

APPENDIX A – WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING (22 November 2017)

8.3 Question from Councillor John Pierce

The Mayor's 2017/18 Budget included nearly £6m additional spending for Mayoral Growth Priorities – what sort of programmes and projects has this £6m provided?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

A number of programmes and projects were approved as part of this £6m:

- £2m for free school meals
- £1.7m towards the £5m tackling poverty fund
- Nearly £700k to support women from unemployment into health care careers
- £120k for Children's Centre commissioning of voluntary and community sector organisations
- £50k to improve air quality in Tower Hamlets
- £185k to help residents overcome barriers to employment
- £230k for the Mayor's Apprenticeship Programme
- Many other projects benefitting residents right across the borough.

I note that Cllr Rabina Khan wanted to scrap this £6m in her February budget amendment. In short it would have meant that these projects would not have gone ahead so there would have been no money to help residents into work, to tackle poverty, for apprenticeships and crucially, Cllr Khan's budget proposals would mean no more free school meals.

8.4 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman

Will the Mayor explain as to why housing, built on land owned by the taxpayer through the council on Blackwall Reach, is being marketed to speculative investors in Singapore, Hong Kong and the Middle East before the council and partners have even opened a UK sales office?

Response by Councillor Rachel Blake

The overseas marketing of these homes just goes to show that London's housing market is broken, it can't be right that to pay for social homes we have to sell private homes overseas. Sadiq Khan is right in his 'first dibs' policy. We have complied with that policy and would like to work with him to go further to make sure that new homes in Tower Hamlets are available for local residents. The agreement was signed under the previous Mayor.

The scheme has to be commercially viable ' the alternative would have been for LBTH to part-subsidise directly or through grant. A normal deal for a private developer under a s106 planning agreement would not have these marketing conditions.

Marketing of the private homes at Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project is in line with a Principal Development Agreement (PDA) signed between project partners LBTH, the GLA and Swan Housing Association. This was signed under when Boris Johnson and Lutfur Rahman were Mayor of London and Tower Hamlets respectively - in April 2011 following the appointment of Swan as development partner and updated December 2013.

This summer saw a sales launch for the 200 private homes being built for Phase 1b of this project.

Initially, and as per the PDA, homes for sale in this phase were marketed by Swan for three months within Tower Hamlets and then London-wide for a further three months. Following this combined six month period, there has been marketing overseas.

Whilst the development phase does not complete till September 2019, it was hoped to secure advance sales in part to fund the affordable homes being built both in this phase and the already completed Phase 1a which was 100% affordable to facilitate rehousing from the Robin Hood Gardens Estate.

8.6 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan

Will the Mayor agree to set up a Tower Hamlets' Brexit Task Group to plan for a number of Brexit scenarios in the lead up to Britain's departure from the EU?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

Brexit is one of the biggest challenges facing our council and our country. The Growth and Economic Partnership Sub-Group – co-chaired by Councillor Peck and Ian Parkes of ELBA - has also been looking at the potential economic impacts of Brexit on the borough, and considering what partners need to do to respond to a number of potential scenarios. This work is focussed on ensuring that any skills or labour shortages caused by Brexit can be responded to by employment schemes in the borough.

I have been clear to our EU citizens living and working in Tower Hamlets, about 12% of our population, that our borough will remain a welcoming, open and international place, as it always has been.

In terms of preparation for Brexit we have done a lot but this is hampered by the Government's chaotic handling of the Brexit negotiations. Despite that, the council has been working to prepare ourselves for whatever the outcome.

As you will be aware, I have asked the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to form a working party which met on 7th December to consider three things: the impact on the Council; the impact on the Borough and community, such as the rights of EU citizens; and to ensure we position the Borough accordingly. In effect we already have the group you are asking for.

We are also working with leading business figures and our partners across the NHS, schools, business, police, housing associations and other public services to jointly analyse the impact of Brexit on the whole borough. From house building to employment, tackling poverty to regeneration, Brexit will have a major impact which we are meeting head on.

8.7 Question from Councillor Ayas Miah

How many meetings of the Best Value Improvement Board have opposition members attended?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

Thank you for this important question. Since the previous Mayor left the Council in utter chaos we have been working hard to repair the damage he did. A major part of that has been through the work of the Best Value Review Board and then the Best Value Improvement Board which have overseen this vast improvement.

