

Mayor's Report to Council

19th September 2018

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Key Events/Announcements

I hope you all had a good summer, and were able to spend some time away from council business. We have a demanding Autumn, with a budget to develop and, as we settle into the new Mayoral term, a new Strategic Plan building on the old one but incorporating my Manifesto commitments. Our budget will include a need for some further savings, unfortunately, and this will be a challenge.

More positively, we can do a lot of positive work as we put the past behind us and continue the journey of improvement from the severely damaged council we inherited from the previous mayor. There may be tough choices in Tower Hamlets but we remain a vibrant place and if we work effectively we can help the most vulnerable and help everyone to improve their lives and enjoy a good quality of life here in the East End.

Journey of Improvement: This month we should learn whether our supervision by the MHCLG will end. We have submitted our, hopefully, final Best Value Improvement Plan progress report to the Government and a decision on the next steps is due. The journey since May 2015 has been tough but we are now significantly more 'mainstream' and focused on delivering good services. I remain committed however to a continuing publicly accountable improvement process and have committed to establishing a Performance & Improvement Board to replace the BVIP Board.

Ofsted: Improving Children's Social Care continues to be a priority and Ofsted has now reported on their latest visit which took place in August. During this visit the inspectors were looking at the ways in which we meet our obligations as corporate parents, looking at court processes, the experience of children looked after and permanency planning.

The report highlights that we continue to make progress, but that there is much more work to be done. We entirely agree with the findings and we are determined to accelerate the pace of change.

Brexit: I have now formally launched the Brexit Commission. This will be led by Cllr Amina Ali and joined by Cllr Mohammed Pappu and 7 independent commissioners: Tony Travers (LSE), Howard Dawber (Canary Wharf Group), Michael Pantlin (Barts Health), Ivana Bartoletti (Chair, Fabian Womens Network), Sue Terpilowski (London Lead, Federation of Small Businesses), Fahimul Islam (Young Mayor) and Sadia Ahmed (Deputy Young Mayor).

They will examine evidence and question witnesses before producing a report setting out recommendations to best prepare the borough for the UK's departure from the European Union.

The Commission will build on the work the council has already carried out over the past 2 years in response to Brexit, including the detailed work carried out by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The council held its first Brexit advice session over the weekend in Whitechapel Idea Store. Over 50 residents attended.

Councillor Amina Ali and I have also proposed a motion for this meeting, in which we call on the Government to hold a People's Vote on any final Brexit deal.

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA): Members will consider a motion calling on the council to adopt the full IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. London Councils advises that Tower Hamlets Council has already adopted the definition, but this has preceded the current council by several years and I propose that we should re-affirm our commitment.

National Hate Crime Awards: A big congratulations to the Domestic Violence & Hate Crime team for winning the National Hate Crime Awards for the No Place for Hate Campaign under the "Local Authority Service Upstander" category. The council does a great deal of work to tackle hate crime, and we are very proud of the team for this well-deserved award.

Salisbury: I issued a statement following the Met's update on the Salisbury and Amesbury investigation, which highlighted that the suspects stayed at the CityStay Hotel on Bow Road. We should be reassured that following tests, experts deemed that the room was safe and that it posed no risk to the public.

We thank the police for their continued efforts to keep our community safe and we will continue to work closely with them to support them in any way we can.

I would urge anyone who stayed in the hotel between 4 March and 4 May 2018 to contact the investigation team by calling 0800 789 321 or by emailing salisbury2018@met.police.uk.

Operation Lynemouth: Members will be aware that the Met Police issued a statement recently that Operation Lynemouth will not consider charging any further individual in relation to electoral fraud and malpractice from the 2014 Mayoral election. We must be very clear, as the Met Police have been, that this does not detract from the election court judgement that serious electoral fraud took place. And it does not mean that election offences were not committed, as they clearly were.

It's positive that the Met have recognised there are aspects of the original investigation they needed to learn from and that they have made changes to how they approach elections, however there has been a deep frustration with delays in investigating this case. There is a view that the passage of time has reduced significantly the likelihood of people being held to account.

