

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2008

**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY
MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7

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

SUMMARY

1. Set out overleaf are the questions submitted by Members of the Council for response by Members of the Executive at the Council meeting on Wednesday 15th October 2008.
2. Questions are limited to one per member per meeting, plus one supplementary question unless the member has indicated that only a written reply is required and in these circumstances a supplementary question is not permitted.
3. Oral responses are time limited to two minutes. Supplementary questions and responses are also time limited to two minutes each.
4. There is a time limit of thirty minutes for consideration of Members' questions with no extension of time allowed and any question not dealt within this time will be dealt with by way of a written response. The Mayor will decide the time allocated to each question.
5. Members must confine their contributions to questions and answers and not make statements or attempt to debate.

QUESTIONS

Set out overleaf are the questions which have been received.

7.1 Question from Councillor Ahmed Omer to the Lead Member for Children's Services, Councillor Clair Hawkins

Can the Lead Member for Children's Services tell us whether there will be any much-needed investment in Youth Services in the borough?

7.2 Question from Councillor Tim Archer to the Lead Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Rofique Ahmed

Would the Lead Member please confirm what the current position is regarding securing the future of Poplar Baths?

7.3 Question from Councillor Abjol Miah to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman

Would the Council Leader agree that the report from End Child Poverty, an umbrella organisation including some 130 children's charities, that Tower Hamlets continues to have the highest proportion of children living in poverty of any borough in London or council in the country, more than 42,000 children in total, is a scandal and shows that the government's proposals to halve the number of children in poverty have failed in Tower Hamlets, despite the relative success acknowledged by End Child Poverty in educational achievement in the borough, that child poverty is closely correlated to lack of work and dependence on benefits, that the growth of jobs in Canary Wharf has had no apparent effect on this unemployment and low incomes and that the council needs to completely reconsider its anti-poverty strategy in the face of this failure?

7.4 Question from Councillor Stephanie Eaton to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

What is the Council's target for meeting National Indicator NI35 (Building resistance to violent extremism), what financial resources are being put into meeting this target by the Borough and how is performance against this target being assessed?

7.5 Question from Councillor Fazlul Haque to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

Can the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener tell us if there are any plans to increase the number of Police officers in the borough over the next two years?

7.6 Question from Councillor Dr. Emma Jones to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

Would the Lead Member inform us as to what the council is doing to ensure that a fuller use is made of the river as part of the public transport network?

7.7 Question from Councillor Fozol Miah to the Lead Member for Housing & Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Could the Lead Member identify the number of Council rented and RSL properties which have not had heat insulating refurbishment including double glazing since 1997 and therefore how many Council-rented and RSL properties remain heating inefficient and expensive for their tenants and could he confirm when it is planned they will get this vital refurbishment and what other plans the Council is intending to bring forward to address the growing problem of fuel poverty in this borough?

7.8 Question from Councillor Tim O'Flaherty to the Lead Member for Employment and Skills, Councillor Alibor Choudhury

What is the Council doing to facilitate greater participation in the workforce by disabled residents?

7.9 Question from Councillor Ann Jackson to the Lead Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Rofique Ahmed

Can the Lead Member for Culture and Leisure please give us an update on the progress of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid for improvements to Victoria Park?

7.10 Question from Councillor Shirley Houghton to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

The Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener recently issued a press statement about his plans to encourage the use of environmentally friendly electric cars in Tower Hamlets. Can he provide details of these plans, including the strategy for charging point provision, resident parking reductions and reducing carbon emissions of the Tower Hamlets vehicle fleet, including specific delivery timescales, street locations and budgetary implications?

7.11 Question from Councillor Harun Miah to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Could the Lead Member specify for each year since 1997 what has been the change in the total Council and RSL property to rent in the borough, specifying whether this is a decline or an increase and providing both the percentages involved and how many one, two, three, four and five bedroom properties involved in either the increase or decrease?

7.12 Question from Councillor Azizur Rahman Khan to the Lead Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Rofique Ahmed

What does the Lead Member intend to do to address the concerns of residents about noise and anti-social behaviour in the Borough's Idea Stores and does he recognise the value in retaining traditional libraries in the Borough?

7.13 Question from Councillor Waiseul Islam to the Lead Member for Employment and Skills, Councillor Alibor Choudhury

Can the Lead Member for Employment and Skills tell me how many local women were employed in Canary Wharf last year and whether there is a target to increase this figure?

7.14 Question from Councillor Philip Briscoe to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman

What is the per household collection cost of Council Tax, how does this cost vary with Direct Debit payments, how many households currently pay by Direct Debit, and are there any discounts offered to residents for paying by Direct Debit?