The Best Value Review Board Public Meetings ran from May 2015 until April 2017 with the Best Value Improvement Board replacing it since 10 April 2017. In total the two Boards have held ten meetings.

The meetings are open to all councillors and held in public. Representatives from all the political Groups are invited.

In answer to your question:

Councillor Peter Golds has attended on six occasions.
Councillor Oliur Rahman has NEVER attended
Councillor Rabina Khan has NEVER attended.

8.8 Question from Councillor Ohid Ahmed

How do the figures for all crime categories in Tower Hamlets since June 2016 compare to those for the previous two years?

Response by Councillor Asma Begum

From June 2016 to June 2017 there were 34,367 offences recorded in Tower Hamlets.

At the time of writing the Met were not able to provide comparison figures for the previous 24 months but were able to provide monthly comparisons: there was a 1.7% reduction in crime from May to June 2017.

To put this in context other boroughs saw increases – In Newham 3.52%, Hackney 1.25% and Islington 5.86%.

We are committed to making this borough a safer place for residents and to tackling crime. Nationally, recorded crime has risen and we are deeply concerned about central Government cuts.

The Mayor recently announced £3m for an additional 19 officers (on top of the 14 previously announced, focusing on estates) which will work across the whole borough.

In addition I recently took the new Community Safety Partnership to Cabinet, focusing on taking action in the following areas:

- ASB including drugs and alcohol
- Violence
- Hate crime, Community Cohesion and Extremism
- Reducing Reoffending

This was in response to extensive consultation with residents in Tower Hamlets in which we received responses from 1,400 residents living or working in the borough.

8.9 Question from Councillor Danny Hassell

Can the Lead Member please update on improvement work undertaken in relation to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub since the Ofsted inspection earlier this year?

Response by Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

Since the Ofsted inspection in February this year there has been a significant amount of work to address the concerns outlined in the report. This work started before the report was published and seeks to make the required improvements across the service with a view to being rated as at least 'good' at our next inspection.

We have put in extra resources across the service but have put an additional focus on our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The MASH is a vitally important service receiving all of the initial contacts from partners and members of the public. The reason for focusing on this part of the child's journey first is that if we get things right at the very beginning of the child's journey then this has a positive impact on the life of that child, as well as ensuring that resources are appropriately targeted at those who most need them.

Since the inspection, two new team managers have been brought in which has greatly improved the functioning of the teams. Daily MASH meetings now take place which has greatly increased the multi-agency involvement in decision making. Performance has significantly improved, with the majority of contacts being closed within 24 hours. A small amount do take longer than this but usually only an additional 24 hours.

There has been a significant increase in the number of cases which are referred for a multi-agency response. These "MASH Episodes" greatly improve decision making and ensure that the children and families receive the most appropriate level of support.

Ofsted's first monitoring visit took place on the 30th and 31st of August 2017. The feedback was:

"Senior managers have appropriately prioritised improving the 'front door' multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and the assessment and intervention (AI) service. As a result, most children in need of help and protection are beginning to benefit from the effective identification of risk and timely action by managers to safeguard them to prevent further harm. Leaders and elected members are developing comprehensive knowledge of the strengths and areas for development in the local authority."

"As a result, children in need of help and protection benefit from a more timely response, ensuring that their needs are prioritised. Cases are speedily transferred to the AI teams, where they are allocated promptly."

"Staff who have been working in Tower Hamlets for a long time are very positive about the changes, describing the MASH and AI service as 'unrecognisable'"

We are not complacent about the scale of the task and know that there is much to do in order to ensure that the changes are sustained and that the improvement is replicated across the service.

Under the previous Mayor there was a severely underfunded service that relied on using reserves as a short term fix, but which stored up significant problems in the long term. In contrast, Mayor Biggs has invested £4.8m in Children's Social Care, as agreed by Full Council in the last Budget. In addition, in the 2018/19 budget process we plan to invest a further £5m plus an estimated £4m for the specific Improvement Plan Budget.