Over four years on from an election that was declared void, people have been rightly concerned about a lack of priority given to serious allegations. Residents need to have confidence that where there are claims of criminality they are properly investigated.

Thanks to the election petitioners the unlawful election was overturned, and I continue to press the Government to now do the right thing and settle their legal fees. It remains unacceptable that four public spirited people potentially still face legal bills exceeding £1million and it's the least that can be done for those that stood up for justice and democracy. Over a month ago I wrote to

the Prime Minister once again pressing the case for the Government to do the right thing and support those who put their livelihoods on the line to defend democracy. To date I have yet to receive a response.

Tower Hamlets has moved on since this unsavoury chapter in its history. We have transformed the ways we work, created a culture of political openness and changed our direction so we are now focused on excellence and are outward looking and excited about the future. The 2018 Mayoral and local election was significant in that it was a fair and secure election, and all but one of Lutfur Rahman's former councillors lost their seats.

We look forward to the final resolution of any further outstanding investigation. A final piece of the jigsaw would be for at least some of those who were a part of his administration to apologise for the £millions spent addressing their misdeeds.

Budget: We continue to work on budget proposals and this will be a key piece of work throughout the rest of the year. It is worth remembering the scale of the challenge we face. Between 2010 and 2017, the council's budget was reduced by £138m – and between 2017 and 2020 we need to save a further £58m. There is no escaping that this means difficult decisions, particularly given the likelihood of further Government cuts beyond 2020.

School cuts: Under the Government's new "National Funding Formula" schools in our borough are likely to see their budgets cut dramatically.

Under the Government's plans, schools in Tower Hamlets will lose at least £16m. That's £448 per pupil. We don't think this is fair, and we've teamed up with schools, parents, students and unions to fight against the cuts. Our schools have made incredible progress over the last 20 years, but those gains are now at risk.

Cllr Danny Hassell and I have proposed a motion to be debated at this meeting, and we urgently call on the Government to properly fund our schools, and to protect our children's education by urgently reconsidering the hugely damaging National Funding Formula.

Waste Strategy Consultation: The council has launched its waste strategy consultation, to seek views on how we can reduce waste, increase recycling and improve air quality.

Dealing with the borough's waste is an enormous challenge. In 2016/17, the council collected 116,704 tonnes of waste, and our population is expected to increase substantially. We need to make sure we get our waste strategy right, and I hope members and residents will engage fully in the consultation.

A Level/GCSE results: A warm congratulations to students across the borough who received their results this year. We have seen some great results, and this is testament to the hard work of the students, teachers, parents and staff.

Mayor's Cup: Congratulations to Shadwell Youth Organisation, Wapping Youth FC, Westward Boys, Victoria Park, Sporting Green Girls, Kekoa, Limehouse Laces Girls and Mindset for their success at the Mayor's Cup. 71 teams took part, and it is a great opportunity for people of all backgrounds to come together to take part in grassroots football.

Individual Mayoral Decisions taken since last meeting:

- 30 Aug 2018 – Nominations to Outside Bodies 2018/19 – Tranche 1

Engagements and Meetings: 19 July to 19 September 2018

- 19th July 2018
 - Corporate Induction
 - Meeting with Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets
 - Meeting with Mayor & Corporate Director, Place (Property & Major Programmes)
 - Meeting with Cabinet Member for Resources & Voluntary Sector
 - Casework – resident visit
 - Mayor's Surgery
 - Casework Team catch up
 - Uprising 10th Anniversary Celebration 2018
- 20th July 2018
 - Meeting with Rushanara Ali MP
 - Meeting with officers
 - Meeting with officers to discuss Local Authority Day Nurseries (LADN's)
- 23rd July 2018
 - Meeting with Head of Mayor's Office
 - James Frankcom Meeting re Town Council petition
 - Lunch Reception – Sheba Restaurant
 - Meeting with Cabinet Member for Work & Economic Growth
 - Meeting with Beta Bangla
 - Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- 24th July 2018
 - Visit to V&A Childhood Museum
 - Emmott Close – Over 60s Summer Events
 - Meeting with Transport for London (TFL) – TFL property development
 - Meeting with Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets
 - Meeting re. Aeronauts Filming
 - Public Meeting – Development at Westferry Printworks
- 25th July 2018
 - Meeting with Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit
 - Meeting with Divisional Director Sports Leisure & Culture
 - Appointment Sub-Committee - Divisional Director Public Realm
 - Mayor's Advisory Board
 - Cabinet
- 26th July 2018
 - Media interview – Shadwell basin
 - Meeting with Borough Commander
 - Partnership Executive Group Meeting
 - Meeting with Jim Fitzpatrick MP

- Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Regeneration & Air Quality
- Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Housing
- Mayor's Surgery
- Casework Catch up meeting
- 1st August 2018
 - Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Work & Economic Growth
 - Meeting with Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets
 - Meeting with Divisional Director for Strategy & Performance re. grants & Voluntary Sector
 - MAB Budget Session
 - Meeting with Institute of Imagination
 - School Site – London Dock & Westferry
 - Mayor's Portfolio Meeting - Environment
 - Mayor's Advisory Board
 - Grants Determination Sub-Committee
- 2nd August 2018
 - Meeting with Cabinet Member for Children, Schools & Young People
 - Strategic Forward Planning Meeting
 - London TULO Meeting
 - Central London Employment and Skills Board
 - Mayor's Surgery
 - Casework Catch up meeting
- 5th August 2018
 - BBC Interview
- 6th August 2018
 - Meeting with Head of Mayor's Office
 - Meeting with Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets
 - Meeting with Interim Divisional Director for Public Realm
 - Meeting with Director – Central London Forward
 - Meeting with Divisional Director for Strategy & Performance
 - Meeting with Udichi/View Exchange
 - AGM Inspire Thai Fighters Boxing Academy
- 7th August 2018
 - Corporate Leadership Team Meeting
 - Meeting with Sir Alan Wood
 - Regional Unison Meeting
 - Meeting with Cabinet Member for Housing
 - Introductory Meeting with new Unison Regional Officer
 - Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Community Safety & Equalities
- 8th August 2018
 - Meeting with Wapping Bangladesh Association
 - Mayor's Portfolio Meeting - Children, Schools & Young People
 - Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Resources
 - Quad Meeting
 - Public Meeting – Anti Social Behaviour
- 9th August 2018
 - Meeting with Oliver Davis
 - Meeting with Officers re. Life Sciences

- Meeting with Chief Executive & Minister Councillor Mr. Yang Xiaokun – Embassy of Peoples Republic of China
- Peer Challenge Review Meeting
- Meeting with Cllr E McQuillan
- Meeting with Divisional Director of Communications & Marketing
- Mayor's Housing Meeting
- Mayor's Surgery
- All Member's – Criminal & Sexual Exploitation Briefing Seminar
- 11th August 2018
 - Mini-Holland Tour
- 13th August 2018
 - Meeting with Head of Mayor's Office
 - Casework Catch up Meeting
 - Visit – Urban Gyms
 - Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Property
 - Meeting with Cabinet member for Arts, Culture and Brexit
 - Meeting with Chief Executive of East End Homes
- 14th August 2018
 - Knife Test Purchasing visit
 - Young News –Interview
 - Meeting with Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Air Quality
 - Youth & Residents Q & A (Stifford Centre)
- 15th August 2018
 - Meeting with Cllr J Pierce
 - Planning Meeting
 - Meeting with officers – waste contract
 - Meeting with Jim Fitzpatrick MP
 - Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Adults, Health & Wellbeing
 - Councils Statement of Community Involvement
- 16th August 2018
 - A Level Results – Langdon Park Secondary School
 - Meeting with Cabinet Member for Children, Schools & Young People
 - Eid Message Recording
 - Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Regeneration & Air Quality
- 20th August 2018
 - Meeting with Head of Youth Service
 - Meeting with Head of Mayor's Office
 - Meeting with CEO East End Community Foundation
 - Meeting with Resident – Casework
 - Channel S Interview
 - Meeting with Brick Lane Mosque
 - Meeting with Divisional Director Children's Social Care
 - Limehouse Mosque Meeting
- 21st August 2018
 - Eid Jammal Prayer
 - Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme visit
 - Meeting with Corporate Director of Governance

