

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL****HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2017****THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG****Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs	Councillor Shafiqul Haque
Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed	Councillor Clare Harrison
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Danny Hassell
Councillor Shafi Ahmed	Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Mahbub Alam	Councillor Abjol Miah
Councillor Shah Alam	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Abdul Asad	Councillor Md. Maium Miah
Councillor Craig Aston	Councillor Mohammed Mufti Miah
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim
Councillor Chris Chapman	Councillor Joshua Peck
Councillor Dave Chesterton	Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	Councillor Oliur Rahman
Councillor Andrew Cregan	Councillor Gulam Robbani
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Candida Ronald
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor Rachael Saunders
Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Andrew Wood

The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Sabina Akhtar 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 3 – Minutes.
- Item 4 – Announcements.
- Item 5.1 – 5.4 – Petitions.
- Item 6 – Public Questions.
- Item 7 – Mayor’s Report.
- Item 12.12 - Motion on NJC Pay.

- Item 8.1 – Members Questions.
- Item 12.4 - Motion in support of foster carers.
- Item 8.2 – Members Questions.
- Item 9 – Reports from the Executive and the Council’s Committees.
- Item 9.1 - Standards (Advisory) Committee - Re-Appointment of Independent Co-opted Member
- Item 10 – Reports and Questions on Joint Arrangements/External Organisations.
- Item 11 – Other Business.
- Item 11.1 - Late Night Levy Determination.
- Item 11.2 – Update to the Mayor's Executive Scheme of Delegation.
- Item 11.3 - Election of Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Speaker of the Council brought the Council up to date with some of her activities since the previous Council meeting. She reported that she had attended an event at Billingsgate to receive the annual traditional rent payment, which was donated to charity and had become a Dementia Friend,

She had also welcomed the crew of two visiting ships from Peru and Brazil to the Borough, participated in the Charity Dragon Boat Challenge, the annual Great River Race challenge and had attended a 100th birthday celebration. She had also attended the Sea Cadets National Band Competition at the Tower of London and the Merchant Navy Day Commemorative Service at Trinity Square Gardens.

She also reported that she had enjoyed some of the Council’s summer activities, many community events, including citizenship and award ceremonies and had visited a number of important local services including the Richard House Children’s Hospice, the young peoples’ service in Whites Row and the older peoples’ service in John Sinclair Court.

She thanked all those who had participated in the activities.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Julia Dockerill
- Councillor Shiria Khatun

Apologies for lateness were received on behalf of Councillors Rachel Blake, John Pierce and Abdul Asad.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

The Council’s Monitoring Officer reported that she had granted a dispensation to all Councillors in relation to Agenda item 12.12 (Motion on NJC Pay). The dispensation had been granted on the basis that the Members’ Allowance Scheme included an uplift to reflect any annual pay settlement for local government staff. The dispensation had been granted as it met the criteria set

out in law. Members were advised that they were able to stay in the meeting room, participate and vote on the motion.

Councillor Denise Jones declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 8.21, a Member Question relating to local businesses as she had a business in the Borough. She stated she would leave the room for the duration of that item, however, the question was not reached during the meeting.

Councillor Peter Golds declared a Non Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda item 12.12, Motion on NJC Pay as he had served on a negotiating Panel on behalf of the Local Government Association. Councillor Golds left the meeting room for the consideration of this item.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 19 July 2017 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 expressed regret at the recent incident on the District Line and was thankful that there were no fatalities. On behalf of the Council, she sent best wishes to all those hurt or impacted by the attack and thanked the London Transport officers and emergency services who responded so quickly to the incident.

