

Non-Executive Report of the: Council 22 March 2017	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Graham White, Acting Corporate Director, Governance	Classification: Unrestricted
Questions submitted by Members of the Council	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Committee Services Manager, Democratic Services.
Wards affected	All wards

SUMMARY

1. Set out overleaf are the questions that were submitted by Members of the Council for response by the Mayor, the Speaker or the Chair of a Committee or Sub-Committee at the Council meeting on Wednesday 22 March 2017
2. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.2 as amended, questions relating to Executive functions and decisions taken by the Mayor are put to the Mayor unless he delegates such a decision to another Member, who will therefore be responsible for answering the question. In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor will answer questions directed to the Mayor.
3. 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. Oral responses are time limited to one minute. Supplementary questions and responses are also time limited to one minute each.
4. Council Procedure Rule 12.5 provides for an answer to take the form of a written answer circulated to the questioner, a reference to a published work or a direct oral answer.
5. There is a time limit of thirty minutes at the Council meeting for consideration of Members' questions with no extension of time allowed and any questions not put within this time are dealt with by way of written responses.
6. Members must confine their contributions to questions and answers and not make statements or attempt to debate.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

28 questions have been received from Members of the Council as follows:-

8.1 Question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar

The National Audit Office recently published a report highlighting the major cost pressures that schools face. What assessment has been made of the savings required by schools in Tower Hamlets, including the changes to the school funding formula?

8.2 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman

In response to my previous council question at 18 January 2017 meeting about vulnerable Syrian refugee children, the Mayor said that he is committed to resettling 3 to 5 households and has allocated funding the council need - will he update us on exactly how many vulnerable Syrians children does his commitment translate into, and how many have now been settled?

8.3 Question from Councillor Denise Jones

What action has the Mayor taken to challenge the Government's damaging business rate increase?

8.4 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood

Given the imminent closure of Marsh Wall & Eastferry road for gas works for five weeks starting the 27th March what has the Mayor done to ensure that construction sites in the area have adapted their plans, that people dependent on the 135 & D6 buses can still access transport and that disruption is minimised. Also given that this is the 2nd major utility related digging up of Marsh Wall in the last 8 months what assurances do we have that this will not happen again next year?

8.5 Question from Councillor Amina Ali

What new facilities are now available in the newly refurbished Ocean Children's Centre?

8.6 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan

Can the Mayor ensure that leaseholders and freeholders will secure a like for like property in the future regenerated scheme of what is known as "Project Stone"?

8.7 Question from Councillor Danny Hassell

Can the lead member please update me on what work is being undertaken by the council and its partners to improve safety along Cantrell Road (the pedestrian path running alongside Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park between Knapp Road and Bow Common Lane) and what specific actions will be taken to improve safety here?

8.8 Question from Councillor Ohid Ahmed

Will the Mayor provide official crime rate figures (overall) for each year since 2010 until present (2017) for the Borough? And will the Mayor confirm that Anti-Social Behaviour is a priority for him which is backed up by his utmost focus and required leadership?

8.9 Question from Candida Ronald:

What assessment has the Council made of the Government's Budget, as announced on 8th March, and its impact on Tower Hamlets?

8.10 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman

The Labour controlled Manchester City Council is ceasing the 20mph limit that was implemented in some areas of the City. The reason being that it made almost no difference to speeds. Manchester Road, Tower Hamlets is increasingly dangerous because of the unenforced and indeed almost unenforceable 20mph speed limit. Will the Mayor bring Manchester Road in line with Manchester and scrap this scheme?

8.11 Question from Councillor Helal Uddin

The London Food Board has named Tower Hamlets as a leading borough in tackling food poverty issues, and the GLA has awarded the Council £5,000 to develop a food poverty action plan to build on this work. Can members be updated about this plan?

8.12 Question from Councillor Abdul Asad

Has the Mayor met with the petitioners following the Budget Meeting on 22nd February to discuss with them their concerns and how the council could work with them to address the issues they highlighted related to children's centres, nurseries and young people's services?

