

APPENDIX A – WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING (20 SEPTEMBER 2017)

8.3 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders:

How many care leavers living in and outside of Tower Hamlets will benefit from the Mayor's new policy to exempt care leavers from paying council tax?

Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

I'm very proud we have chosen to give care leavers the best start in adult life by exempting them from Council Tax until they are 25 years old. As councillors we are the corporate parents for all children in care – like any parents, we want to give our young people a helping hand as they become independent.

We are in the process of updating the list of care leavers to include new cases. At the time Cabinet agreed the proposal, there were 324 care leavers.

When a young person leaves care and begins to manage their own financial affairs for the first time, they can easily fall into debt, especially without vital advice and practical support from family. National charity The Children's Society has highlighted this and we're pleased to support their campaign.

This is a relatively small cost for the council to fund this exemption but it can have a huge impact on the lives of those leaving our care. We've already had feedback from some care leavers about the massive difference this decision will make to their lives.

Based on our analysis, a care leaver living on their own in a B&B property would be set to save over £700 (£725) per year off their council tax bills up to age 25.

Without the family support many young people get as they become adults, care leavers often struggle to manage their household bills and make ends meet. Many find themselves in debt, or having to go without food or other basic necessities.

We're delighted that Tower Hamlets Council has taken this vital step and we would urge more Councils, in London and beyond, to follow suit.

8.4 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood

Did both foster parents of the little girl fostered in the news recently match the child's "religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background." Simple yes or no answers for each category and foster family would be sufficient given the reporting restrictions

Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

You will be well aware that this is subject to significant legal restrictions on what can be discussed and published. Even more importantly, I'm sure you share my view that our priority must be to protect the identity and safety of the young girl in question above all else, and indeed her family and foster families.

All our foster parents are trained to respond to children's needs as identified in their care plan. There is not a requirement that they have to match all the identified needs but they must be able to respond and ensure that the appropriate care is given to a child. Keeping a child local to family, networks and school is a crucial factor and all foster carers are trained to support children from a range of backgrounds. You may have seen that recently the case was again heard in court, and it was reported that the child concerned had a "warm and appropriate" relationship with the foster carers.

Both the Corporate Director and I have offered Members the opportunity to discuss the case more fully in a confidential setting. You would also benefit from reading the Family Court statement but be assured that we have examined very closely the allegations and facts of this case.

8.5 Question from Councillor Shiria Khatun

Can the lead member update councillors on the latest exam results?

Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

There have been numerous changes to the exams this year, but I am pleased to say that Tower Hamlets schools continue to perform well and improve their results. I would like to congratulate all our young people for their achievements.

At GCSE level, early interim data from 13 out of the 16 schools in Tower Hamlets show that under the new grade structure, those attaining grade 4 or above in English and Mathematics is 65.9%.

This is not strictly comparable to the old measure but does show that attainment in these subjects has improved (the percentage attaining grades A*-C in English and mathematics in 2016 was 63.3%).

At A Level, early and provisional data from 13 out of the 15 schools and colleges in Tower Hamlets show that the percentage of students achieving 3 A Levels A*-E has risen to over 80 percent, whilst the percentage of students that have studied 3 A Levels and have achieved 2 A grades and a B grade or higher in at least 2 facilitating subjects, has also risen this year.

The vast majority of local schools subscribe to the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership (THEP) as they recognise the benefits of working within a strong family of schools. THEP is supporting the development of system leadership, brokering school to school support and the sharing of resources across local schools, as well as providing intensive intervention in the very few schools of concern in the borough. We're proud to still have a high number of maintained schools in the borough and that most academies and free schools want to be part of THEP and work together.

The Primary School Improvement Team have been seconded to the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership since the 1st of September 2017 and the Council is supporting THEP to secure appropriate capacity to support secondary schools in a similar way. Key performance indicators have been agreed to hold the THEP to account with regard to their performance and a governance structure has been agreed.