The Speaker also offered her condolences to all those affected by recent events in Rakhine. She stated that the community should do all it could to support those affected

The Chief Executive, Will Tuckley provided an update on recent developments at the Council. He advised that over the summer, the Council welcomed the Home Secretary to discuss tackling extremism, and had met with the Children's Minister to look at child care issues and the Mayor of London to look at housing issues. The Council had also received the final Direction from the Department for Education in respect of children's social care and the first monitoring visit from Ofsted which had gone well. In addition, it was also announced that the Council would pilot improvements to the postal vote process in conjunction with the Cabinet Office.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved** and Councillor Mahbub Alam **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.14, Rule 13.1 be suspended to enable an urgent motion regarding the New Direction from the Secretary of State of Education about failure of Tower Hamlets Children

Services to be considered". The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **defeated**

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition regarding PCNs and vehicle removal

Sumsul Talukder Tareq addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Anima Ali, Cabinet Member for Environment then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She briefly outlined the Council's approach to vehicle removal and the use of waiting restrictions, including the key features of the most recent changes to the regulations to prioritise the removal of vehicles in reserved bays. She also explained that the Council were working to improve parking service's webpages and stated that she was happy to meet with the petitioner to discuss specific concerns.

RESOLVED:

1. That the petition be referred to the Acting Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

5.2 Petition regarding Play on Sports

Callum Wear addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE Cabinet Member for Culture and Youth then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He advised that Play on Sports was a private company and at present no suitable facilities in the Borough were available for the organisation. Should a suitable site become available, it would need to be advertised in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures. However, he was happy to meet the petitioners to discuss their work.

RESOLVED:

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

5.3 Petition regarding ASB and RSLs

Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Asma Begum Cabinet Member for Community Safety then responded to the matters raised in the petition. Councillor Begum explained that addressing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) was a key commitment of the administration given the impact that such issues had on the community. To address such problems, the Council had developed an ASB strategy with specific focus on addressing ASB in the areas identified in the petition in partnership with key stakeholders. The Council had also provided additional funding for the Council's ASB team, supported patrols of crime hotspots and had provided funding for additional Police Officers amongst other measures.

RESOLVED:

1. That the petition be referred to the Acting Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

5.4 Petition Debate – No to new parking restrictions for residents and local businesses by Tower Hamlets Council

The Council approved a change to the Council's Petition Scheme in respect of the standard format for Petition Debates at Council to allow Councillors to put questions to the petitioners for a maximum of four minutes.

Fazleh Elaahi and other petitioners addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. The Council then debated the matters raised by the petition and Mayor John Biggs responded to the issues raised. The Mayor outlined the scope of the recent consultation on parking matters and the nature of some of the issues raised. He reported that he had no intention of extending parking hours in the Borough unless there was overwhelming support for the particular changes to be made. He also stated that he was willing to meet with Councillors from all parties to take forward the issues raised.

RESOLVED:

1. That the petition be referred to the Acting Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The following questions followed by a supplementary question (except where indicated) were put and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member:-

6.1 Question from from Adam Allnutt:

The Council recently announced funding for 14 new police officers – how will these officers be used in the borough?

Response of Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Community Safety:

Recently the Mayor announced £1.5m funding for 14 new police officers to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on council estates. There will be 12 constables and 2 sergeants. The Mayor and I also announced at Cabinet last night new funding for an extra 19 Police Officers, on top of the 14 already announced. This will bring the total number of Council funded Officers to 39. They will be joining Tower Hamlets Homes staff in a joint anti-social behaviour team – the first of its kind in the borough. The new officers will have a particular focus on drug dealing and drug misuse. They will carry out uniformed patrols, Stop and Searches, Issuing ASB warnings, enforcement of disposal zones, weapons sweeps, security checks of blocks and bin stores,

door knocking, attending TRA meetings and carrying out home visits. They will take on the persistent offenders who are making life a misery for residents. These officers should be on our streets from this month.

Supplementary question from Adam Allnutt:

I was recently attacked by one of these roaming groups of men who commit anti - social behaviour around the borough. It was on Millharbour which is meant to be a safer part of the borough. With central Government cuts we have seen an end to community policing. How long can councils fill in for central Government cuts to these police services which are essential?

