be kept as low as reasonably possible.
2. Poplar HARCA should ensure that the prices of parking spaces and sheds should take into consideration the financial means of residents and levels of deprivation locally as well as rising costs of living locally.
3. As a locally based and supposedly resident-led organisation Poplar HARCA should be doing all it can to keep costs to residents as low as possible.
4. There needs to be a proper accounting for the consequences of the other cuts implemented by the HARCA. The lack of transparency is in stark contrast to the openness of the Council's own recent budget debate and consultation.

This Council resolves:

1. To call on the Mayor to write to Poplar HARCA expressing the concern of this Council to the large increases in charges, and other cuts.
2. To call on Poplar HARCA to stop the implementation of these new charges and to engage in consultation with residents about increasing charges.

Motions 12.1, 12.3 – 4 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 motion to be debated without notice:

13.1 Motion Regarding Britain First and the East London Mosque

Mayor John Biggs, Councillors Oliur Rahman and Peter Golds **moved** and **seconded**, the motion as tabled.

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

RESOLVED:

This Council notes the attempt by Britain First to provoke violence in our borough with their unannounced and hostile acts outside the East London Mosque on Saturday 12th March. This followed a previous visit on Tuesday 1st March. Britain First attempted to block the entrance to the Mosque, used offensive, provocative, Islamophobic and racist language, and clearly attempted to incite a reaction. East London Mosque is in a predominantly Muslim area of our Borough.

The Council further notes the strength of response to these events from the community, Council members, partners and services and welcomes action taken by the Mayor to address the events including attending a solidarity with the Mosque demonstration promoted by United East End where both the Mayor and Leader of opposition were joined by a cross section of community groups including representatives of various faiths and none. We have fought hard to secure and maintain good community relations, based on respect, in our borough and will continue vigorously to do so.

This Council believes that the actions of Britain First are dressed up as a 'passive protest' but are clearly designed to provoke a reaction, obstructing local people from going about their lawful and proper business and increasing the risk of violence.

The Council further believes that we must remain vigilant and send a clear message that groups such as Britain First are not welcome in any corner of our Borough.

This Council resolves:

1. To call on the Mayor to continue updating all members on the response and planning for any possible future attempts by groups such as Britain First to divide communities and provoke violence.
2. To request that the Mayor, the leader of opposition, and minority opposition group leader, on behalf of Council, write an open letter to local residents to reassure them that they stand united to their opposition to any effort to divide our communities.
3. To call on the Mayor to write, jointly with the leader of opposition and minority opposition leader, to the Home Secretary exploring options to ban Britain First from demonstrating in any part of our Borough, including in particular outside a faith building, where their intent is to provoke violence and spread their message of hatred.

13.2 Urgent Motion regarding the Future of Old Ford Housing Association

Councillor Marc Francis **moved**, and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded**, the motion as tabled.

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

RESOLVED:

This Council notes:

- Old Ford Housing Association was established in 1998 as the successor body to Tower Hamlets Housing Trust;
- OFHA was a subsidiary of Circle 33 Housing Trust for financing purposes, but was accountable to its own Board of tenants, leaseholders and independent members;

- In 2005, Circle 33 merged with Anglia Housing to form Circle Anglia Ltd, and that other associations joined later to form Circle Housing Group;
- In July 2007, LBTH transferred the “Parkside” council estates to OFHA with the promise to refurbish individual flats and the estates within five years;
- In 2015, following complaints from LB Islington and LBTH about the performance of its repairs service, the Homes & Communities Agency found evidence of “serious detriment” to tenants and downgraded Circle Housing Group, requiring an action plan to improve governance;
- It has now become clear that Circle’s “action plan” essentially involves closing down its subsidiaries, including Old Ford HA, and centralising services, moving most staff to a new call-centre in Kent;
- Circle has also announced its intention to merge with Affinity Sutton “to create the largest housing association in Western Europe”;
- While Circle ended its repairs contract with Kier Group, it retained Kier gas to carry out boiler maintenance, and that many residents have been left without heating and hot water for weeks on end over the winter;
- Old Ford has the worst performance on Members Enquiries of any housing association in Tower Hamlets;
- Residents of Old Ford HA are now calling on the Mayor and MP to raise concerns about Circle’s performance and future plans with the HCA regulator and Minister.

This Council believes:

- That the service provided by Old Ford was undermined by Circle’s centralisation of contracts and that the closure of Old Ford and merger with Affinity Sutton will worsen the situation;
- The Bow estates were transferred to Old Ford on the basis that it would be a “community-based housing association”, and that residents voted for the transfers on that basis;
- The Board members of Old Ford HA must now be allowed to seriously explore the option of leaving Circle Housing Group without the threat of their removal;
- Residents should be given the final say on whether Old Ford stays with Circle or stands alone or in partnership with another locally-based association;

This Council resolves:

- To call on the HCA regulator to urgently investigate why Circle’s Management Board retained a failing contractor Kier Gas to provide its gas safety/maintenance service, and whether this decision, which left many tenants without heating and hot water for weeks amounts to further “serious detriment”;
- To ask that the Mayor suspend Circle as a Preferred Development Partner in Tower Hamlets with immediate effect;

- To request the Mayor to instruct officers to explore options for legal proceedings against Circle Housing Group for breach of Schedule 17 of the Transfer Agreement and to report back to members on the possibility of such proceedings within 28 days.

13.3 Urgent Motion calling on the Council to support the UK's membership of the European Union

Councillor Andrew Cregan **moved**, and Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs **seconded**, the motion as tabled.

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

RESOLVED:

This Council notes:

- That there is a referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union (EU) on 23rd June.
- Over half Britain's exports go to EU countries, worth £227 billion last year to the UK economy, and many UK businesses large and small are dependent on trade with the EU, supporting many thousands of jobs.
- Access to the Single Market is a major factor in making Tower Hamlets, in-part, home to the leading global financial centre and major employers from across the world choose to locate in Britain and in Tower Hamlets because we are a gateway into the European Union.
- EU membership has given vital rights to British workers and the EU's rules provide important protection to consumers, workers and the environment. Rights to equal pay, paid holidays, maternity and paternity leave, equal rights for part-time workers and health and safety regulations are all protected under EU law.

This Council believes:

- This Council has a role in explaining the consequences of the referendum outcomes and helping the residents of Tower Hamlets to reach an informed decision.
- That our membership of the EU makes the UK stronger, safer and better off. It is in the best interests of residents and businesses the Borough and the whole of the UK to remain a member of the European Union.
- There are direct benefits to Tower Hamlets communities of EU membership including that linked to being, in part, home to the world's leading financial centre which supports jobs and economic growth in the Borough and the UK as a whole.
- That leaving the EU risks a loss of jobs, would weaken the UK's attractiveness to international investors, and would create prolonged

uncertainty for business while the practical implications of a withdrawal are put in place.

- EU reform should make the EU better for the UK and that means remaining a member to lead that reform, not being a spectator on the sidelines.

This Council resolves:

- We support the United Kingdom's continued membership of the EU.

The meeting ended at 10.40 p.m.

Speaker of the Council