The challenges we face locally are in the context of a national crisis. Nationally Children's social care is being pushed to breaking point, with an unprecedented surge in demand leaving services struggling to cope, across the public, voluntary and community sector. The funding gap facing children's services across the UK will reach at least £2 billion by 2020. The Government's failure to invest in these vital services, including early help for vulnerable families, will have long term consequences for our country's children and families. The number of children needing child protection plans has nearly doubled over the past decade, and last year saw the largest annual increase in children in care since 2013.

8.10 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood

Will the Mayor arrange a meeting between the Councils Planning, Clean and Green, Roads, Public Health and the Environmental Health teams and affected residents on the Isle of Dogs as to how to mitigate the cumulative impact of construction on their health and quality of life?

Response by Councillor Rachel Blake

We are already taking action - in April 2017, the Council's structure was reorganised which resulted in planning and environmental health services being brought together within the new Place Directorate. The Planning Compliance (Enforcement) Team has been restructured and expanded following a Mayoral Growth bid approved in the 2017/18 budget. A new Planning Compliance Manager has been recruited to and all vacant posts within the team have been filled, providing much needed additional capacity, stability and strong team leadership. All open enforcement cases, including ones centred on construction issues, are subject to progress review at least once a month and more frequently for high profile, urgent or harmful cases. We have also assigned a lead officer to deal largely with construction management issues

In terms of the meeting, this is already in progress. The Planning Compliance Team is working to produce a cross-departmental Construction Works Forum with Environmental Health, Highways, Licensing, Building Control, as well as the Director of Public Health and others. The group should be fully operational within the next month and will consider input from residents. The meetings are being held monthly with the second meeting held on 21st November 2017. The next meeting after the Christmas break is tentatively set for 23rd January 2018.

The forum meets on a monthly basis with key nominated officers from each service acting as main contact points and monitoring officers for significant cases. We are currently compiling a 'hitlist' of sites in order to co-ordinate action and necessary monitoring arrangements.

The main crux of this forum is to tackle problematic construction work especially focused on the rapidly developing Canary Wharf and Isle of Dogs

areas.

The working group is a cross-departmental initiative set up to collaborate and co-ordinate action, site inspections and/or communication for construction sites where resolution is on-going. In this regard internal lead contact points for departments such as Environmental Health, Planning, Parking and Highways have been established and they will continue to share information amongst themselves in a more expeditious and concentrated manner. Additionally key sites such as Landmark Pinnacle have been prioritised for collaborative action and enhanced direction or enforcement.

8.11 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Will the Lead Member update me on the outcome of the survey of Bow residents about the current parking restrictions that took place over the summer?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

The Council has undertaken an informal survey on parking in zones B4 and B2, to listen to residents and business regarding their parking and gave the opportunity for residents and businesses to indicate their parking views.

The main reason for the informal survey is that with significant development on the eastern edge of Tower Hamlets, particularly resulting from the development of the nearby Olympic Park, Westfield, West Ham Football Club and new housing schemes, some residents and business have expressed concerns about the pressure on parking. As a result we carried out this survey to gather wider views of residents and businesses.

We are reviewing feedback. There may be some limited areas such as Fish Island where residents may be keen for changes, but we would not proceed unless there is a strong local demand.

We would like to thank residents and businesses for taking the time to complete the informal parking survey questionnaire and providing us with your feedback.

8.12 Question from Councillor Abdul Asad

With the changes introduced under the new Council Tax Reduction Scheme does the Mayor believe that it has not affected our most vulnerable members in the community?

Response by Councillor David Edgar

The council's Local Council Tax Reduction scheme (LCTRS) is designed to ensure that the most vulnerable households in Tower Hamlets can qualify for a maximum 100% Council Tax rebate. Most councils no longer have a scheme which allows a 100% reduction in Council Tax.

We have 27,977 live claims of which 19,322 (69%) receive a full reduction in their council tax bill.

Since the abolition of Council Tax Benefit in April 2013, the funding provided to local authorities for their Local Council Tax Reduction Schemes has significantly reduced. Tower Hamlets kept a local scheme broadly similar to Council Tax Benefit between April 2013 and March 2017. This had significant costs because the council had to fund the difference between the actual cost of the scheme and the funding provided by central government

Following a public consultation in autumn 2016, the council decided to make changes to its scheme, partly in response to the Government's introduction of Universal Credit which means we no longer receive much of the income information we used to base the LCTRS calculation on. The changes also aimed to slightly reduce costs and make the scheme fairer, whilst prioritising protecting the poorest.

