

# Mayor's Report to Council

20<sup>th</sup> March 2019

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

## Key Events/Announcements

**Christchurch:** There are no words that can properly describe the horror of the terror attack in New Zealand. I send, as we all do, our deepest sympathies to those who have lost loved ones, and we stand in solidarity with the people of New Zealand, and with Muslims around the world. A number of vigils have taken place across the borough to show solidarity and we are in touch with mosque leaders to discuss what practical steps we can take as a council going forward. A statement of our solidarity will, I hope, be unanimously agreed by Council this evening and I believe reflects exchanges across the chamber.

I have also welcomed the announcement from the Home Office that the Places of Worship Protective Security Fund will receive additional funding to help protect places of worship. Last year, the council supported local faith groups to bid for funding from the scheme, which led to two mosques in the borough being awarded funding for enhanced security measures. As a council we will support places of worship to bid for funding following the announcement from the Home Office.

**Brexit:** The Prime Minister has, with less than two weeks until March 29<sup>th</sup>, conceded that the country is in crisis. Clearly we are keeping a very close eye on what happens, but this presents an enormous challenge particularly when it's clear that not even the Government knows what will happen.

The Brexit Commission, led by Cllr Amina Ali, recently published its final report and recommendations. This was an important piece of work and has shaped our approach. Belatedly the DHCLG has been convening meetings with local government to discuss the many areas where we might need to prepare for different outcomes, and we have been involved in those meetings.

**Support for EU citizens:** our campaign to provide reassurance for EU citizens living in Tower Hamlets, and council staff members, received some media coverage. I make no apology for standing up for those who call our borough home and who are worried about what the impact of Brexit will be on them. We have provided comprehensive advice and guidance on what steps people need to take to secure their right to continue living and working here after Brexit. We are also offering to support residents with their applications for settled or pre-settled status.

EU citizens contribute so much to our borough, and this is their home too.

**LGC awards:** Tower Hamlets Council was shortlisted for a number of these awards, and we are very proud that our Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Hate Crime team won the 'team of the year' award. The council was also highly commended in the 'business transformation' category, for the hostels reconfiguration. Congratulations and thank you to the officers

involved. And by the way, we won Team of the Year last year too. These awards are tributes to our steady progress in the past few years following past controversies.

**Serious Case Reviews:** We do however need always to learn, and to improve. Two Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) were published last month by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and all members will have received a briefing on this.

Both of the SCRs have provided a set of recommendations for the LSCB, Tower Hamlets Council, the CCG and a number of other health trusts/groups. Many of the recommendations for the council have already been actioned over the last two years through the council's social care improvement work, but there is no complacency about the further work we need to do. OFSTED inspectors have indeed been coincidentally in the Town Hall for the past two days, as we continue our improvement journey. I am positive about the future, but never complacent.

**£3.3m boost for Bow:** a £3.3m boost for Bow, including the town centre on Roman Road, has been announced, after our successful bid for funding from the Mayor of London and Transport for London (TfL), under their Liveable Neighbourhoods programme. This will help us make further and deeper progress with our local, and ambitious, Liveable Streets programme, which will cover Bow, and in phases many other parts of the borough in the coming years. We have an ambitious programme to improve the street scene, to bring calmer traffic behaviour, provide a better environment for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users, to neighbourhoods across the borough. Bow is one of our earlier projects, and we are delighted TfL have recognised our commitment. There will be detailed consultation, and I want the community to be involved in the design where we can.

**Cladding:** I attended a meeting recently with residents of New Providence Wharf, a development in Blackwall and Cubitt Town Ward. I met subsequently with Ballymore Homes, the freeholders. We remain watchful of the problems of blocks in the borough with cladding systems that need replacement. Aside from the urgency, and reassurance, needed, there remains a very real problem of who will pay, particularly where leaseholders, management companies, and freeholders are involved. This remains a political issue on which Government is not acting decisively particularly as they have, understandably post-Grenfell, required removal but have left others to argue over the bills. We must assume that everybody acted diligently and in line with the law when the blocks were built. This issue will continue to be an anxiety for residents affected.