Councillor Begum's, response to supplementary question:

I am sorry to hear about your incident. You're absolutely right that the Government has slashed police budgets and expects local councils to step in to 'fill the gap'. While we do what we can, like funding extra officers, we simply cannot replace every officer that the Government scraps. Police numbers fell for the seventh consecutive year in July. Police forces in England and Wales are now at their lowest strength per head on record. Tower Hamlets Council will continue to fund additional officers, and we're looking at funding even more, but the Government needs to properly fund our police services.

6.2 Question from Shohidur Rahman:

Many residents are concerned about anti-social behaviour associated with the use of laughing gas. What is the council doing about this?

Response of Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Community Safety:

We recently launched a '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.
- Urging residents to report traders selling it for human consumption.
- Working closely with trading standards and the police to close down outlets.
- Providing residents with ways to report discarded canisters.
- Talking to school children about the dangers of nitrous oxide.

In addition, as I just mentioned, the Mayor announced in Cabinet last night, extra funding for 19 Police Officers on top of the 14.

(No supplementary question was asked).

6.3 Question from Abukor Essa:

What action is the Council taking to address poor air quality in Tower Hamlets?

Response of Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development and Waste:

Thanks for raising this important issue. 9000 Londoners die each because of poor air quality. So it is urgent that we tackle this now. Living in London and living in the borough this is a matter of justice. This is about inequality as people living in deprived areas have poorer air quality. 48% of our residents live in areas of unacceptable air quality. 48% of our schools are in areas of unacceptable air quality. Two of the most polluted schools in London are in Tower Hamlets, so it is urgent that we take action. We in Tower Hamlets and the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, are taking action, unlike other parts of London and the previous administration here, we take this issue very seriously. We consulted widely on our Air Quality Action Plan and have received 153 responses, 86% were residents. We are already taking the following actions:

- Electric vehicle charging, for which we approved plans last night.
- Increasing provisions for walking and cycling.
- Investing in measures in schools to encourage children to walk to school.
- Raising awareness of pollution and encouraging people to make small changes to day to day journeys.
- Leading by example by upgrading our own Council fleet and ensuring that our new civic centre has low impact on air quality and
- Lobbying the Government for stronger national action on air quality.

We need to work together across London with the Mayor of London on this issue. What we need is further action from national Government to help us really tackle this issue.

Supplementary question from Abukor Essa:

Councillor Peter Golds earlier mentioned particularly Woolmore Primary School, which is about 400-500 yards from where I live. Although it's a London issue, this area - the Isle of Dogs near Blackwall tunnel is one of the worst affected areas in terms of air pollution. Is there any specific targeting for the problem in that area?

Councillor Blake's response to supplementary question:

Yes we do target the areas that are worst affected. We focus our monitoring stations on the areas worst affected, and then we have other monitors distributed around the borough, that can monitor the overall level of air pollution in the borough. We can also share with everybody methods of identifying where pollution is worst in the Borough at any one time. As you

rightly said, the A13 and the A12 corridors are some of the most affected areas and they are surrounded by some of our most deprived communities. That is why this is an issue about social justice and it's important that we tackle this so that the children growing up in those areas do not have their lungs damaged at such an early age, because national Government is not prepared to take the action that we need to be taken.

I think the most interesting thing about the local action that you are requesting is that the residents who responded to the consultation are asking us to do more. They want us to tackle emissions from canal boats, they think we need more action to reduce traffic volume and to tackle engine idling. There is a real demand out there that we tackle this issue, so I think that we should listen to the people that have responded to our consultation, listen to the people who came to our consultation event over the summer and make this air quality action plan strong so that we stop children living around the A12 and A13, from having their lungs damaged by air pollution in Tower Hamlets because it's not fair. This is something that we as a Labour Party within Tower Hamlets Council are determined to tackle.

6.4 Question from Victoria Obaze:

How many affordable homes were delivered in 2016?