The council wants to ensure that residents do not suffer financial hardship as a result of the changes and has a hardship scheme as part of the revised LCTRS. This allows a reduction in council tax liability where it is deemed appropriate to do so.

In addition to this, the November Cabinet meeting considered and agreed two reports that are part of the Mayor's wider Tackling Poverty priority. These reports set out the additional support and funding available for the borough's more vulnerable residents.

8.13 Question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed

Does the Mayor feel his human rights have been impeded by responding to questions at Full Council meetings?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

Thank you Councillor Ahmed for what in any other council would be an utterly bizarre question.

Sadly as we all know the previous Mayor refused to answer a single question from councillors or members of the public at Council meetings.

You could reasonably be forgiven for assuming he didn't have a clue, or potentially a care, about what he did with taxpayer money.

Instead he hid behind a farcical defence that it was against his human rights to be made to account for his decisions. Some might call that cowardly. I call it a disgrace.

Since becoming Mayor I have not only answered countless questions, petitions and motions at Council, I've attended Overview and Scrutiny

regularly, made myself as open and accountable as possible to local residents through surgery, casework and community meetings and held numerous Ask the Mayor sessions to invite residents to quiz me on my decisions and plans for the borough.

From the next meeting Members will note the rules have changed so each opposition group will get a chance to bring a motion to Full Council.

I believe that being Mayor is a privilege and that residents should have the power to question every decision you make. By contrast, the previous mayor and Cabinet treated it like an entitlement and were accountable to no-one. An utter disgrace.

8.14 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

Can the Council provide the record of the number of missed bin collections (household waste, recycling and associated log of complaints) for each electoral ward since 2010 until now?

Response by Councillor Rachel Blake

The statistics for this response will be circulated separately.

Some of the information you requested is not held or not effectively recorded to provide analysis and breakdown of your query. Clean, Green and Highways was created in 2011

8.15 Question from Councillor Candida Ronald

The 20mph speed limit on Prestons Road in my ward of Blackwall & Cubitt Town is regularly ignored by drivers and there have been a spate of accidents at the traffic bollard outside Horizons Tower. What measures will the Mayor take to improve road safety in this area?

Response by Councillor Amina Ali

Officers are currently completing a design review of Prestons Road to improve the safety of this road and encourage slower speeds through design, thus improving compliance with the 20mph speed limit.

The traffic island houses an ANPR security camera which monitors the two lanes of traffic to either side.

This island links to another island at Westferry Circus lower roundabout and forms part of the "Canary Wharf ring of steel" that was put in as part of Canary Wharf security. Unfortunately there is a history of accidents within the vicinity as vehicles merge into a single lane.

The design review will seek to address this problem both in terms of revising the road layout and providing a safer location for the camera to be able to

maintain its role.

The design review also takes into account the changes required to provide access to the Wood Wharf development.

It is expected that the study will be completed before Christmas and subject to Mayoral approval, will be issued for local public consultation early in the New Year.

8.16 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

It has been council policy for the past seventeen years, under both the Labour and Tower Hamlets First administrations, for the provision of a second South Quay Bridge. In view of the population explosion on the Isle of Dogs, will the Mayor outline when the bridge will be delivered? By Contrast the Mayor of London has started a full public consultation on the new Rotherhithe to Canary Wharf bridge one year after announcing he would build it by the year 2020.

Response by Mayor John Biggs

We have progressed this unlike the previous administration. I have taken an interest in this from 2002, and it has been a complicated project.

A feasibility study completed by the Council has identified options for the provision of additional crossing capacity over South Dock.

A project team, including secured project management resources, and a Project Executive Board are in place.

A report is to be considered by the Mayor in Cabinet at the meeting on the 19th December. This report will provide an overview and outline of the project. Subject to the Mayor's approval we hope to start consultation on crossing options in February next year.

The draft programme of works identifies completion of the project by March 2020.

