

Mayor's Report to Council

18th November 2020

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Key Events/Announcements

Although we cannot physically meet, or attend meetings with others, other than by internet, it has been an extremely busy time. While we all desperately need the Covid19 crisis to end, equally we are all now clear that it is a long haul, and not as we had hoped a brief pause to our lives. This means that while working safely is vital it is important that we continue with services and projects as close to normal as possible.

We are making good progress with a lot of our work and projects, and service delivery, while obviously reduced in some areas remains a priority, particularly for 'core services' and vulnerable people.

I am proud of the work council staff and our many partners are doing in the service of local residents.

Covid-19

We are approaching the midway point of the new national restrictions, although the date that restrictions are lifted could change depending on developments.

Whilst of course the recent news of a vaccine is very welcome, we must be very clear that there is still some way to go and we cannot allow our guard to be lowered. I urge everyone to follow the rules and do everything you can to protect yourself and others. Lives are at risk and we all must act now to control the spread of the virus. It's equally important for us all to look after our mental health and wellbeing, and stay in touch with friends, family and neighbours.

Lockdowns have a huge impact on individuals, families, businesses and our communities. It was the right decision that the furlough scheme was extended, but I continue to argue that more support is needed for families and businesses. As a council we will continue to do what we can to support residents, and push for the Government to do more. I welcomed the Prime Minister's U-turn on Free School Meals, meaning they will continue through the Christmas holidays, but like with so many other decisions it was made far too late (leaving local councils, individuals, charities and community groups to step in for the half-term holidays) and in such a chaotic fashion. They must do better.

As I mentioned in my update to residents just after the lockdown was announced, while these are tough times, the East End is even tougher. Our communities showed great resilience, courage and camaraderie during the first peak, and this new lockdown is no different.

As a council, we'll continue to work with our partners across the borough to make sure that our residents, particularly those most vulnerable, are supported. We will get through this together.

Budget consultation

Our budget consultation – which runs until early December – is now available online. Some key information:

- This year the council is spending £1.2 billion gross expenditure (£354.5 million net expenditure budget) on public services to support people and improve lives.
- Over half of our net budget is spent on supporting children and vulnerable adults.
- We've worked hard to make **£200m in savings since 2010**, as our budget has been cut by the Government and we've been squeezed by additional demand.
- The additional pressures that have now been experienced because of the pandemic means that we will now **have to save a further £30m by 2024**.
- Despite challenges from budget cuts, increases in demand from vulnerable residents and a rising population, we are proud to have continued to invest in frontline services and have **the seventh lowest council tax in London**.

Future of the Mayoralty

It's been over ten years since Tower Hamlets voted to adopt the mayoral system in a referendum. A lot has happened during this last decade, and a significant part of my time as Mayor has been spent undoing the damage done by my predecessor.

There's a report on the council agenda on this subject and while there are strong views on different sides of the debate, my view is that it's time for the people of Tower Hamlets to have their say about what they think works best for our borough.

We face huge challenges over the coming years as we continue to respond to the pandemic and as we recover from its impact. We need to be sure that residents are confident we have the best systems in place to respond to these challenges.

Above all else, the debate that follows must be focussed on securing good governance, accountability and ensuring that whatever system we use delivers for Tower Hamlets during these really difficult times.

Ask the Mayor

My next 'Ask the Mayor' event is being held online, on Tuesday 24 November from 7pm to 8pm. The event will focus on the tough financial challenges

ahead for the council and we want to find out what services matter the most to residents. More details on the council's website.

Chinese Embassy

A motion on this subject was on the agenda paper for our last meeting and it is listed again for this meeting. Since our last council meeting I have written to the Chinese Ambassador, and indeed met with a representative, to make sure our concerns have been heard.

A Season of Bangla Drama

I was really glad that we managed to adapt our offer this year so that we can continue A Season of Bangla Drama - now in its eighteenth year – which celebrates British-Bengali theatre.

Our programme of events ends soon, but there are still plenty of online events to come.

John Biggs

Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Individual Mayoral Decisions taken since last meeting

None.

Mayor's engagements and meetings

Below is a summary of the Mayor's main engagements and meetings from 1st October 2020 to 18th November 2020. Please note that most of these meetings were held digitally as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

1 October 2020

- Minister Stephen Greenhalgh
- Visit to Locksley A
- Visit to Baroness Road
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- City Hall Covid-19 Leaders call
- Update on BAME Inequalities Commission

1 October 2020

- Cllr Jack Hopkins, London Borough of Lambeth

6 October 2020

- Arbour Square visit
- Corporate Director Asmat Hussain
- Covid 19 Political Leadership Group
- Communication Portfolio meeting

7 October 2020

- Resources Portfolio meeting

- JCAG meeting
- City Fringe Area Board pre-meet
- Whitechapel Bell Foundry
- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- Mayor's Advisory Board

8 October 2020

- Liveable Street Programme
- Faith Conference
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Central London Forward meeting
- Mayor's casework surgery
- Tower Hamlets Hockey Club meeting

9 October 2020

- Cllr Rachel Blake
- Central London Forward

12 October 2020

- Tower Hamlets Partnership Executive Group Meeting
- Adults, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio meeting
- Columbia Road Visit
- Test and Trace business visit
- Weekly Briefing for Leaders and Chief Executives on Covid 19
- Covid 19 Local Engagement Board

13 October 2020

- Cllr John Pierce
- London Council's Labour Group
- London Council's Leaders Committee AGM
- Culture, Arts and Brexit Portfolio Meeting
- GLL meeting
- Maltings and Brewster