Response of Councillor Sirajul Islam, Cabinet Member for Housing:

Affordable housing is a top priority for this administration and we are delighted to confirm that a City Hall report revealed that Tower Hamlets saw more affordable housing built than any other borough in London (2015/16).

Up to date Council figures show that in Tower Hamlets more than 1,070 affordable homes were built last year (2016/17) and another 1,073 the year before (2015/16).

Alongside his pledge to build 1,000 council homes in coming years, Mayor Biggs established the Tower Hamlets Affordability Commission last year which resulted in the decision earlier this year to introduce lower rents for new council and affordable housing saving residents up to £6,000 a year.

The very high cost of housing, a chronic shortage of stock and a growing population all mean considerable challenges in providing affordable housing. These encouraging figures highlight the massive progress made in fulfilling one of Mayor Biggs' key priorities.

Supplementary question from Victoria Obaze:

What affordable housing is planned for the future?

Councillor Islam's response to supplementary question:

We continue to be committed to providing affordable housing for residents. Last week the Mayor and I alongside other Councillors were joined by the

Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, to unveil another 150 homes in Watts Grove - a new rented affordable housing split between Tower Hamlets Living Rents and London Affordable Rent, which is the equivalent of social rent. This scheme was earmarked for scrapping by ex-Mayor Lutfur Rahman and former Cabinet Member for Housing Councillor Khan but reinstated in 2013 after a strong local campaign led by Labour Councillors and John Biggs. As part of the next phase of this important programme, we have identified four such sites in the borough which will provide more new affordable homes for local families. We are also well on our way to providing 1000 Council houses, since the start of this administration.

6.5 Question from Dipa Das

How many residents in low income households in Tower Hamlets don't have access to WiFi?

Response of Mayor John Biggs:

In Tower Hamlets, 24% of residents living in low income households do not have access to Wi-Fi. 45% of those aged over 50 do not have access to Wi-Fi; 40% of residents with disabilities do not have access to Wi-Fi. We will be arranging free digital training for residents so that they can have access to the infrastructure and develop the skills to use free Wi-Fi. Just to be clear in case people think that this is some sort of gimmick, the Council will actually make money not out of residents but from the providers who have been bidding to provide this service for us and they will be providing on top of that the free access to local residents. On top of that, we are very clear that this forms a part of our communications strategy for making sure that we get what is called channel shift - that is getting more people to access Council services on line. It's also about social exclusion so it's about making sure that people who are information poor have access to Wi-Fi and can participate more fully in this increasingly electronic age.

Supplementary question from Dipa Das:

Will the free Wi - Fi benefit businesses in the local area?

Mayor Biggs response to supplementary question:

Yes. Over 800 businesses in Brick Lane, Watney Market and Chrisp Street town centres and over 130,000 residents living within 800 metres of these centres, will benefit from this first phase. It's not designed to subsidise more comprehensive business use, but about ensuring in particular that small businesses can have access to the internet to help them be more efficient in the way they do things like, procurement, gathering information and so on. I think it is a progressive move, which is obviously why I have proposed it.

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 and at the invitation of the Speaker, the Leaders of the Independent Group, the People's Alliance of Tower Hamlets and the Conservative Group, responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Danny Hassell **moved** and Councillor Sirajul Islam, **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that agenda item 12.12 Motion regarding NJC Pay be taken as the next item of business". The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

At the request of Councillor Danny Hassell, the Speaker allowed a representative of a trade union to make a short statement on the motion during the debate.

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following questions followed by a supplementary question (except where indicated) were put and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member:-

8.1 Question from from Councillor Danny Hassell:

Will the Mayor join me in thanking foster carers across the borough for their tireless work and dedication with some of our most vulnerable young people?