8.17 Question from Councillor Dave Chesterton

When does the Mayor anticipate being able to announce the creation of a new riverside public park on the site of the old Millwall Lock Entrance, opposite the Dockland Sailing Centre?

Response by Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE

The Council has secured Section 106 funding to support the improvement of the open space in its ownership at Millwall Outer Dock.

A project team, including secured project management resources and a

steering group are in place.

The draft programme of works identifies completion of the project by August 2018, with public consultation programmed in for the first quarter of 2018. Officers are seeking dialogue with the owners of non-Council owned land.

8.18 Question from Councillor Aminur Khan

How many council funded police officers did the Mayor cut following his first two budgets?

Response by Councillor Asma Begum

Since 2010, Tower Hamlets council – like councils across London and the UK – has faced a Conservative-led Government determined to cut police budgets. The Met has already lost £600 million in funding since 2010 and the Government is threatening to go even further.

This has left Tower Hamlets Council to pick up the tab. In fairness to the opposition, to that end the council funded a team of 21 police officers in July 2011. However, the disgraced former Mayor Lutfur Rahman chose to scrap them in March 2015 when their contract was up for renewal.

Central Government cuts to police budgets are having a real impact.

This administration is determined to do everything it can to protect our community from huge central Government cuts to policing. This year we hired fourteen new police officers as part of a ground-breaking team to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on council estates – the first of its kind in the borough.

Furthermore the Mayor in Cabinet has recently agreed to fund additional officers to support neighbourhood policing, including an officer focused on 'designing out crime'. This will bring the total number of officers including those patrolling THH estates to 39.

8.19 Question from Councillor Clare Harrison

How will the Mayor's £200,000 Air Quality Fund be spent?

Response by Councillor Rachel Blake

At Cabinet on the 31st October 2017 the Mayor agreed a new fund as part of the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP).

The fund is for £200,000 over a two year period of 17/18 and 18/19.

The fund is intended for 'prospective bidders to support activities aligned to the Council priorities in improving air quality'.

Criteria for the proposed projects include:

- be related to either reducing emissions of, reducing exposure to or increasing awareness of air pollution;
- be directly relevant to actions in our AQAP;
- have a measurable impact; and
- have wider community benefits

The next stage is to take a report to the grants sub-committee to approve the process to release the funds.

8.20 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam

Following the Grenfell tragedy, will the Mayor commit to publishing all Fire Risk Assessments immediately?

Response by Councillor Sirajul Islam

The Mayor has publicly committed to publishing THH's Fire Risk Assessments and this programme is already underway. All blocks rated a substantial risk have already had their FRA's published. All remaining blocks are being processed by THH who have a programme agreed with the council to upload the assessments.

8.21 Question from Councillor Rachael Saunders:

What plan for Old Flo did the Mayor inherit when he was elected?

Response by Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE

Old Flo is an important part of our cultural heritage and it deserves proper recognition.

Before the previous mayor was removed from office, he planned to sell Old Flo. One of the first decisions I made after my election was to cancel the sale and return her to the borough.

Old Flo is now safely back in Tower Hamlets, at a secure and accessible home in Cabot Square. Whilst I would have loved to see Old Flo returned to her old home in Stepney her considerable value means we've had to find her a safe and secure home for her for the next five years, in Canary Wharf. My hope is after that she can move even closer into our community, at the new Civic Centre in Whitechapel when it is complete.

Tower Hamlets has recently submitted its bid to be London Borough of Culture and I'm proud that Old Flo is back home and played a big role in our bid.

8.22 Question from Councillor Craig Aston

Will the Mayor indicate what discussions he held with his counterpart in Hackney with regard to sharing the costs of the firework display which was much appreciated by residents of both Tower Hamlets and Hackney but paid for by Tower Hamlets?

Response by Councillor Chunu Mukit

The London Borough of Hackney has not in recent times been formally approached with regard to sharing the costs of the Victoria Park fireworks display with Tower Hamlets. The Mayor did briefly mention it to Mayor Glanville who said that resources were allocated to the north of the borough.

