

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL**

**HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2020**

**ONLINE 'VIRTUAL' MEETING - [HTTPS://TOWERHAMLETS.PUBLIC-I.TV/CORE/PORTAL/HOME](https://towerhamlets.public-i.tv/core/portal/home)**

**Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Tarik Khan
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor James King
Councillor Sufia Alam	Councillor Eve McQuillan
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Shah Ameen	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Victoria Obaze
Councillor Kevin Brady	Councillor Mohammed Pappu
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	Councillor Leema Qureshi
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	Councillor Zenith Rahman
Councillor Dipa Das	Councillor Candida Ronald
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor Dan Tomlinson
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Danny Hassell	Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	Councillor Val Whitehead
Councillor Asma Islam	Councillor Bex White
Councillor Sirajul Islam	Councillor Andrew Wood

**The Speaker of the Council Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain,  
(Chair)**

During the meeting, the Council agreed to vary the order of business to consider the Reports (10.1 together with Petition 5.3 and Items 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3) before items 6, 7,8,11 and 12. To aid clarity, the Minutes are presented in the order that the items originally appeared on the agenda

The Speaker of the Council opened the meeting and provided an update on his activities since the previous Council meeting.

He was pleased to advise that he had taken part in virtual celebrations and discussions as well as attending a small number of socially distanced events including the recent Remembrance event in the Town hall. His focus had mainly been on the community.

Turning to the impact of the lockdown, he gave special thanks to the efforts of the kind and generous people who had helped residents. He expressed an intention to look into how these people should be recognised

He also advised that he had chosen to support the following charities during his civic term:

- The Patchwork Foundation
- Capital Kids Cricket
- Soyttan Sen School of Performing Arts

## 1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Puru Miah
- Councillor Kyrsten Perry

## 2. **DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS**

Regarding Motion 12.3 relating to Care Full Pay, the Speaker noted that a number of Members had recorded membership of the GMB Union in their register of interests. Whilst he noted this declaration, he had been advised that all Members may participate in the debate and vote on this item.

Councillor Kahar Chowdhury declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda item, 12.3 Motion regarding Care Full Pay. This was on the basis of his wife's employment in the care sector.

Councillor Rabina Khan declared a non Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda items, 5.1 (Petition regarding St George's Pools) and 5.4 (Petition regarding the Covid Test Centre in Watney Market). This was on the basis that the facilities were within her ward and, in respect of item 5.1, she has signed the Petition.

Councillor Bex White declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in agenda item, 8, Motion regarding Fire Safety and the security of the housing sector in Tower Hamlets. This was due to a leaseholder interest in a tall building that had undergone a Waking Watch.

Councillors with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest were advised to leave the meeting for the duration of the item.

### 3. MINUTES

#### RESOLVED:

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Bex White's personal explanation in relation to Member Question 17.12 relating to rough sleepers in the Borough.

### 4. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE SPEAKER OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Council's Chief Executive made a number of announcements as highlighted below:

- He stated that he was pleased to join the Mayor, the Speaker and Councillors in placing a wreath at the Tower Hall foyer on 11 November to mark remembrance day.
- At the Local Government Awards, the Council won a Public Health Award for its Born Well Growing Well, Asthma and Wheeze Project. He thanked everyone in the various Council teams that had contributed to this work and to the work of the other shortlisted teams.
- Regarding staffing matters, he advised of the departure from the Council of Michael Rourke. Vicky Clark was covering the role of Divisional Director, Property and Major Programmes on an interim basis.
- That a review of the Council's Senior Management Structure was currently underway. He was due to provide an update to a forthcoming General Purposes Committee.
- The Council had commenced plans for holding next year's Mayor of London and GLA Assembly elections, however it was noted that the Council's decision on its governance model at item 10.1 of the Council agenda, may affect this.
- He also expressed thanks to Council staff for their continuing work in dealing with Covid - 19.

