

Mayor's Report to Council

23rd January 2019

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Key Events/Announcements

Budget: our proposals have now been formally proposed by Cabinet and were examined by the Scrutiny Committee last week. The Cabinet will consider the comments of O&S on the 30th of January, and proposals will be taken to the budget council meeting on 20th February. We need to be realistic about the challenge we face. In Tower Hamlets the council's core funding is set to be £148m less this year compared with 2010 – equivalent to a 64% cut – and the council expects to have to save a further £44m over the coming three years.

Despite this, we have a positive set of budget proposals with significant investment in what residents have told us are their top priorities: housing, education, young people, waste collection and tackling ASB.

Ofsted: findings from the latest Ofsted monitoring visit have now been published and the headline finding is that 'effective action taken by leaders and managers following the August monitoring visit has led to considerable improvements in the quality of social work practice for children in care.' This is very encouraging and testament to the work and dedication of our staff, but there is a great deal more to do. There will be a further monitoring visit in March, followed by a full re-inspection.

By-elections: as members will be well aware, we are now only a few weeks away from by-elections in Lansbury and Shadwell wards following the resignation of two councillors there.

Brexit: We are of course also anticipating Brexit and are one of the very few local authorities to have gathered public evidence and studied its possible impact.

Like everyone else we are still in the dark about what will happen, but our Brexit Commission report will be launched next month, led by Cllr Amina Ali.

As the political wrangling continues in Westminster we are looking at the practical steps we can take, and to offer reassurance to the 41,000 EU citizens who live here. We value their contribution and this is their home too.

I continue by the way to believe a second referendum is now needed to break the deadlock. Indeed now more vitally than ever. A narrow referendum result, either way, is not a mandate for the reckless pursuit of narrow interests.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS): this is on the agenda for discussion this evening. At a recent cabinet meeting we decided not to proceed with the recommendation to use the same child allowances in the Local Council Tax Reduction scheme assessments as those used for Universal Credit, I am in particular referring to the 'two-child limit'.

In 2013 the Government made significant cuts to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and localised its implementation. Since then the slow introduction of

Universal Credit has meant that much of the information which councils rely upon to administer CTRS is no longer available. That has made supporting our lowest income residents much harder and sits behind many of the changes we have had to make to the CTRS in recent years.

To further complicate matters, the Government introduced a limit of two children on benefit calculations. This means if a family has more than two children the Government will continue to assume they only have two when calculating their entitlements. The Government's systems make any deviation from their assessment criteria very difficult to implement as they no longer provide councils with the data we need.

The Government has recently partially backtracked on the two-child limit and agreed that it would not apply to those who had children before the system was introduced. I have called for the limit to be scrapped entirely.

We still operate one of the most generous schemes in the country and unlike many councils we offer 100% discount meaning our poorest residents don't have to pay. In total we expect to spend £25m on our Council Tax Reduction Scheme and in total over 27,000 families receive some form of discount as a result of the CTRS. Over 19,000 families received a 100% reduction over the last year and haven't had to pay a single penny of council tax.

Operation Continuum: we recently marked the first anniversary of Operation Continuum. As of December, Operation Continuum has resulted in 100 warrants executed/properties raided, 191 total arrests for drug offences and drug supply, 88 people charges, 31 men sentenced to a combined total of more than 100 years' imprisonment, large quantities of Class A drugs seized, £167k in cash seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act, 164 drugs stop and searches conducted, 399 ASB warnings issued, 25 weapons sweeps conducted, 33 weapons recovered from weapon sweeps and 93 people arrested, assessed and referred for drug treatment.

School funding: new analysis from the National Education Union (NEU), which has compared the Schools Block funding allocations for 2017/18 with 2018/19, has revealed that the Government has broken its promise that there would be "a cash increase for every school in every region" – with 31 schools in Tower Hamlets alone having seen their funding cut in 2018/19. This is deeply worrying, particularly as the National Funding Formula starts to bite.

Early Years Summit: we held a summit at the end of November to hear from parents, partners and professionals about our Early Years services and how we can make them even better. This was a positive event and feedback will be used to develop a new early years strategy and provide the support parents and families need.

New Homes Bonus (NHB): the Government has recently announced that Tower Hamlets has been provisionally allocated £19.2m NHB, the highest allocation in the country, as part of the New Homes Bonus allocations – the grant paid by central government to local councils to reflect housing growth and fund infrastructure.

Nearly £300,000 of this figure has been allocated as a result of the number of affordable homes built in Tower Hamlets, which was the second highest local authority area in terms of the number of affordable homes added, with 850 new homes.

I am also very grateful for the hard work of council staff which meant that no homeless families were accommodated in B&Bs over the Christmas period, who were instead placed in self-contained homes. Under the previous mayor many families were left in B&B accommodation for longer than the legal limit of six weeks.

Creative Enterprise Zone: I was very pleased to learn that our joint bid with Hackney Council has been successful, and the Mayor of London has named Hackney Wick and Fish Island as a Creative Enterprise Zone. This will help protect this outstanding creative quarter by ensuring that planning powers help develop a pipeline of affordable workspace in the area. Creative communities have brought a new lease of life to former industrial areas, but too often they end up being victims of their own success and are priced out of workspace and accommodation when developers move in.