- Meeting with officers - Update on the Spitalfields Community Governance Review
 - Update meeting on Lowder House Consultation
- 22nd August 2018
 - Grants Determination Sub Committee
 - Sporting Carnival
 - Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Housing
 - Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Environment
 - New Festival Quarter Meeting
- 23rd August 2018
 - GCSE Results – Swanlea Secondary School
 - Meeting with Officers – Contract Services
 - Interview for London Design Festival
 - Visit to new Whitechapel Town Hall site
 - Mayor's Surgery
 - Caseworkers Catch up Meeting
- 25th August 2018
 - Eid Summer Party
 - Columbia Road TRA Summer Fete
- 29th August 2018
 - Meeting with Officers - Budget Discussion
 - Meeting with Cllr D Edgar – Cabinet Member for Environment
- 2nd September 2018
 - Lansbury Community Gathering
 - Summer Course Award Ceremony for Hifzul Quran & Islamic Education Centre
- 3rd September 2018
 - Meeting with Divisional Director for Strategy & Performance
 - Meeting with Divisional Director of Communications & Marketing
 - Meeting with Head of Mayor's Office
 - Local Authority Day Nurseries Consultation meeting at Overland nursery
 - Interview with work experience student
 - Budget Meeting with Mayor & Cabinet Members
 - Meeting with Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets
 - Overview & Scrutiny – Performance Challenge Session
- 4th September 2018
 - Meeting with Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets Homes
 - Meeting with LBTH & OHG – Working Group Meeting
 - Meeting with One Housing Group
 - Meeting with Cabinet Member for Children, Schools & Young People
 - Meeting with Cabinet Member for Housing
 - Meeting with Cabinet Member for Arts, Culture and Brexit
 - Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Culture, Arts & Brexit
 - Quintet Meeting
 - Meeting with Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets
- 5th September 2018

- BBC Radio Interview
- Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Work & Economic Growth
- Planning Meeting
- Meeting with Cllr J Pierce
- Mayor's Regeneration Board
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Resources
- Meeting with London Fire Brigade
- 6th September 2018
 - Meeting with Cabinet Member for Resources & Voluntary Sector
 - Joint Consultative & Advisory Group
 - Brexit Commission Launch
 - Visit to Toyhouse nursery
 - Mayor's Surgery
- 7th September 2018
 - London Councils Labour Leaders Group Meeting
- 8th September 2018
 - Charity Clean Up UK
 - Labour Group Away Day
- 9th September 2018
 - Mayor's Cup Final
 - Award Football Ceremony
- 16th September 2018
 - Soundtek Carron Club Competition Launch
 - Sherpur Welfare Trust event
 - Probashi Balagonj - Osmani Nagar Adarsha Upozila Shomity
 - Bongobir Osmany Trust
- 17th September 2018
 - Meeting with Head of Mayor's Office
 - Community Governance Review
 - Launch of Financial Health Centre
 - Meeting with Resident – Casework
 - Tower Hamlets Best Value Improvement Board Meeting
- 18th September 2018
 - Budget Session with Mayor & Cabinet Members
 - Meeting with Chief Executive of Clarion Housing Group
 - Tower Hamlets Partnership Executive Group
 - Meeting with Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets
 - St Katharine & Wapping Ward Panel Meeting
 - Meeting with the Council of Mosques
- 19th September 2018
 - Central London Forward Board Meeting
 - Meeting with Officers re. London Dock
 - Pre-Council Labour Group
 - Full Council