7.15 Question from Councillor Mohammed Abdul Munim to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

Could the Lead Member provide the total number of PCSOs from BME communities who are employed in the borough as a percentage and in absolute numbers out of the total number of PCSOs, provide the same percentage and absolute numbers for police officers in the borough and give his reaction to the fact that the senior management team in Tower Hamlets Metropolitan Police has no officers from the BME community at all, despite the fact that this is a borough with a very high percentage of people who are from BME communities, and would the Lead Member deplore as I do the way in which the Metropolitan Police Commissioner has been forced to resign by the Mayor of London and agree that we need to continue to support the

diversity and community policing initiatives taken by Sir Ian Blair and see these initiatives extended and fulfilled properly?

7.16 Question from Councillor Abdul Matin to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

Could the Lead Member provide details of the training, security checks, and powers of the proposed THEOs (Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers) and can be advise what restraints, protection equipment, personal security devices and communications equipment will be issued to the THEOs?

7.17 Question from Councillor Rania Khan to the Lead Member for Children's Services, Councillor Clair Hawkins

Can the Lead Member for Children's Services tell us whether the year-on-year improvement of GCSE results in the borough has continued this year?

7.18 Question from Councillor Ahmed Hussain to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Can the Lead Member explain why the RSLs are bullying the residents of Burdett Estate in my ward over parking and development; can he assure us that the development of the health centre will be built on St. Paul's Way despite the credit crunch; can he let us know when the British Estate Residents will be pardoned from the chaotic and misery that the RSL has created?

7.19 Question from Councillor Dulal Uddin to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Could the Lead Member inform the Council as to whether English Heritage has yet decided to list Robin Hood Gardens and whether the council has drawn up any plans yet to try to secure the investment, estimated by some at £20 million, that would then be needed to bring Robin Hood Gardens up to the standard of a listed building, which is commonly thought to be a treasured piece of architecture, and to provide the community in Robin Hood Gardens with the standard of homes they have both a right to and deserve?

7.20 Question from Councillor Salim Ullah to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman

Can the Leader of the Council tell us whether, in the light of death threats received by himself and the Service Head, Democratic Services following his reasonable request that non-Muslim members refrain from eating Iftar packs set aside for Muslim members until after the breaking of the fast, it would be expedient to ban all food and drink from future Council meetings in order to prevent accusations of favouritism in the future?

7.21 Question from Councillor Peter Golds to the Lead Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Rofique Ahmed

In view of the growing concern amongst former and present residents of the Borough about the Council's intention regarding its outstanding archive collection, will the Lead Member indicate as to why there has been £24 million of public funding for "Rich Mix" and yet the Council declines to allocate a fraction of this sum to preserving the record of the rich heritage of our Borough for future generations?

7.22 Question from Councillor Mamun Rashid to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Could the Lead Member confirm that he is aware that residents on the Tarling Estate believe they require a large community facility to meet their needs and also confirm whether the Council has any plans to try to find or help obtain the £400,000 additional funding estimated to be necessary to ensure that the residents do get the facility they need?

7.23 Question from Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman to the Lead Member for Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Councillor Abdal Ullah

Can the Lead Member provide an update on SNT (Safer Neighbourhood Team) officers, including PCSOs (Police Community Support Officers). How many are there in post, how many vacancies are there and how many have been in post longer than 2 years? Additionally, could the Lead Member explain the line of accountability there is to the Council?

7.24 Question from Councillor Rupert Eckhardt to the Lead Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Joshua Peck

In the light of recent reports regarding Local Authority budgets, what is the impact to date of rising fuel and food costs and falling revenues from property searches on the Council accounts and can we be reassured that the hard pressed Council Tax payer is not going to get lumbered with a massive rise next year?

7.25 Question from Councillor Carli Harper-Penman to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lutfur Rahman

Would the Leader please outline the importance of participation in quasi-judicial and scrutiny committees by members from across the Council and the risks that might be faced by residents if a particular group within the Council were to abdicate these responsibilities for a period of, for example, five or six months?

7.26 Question from Councillor David Snowden to the Lead Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Joshua Peck

Would the Lead Member please outline the policy for setting pay for contractors and temporary staff?

7.27 Question from Councillor Alex Heslop to the Lead Member for Housing and Development, Councillor Marc Francis

Can the Lead Member for Housing and Development assure us that he is doing everything possible to ensure that a significant portion of homes built as a result of the Olympics will be affordable?