Individual Mayoral Decisions taken since last meeting

- 29th November 2018 – Tower Hamlets Town Hall – Contract Sum Risk Contingency Approval

Summary of the Mayor's Engagements and Meetings **22nd November 2018 – 23rd January 2019**

22 November 2018

- London First breakfast talk
- Meeting with Cllr Candida Ronald
- Mayor with Chief Executive
- Meeting with Cllr Asma Begum
- Strategic Forward Planning Meeting
- Resident home visit
- Mayor' Surgery

23 November 2018

- Weavers Community Action Group

26 November 2018

- Kobi Nazrul School Visit
- Introductory meeting with Divisional Director for Public Realm Dan Jones
- Meeting with Head of Mayor's Office
- Mayor's Housing Meeting
- Launch of Tram Shed Community Hub
- Update on Crossrail Legacy Land at Eleanor Street

27 November 2018

- Meeting with Cllr Danny Hassell
- Meeting with Corporate Director for Health, Adult and Community
- Q&A at the Premier Property Club Canary Wharf

28 November 2018

- Meeting with ADA – the national college for digital skills
- Meeting with Resident
- Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Regeneration and Air Quality
- Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Adults, Health and Wellbeing
- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Cabinet Meeting
- King George's Field Charity Board

29 November 2018

- NHS Collaboration across CCGs
- Meeting with Gateway Chief Executive Kate Dodsworth
- Meeting with Cllr Rachel Blake
- Meeting with London Child Poverty Alliance
- Meeting with Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Pre Meet for Town Hall Project Board
- THCVS 2018 AGM
- Mayor's Surgery

30 November 2018

- Early Years Summit

01 December 2018

- Small Business Saturday
- Christmas Lights Switch on

02 December 2018

- Derai Thana Development Organisation & celebration of former Civic Mayor Abdul Sardar's receipt of the BEM
- Community event in Poplar Ward

03 December 2018

- Meeting with Head of Mayor's Office
- Children Services Improvement Board
- Meeting regarding Match Girls
- Call with Cllr Amina Ali
- Meeting with Susmita Sen CEO of Tower Hamlets Homes
- Meeting re. Docklands Community Centre
- Meeting with Divisional Director of Strategy, Policy and Performance
- Meeting with Aldgate Partnership
- Meeting with Cllr Abdal Ullah and Divisional Director of Strategy, Policy and Performance re. Overview and Scrutiny
- Labour Group Meeting

04 December 2018

- London Councils Leaders Committee Meeting

- Meeting with Chief Executive – Will Tuckley
- Mayors Portfolio Meeting Community Safety and Equalities – Cllr Asma Begum and Denise Radley
- Speakers Charity Ball

05 December 2018

- Social Work Academy Launch
- Mayors Portfolio Meeting Work and Economic Growth with Cllr Motin Uz-Zaman and Ann Sutcliffe
- Mayors Portfolio Meeting – Resources with Cllr Candida Ronald and Neville Murton
- Public Realm Working Group
- Mayors Advisory Board
- Grants Determination Sub Committee
- Meeting with Tower Hamlets Wheelers

06 December 2018

- School Visit Upper North Street/Ricardo Street
- TULO meeting
- Visit to Harbinger Primary School
- THCVS/Council Partnership meeting
- Mayor's Surgery
- LMC Promote Neighbourliness Event
- Home Visit

07 December 2018

- Home Visit

08 December 2018

- Event with council's strategic partners

10 December 2018

- Photocall with CWU postal workers at Whitechapel
- William Burrough Primary School visit
- Meeting with Head of Mayor's Office
- Meeting with Quaker Street business
- Christmas Card Competition judging
- Meeting with Divisional Director of HR
- Regeneration Vision Meeting with Cllr Rachel Blake and Cllr James King
- Meeting with Divisional Director of Communication and Marketing
- Meeting regarding Harkness House
- Executive Committee Meeting
- Labour Group Meeting

11 December 2018

- Meeting with Southern Housing Group
- Children Social Care Meeting
- Partnership Executive Group briefing

- Meeting with THCH Chair and Chief Executive
- Mayors Portfolio Meeting- Children, School and Young People
- Air Quality Partnership Board Meeting

12 December 2018

- Capital Strategy Board Meeting
- Partnership Executive Group Meeting
- Meeting with Cllr Motin Uz-Zaman
- Mayors Political Cabinet Meeting
- Mayors Advisory Board
- Ofsted Feedback Meeting
- Meeting with Cllr Denise Jones

13 December 2018

- Meeting with Cllr Amina Ali
- Meeting with Cllr Sirajul Islam
- Transformation and Improvement Board Meeting
- Meeting with CEO Will Tuckley
- Meeting with CEO Will Tuckley and Borough Commander
- Christmas Tea Dance visit
- Mayor's Surgery
- Leaders reception at City Hall