### 5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

#### 5.1 Petition requesting all options to be investigated to fully refurbish and update St George's Pools

Amanda Day addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She advised that the spring lockdown and the Covid restrictions had changed the shape of the Council's Leisure services including those

provided by St George's Pool. The Council regularly carried out reviews of the leisure services including this pool and this wider review will inform the future of the services. She also stated that she was aware of the need for further investment and that additional funding might be made available from the government. She and the Mayor would be happy to meet with the Petitioners. Any changes would be made public.

### **RESOLVED**

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Children and Culture for a written response within 28 days.

### **5.2 Petition requesting an enquiry into the treatment of residents at Aspen Court Care Home**

Amanda Henry addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members.

Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She expressed condolences to the Petitioner. She noted that the Council must honour and reflect on the experiences at the care home. She also acknowledged that the Council must consider the outcome of the review of care homes and the enquiry.

### **RESOLVED**

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community, for a written response within 28 days.

### **5.3 Petition regarding Hold a referendum on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 to replace the 'Directly Elected Mayor and a cabinet' system by a 'Leader and cabinet' system**

Khwaja Qureshi addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. The Council's response to this issue is set out at Item 10.1

### **RESOLVED**

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer, for a written response within 28 days.

### **5.4 Petition for debate regarding Covid Test Centre in Watney Market**

Ruhul Amin addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners. The Council then debated the matters raised by the petition and Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing provided a response. She stated that she supported the retention of the test centre, as well as the wider measures to facilitate testing, given the importance of an effective test and trace system in reducing the rates of Covid-19.

She considered that there were inaccuracies in the motion

During the debate, Councillor Harun Miah **moved** and Councillor Rabina Khan **seconded** a motion (as set out below).

**This Council notes:**

1. Tower Hamlets has one of the highest levels of deprivation in the United Kingdom. With Shadwell being one of the most deprived areas in the Borough. With a large BAME community.
2. The Idea Store which was built to provide a place for people who suffer from data poverty to access the internet, provide a study area for individuals who live in overcrowded households has now been given over for SERCO Covid-19 test centre.
3. The test centre is adjacent to sheltered housing for the elderly, in a busy market, densely populated residential area, surrounded by bus stops, and half a dozen schools including the Bishop Challoner Secondary School and Mulberry Secondary Girls School and Sixth Form.
4. There was a visit to the area by Council Officers, Lead Member and Civil Servants from the Cabinet Office, before the announcement of the test centre. No local stakeholders, local councillors or members of the BAME community were invited to that meeting. Nor was there any local consultation.
5. According to the Covid-19 Dashboard incidences in Shadwell are on the rise.

**This Council Welcomes:**

1. The Mayor and his Lead Member embracing the Blacks Lives Matter movement, by wearing T-Shirts and posts on social media.

**The Council Encourages:**

1. The Mayor and his lead member to engage with the BAME community and deprived working-class communities in decisions that have an impact on their lives. As the BAME and working-class communities have their own voices and views and are not passive and silent actors.
2. Make the support for the Black Lives Matter movement deeds in actions and not just mere words and take account the views expressed in the petition to remove the Covid-19 test centre from Shadwell, engage positively with the petitioners.

**The Council Resolves**

To remove the Serco Covid-19 Test Centre from Watney market and remove it to a more suitable location.

This motion was put to a vote and was **defeated**.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community, for a written response within 28 days.

<b>Results of Vote on Councillor Harun Miah's Motion on the Petition 5.4</b>	
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	Against
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Against
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Against
Councillor Sufia Alam	Against
Councillor Amina Ali	Against
Councillor Shah Ameen	Against
Councillor Asma Begum	Against
Mayor John Biggs	Against
Councillor Rachel Blake	Against
Councillor Kevin Brady	Against
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	Against
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	Against
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	Against
Councillor Dipa Das	Against
Councillor David Edgar	Against
Councillor Marc Francis	Against
Councillor Peter Golds	Against
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	Against
Councillor Danny Hassell	Against
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	Against
Councillor Asma Islam	Against
Councillor Sirajul Islam	Against
Councillor Denise Jones	Against
Councillor Rabina Khan	For
Councillor Tarik Khan	Against
Councillor James King	Against
Councillor Eve McQuillan	Against
Councillor Ayas Miah	Against
Councillor Harun Miah	For
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE	Against
Councillor Victoria Obaze	Against
Councillor Mohammed Pappu	Against
Councillor John Pierce	Against
Councillor Leema Qureshi	Against
Councillor Zenith Rahman	Against
Councillor Candida Ronald	Against

Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	Against
Councillor Dan Tomlinson	Against
Councillor Helal Uddin	Against
Councillor Abdal Ullah	Against
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	Against
Councillor Val Whitehead	Against
Councillor Bex White	Against
Councillor Andrew Wood	Against
<b>Rejected</b>	

## 6. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor presented his report to the Council. Following which:

- Councillor Peter Golds, Leader of the Conservative Group, responded briefly to the Mayor's report.
- The Mayor responded briefly

## 7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE

### Administration Motion regarding The Government Have Failed our Children and Young People

Councillor Danny Hassell **moved** and Mayor John Biggs **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Peter Golds **moved** and Councillor Andrew Wood **seconded** the following amendment to the motion:

Insertions underlined, deletions struck through

This Council notes:

1. That the FOI response FOI: 22996542 Financial support to LBTH during Covid stated that Tower Hamlets Council had received "£62.6m in grants for Council expenditure and reduced income"
2. That the Health and Wellbeing Board was told on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020 that the Council had been informed on the 11<sup>th</sup> June about an additional £3.2 million grant of money for Local Authority Test and Trace Service Support Grant.
3. That there are reports of an additional £1.203 million in government grants to support children, families and our most vulnerable residents over the winter, as yet unconfirmed.
4. That in the Cabinet meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> October we were informed that in the P5 budget monitor that:
  - a. £30.6 million would be received from government in 2019/20 & 2020/21 for COVID relief, this was verbally amended to add an additional £14 millions of extra money recently received for a total of £44.6 million.

- b. That the total forecast impact of COVID on the Council finances were £35.9 million for 2020/21.
  5. That these numbers are very different to those detailed in the Councils 5th August press release titled "Council pleads with government to honour its Covid-19 funding promise" which said then that the total cost of COVID was £60 million and that only £30 million had been committed from government.
  6. The uncertainty and confusion that these different numbers have caused which make it impossible to understand the true impact of COVID on this year's budget.
1. The Government's exams fiasco which saw a large number of teacher predictions for A-levels and GCSE exam results – particularly in more deprived areas – downgraded by an algorithm until the Government performed a U-turn and permitted teacher assessed grades to be used;
  2. The exams fiasco caused a huge amount of unnecessary uncertainty and upset for many young people across the country, as well as jeopardising their futures;
  3. The Government's failure to continue its Free School Meals (FSM) programme throughout the October half-term holiday, despite the pandemic and the jobs crisis causing hardship for many families who were already struggling;
  4. That charities, individuals, community groups and local authorities – including Tower Hamlets – had to fill the gap left by the Government's failure to continue FSM over the holiday;
  5. ~~That children and young people have suffered more than most throughout the austerity programme introduced by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats in 2010, through the rise in child poverty, cuts to youth services, cuts to school funding, failure to properly fund special needs education, cuts to council budgets, welfare reforms, the coalition's decision to treble tuition fees despite the Lib Dem promise to abolish them, and more;~~
  6. ~~That welfare reforms, including the Universal Credit rollout, the 5-week wait, the benefit cap, the two-child limit and the Government's plans to scrap the Universal Credit uplift meaning families will lose over £1,000, have all had a significant impact on children and young people;~~
  7. ~~The Government's failures on Covid-19 testing have left pupils out of school when they do not have symptoms but cannot access a test, worsening the attainment gap;~~
  8. ~~That the Department for Education informed some schools last month that the number of laptops they were promised had been cut by 80% after changes to the allocation process;~~
  9. ~~That the Government has failed to prepare and respond to the challenge of the Covid-19 situation in universities;~~