8.6 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan

Will the Mayor commit to Rent Controls in the Private Rented Sector throughout the borough?

Response from Councillor Sirajul Islam

The Council has no legal powers to control the rents charged by private landlords.

Any form of mandatory rent control would require primary legislation on the part of Parliament at Westminster. I urge the Government to examine the benefit of such measures in tackling the affordability crisis.

The Council is determined, however, to use all the powers that are at its disposal to protect private renters in Tower Hamlets. We recently launched the Tower Hamlets Private Renters' Charter, which clearly sets out tenants' legal rights and also the steps that the Council and its partners will take to enforce them.

In the last twelve months we have also revived the Tower Hamlets Landlords Forum, which promotes best practice and provides landlords and agents with regular legal, regulatory and policy updates to make sure good landlords are complying with the rules.

The council also works with the GLA, and is currently contributing to the development of the Mayor of London's Housing Strategy. The Draft Housing Strategy includes a commitment to develop a more secure, stable, and affordable private rented sector.

I would reiterate that local authorities have no legal powers to control the rents charged by private landlords, but the Government should carry out a thorough assessment of such a policy. If we had such powers we would of course consider exercising them as we are clear that the effects of rent rises are pricing people out of our borough.

8.7 Question from Councillor John Pierce

What assessment has been made of the cladding of the PFI block behind Poplar Baths?

Response from Councillor Sirajul Islam

The cladding system on Randall House has failed the advanced testing carried out by the BRE. Information on this testing can be found on the DCLG website.

The block is not owned by the Council – it was built under the previous Mayor using a private finance initiative (PFI) deal.

The Council has a duty of care to our tenants in the block and we are doing everything we can to ensure their safety.

Folera have advised the Council and the DCLG in August 2017 that they have agreed the following actions –

1. Replace all existing ACM materials from the external fabric of the building at the earliest time frame
2. Architects are at design stage for a replacement cladding system
3. Folera are currently awaiting on two fire consultant reports on the proposed replacement materials and on existing cladding to balconies and finishes
4. Folera's appointed cladding contractor is on standby to mobilise at short notice along with their preferred scaffold contractor

Folera are due to update the council on the programme shortly and we will keep residents informed with any developments.

8.8 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman

Will the Mayor provide the latest update about the foster child, looked after by Tower Hamlets Council, about whom a front-page news story was recently published by a national newspaper, The Times, as well as other prominent media outlets?

Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

You will be well aware that this is subject to significant legal restrictions on what can be discussed and published. I'm sure you share my view that our priority must be to protect the identity and safety of the young girl in question above all else, and indeed her family and foster families.

The child as identified by the redacted court judgement is in the care of grandparents as was the plan of the local authority. We are not able to give any further details.

Both the Corporate Director and I have offered Members the opportunity to discuss the case more fully in a confidential setting. I refer you to the earlier answer (8.4) on the agenda.

8.9 Question from Councillor Ayas Miah:

How many families are housed by the Council in B&B accommodation for longer than the legal 6 week limit?

Response from Councillor Sirajul Islam

Currently no families who may be owed a duty under the Housing Acts are housed by the Council in B&B accommodation longer than the legal 6 week limit.

We work very hard to avoid the need to place families in B&Bs at all, but sometimes it is necessary to place them in B&Bs for a short term emergency placement. Where we do have to place families in B&Bs, we are very clear that this needs to be for the shortest possible time.

When Mayor Biggs was elected in June 2015, he inherited the country's worst performing local authority for housing families in B&Bs longer than the legal 6 week limit. Shamefully, at its peak in 2015 the Council housed 174 families in B&Bs for longer than 6 weeks.

I'm very glad that after a lot of work and investment, we've brought this figure down to zero.

The previous administration left families to languish in B&Bs and we're not going to follow their example.

8.10 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman

Did the little girl in contact centre reports provide a clear indication of her wishes as regards her fostering arrangements and did the Council give "due consideration.....to such wishes and feelings of the child as they have been able to ascertain?

Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

You will be well aware that this matter is subject to significant legal restrictions on what can be discussed and published. Our priority must be to protect the identity and safety of the young girl in question above all else, and indeed her family and foster families.

The views of children are taken by social workers, with regards to their placement. However the weight given to a child's wishes and feelings is dependent on their age and maturity. The child in this case is 5 years of age.

I would also note that the Children's Guardian, who is an independent official appointed by the court to protect the interests of the child, found 'there were no concerns as to the child's welfare and she reports that the child is settled and well cared for by the foster carer'. She had visited both placements and assessed that the child was happy and settled with both carers.

Both the Corporate Director and I have offered Members the opportunity to discuss

the case more fully in a confidential setting. I refer you to the earlier answer (8.4) on the agenda.

8.11 Question from Councillor Dave Chesterton:

Can the cabinet member tell me what impact the Private Renters' Charter will make to residents in private rented accommodation?

Response from Councillor Sirajul Islam

The Charter and the campaign around it will raise standards for private renters across the borough.

The Charter sets out clearly the standards that all private renters can expect in the borough, and also the steps that the Council and its community partners will take to enforce those standards.

The Charter will have a positive impact across the borough's 46,000 private renting households. However, this impact will be particularly beneficial for those tenants that currently have the least understanding of their rights. These are disproportionately the most vulnerable and excluded private tenants, including recent migrants, young people, and those in relative poverty.

The Charter will be at the centre of an ongoing campaign, reaching out not only to private renters, but also to landlords and agents – especially the 'amateur' or 'accidental' landlords who do not understand their responsibilities. Alongside this, the Council will take robust enforcement action where landlords breach standards.

Ultimately the Charter aims to change the culture of private renting in the borough to one where poor conditions and poor management are unacceptable.

Further, in the last twelve months we have revived the Tower Hamlets Landlords Forum and we are working with the forum towards those goals. The forum promotes best practice and provides landlords and agents with regular legal, regulatory and policy updates – and enables landlords and agents actively to feed into the Council's policy development.

The Charter is actively supported by all the key agent and landlord bodies: Residential Landlords Association, National Landlords Association, Association of Residential Letting Agents, and National Approved Lettings Scheme.

The strategy for the first year of the Private Renters' Charter is to establish and begin to embed awareness across the borough. After the planned extensive campaign is completed after the first year, we will consider the options for developing the charter as a simple charter-mark for landlords and agents. Alongside that we will begin actively to highlight and celebrate the work of the best and most improving agents and landlords.

The Council actively supports the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme which trains landlords to be compliant with the law and best practice. The council makes financial contributions to the scheme, incentivises landlords to become accredited and sits on the scheme's steering group. In the last twelve months we have begun

hosting quarterly accreditation training days at Albert Jacob House.

8.12 Question from Councillor Abdul Asad;

Why has the Mayor made an Individual Mayoral Decision outside of a Cabinet meeting to award a £3.5 million contract to consultants as part the transformation programme?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) agreed a report in June 2016 which detailed the business case for establishing a Corporate Programme Management Function to support the Council's Savings Programme.

The paper also detailed the need to secure a strategic partner to provide additional support and external specialist expertise in delivering large scale transformational changes.

A competitive procurement process tested the market through an appropriate national framework for professional consultancy services, and as a result the day rate agreed is below those already competitively priced within that framework added further value for money in terms of the pricing.

The award of the contract was scrutinised at the Competition Board and then approved at the meeting of Cabinet on 26th July 2016 as part of the Contracts Forward Plan.

The contract was awarded to Grant Thornton as the lead organisation, with a number of other organisations working with them, including for example the Centre for Public Scrutiny and CIPFA.

The recent IMD does not extend the contract either in its scope or duration but it extends the contract value (budget). This action is allowed for in the contract that was initially tendered and let.

The extension of the contract under this IMD will not require any additional savings as the costs will be met from the existing transformation reserve that was approved by Full Council in February 2017.