The Fireworks event attracted an audience of 80,000 this year and was a successful event. It is one of the few remaining free events of this kind in London. As a neighbouring borough Hackney residents already benefit from the high quality facilities in the park as do many others who live in other parts of London

8.23 Question from Councillor Shah Alam

Does the Mayor agree that this budget overlooks the needs of the disabled children who use council funded nurseries and abandons the low income families these nurseries currently serve?

Response by Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

Supporting our children to get the best start in life is one of our top priorities in Tower Hamlets. We are proud to have a diverse range of early years services for children under 5 with over 7,000 children attending sessions across the borough. The vast majority of these are provided by pre-school classes within primaries, separate maintained nursery schools, independent nurseries, numerous playgroups and child-minders, with around 105 children (dropping to about 30 children during holidays) attending day nurseries run directly by the Council - Overland, Mary Sambrook and John Smith.

We know parents value the service their children receive at these council-run nurseries. That's why we have been consulting online and directly with parents on proposals about how we manage them in the future and we very much welcome people's views as we decide what to do.

As of June this year the breakdown across our early years provision was:

- 68 primary schools, 65 of which have nursery classes and the other 3 have reception classes (attended by 2,980 children)
- 6 maintained nursery schools with teaching staff (407 children)
- 47 day care nurseries and nursery schools provided by private businesses and voluntary or independent organisations including charities (2,503 children)

- 30 playgroups (888 children) and 114 child minders (560 children)
- 3 Local Area Day Nurseries

The quality of services offered is exceptional with the vast majority (95%) of nurseries in our borough rated “good” or “outstanding” by Ofsted, which accredits all childcare settings.

We are clear that anyone seeking to run our nurseries would have to show they can offer services which are as good or better than what is currently there, including meeting tough contract requirements about maintaining excellent standards of care for children. That includes protecting the excellent specialist support for our children with disabilities or special educational needs, in particular the hearing impairment support at Overland. We would also ensure these and other nurseries continue to support vulnerable children that are being supported through the council’s social care and child protection services.

We are committed to listening to local people and will take the results of the consultation into account before any final decisions are made.

8.24 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed:

Will the Mayor provide the number of housing units (affordable, private and council) ‘approved’ since June 2015 until now with their completion schedules?

Response by Councillor Rachel Blake

The population of Tower Hamlets recently passed the 300,000 mark and it is predicted there will be a further 87,400 people living in the Borough over the next 25 years. While an increasing population brings opportunities, a lack of affordable housing is a major concern for our residents.

Mayor Biggs has committed to fighting the housing crisis and increasing the number of affordable homes in Tower Hamlets.

In the last two years of the previous administration, 2013/14 and 2014/15, only 595 and 635 affordable homes were built in Tower Hamlets, respectively.

Since Mayor Biggs came into office we have almost doubled that figure with over 1,000 new affordable homes built in each of the past two years.

Since June 1st 2015, the numbers of affordable housing units which have been built, i.e. completed, is as follows:

Year	Total Affordable	Rented	Intermediate
June 2015 – Mar 2016	1009	728	281
April 2016 – Mar 2017	1066	734	332

2017			
April 2017 – Sept 2017	464	357	107
	2539	1819	720

In addition to this Mayor Biggs has introduced new rent levels, based on the findings of the Affordability Commission, which will save residents up to £6,000 per year compared to rents under the former mayor before he was removed from office.

When Mayor Biggs was elected, 174 families were living in B&B accommodation for longer than the six week legal limit. After significant investment and planning, we've brought this figure down to zero.

We have a proactive approach to housing; we don't bury our head in the sand like the previous administration.

8.25 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill

The building of a new secondary school was part of the deal when the London Dock planning application was approved, and the development is now completed in parts. However, there has been very little information about the building and running of the school ever since, beyond two last-minute 'consultation' meetings, the most recent of which was held outside of the ward. Given that the council is meant to hold an open and competitive tendering process for any new provider, will the Mayor update the council on what his administration intends to do?

Response by Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

Cabinet agreed on 19 September 2017 to defer implementation of the London Dock secondary school building scheme while there is a review of the demand for secondary school places in the borough.

We are seeking planning consent at this stage to consult with residents in advance of gaining planning approval and starting the process with the Department for Education to open a new school. Based on current figures it is anticipated that the school will not be needed before September 2021 at earliest, with the likelihood that the scheme will be planned for either September 2022 or 2023. The implementation date will be considered again by the Council's Cabinet at a meeting in September 2018.