8.13 Question from Councillor John Pierce

Can the Mayor update us on the Council's progress to meet the second goal of the OSC Transparency Commission to 'publish all data by default wherever possible'?

8.14 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam

How would the Mayor describe Poplar HARCA's relationship with the Council and the Mayor, as well as its performance?

8.15 Question from Councillor M. Abdul Mukit:

Tower Hamlets has a successful night-time economy which has major benefits but also needs careful management. What is the Lead Member doing to tackle drug abuse and the associated anti-social behaviour?

8.16 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

Isle of Dogs residents continue to express concern at the loss of the three houses on Eastferry Road which were illegally pulled down, the future of the Victorian Pier Tavern, which although recently refused demolition could still be in danger and finally the future of the 110 year old, Cubitt Town Library, which is again under threat. Will the Mayor update the council as to what is being done to reassure Islanders about these valuable local assets?

8.17 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan

Will the Mayor state how many Tower Hamlets Council run nurseries he plans to privatise?

8.18 Question from Councillor Md Maium Miah

Will the Mayor update us on the total amount of cuts that were approved in his budget in February 2016 but were not achieved in the year by February 2017?

8.19 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill

Tower Hamlets has huge financial resource at its disposal from unspent s106 contributions. Yet all too many small parks, green spaces and leisure facilities in our borough look shabby and neglected. The Mayor has previously advised me that the council team with responsibility for improving our green spaces hasn't the capacity to deliver improvements. This being so, would he now look into contracting out more of these projects so that residents actually get the amenity improvements that local development is meant to pay for?

8.20 Question from Councillor Shafi Ahmed

Can the Mayor clarify if he is closing 18, 10, 8 or no Youth Centres?

8.21 Question from Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim

Will the Mayor update as to what is the average percentage of built-in inflation in the Council contracts of £1m and above?

8.22 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

What is the Council's intention towards the Council owned green space known as the Limehouse Triangle on Salmon Lane. Given the known scarcity of green space in the Borough should this space not be used as part of the Borough's green grid rather than for housing?

8.23 Question from Councillor Shah Alam

Can the Mayor state how many staff will lose their jobs through the cuts to the Careers Centre?

8.24 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed

Will the Mayor inform exactly how many staff – not just full-time equivalent figure - will lose their jobs due to his budget cuts approved last month? Can he confirm the total number of staff – part-time or full time - have lost their job since June 2015?

8.25 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

What funding amounts and for which specific service areas remained unallocated in 2015/16 and 2016/17?

8.26 Question from Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury

Does the Council have no statutory, welfare and/or moral responsibility to keep a record as to precisely how many people – not families – are currently housed in temporary accommodation – particularly children under the age of 16?

Will the Mayor undertake to ensure that this record is kept and monitored immediately to avoid potential abuse and impropriety that the Council can be liable for?

8.27 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani

Will the Mayor share with residents and elected members the following:

- a) the Council's new communications strategy?
- b) the Council's campaigns schedule for 2017/18?
- c) if the Mayor has asked the communications team 'not' to send the standard daily media monitoring alerts to the elected members other than his administration? If he has not, will he ask the Head of Service to immediately start sending the daily media alerts to 'all' elected councillors?
- d) the Council's protocol and the legislation relating to the journalists or media filming the public full council meetings provided they give notice and are non-disruptive?
- e) the legislation and the Council's protocol to allow residents to undertake democratic, peaceful and non-disruptive protests at public meetings?
- f) if the Mayor has asked the Council's security to overzealously remove innocuous banners or display cards from the residents and discourage them when they come to peacefully and democratically voice their concerns at the council's public meetings? if the Mayor has not done so, can he explain why is this taking place under his administration that residents are being discouraged? Will he ensure that clear instruction is given to the council's security, facility and members team – particularly security - 'not to discourage the peaceful and civic democratic engagement', and continue to be courteous and helpful to all residents when they come to attend the council meetings?

8.28 Question from Councillor Andrew Cregan

What is the Mayor doing to address the borough's recycling rate of 21% - one of the poorest in the UK?