It should also be noted that the contract has been let on the basis of 1year+1year+1year, rather than a straight 3 year contract award. This was done to ensure that the Council maintains maximum flexibility in its arrangements and is not contractually obliged to continue with the contract if it is not performing satisfactorily or if the council's requirements change over time and the contract is no longer required.

I am however grateful for the attention drawn to this decision, and I am reviewing it and will make further information available to Councillors in order that its operation and scope, and anxieties that it may be perceived to be escalating, are addressed.

8.13 Question from Councillor Helal Uddin

What progress is being made to improve the quality of the Council's housing stock?

Response from Councillor Sirajul Islam

The Council is committed to improving the borough's housing stock and reverse the disrepair and neglect we inherited from the previous administration.

Cabinet adopted £22m and £18m in 2016/17 and 2017/18 respectively for capital works. 39 blocks across neighbourhoods have been identified for improvement works comprising, but not limited to roofs, windows, brickworks, lifts and door entry systems.

In addition, procurement of the Better Neighbourhood Framework has commenced, the same is targeted to complete in September 2018. The Framework will deliver the Council's five year capital programme, already adopted by cabinet.

8.14 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam

Will the Mayor update about the changes in his Cabinet which took place this year after the resignation of his both female Deputy Mayors who were also Cabinet members, will he tell us who are the 2 Deputy Mayors now?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

I refer you to my Executive Scheme of Delegation, item 11.2 on the Council agenda.

8.15 Question from Councillor Rajib Ahmed:

Can the cabinet member provide an update on the work of the Somali Task Force?

Response from Councillor Amina Ali

The Somali Task Force review led to the development of 23 recommendations, covering actions to improve access to services, a focus on improving employment outcomes and developing local community leadership.

An issue that was repeatedly raised by community members involved in the Task Force was the need for improving knowledge of and take up of services that are already available and to ensure that provision can meet the diverse needs of the community.

This led to the development of the Community Hub proposal which would have a focus on provision for the Somali community.

There has been progress on the development of options for the hub at an existing facility, Granby Hall, that requires refurbishment and already has members of the Somali community engaged through the Somali Senior Citizens Club and Bentworth Friendly Club which provides space for the local residents living on the adjacent estate.

There is ongoing engagement with the wider Somali community through review meetings designed to consult and enable participation of the community in how the hub is developed.

The other recommendations include an ESOL outreach programme and a graduate work experience programme that include new programmes to support employment outcomes.

There have also been a number of outreach and engagement activities to encourage more Somali young people to take up apprenticeships as they are currently under-represented in these groups.

The Council has completed the procurement of a Somali History Project to develop a project that will look at the long history of the community in the borough and in the East End. The project will engage local people to create the programme and is part of the work to develop local community leadership.

Other work includes improving Somali representation at key consultative and strategic partnership forums.

8.16 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

'Is the Mayor aware of the legal requirements as regards child fostering placements in the UK as well as the international norms established by the United Nations General Assembly in the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child'?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

Yes, I would in particular note the requirement under Article 20 that when a child is placed in foster care, residential care or for adoption, due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.

These rights are reflected in relevant UK legislation, however, it is important to note that although the child's background must be promoted, that does not equate to a requirement to place children with carers who exactly match their background. The primary concern when placing a child who cannot live with their own parents is that they will be in a supportive, caring placement where all of their needs will be met, including those set out in Article 20.

To ensure compliance with the Council's legal duties, our foster carers and adopters are comprehensively trained to meet these needs in respect of children from different backgrounds who are placed in their care. The Council also ensures that contact is arranged with the birth family at a level which meets the needs of the child. I refer you also to an earlier answer (8.4) on the agenda.

8.17 Question from Councillor Clare Harrison

Can the Mayor provide a brief update on recruitment to senior officer positions?

Response from Councillor David Edgar

We've made significant progress in appointing excellent officers to our senior leadership team.