The consultation invite was mailed to 2,275 addresses (residential 2213 and businesses 62) that may be affected by the proposed plans. The design team is currently working with Planning Officers to finalise the proposals taking account of the consultation issues raised.

Where the need for a new school is identified, the local authority (LA) is no longer able to open a new community school. We can seek expressions of

interest from approved free school or academy providers, following a procedure set out by the DfE.

We will set a specification for the new school at London Dock to ensure that a provider is appointed who can deliver the specification, including a requirement to support the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership. Once the specification is agreed, Expressions of Interest (Eols) in providing the services specified will be sought. Eols are publicised by the LA as well as the requirement for them to be available on the DfE website.

8.26 Question from Councillor Shafi Ahmed

Does the Mayor think that there has been an increase in knife crime in Tower Hamlets?

Response by Councillor Asma Begum

Sadly we have seen knife crime rise across London, including in Tower Hamlets. According to the latest figures from the Police in the Borough on a rolling year to date (12.11.17) compared to the previous rolling year to date (12.11.17)

Total Knife Crime has increased by 22.1% to 684 offences (this includes a knife or sharp instrument that has been used to injure, used as a threat, or the victim was convinced a knife was present during the offence and knife possession).

Other London boroughs have seen similar increases:

Lambeth up 50.58% to 646
Hackney up 10.85% to 562
Croydon up 102.67% to 683
Newham up 15.08% to 702
Southwark up 45.58% to 840

Knife Injury Victims (under 25 non domestic abuse) has stayed the same at 106.

We are committed to tackling knife crime in Tower Hamlets. In June 2017 the Community Safety Partnership and Council set up a Task force of partner agencies to review knife and knife enabled crime in the borough and ensure that the partnership's response was effective in order to prevent and respond to future incidences.

Since then we have undertaken the following:

- 7 community weapon sweeps, supported by our dedicated youth outreach Rapid Response Team.

- knife test purchase operations have been carried out by Trading Standards and police cadets during which 22 premises have been visited and 5 failed, those 5 are subject to further action and prosecution being considered.
- 4 young people were referred to the most recent LFB LIFE Course, of which 2 engaged with the course and 1 young person completed the course which offers positive activities and diverts them from ASB and crime. A further 4 young people have referred to the next course.

8.27 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

Will the Mayor provide details of how many Council staff have been made redundant or left the council since June 2015 including the number who fall under the protected categories of the Public Sector Equality Duty and their final impact assessments?

Response by Councillor David Edgar

All staff are covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty as all have protected characteristics. The 'Annual workforce equalities report' published in 2016 showed that 54% of the people working for the Council identify as Asian, Bangladeshi, Black or Mixed race. That is slightly higher than the percentage of BAME people living in Tower Hamlets and slightly higher than when I was elected.

Two of the council's five Corporate Directors are from BAME backgrounds and all five are women.

There has been a significant reduction in the size of the workforce due to Government spending cuts – a 1,200 reduction since 2010.

Overall in my 30 months as Mayor, the BAME composition of our workforce has actually risen from 52.6% in 2015 to 54% in 2017.

In terms of the number of staff who have been made redundant or left the Council since June 2015 for any other reason, the information below covers the protected characteristics where sufficient information is held for reporting.

Table 1 – Leavers by ethnicity

Leavers June 2015 - Oct 2017		
Ethnicity	Number	%
Asian	93	4.8
Bangladeshi	414	21.5
Black	282	14.6
Mixed	60	3.1
Other	12	0.6
White	796	41.2
Declined to State / Missing	273	14.1
Grand Total	1930	100.0

Table 2 – Leavers by religion

Leavers June 2015 - Oct 2017		
Religion	Number	%
Buddhist	23	1.2
Christian	520	26.9
Hindu	14	0.7
Jewish	14	0.7
Muslim	448	23.2
No religion	350	18.1
Other	73	3.8
Sikh	9	0.5
Decline to State Missing	479	24.8
Grand Total	1930	100.0