**HMICFRS Inspection:** Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has published a report following its inspection of the Metropolitan Police Service's review and reassessment of alleged criminal offences arising from the 2014 mayoral election in Tower Hamlets. I have copied my response below for information:

*"This report makes clear that a lack of serious attention under the previous Mayor, Boris Johnson, in 2014 meant the police investigation into electoral fraud in Tower Hamlets was under-resourced and uncoordinated. As a result it potentially missed lines of enquiry and had to be reinvestigated years later.*

*“I’m pleased this review took place so lessons can be learnt for the future but sadly we may now never know what evidence was missed at the time which could have been crucial in prosecuting those responsible.*

*“Local people were rightly appalled at how Lutfur Rahman and his cronies stole an election. No stone should have been left unturned by the police in investigating how democracy was subverted. Sadly this was far from the case.*

*“As a borough we have moved on from this sorry moment in our history but as the report makes clear these failings have I fear let people off the hook.”*

**International Women’s Day:** I was very pleased to celebrate International Women’s Day on the 8<sup>th</sup>, with the theme ‘Balance for Better’ – a number of videos were recorded to mark the day featuring cabinet members Cllr Asma Begum, Cllr Rachel Blake, Cllr Amina Ali and Cllr Denise Jones as well as senior officers. The council also has a range of events to mark Women’s History Month. Our borough has a rich history of inspirational woman from the suffragettes to the many women that I have the privilege of working with today in the Cabinet and Labour Group. On the day I awarded certificates to women who had completed construction training courses. I add that I did this because both my female Deputy Mayors were busy elsewhere!

**Fair Funding Review:** we have responded to the Government’s so-called Fair Funding Review which seeks to change the way local councils are funded. Recent analysis from the Local Government Chronicle has found that more than half a billion pounds is likely to be diverted from London boroughs, mainly to shire areas, as a result of the Government’s proposals. We will continue to press the case that we deserve truly fair funding and that this cannot be achieved by further cutting areas like Tower Hamlets.

**Spitalfields Community Governance Review:** a second public consultation is currently underway and will conclude in May. A number of roadshows have also been arranged as part of the consultation, and the Council will make its final decision in July.

**Operation Continuum:** we continue our clampdown on drug related crime in the borough. The police have carried out further dawn raids in connection with drug crimes, and the council are carrying out enforcement patrols and working with social landlords to seek the repossession of homes where raids find evidence of drug related crime. Operation Continuum, has taken 190 drug dealers off our streets in the last 12 months

**Graffiti and Street Art Policy:** the Cabinet has agreed a new Graffiti and Street Art Policy. There will be an increased focus on removing illegal or offensive graffiti while leaving street art in place. Our recent budget includes £450k investment in new teams to tackle graffiti in the borough, one of our manifesto commitments.

**School Streets:** 50 primary schools across Tower Hamlets will benefit from School Streets, an initiative to close roads to traffic or restrict the volume of cars passing by schools. £200k has been allocated for works to start on fifteen schools this year and next year. This is part of our ongoing efforts to help improve air quality around schools.

**Licensing Scheme:** We are extending our licensing scheme to further protect tenants and drive up standards in the private rented sector. The scheme,

effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April, builds on the scheme already in place, and will extend it to houses in multiple occupation. This will ensure properties are managed properly and offer a safe home for tenants.

**‘Start-Up Ready’ programme:** Since October 2016 we’ve invested over £650k in support for entrepreneurs to get start-ups running. More than 150 new businesses are up and running in the borough thanks to the programme.

**Boishakhi Mela:** The 2019 Boishakhi Mela has been confirmed for Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019, Weavers Fields.

### **Individual Mayoral Decisions taken since last meeting**

None since the last meeting.

## **Summary of Mayor’s engagement and meetings 24<sup>th</sup> January 2019 – 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

### **24 January**

- Meeting regarding Poplar development update
- Meeting with Chief Executive – Will Tuckley
- Strategic Forward planning meeting
- Mayors Portfolio meeting – Housing
- Mayor and Cllr Candida Ronald
- Mayors Surgery

### **27 January**

- Tower Hamlets Holocaust memorial event

### **28 January**

- Meeting with Cllr John Pierce
- Mayor and Head of Mayor’s Office
- Tower Hamlets Brand Refresh meeting
- Mayor and Chief Executive – Will Tuckley
- Mayor’s Portfolio meeting (Property)
- TFL Briefing on Rotherhithe
- Policy and Performance review meeting
- Meeting with Cllr Bustin
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Bethnal Green drug related crime and ASB meeting

### **29 January**

- Visit to Central Foundation Girls School
- Homelessness report launch event
- ITV London interview

- Mayor and Cllr Amina Ali
- Meeting with former councillor Gulam Mortoza
- Meeting with Adam Evans
- Improvement Meeting
- Quintet meeting for Children Service Improvement Board
- New Providence Wharf Meeting