The posts of Corporate Director Governance and the 5 Divisional Directors of Community Safety, IT, HR and Transformation, Legal and Growth and Economic Development have now been appointed.

Final interviews for the posts of Divisional Directors for Youth and Children's Commissioning and Sports, Leisure and Culture, are taking place in October. Also the posts of Joint Director Integrated Commissioning and Divisional Director Adults Social Care have now closed and shortlisting and interviews are being organised for October and November.

The Corporate Director Place is being covered by the existing Divisional Director for Property and Major Programmes and the Divisional Director for Housing and Regeneration is being covered on an interim basis. It is expected that recruitment to these roles will commence in 2018.

8.18 Question from Councillor Shah Alam

Will the Mayor keep the current operating parking times of 8.30am till 5.30pm Monday and Friday?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

I am clear that I will not support extending the parking permit hours unless there is a clear need, and following a thorough consultation.

The Council followed up on feedback from residents about parking difficulties outside of the controlled parking zone operating times and sent a survey to some residents in the B2 and B4 parking zones. This matter was also addressed in my response to a petition earlier in the meeting.

8.19 Question from Councillor Candida Ronald

What action is the Mayor taking to prevent noise pollution from events on the Greenwich Peninsula having an adverse impact on residents on the riverside in Blackwall and Cubitt Town?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

The Council will monitor any noise issues, and if appropriate will engage with Greenwich, and identify how these can be reduced, and what actions can be taken to prevent further problems.

The Council has an out of hours call out, and conversations are taking place with Greenwich, and we will make representation where applicable. The service also actively engages with ward Members, but to date they have not established a statutory nuisance to take forward. This work will continue.

I am also planning to meet with the Leader of Greenwich Council and will keep you updated on this issue. Clearly, as the Greenwich Peninsular develops we will need to work with local residents on the Isle of Dogs and at Blackwall who will be affected by activity there, although the powers clearly reside with the Royal Borough of Greenwich. This needs to be a developing relationship with our neighbour.

8.20 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

Will the Mayor meet my ward residents of Kedge House, Winch House and Starboard Way, with me, who have been badly affected by the Westferry Printworks construction?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

I know that Environmental Health Officers have met the local ward Councillor and residents on a number of occasions to investigate noise, dust and vibration issues.

I understand remedial works were undertaken to reduce the disturbance to residents, however I am happy to meet with residents to discuss any additional concerns. Please contact my office if you would like to progress this.

8.21 Question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed

What support does the Council offer to local businesses to help them grow?

Response from Councillor Joshua Peck

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets currently offers support to its business base through various projects managed by its Enterprise team.

The support currently includes:

Start Up Ready (Training):

Training and practical help aimed at new entrepreneurs who are seeking to start up a new business in the borough.

The Council's Enterprise Team has developed a training initiative for local residents who wish to set up an enterprise or have an interest in becoming entrepreneurs. Delivered in partnership with local support agency London Small Business Centre (part of the Nwes group), Tower Hamlets residents can develop the practical skills required to become an entrepreneur including:

- creating a business plan
- bookkeeping and accounting
- choosing a business model
- learning effective marketing techniques
- Understanding intellectual property.
- 1-2-1 business support is also available for start-ups.

Individuals who complete the start-up programme will have the opportunity to receive advice on accessing business funding from a range of sources including the Start Up Ready Grant.

Start Up Ready (Grants):

Entrepreneurs who complete the Start Up Ready course will have the opportunity to apply for grant funding of up to £5000 to support the launch of their new business. Individuals who express an interest in applying for the grant will be required to complete an application form and pitch to an independent panel of judges.

Retail Marketing Ready

Supporting retailers in marketing skills – specialist retail consultancy advice.

The Council's Enterprise Team seeks to assist local retailers by helping them to develop practical skills to promote themselves and their businesses through more effective marketing.