Table 3 – Leavers by sexual orientation

Leavers June 2015 - Oct 2017		
Sexual Orientation	Number	%
Bisexual	22	1.1
Gay	27	1.4
Heterosexual	1309	67.8
Lesbian	10	0.5
Decline to State Missing	562	29.1
Grand Total	1930	100.0

Table 4 – Leavers by gender

Leavers June 2015 - Oct 2017		
Age band	Number	%
<=20	31	1.6
21 - 24	159	8.2
25 - 34	552	28.6
35 - 44	490	25.4
45 - 49	164	8.5
50 - 54	119	6.2
55 - 59	157	8.1
60 - 64	155	8.0
65+	103	5.3
Grand Total	1930	100.0

Leavers June 2015 - Oct 2017		
Gender	Number	%
Female	1162	60.2
Male	768	39.8
Grand Total	1930	100.0

Table 5 – Leavers by disability

Leavers June 2015 - Oct 2017		
Disability	Number	%
Not disabled	1363	70.6
Disabled	110	5.7
Declined to State / Missing	457	23.7
Grand Total	1930	100.0

Table 6 – Leavers by age

Leavers June 2015 - Oct 2017		
Age band	Number	%
<=20	31	1.6
21 - 24	159	8.2
25 - 34	552	28.6
35 - 44	490	25.4
45 - 49	164	8.5
50 - 54	119	6.2
55 - 59	157	8.1
60 - 64	155	8.0
65+	103	5.3
Grand Total	1930	100.0

Please note the following about the information above: -

These figures are slightly different than those quoted in an FOI (9551965) which asked for similar information because they include all leavers by post. i.e. a person who leaves 2 posts is counted twice - once for each post.

The figures include iTRES leavers – the Council's in-house resourcing agency. The figures are inclusive of staff who left due to TUPE transfer. This includes Fides Care staff who initially TUPEd in to the Council with no protected characteristics information provided, which partially explains the high 'declined to state/missing' figures.

8.28 Question from Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury

Will the Mayor provide the number of recorded ASB cases (incidents and complaints) in each electoral ward from June 2015 until now?

Response by Councillor Asma Begum

There have been a total of 29,087 anti-social behaviour calls in LBTH to Police 101 between 1st June 2015 and 12th November 2017.

The latest comparison for ASB calls to 101 for the 12 months up to and including 12th November 2017 compared to the previous 12 months up to 12th November 2016 show that they are down 13.8% as follows:

2016: 17,816
2017: 15,351

For the same period, repeat callers for ASB to Police 101 are down 14.0% as follows:

2016: 701
2017: 603

This administration is committed to tackling ASB, including making it a top priority of the new Community Safety Partnership and for the new police officers tasked with tackling crime and ASB in Tower Hamlets.

These figures are for ASB between 1st June 2015 and 12th November 2017

Ward	Number of ASB calls
Bethnal Green	1478
Blackwall and Cubitt Town	1692
Bow East	1577
Bow West	1200
Bromley North	1669
Bromley South	1500
Canary Wharf	1022
Island Gardens	1068
Lansbury	1061
Limehouse	1128
Mile End	1326
Poplar	1472
Shadwell	1632

Spitalfields and Banglatown	2085
St Dunstan's	2103
St Katharine's and Wapping	1759
St Peter's	1570
Stepney Green	1374
Weavers	1162
Whitechapel	1209
Grand Total	29087

8.29 Question from Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim:

Will the Mayor set out the list of youth centres which are no longer in use but which were operational (full or part time) in February 2015?

Response by Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE

In February 2015 the Youth Service was responsible for a number of youth projects. However, young people were getting a poor offer from the Youth Service which was characterised by:

Insufficient staffing levels to guarantee that youth centres would open at the stated time. Because staff were spread too thinly across youth centres;
Short notice closures of youth centres;
An inconsistent youth offer delivered from youth centres;
Very low attendance of young people at some youth centres due to the poor programme offer

At its meeting on 10th January 2017 Cabinet agreed that the Youth Service could be restructured to commission internally run youth activities from 8 key youth centre hubs; providing support for a number of young people, including more vulnerable young people.

As a result, the restructured Youth Service now has a total of 24 council youth projects operating now (made up of 18 universal youth centres, five specialist projects, and a youth participation programme).