Response of Mayor John Biggs:

Yes. Foster carers deserve our utmost thanks. They give dedication and they do it not for the reward but because they care passionately about our community and serving local people. Councillor Whitelock Gibbs and I recently wrote a letter to our foster carers All of whom, I think were shocked by the newspaper coverage and the way in which it portrayed them in an inaccurate and pejorative fashion and passed judgments which were very critical and undermined the dedication they show. As a Council, we should be unanimous in supporting our foster carers who provide dedicated support. They are tireless and they support and care for our children at traumatic times in their lives and they deserve to feel safe and supported and valued. I for one as Mayor of this Borough value our foster carers and encourage others to come forward and we will work tirelessly to ensure that children in our care are looked after properly.

(No supplementary question was asked)

Procedural Motion

Mayor John Biggs **moved** and Councillor Sirajul Islam, **seconded**, a procedural motion “that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that agenda item 12. 4 Motion in support of foster carers be taken as the next item of business”. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

8.2 Question from Councillor Ohid Ahmed:

In response to concerns raised about the potential closure of One Stop Shops in the borough, the Mayor stated “We are consulting residents on proposals to merge our One Stop Shop and Idea Stores. This is not, obviously, a proposal to shut One Stop Shops. Indeed a new one will open, it is planned, as part of the Isle of Dogs Idea Store site.” Considering this comment, will the Mayor confirm that the 4 One Stop Shops (Bow, Chrisp Street, Watney Market and Bethnal Green) will continue to operate as they are with stand-alone One Stop service for residents, and not close down?

Response of Mayor John Biggs:

We are consulting on a proposal that was considered as part of our budget proposals for the next three years. We believe that by merging the One Stop Shops and Idea Stores, we will achieve both efficiencies and a better quality service. If I could focus on the current One Stop Shop in Chrisp Street for example, it’s in a pretty inadequate premises and by moving it into the idea store, we think we can provide a better service for residents. By providing a One Stop Shop ideally in a better location as part of a combined operation on the Isle of Dogs, we will be providing residents there with a service they don’t currently receive on the island. We already have combined effectively the One Stop Shop and Idea Store at Watney Market. The one that I remain particularly anxious about is the one in Bethnal Green and as part of the current proposal that might move to Whitechapel. It’s a genuine consultation and there is no predetermination. We will see what the public consultation says. The answer to your question is that we are now in a flat earth situation and we are in a £58million savings situation. But we think that we can improve the quality of services and accessibility to services for residents by including a better internet presence to residents, counter services and by better providing our services more corporately as an Authority.

Supplementary question from Councillor Ahmed:

About 1000 residents visit the One Stop Shops on a daily basis. I go to Chrisp Street Market quite often as this is where I hold my surgery. Every time I go I can see people queuing up for advice. So how do you think that particularly the elderly people and people who who don’t speak English as a first language are going to be able to use the service, particularly the online service you are referring to?

Mayor John Biggs', response to supplementary question:

I said very clearly that we are not closing the One Stop Shops, therefore people will continue to be able to access the same level of service and we expect to be able to provide an improved service as a result of these changes. I appreciate the point you make about people who may not have English literacy and may not have English as a first language and the service will reach out to them to meet the needs of those residents. We need to focus on people who need a counter service in particular and we need to move people as far as possible to other means of contacting the Council which are more efficient and satisfactory for them and work better for the whole community.

Questions 8.3 - 30 were not put due to 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 Standards (Advisory) Committee - Re-Appointment of Independent Co-opted Member**

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer proposing the re-appointment of an Independent Co-Opted Member to the Standards (Advisory) Committee. The recommendation was put to the vote under the guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the re-appointment of Mr John Pulford as an Independent Co-opted Member of the Standards (Advisory) Committee for a period of two years be approved.

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 Late Night Levy Determination

The Council consider the report of the Acting Corporate Director, Place seeking determination of the Late Night Levy. The recommendations were put to the vote under the guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9.