### **30 January**

- Ground breaking at Jubilee Street
- Policy and Performance review meeting
- Regeneration and Air quality Portfolio meeting
- Meeting with Matthew Mannion
- Mayors Advisory Board
- Cabinet Meeting
- Big Half Marathon Meeting

### **31 January**

- Mayors Portfolio meeting – Adults, Health and Wellbeing
- Policy and performance review meeting
- Meeting regarding Island Gardens
- Policy and Performance review meeting
- Meeting with Corporate Director Asmat Hussain
- Meeting with Bangladeshi High Commissioner
- Policy and Performance review meeting
- Roman Road LDN's first Birthday Party

### **04 February**

- Meeting with Head of Mayors Office
- Strategy and Performance meeting with Sharon Godman
- Meeting with Denise Radley Corporate Director Health and Adults and Community
- Meeting re. Corporate Director Resources
- Mayor and Chief Executive – Will Tuckley

### **05 February**

- London Councils Labour Group meeting
- BBC London interview on Local Government Funding
- Transformation and Improvement Board agenda planning
- Channel S interview regarding Universal Credit
- Two policy and performance review meetings
- Portfolio Meeting – Community Safety and Equalities

### **06 February**

- CLT/Cabinet joint away day

### **07 February**

- By-election day

## **08 February**

- LGA Labour Group council leader's summit
- Local Labour Government Conference 2019

## **09 February**

- Local Labour Government Conference 2019

## **11 February**

- Mayor and Head of Mayor's Office
- Final Interviews for Corporate Director Resources
- Construction Skills Award Graduation Ceremony
- Mayor and Chief Executive – Will Tuckley
- Executive Committee Meeting
- Labour Group Meeting

## **12 February**

- Wapping traffic consultation meeting
- Portfolio Meeting – Culture, Arts and Brexit
- Mayor and Cllr Rachel Blake
- Mayor and Cllr Danny Hassell
- Telephone meeting with resident
- Mayors Housing meeting
- Children's Services Improvement Board meeting
- East Bank Board Dinner

## **13 February**

- Portfolio Meeting – Work and Economic Growth
- Mayor's Planning meeting
- Grants Determination Sub Committee pre agenda planning
- Public Realm Working Group Meeting
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Portfolio meeting – Environment
- Policy and Performance review meeting

## **14 February**

- Brexit Commission report launch
- Mayor and Chief Executive - Will Tuckley
- Meeting with Turin Street Mosque
- Portfolio Meeting – Resources
- Supporting Trainees on Uprising Fastlaner Programme
- Mayor's Capital Strategy Board Meeting
- Town Hall Project Board Meeting
- Mayors Surgery

## **15 February**

- Breakfast with Trevor Phillips

- Meeting with Steve Bullock

### **18 February**

- Mayor and Head of Mayor's Office
- Meeting regarding Chisenhale Art Gallery
- Meeting with East End Community Chief Executive Tracey Walsh
- Meeting with Cllr Tarik Khan
- Property meeting with Ann Sutcliffe
- Meeting with Osmani Centre
- Mayor and Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Mayor and Divisional Director of Human Resources Amanda Harcus
- Round Table Meeting Teaching Bengali in LBTH
- Public Meeting regarding Anti-Social Behaviour

### **19 February**

- Meeting with Cllr Eve McQuillan
- Bethnal Green Methodist Church Visit
- Meeting with Cllr Sirajul Islam
- Meeting with Ann Sutcliffe re. GLA engagement
- Meeting with Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of London Metropolitan University
- Two policy and performance review meetings

### **20 February**

- Meeting with Deputy Mayor of London Jules Pipe
- Political Cabinet
- Meeting with Madison Square Garden Company re MSG Sphere London
- Pre Council Labour Group Budget Meeting
- Budget Council Meeting

### **21 February**

- Greater London Employment Forum meeting
- Mayor and Cllr Candida Ronald
- Meeting with Limehouse Mosque Committee
- Mayor's Surgery

### **22 February**

- Ward visit with Cllr Tarik Ahmed Khan

### **24 February**

- International Mother Language Day 2019 Event
- Inauguration Ceremony of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Founding Udichi Event

### **25 February**

- Mayor and Head of Mayor's Office
- CLF Employment and Skills Board meeting

- Mayor and Chief Executive - Will Tuckley
- 52Bangla anniversary and awards

## **26 February**

- Meeting with Jim Fitzpatrick MP
- Meeting with Divisional Director of Human Resources Amanda Harcus
- Portfolio Meeting – Housing
- Strategic Forward Planning meeting
- Meeting with Cllr Asma Begum
- Meeting with Cllr Amina Ali
- Leisure Management Contract Workshop
- Meeting with Cllr Kahar Chowdhury