Retailers can sign up for specialist retail consultancy support to enhance marketing capabilities including:

- advice analysing consumer market opportunities and trends
- developing niche markets
- creating effective visual merchandising displays

- establishing an online presence whilst developing a social media marketing strategy

The Retail Place

Retailers that take part in our Retail Marketing Ready scheme will also have the opportunity of promoting themselves and their goods through our new online retail destination The Retail Place. Providing shoppers with details of Tower Hamlets' unique and unusual businesses The Retail Place is a free listing for local businesses to help develop their online presence whilst also publicising offers, promotions, news, events and job opportunities. The Retail Place aims to offer the most comprehensive source of information for shopping in Tower Hamlets.

Supply Ready

Supporting local businesses to sell through contracts with large organisations.

The council's Enterprise Team is committed to helping local businesses access opportunities to increase turnover through supplying large organisations.

A business which supplies goods or services to large organisations needs to be adept at selling by means of formal procurement procedures. This way of selling is not for every business. Some businesses, however, do most of their selling in this way.

The Supply Ready programme helps business owners who wish to develop a capacity to supply through procurement processes and works with them in training and individual support to the stage that they are able to win contracts.

Delivered through workshops, masterclasses and bespoke 1-2-1 sessions, this initiative will support businesses in tendering methods, building relationships, pitching to buyers and developing growth strategies.

Good premises for business

Helping start-up and small businesses find suitable workspaces.

A big factor which inhibits local enterprise development is the availability of suitable workspace and business premises.

By working closely with local workspace providers the council's Enterprise Team seeks to offer advice to small and start-up businesses on suitable workspace on flexible terms in the borough.

Growth Businesses

Assistance is provided to local businesses who are currently undergoing a period of growth.

The Growth businesses project which is being delivered in partnership with business specialist YTKO provides support by way of a diagnostic and action planning service for each organisation who identifies themselves as a growing business.

Whitechapel Enterprise

We've opened the new Whitechapel Enterprise Centre which is a Hub is designed to serve and meet the needs of residents and the local business community.

The Whitechapel Enterprise is offering free expert business advice, start-up grants and top-quality affordable shared workspace to local people wanting to start a business.

8.22 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill

Can the Council update residents on progress on the planned development of the new secondary school on the News International/London Dock site in Wapping?

Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

There have been concerns that the current data available to inform Pupil Place Planning is not providing a sophisticated enough analysis of complex demographic changes and this has resulted in excess capacity of school places in the borough.

This phenomenon is acutely felt in primary schools in the west of the borough, whilst there is some evidence of growing pressure for places in the south east of the borough.

Secondary headteachers have also raised concerns about the impact of primary rolls not increasing as rapidly as had been expected on their own numbers in future years.

The Council had identified the possible development of two six form entry secondary schools both due to open circa 2020, one on the Westferry site and one on the London Dock site.

There has been consideration of existing empty places in secondary schools; the expected location of the projected demand for secondary places and the comparative costs of the two secondary school options is currently available.

We have also been concerned at the proposal for the 'Livingstone Academy' which would create an unplanned, and we think unneeded, six-form entry secondary school near to the London Dock site. The opening of this school might render unviable the construction of a further secondary school at London Dock.

Officers have recommended that the council proceeds with the development of the Westferry site to open in 2021 and to review the development of the London Dock site on an annual basis. It is anticipated that demand for secondary places can be managed through the use of existing capacity for the time-being. This is subject to the agreement of Cabinet.

8.23 Question from Councillor Shafi Ahmed:

Will the Mayor launch a campaign to recruit Foster Carers in the borough so foster placements can be sensitive to a child's ethnicity, culture and religion?

Response from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

We're proud of our committed and diverse foster carers. The Council's fostering service actively recruits foster carers from across all communities. There is an ongoing campaign and the fostering team are assessing foster carers throughout the year.

Fostering fortnight took place between the 8th May to 21st May and is the UK's biggest foster care awareness raising campaign, delivered by leading fostering charity, The Fostering Network. Established for almost 20 years, the campaign showcases the commitment, passion and dedication of foster carers.