14 October 2020

- Work and Economic Development Portfolio Meeting
- Corporate Induction
- Planning Meeting
- Chanel S interview
- Speaker's signing in ceremony
- Liveable Streets Bow
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Environment and Public Realm Portfolio Meeting

15 October 2020

- Mount Avil Meeting
- London cladding summit
- Unison Meeting
- Cllr Khan and Cllr Francis
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley

- Planning meeting
- Covid 19 Political Leadership Meeting
- Care Full Pay Campaign: Cllrs Briefing

16 October 2020

- BBC interview
- Cllr Rachel Blake
- Developing the “Anchor” approach in North East London
- OSC Call – in of the Allocations Scheme

19 October 2020

- London Communications Agency
- Corporate Director for Place, Ann Sutcliffe
- THH Chief Executive Susmita Sen
- Aberfeldy Meeting
- Housing Allocation Policy meeting
- Labour Group

20 October 2020

- Growth borough partnership meeting
- East End Community Foundation
- Clarion Housing - Performance on Old Ford Estates
- Safety and Equalities Portfolio Meeting
- Sutton’s Wharf meeting
- Relationship education meeting
- HR meeting
- Mayor’s Advisory Board

21 October 2020

- Mayor’s Traffic Meeting
- Chinese Embassy meeting
- Growth Boroughs meeting
- Arts and culture provision
- Mayor’s Political Cabinet
- GDPR refresher training
- Mayor’s Advisory Board
- Cabinet Meeting

22 October 2020

- Liveable Streets briefing
- Greenwich & Docklands Chabad Jewish Community Center
- Housing Portfolio meeting
- Liveable Streets briefing – Barkentine estate
- Whitechapel High Street development
- Mayor’s casework surgery
- Strategic Forward Planning Meeting
- Covid 19 Political Leadership Meeting
- Liveable Streets - Old Ford West

23 October 2020

- Mayor's Traffic Meeting
- City of London Corporation
- Cllr Rachel Blake
- Rushanara Ali MP
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley

26 October 2020

- Thames Path briefing
- Central London Forward Employment and Skills Board
- Bishopsgate Goodsynd
- Divisional Director of HR Amanda Marcus
- TV One interview
- Liveable Streets briefing
- Weekly catch up for Leaders and Chief Executive on Covid 19

27 October 2020

- East India Dock Basin discussion with Lee Valley
- Poplar HARCA briefing
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Community Safety and Youth Portfolio Meeting
- All members seminar – Ethics and Probity Training

28 October 2020

- East End Trades Guild
- Cllr Eve McQuillan and Cllr Mufeedah Bustin
- City Fringe Area Board
- Len Duvall AM, Leader of the London Assembly Labour Group
- Covid- 19 Political Leadership meeting
- LGC Awards
- Cabinet

29 October 2020

- Greater London Provincial Council Employers meeting
- Greater London Provincial Council Joint Meeting
- Manorfield Primary School visit
- Voluntary Community Sector Portfolio Meeting
- Children and Schools Portfolio Meeting

3 November 2020

- Central London Forward Employment and Skills Board
- Poplar works café visit
- Liveable Streets – Bow
- Aberfeldy Islamic Cultural Association

4 November 2020

- Resources Portfolio Meeting
- Regeneration Portfolio Meeting
- Regeneration Board
- Political Cabinet
- Mayor's Advisory Board

- Online public meeting with Limehouse residents
- Q2 Performance and Budget monitoring meeting – Children’s and Culture

5 November 2020

- Q2 Performance and Budget monitoring meeting – Governance
- Chief Executive, Will Tuckley
- Mayor’s casework surgery
- Q2 Performance and Budget monitoring meeting – Resources
- Assets/Property Portfolio meeting
- Community Group meeting - Leaseholders and fire safety in Tower Hamlets

6 November 2020

- Cllr Rachel Blake
- London Council’s Labour Group
- Tower Hamlets Together briefing

9 November 2020

- Adults, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Meeting
- Ocean Regeneration Trust
- Integrated Care System Leaders meeting
- Corporate Director Asmat Hussain
- Weekly Briefing for Leaders and Chief Executives on Covid-19
- Labour Group meeting

10 November 2020

- Cllr John Pierce
- Cllr Sirajul Islam
- Health and Wellbeing Board Chair and partners meeting
- Cllr Asma Begum
- Petticoat Lane Market Traders
- Planning meeting
- Covid 19 Political Leadership Group
- Covid 19 Local Engagement Board

11 November 2020

- Work and Economic Growth Portfolio Meeting
- Armistice Day
- Environment/Public Realm Portfolio Meeting
- Mayor’s Advisory Board
- Channel S interview
- Youth Council and Young Mayor Black History Month

12 November 2020

- Grants Determination Pre-Meeting
- Q2 Performance and Budget monitoring meeting – Place
- Tower Hamlets Homes
- One Housing Group
- Q2 Performance and Budget monitoring meeting – Health, Adults and Communities
- Audit Committee

- People's Question Time

13 November 2020

- Cllr. Rachel Blake
- Community Food Pantry-Opening

16 November 2020

- Central London Forward: Health & Social Care Senior Sub-Group
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Digital Health
- Rushanara Ali MP
- Cllr. Rachel Blake
- Labour Group

17 November 2020

- Mayor's casework surgery
- Rich Mix
- The Royal Foundation of St Katharine
- Central London Forward Employment and Skills Board briefing
- Budget briefing
- Unmesh Desai AM
- Communications Portfolio Meeting
- Hope Not Hate event

18 November 2020

- Mayor's Traffic Meeting
- Capital Strategy Board
- Planning Meeting
- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- LTDA meeting
- Full Council