RESOLVED:

That the Council agree:

1. That the Late Night Levy be adopted;
2. That the commencement of the levy shall be from 1st January 2018.
3. That the commencement period of the levy should be from midnight every night.
4. That the income from the levy, less collection costs, should be allocated through the Community Safety Partnership.
5. That Members of the Best Bar None Scheme receive a 30% reduction from the levy.
6. That the following premises would be exempt from the levy:
 - Premises with overnight accommodation where alcohol is supplied only to persons staying at the premises during midnight to 6am for consumption on the premises
 - Theatres and Cinemas: this exemption applies if alcohol is served during the levied hours only for consumption on the premises to ticket holders, participants in the production or invited guests to private events; they must be bona-fide theatres or cinemas and the sale of alcohol must not be their primary purpose
 - Bingo Halls
 - Community Amateur Sports Clubs: These are clubs registered as Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC)
 - Community premises: these are premises that form part of the church hall, chapel hall, village hall, parish hall, community hall or other similar buildings.
 - Premises opening past midnight for New Years Eve only: applicable to premises which are authorised to sell alcohol between midnight and 6am, only applies on New Years day

7. That the following licenced premises would not be exempt from the levy, as :

- Country Village Pubs
- Premises in Business Improvement Districts
- Premises that receive a small business rate relief

11.2 Update to the Mayor's Executive Scheme of Delegation

The Council considered proposed updates to the Mayor's Executive Scheme of Delegation. The recommendation was put to the vote under the guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9.

RESOLVED:

1. That the updated Mayor's Executive Decision Making Scheme be noted

11.3 Election of Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Council were invited to appoint a Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The recommendation was put to the vote under the guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9.

Councillor Clare Harrison **moved** and Councillor Danny Hassell **seconded** a proposal that Councillor Dave Chesterton be appointed as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The nomination was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED:

1. That Councillor Dave Chesterton be appointed as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

12.4 Motion in support of foster carers

Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs **moved** and Mayor John Biggs **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Andrew Wood **moved** and Councillor Oliur Rahman **seconded** the following amendment to the motion

“Delete all after 1 in the opening section and insert

2. That following the highly critical Ofsted Report published on Friday 7th April the Secretary of State using powers under Section 497A (4B) of the Education Act, 1996 imposed statutory directions to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets in relation to Children's services.

3. That after this Council's Children's Services failed its OFSTED Inspection that those responsible for the service were moved sideways, stayed in post or have taken a secondment elsewhere but nobody has lost their job.
4. That whereas the OFSTED failure was a surprise to this Council it was in part due to the culture of the service.
5. That this service failure may be identified elsewhere within the Council.
6. That concerns relating to childcare were further revealed in the extensive publicity concerning the fostering of Child AB as revealed in the Family Court of East London.
7. It is reported that the biological mother of the child raised issues, in Court, as the suitability of the foster placement and that the child was reported as being distressed.
8. It is reported that certain controversial statements were referred to in Court which were attributed to the initial foster carers.

The Council;

Reiterates that foster parents in Tower Hamlets and countrywide undertake extremely difficult tasks in caring for often confused and vulnerable children.

Calls upon the Intervention Advisers appointed by the Secretary of State to undertake an investigation into the accuracy of these allegations.

In the event of the allegations being correct then the Council removes the persons concerned from the Register of Foster Parents to ensure the credibility and reputation of the service in Tower Hamlets.

The Council further notes

The Ofsted report noted a significant decline in the standard of delivery of Children's Services since the last inspection in 2012 when the borough standard was rated Good.

The Council had reports available to them from the Contact Centre where the young girl expressed her concerns in the presence of those supervising officers. Answers need to be given about what the Council did after reading these reports.

The Council calls upon the Mayor

To concentrate on the delivery of an improved service as required by the Statutory Directions and by ensuring that the concerns are properly investigated, provide parents, residents and Foster carers that the service operates to the highest level".

Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs declined to accept this amendment to the motion. The amendment was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

Councillor Rabina Khan **moved** and Councillor Aminur Khan **seconded** the following friendly amendment to the motion:

- (a) Under 'Believes 4' replace 'many will see' with ' we see'
- (b) Under 'Resolves' add '3. To instruct the Chief Executive to report the Times and the Daily Mail to IPSO on the grounds of Clause 1 (Accuracy), Clause 2 (Privacy), Clause 6 (Children) and Clause 12 (Discrimination)

Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs and Mayor John Biggs accepted the amendment and altered their motion accordingly:

Following debate, the motion as amended was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED:

This Council notes:

1. The story first published in The Times newspaper concerning a child in a Tower Hamlets foster placement, which has seen significant media attention in the UK and internationally.
2. The unprecedented publication of the court report confirms that while foster placements will always require judgement and will rarely achieve a perfect fit, the judgement of our officers was sensitive and makes clear The Times' reporting was intrusive to both the child and her foster family.
3. That many foster carers feel their work and value have been questioned and undermined as a result of negative media coverage.
4. That immediately following the publication of the Times article Mayor Biggs and Cllr Whitelock Gibbs met with a group of concerned foster carers.

This Council believes:

1. The media's portrayal of foster carers is deeply misguided and harmful to the recruitment and retention of carers.
2. That foster carers are dedicated individuals, who work tirelessly and provide the highest levels of care and support for some of our most vulnerable young people.
3. That child protection and safeguarding is a complex area but this nuance and sensitivity has been lost in the distorted and sensationalist media coverage.

4. The reporting in the Times article and its reinterpretation by other media showed a crude and judgemental stereotyping which we see as being Islamophobic, by attaching prejudices and implied motives and using intrusively stereotyped views of a foster carer who happened to be of Muslim faith.
5. Foster carers deserve to feel safe, supported and valued.

This Council welcomes:

1. The caution exercised by the political and corporate leadership in engaging with the public debate, to protect the safety and identity of the child first and foremost.
2. The public statements from Mayor John Biggs in support of our foster carers and calling out the Islamophobic tone of much of the media coverage.

This Council resolves:

1. To welcome the work Mayor John Biggs and the Lead Member, Cllr Whitelock Gibbs, have undertaken to show support for our foster carers.
2. To continue to support foster carers in their vital work and to work with them to promote the positive difference they make in our borough and to our young people.
3. To instruct the Chief Executive to report the Times and the Daily Mail to IPSO on the grounds of Clause 1 (Accuracy), Clause 2 (Privacy), Clause 6 (Children) and Clause 12 (Discrimination)

12. 12 Motion regarding NJC Pay

Councillor Rachel Blake **moved** and Councillor Danny Hassell **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

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

RESOLVED:

This Council notes that:

1. NJC basic pay has fallen by 21% since 2010 in real terms
2. NJC workers had a three-year pay freeze from 2010-2012
3. Local terms and conditions of many NJC employees have also been cut, impacting on their overall earnings
4. NJC pay is the lowest in the public sector

5. Job evaluated pay structures are being squeezed and distorted by bottom-loaded NJC pay settlements needed to reflect the increased National Living Wage and the Foundation Living Wage
6. There are growing equal and fair pay risks resulting from this situation

This Council therefore supports the NJC pay claim for 2018, submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite on behalf of council and school workers and calls for the immediate end of public sector pay restraint. NJC pay cannot be allowed to fall further behind other parts of the public sector. This council also welcomes the joint review of the NJC pay spine to remedy the turbulence caused by bottom-loaded pay settlements.

This Council also notes the drastic ongoing cuts to local government funding and calls on the Government to provide additional funding to fund a decent pay rise for NJC employees and the pay spine review.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Call immediately on the LGA to make urgent representations to Government to fund the NJC claim and the pay spine review and notify us of their action in this regard;
2. Call on the Mayor to write to the Prime Minister and Chancellor supporting the NJC pay claim and seeking additional funding to fund a decent pay rise and the pay spine review;
3. Call on the Mayor to meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and the pay spine review.

Motions 1-3 and 5-11 and 13-19 were not debated due to lack of time.

The meeting ended at 10.03 p.m.

Speaker of the Council