14 December 2018

- Creative Enterprise Zone visit
- Team Cycle Club Meeting

16 December 2018

- Victory Day Celebration and Channel S Anniversary

17 December 2018

- Meeting with Head of Engineering and Highways
- Meeting with Head of Mayors Office
- Meeting with Divisional Director for Strategy, regeneration and Sustainability
- Quad Meeting
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting

18 December 2018

- Creative Enterprise Zone Meeting
- Meeting with Chief Executive Poplar Harca Steve Stride
- Meeting with Cllr Rachel Blake
- Primary Places Review Meeting with Christine McInnes and Cllr Danny Hassell
- Meeting with Corporate Director Asmat Hussain
- Property Meeting with Divisional Director, Property and Corporate Property and Major Programmes and Capital Delivery Ann Sutcliffe
- Meeting with Canal and River Trust
- Meeting with Divisional Director of HR

- Meeting with Mayor and Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Tower Hamlets Transformation and Improvement Board

19 December 2018

- Meeting with Divisional Director of Communication and Meeting and Divisional Director Customer Services
- Mayors Portfolio Meeting – Adults, Health and Wellbeing
- Mayor's Planning Meeting
- Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Environment
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Cabinet Meeting

20 December 2018

- Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Culture, Arts and Brexit
- Violent Crime Summit follow up meeting
- Meeting with Veolia Trade Union representatives
- Meeting regarding ALMO Review
- Mayor's Portfolio Meeting – Housing
- Meeting with Cllr Asma Begum
- LGA meeting with Sri Lankan Mayor

3 January 2019

- BBC London Interview

7 January 2019

- Meeting with Head of Mayor's Office
- Meeting with Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance
- Royal London Hospital – New Year health living campaign launch
- BBC Media Interview
- Meeting with Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Pre Meet – Deputy Mayor of London for Transport Heidi Alexander Visit
- Public Realm Working Group Meeting

8 January 2019

- LLDC Stakeholder Perception Survey
- CLT meeting
- Meeting with Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Meeting with Clarion Housing Chief Executive Claire Miller
- Meeting with Rachel Blake
- Mayor's Portfolio Meeting Community Safety and Equalities
- Meeting with Divisional Director for Public Realm
- Mayor's Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Board

9 January 2019

- Mayor's Portfolio meeting Work and Economic Growth
- Network Rail Arches Meeting with new owners

- Pre Meet Regeneration board
- Resources Portfolio meeting
- Meeting with Divisional Director for Sports, Leisure and Culture
- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Mayor's Regeneration Board
- Media Interview
- Cabinet Budget Meeting

10 January 2019

- Meeting re. Altab Ali Day
- Capital Bids and Estate Appraisal Work Meeting
- Divisional Director Adult Social Care Interviews Discussion and Decision
- Mayor's Surgery
- City of London – London Government Dinner

11 January 2019

- Tower Hamlets Homebirth Teams 1st Birthday Celebration
- Bernie Cameron Community Centre naming ceremony

14 January 2019

- Public Realm Meeting
- Mayor's Meeting with Divisional Director of Children Social Care
- Mayor and Cllr Amina Ali
- Mayor and Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Meeting with assets team
- Meeting with Corporate Director of Place
- External Talk with AECOM

15 January 2019

- Capital programme meeting
- Meeting with Divisional Director Property and Mayor Programmes re. Kemnal Park
- Mayor's Portfolio meeting – Culture Arts and Brexit
- Mayor and Cllr Sirajul Islam
- Meeting with Swadhinta Trust
- Meeting with LSCB Chair Stephen Ashley
- Mayors Traffic Meeting

16 January 2019

- Meeting with Deputy Mayor of London for Transport Heidi Alexander at Whitechapel
- Mayors Portfolio Meeting – Environment
- Mayor's Planning Meeting
- Mayors Advisory Board
- Meeting re. Hertsmere House
- Grants Determination Sub Committee

17 January 2019

- Corporate Staff Induction
- GLEF/GLPC Portfolio Holder Meetings
- Mayor and Divisional Director of Communication and Marketing
- JCAG - Finance Review
- Meeting with Trust Chairman of Micro Business Centre
- Mayor's Surgery
- Meeting with LGA

18 January 2019

- Phone interview re LLDC Perception Audit

20 January 2019

- Civic Condolence Meeting – Late Syed Ashraful Islam

21 January 2019

- Mayor and Corporate Director (Governance) and Monitoring Officer
- Mayor and Head of Mayors Office
- Meeting regarding Raines House Wapping
- Meeting regarding Island Gardens
- Mayor and Cllr Helal Uddin
- Mayor and Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets Homes
- Mayor and Limehouse Mosque Meeting
- Mayor's portfolio – Civil Contingencies and Emergency Planning
- Executive Committee Meeting

22 January 2019

- NARE Meeting
- Partnership Board meeting on Brexit
- Public Meeting with Film Office

23 January 2019

- Tower Hamlets Education Partnership Meeting
- Mayor's Portfolio Meeting Adult, Health and Wellbeing
- Mayors Political Cabinet
- Council meeting