LBTH fostering service participates in this event each year to raise the profile of foster carers both locally and nationally.

Foster carers are dedicated and work with some of our most vulnerable young people. They need our support and we will continue to actively recruit carers to join the excellent carers we already have.

8.24 Question from Councillor Muhammad Mustaqim

When will the Mayor confirm if he has any plans to change the parking restrictions in any part of the borough this year or the next following the formal consultation conducted by the council about potential changes in various parking zones?

Response from Councillor Amina Ali

The Mayor has made clear that he would not support extending the parking permit hours unless there is a clear need, and following a thorough consultation.

The council followed up on feedback from residents about parking difficulties outside of the controlled parking zone operating times and sent a survey to some residents in the B2 and B4 parking zones.

There is a clear option for residents to support the current arrangements, under question 4 of the survey, as it asked if they are satisfied with the current arrangements.

We are receiving valuable feedback from residents and businesses from the survey. This is an informal survey to gather the views of both residents and businesses, and the responses will be shared with Cabinet to help inform them on how residents feel parking arrangements are working.

The survey means if there are particular roads within a parking zone where residents feel there are issues with parking then we can consider solutions, working with local residents.

If changes were suggested, then they would be subject to a full formal consultation with residents and businesses. However the Mayor has made it clear that he would not support extending the parking permit hours unless there is a clear need.

8.25 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

Large trucks routinely enter Narrow Street in Limehouse by accident blocking sections of road, can the Council update residents on its plan to improve signage on the key entry routes especially around the Rotherhithe tunnel entrance.

Response from Amina Ali

Officers have been instructed to look at this issue and make any appropriate changes. This will probably require us to look with TfL at the signage on their roads too. I am happy to discuss this with you further if that would be helpful.

8.26 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan;

Will the Mayor commit to not privatising, cutting or scrapping:

- nurseries
- the careers services
- the Tower Hamlets Youth Sports Foundation?

Response from

Unlike many Councils, we are protecting funding for all of the borough's libraries, leisure centres, children's centres and Idea Stores as well as for our award winning parks. We will also continue funding for all primary school pupils to receive free school meals and offer a 100% council tax discount for the poorest, and have exempted care leavers from paying council tax.

That is something very few councils in the country have managed to do.

And unlike the previous administration we take very seriously our responsibility to manage the Council's budgets and secure excellent services such as those you list and we will continue to do so.

8.27 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

Following a huge petition by Chris Dunne and thousands of parents, carers and young people at the last council protesting the decision to stop its funding, will the Mayor provide details if any viable and concrete proposal has been put forward and agreed to save Tower Hamlets Youth Sports Foundation as it is one of the most successful sports programmes of its kind in the country?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

Contrary to some assertions Tower Hamlets Council is not cutting the THYSF. It is not a council-funded service but we have provided them with emergency funding when they faced budget challenges. In fact over the past year we have provided around £150,000 to help cover their deficit.

Towards the end of this response you will see that I have been actively working with THYSF to help them to build a viable business plan. I am hopeful but further work and discussions are needed, and I and officers are progressing these.

The problem facing THYSF is that they have always been primarily funded by the schools they provide services to; aside from the small amount of funding the Council gets from Sport England which we gave to THYSF to support their programmes. School budgets cuts mean they struggle to afford to buy services like those provided by THYSF.

As a result the THYSF ended the 2016/17 year with a deficit of around £150k.

The Council has not withdrawn any of its existing funding sources, nor were we proposing to. In fact we have given THYSF more money than ever over the past year to give them time to come up with a new business plan.

Currently the organisation's staff are formally employed by Langdon Park School. Given the increasing concerns about THYSF's finances the school no longer wish to host them as they could end up liable for any deficit.

There have been a number of developments regarding THYSF since the end of the summer term.