## **27 February**

- Meeting with Bishops Way Mosque
- Meeting with Chief Executive Will Tuckley and Borough Commander Sue Williams
- Portfolio Meeting – Adults, Health and Wellbeing
- Cabinet pre-meeting
- Independent Chair of Improvement Board- Sir Alan Wood
- Cabinet Meeting
- King George's Field Charity Board Meeting

## **28 February**

- Central London Forward Board meeting
- Filming with the graffiti team
- TFL property team meeting
- One Housing Group Board Meeting
- Portfolio meeting - Regeneration and Air Quality
- Mayor's Surgery

## **1 March**

- BBC London radio interview
- Exhibition visit – A Discourse on Contemporary Drawing
- Resident Visit

## **2 March**

- Pat Shaw House Visit with ward councillors

## **3 March**

- Visit my Mosque – East London Mosque event
- Memorial Service– 76<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Bethnal Green tube disaster

## **4 March**

- External investment meeting
- Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets Homes Susmita Sen

- Mayor and Head of Mayor's Office
- Transformation and Improvement Board work programme
- Meeting with Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Mayor's Property Meeting with Corporate Director Ann Sutcliffe
- Phone Interview – Research for London First
- Strategy and performance meeting
- Opening of Neuron Pod – Queen Mary University of London

## **5 March**

- Sports development meeting
- Meeting with Cllr Denise Jones
- Meeting with Weavers Community Action Group
- Meeting re. South Quay bombing memorial
- NHS briefing
- Communities Safety and Equalities Portfolio meeting

## **6 March**

- Portfolio Meeting Resources
- Regeneration Board Meeting
- Children, Schools and Young People portfolio meeting
- Political Cabinet
- Mayors Advisory Board
- Grants Determination Sub Committee
- Briefing meeting with TH unions

## **7 March**

- West Ham United Foundation
- Quad Meeting
- Meeting re. Corporate Director Place
- Mayor's Surgery

## **8 March**

- Women in Construction certificate day – International Women's day
- Bow Arts Visit

## **9 March**

- Home Visit with Cllr Zenith Rahman

## **10 March**

- International Women's day celebration

## **11 March**

- Republic East India Meeting
- EU settlement scheme service launch
- Mayor and Head of Mayor's Office meeting
- Meeting with Cllr Leema Qureshi

- Telephone call with Chief Executive Officer of Southern Housing Group
- Chisenhale Gallery meeting
- Mayor's portfolio meeting Property
- Mayor and Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Meeting with Corporate Director Asmat Hussain
- Mayor's Traffic meeting

## **12 March**

- Meeting with Cllr Sirajul Islam
- Meeting with Turks Head Charity
- Meeting with Poplar Harca Chief Executive Steve Stride
- All Points East briefing
- Meeting with Tower Hamlets CVS
- Meeting with Ballymore re: New Providence Wharf
- Meeting with IoD cllrs re. Greenwich Foot Tunnel

## **13 March**

- Portfolio meeting – Work and Economic Growth
- Planning meeting
- Public Realm Working Group
- LGC Awards event

## **14 March**

- Follow up meeting with Tower Hamlets CVS
- Mayor and Cllr Rachel Blake
- One Housing meeting
- Appointments Sub Committee Shortlisting Corporate Director Place
- Welfare Reform dashboard briefing
- Mayor and Cllr Ahbab Hossain
- Parkguard ASB patrol visit

## **15 March**

- Prevent champions meeting
- Mayor and Cllr Mufeedah Bustin

## **18 March**

- East End Trade Guild
- Chief Executive of Altair - Steve Douglas re. THH review
- Mayor and Head of Mayor's Office
- Strategic Forward Planning meeting
- Meeting with Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Tower Hamlets Partnership Executive Group
- Executive Committee meeting
- Labour Group meeting

## **19 March**

- London Councils Labour Group meeting
- London Councils Leaders Committee

- Portfolio meeting Culture, Arts and Brexit
- Crossrail scheme meeting
- CLT and TELCO celebration at St Clements
- Speakers Charity Curry night

## **20 March**

- Portfolio Meeting – Adults, Health and Wellbeing
- Portfolio Meeting – Regeneration and Air Quality
- Divisional Director for Communications Andreas Christophorou
- Portfolio Meeting – Environment
- Political Cabinet
- Ofsted feedback meeting
- Bow Arts exhibition closing event
- Pre-Council Labour Group
- Council Meeting