Over the summer Langdon Park School consulted on and has now implemented the proposals to make the staff who deliver THYSF services to schools redundant at the end of autumn term 2017. THYSF staff will continue to carry out their normal duties throughout the period of notice until the end of December 2017.

In July the Mayor offered to support THYSF to step out on their own should they wish to set up as a new social enterprise. The Foundation is now working on developing a solid business plan and if successful, the intention would be to formally transfer the staff over to the social enterprise and the existing SLAs would run through to the end of March 2018 as normal.

The Council would consider commissioning the Foundation to run some of the services they offer, through an open tender process, for the next financial year (2018/19) and schools would be able to sign up for this using the SLA portal.

If however, THYSF is not in a position to produce a workable business plan and to set themselves up independently, then the existing THYSF SLAs with schools would be terminated at the end of December 2017 and refunds would be given to those schools to cover the cost of THYSF services they would have received in the Spring term.

An alternative offer for all schools would then be made available from January 2018 onwards. This alternative offer would be informed by the feedback from the questionnaires that schools completed at the end of last term.

8.28 Question from Councillor Kibria Choudhury

Following consistent complaints about crime and drug dealing, will the Mayor provide an update about what action has the council taken to deal with the serious problem of Nitrous Oxide being used as a drug across the borough including any cases that have been reported in the last two years?

Response from Councillor Asma Begum

In response to the concerns of residents, the Council has recently launched the 'No Laughing Matter' campaign, working with partners including local police and Tower Hamlets Homes to tackle the problems caused by nitrous oxide

The Council's ground-breaking campaign 'No Laughing Matter' includes:

- Educating people about laughing gas or nitrous oxide and the risks to health
- Urging residents to report traders selling it for human consumption
- Working closely with trading standards and the police to close down outlets where we know they are selling Nitrous Oxide to our young people
- Providing residents with ways to report discarded canisters so they can be collected.
- Talking to school children about the dangers of nitrous oxide

In addition, Cabinet has agreed new funding for an extra 19 police officers, on top of the 14 recently announced and the six already in post. This will bring the total number of Council-funded officers up to 39. These officers will have a focus on tackling anti-social behaviour, including nitrous oxide.

I should add however that as regards the use of Nitrous Oxide and the associated littering and poor behaviour, while we can take some steps, in a free society what we need is for young people to act responsibly towards themselves and thoughtfully towards others.

8.29 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani

Will the Mayor look into the persistent issue of why the written responses sent to Members Questions, asked and responded to at the full council meetings, are taking so long to come back to Members when most of the information and responses had already been prepared leading up to the meeting by officers and the Mayor's office or provided by the Mayor/Cabinet Members at the meeting?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

Unlike the previous Mayor who did not like answering questions, my administration has been robust in engaging in the democratic process.

Written responses are provided by the next Council meeting. If issues are urgent they should be raised with my office, with officers directly, or through the members enquiries system.

8.30 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed

Will the Mayor provide the total number of people on the Council's housing waiting lists for each year since 2013 until now, and the number of furthest placements made in that time-period with details? Kindly, just provide facts please not the irrelevant details, which are not being requested and I am happy with written answer.

Response from Councillor Sirajul Islam

Please find the relevant housing demand and lets table below for the period 2013 to 2017. The second part of your question relating to placements is unclear, therefore information is provided in the table below on the furthest let outside of Tower Hamlets for each of the years. Applicants rehoused outside of Tower Hamlets will have chosen these homes through the choice based lettings scheme operated by the Council.

Housing Demand	April 2013	April 2014	April 2015	April 2016	April 2017	As at 12 SEP 2017
Total	24,414	20,425	19,783	19,124	18,616	18,687

Lets (Financial Year)	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18 (Apr-Aug)
Total	2,435	1,907	1,872	2,207	1,601	759
Total OOB Lets	42	24	31	9	3	0
Furthest let	Upminster, Essex, RM14	Romford, Essex, RM7	Rainham, Essex, RM13	Rainham, Essex, RM13	London, E15	0