- ~~10. The Government's threat to remove free travel for under 18s as part of a Tfl deal, which was rejected by the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan;~~
11. Tower Hamlets Council funds a wide range of tackling poverty measures, including providing a Council Tax Reduction Scheme with council tax reductions of up to and including 100% depending on circumstances (meaning the most disadvantaged don't have to pay a single penny of council tax), of which nearly 32,000 households in the borough receive some level of council tax discount. The council also funds holiday hunger programmes and provides universal FSM to all primary school pupils, going significantly beyond the Government-funded FSM programme which only funds FSM for some children;
12. That our Tackling Poverty work and other support schemes are under increasing threat unless the Government adequately funds the council.

**This Council believes:**

1. That until we fully understand what money has been received from government in COVID support and the forecast costs of COVID for 202/21we are not in a position to understand whether or not the government has met its commitments.
  2. That there may be excess COVID funds available this year to supplement government programmes for example by buying extra laptops.
- ~~1. That since 2010, austerity has significantly affected our children and young people, with child poverty on the increase;~~
- ~~2. That the Government's approach to supporting people during the pandemic—leaving families to sink or swim—is having a devastating impact;~~
- ~~3. The Government has failed our children and young people.~~

**This Council resolves:**

- ~~1. To condemn the Government for its failure to tackle child poverty;~~
2. To ask the Mayor and Cabinet Member to write to every member of the council, setting out how Tower Hamlets Council is tackling poverty in the borough, supporting families, and how the council is working to seize every chance for every child or young person to be healthy, safe and successful;
3. To demand that the Department for Education responds to the points raised in this motion, and to warn that Tower Hamlets Council's Tackling Poverty work and other support schemes are under increasing threat unless the Government adequately funds the council;
4. To continue to lobby the Government for proper funding for our schools, councils and youth services, and to continue to lobby against detrimental changes to the welfare safety net.

5. Not to lobby or to write to the department for extra money and support until it fully understands its own financial situation as regards the direct impact of COVID in 2020/21. That if there is then a gap in financial support to lobby the government to fill that gap.
6. To update its press releases with the latest financial news, updating the 5<sup>th</sup> August news release with the latest financial information on COVID.

**Time limit for the meeting reached.**

Due to lack of time, the Speaker at this point, drew the meeting to a close. The amendment and the substantive motion were therefore put to a vote without further discussion under Council Procedure Rule 9, relating to the guillotine

The amendment was put to a vote and was **defeated**.

The motion was put to a vote and was **agreed**.

**DECISION:**

**This Council notes:**

1. The Government's exams fiasco which saw a large number of teacher predictions for A-levels and GCSE exam results – particularly in more deprived areas – downgraded by an algorithm until the Government performed a U-turn and permitted teacher assessed grades to be used;
2. The exams fiasco caused a huge amount of unnecessary uncertainty and upset for many young people across the country, as well as jeopardising their futures;
3. The Government's failure to continue its Free School Meals (FSM) programme throughout the October half-term holiday, despite the pandemic and the jobs crisis causing hardship for many families who were already struggling;
4. That charities, individuals, community groups and local authorities – including Tower Hamlets – had to fill the gap left by the Government's failure to continue FSM over the holiday;
5. That children and young people have suffered more than most throughout the austerity programme introduced by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats in 2010, through the rise in child poverty, cuts to youth services, cuts to school funding, failure to properly fund special needs education, cuts to council budgets, welfare reforms, the coalition's decision to treble tuition fees despite the Lib Dem promise to abolish them, and more;
6. That welfare reforms, including the Universal Credit rollout, the 5-week-wait, the benefit cap, the two-child limit and the Government's plans to scrap the Universal Credit uplift meaning families will lose over £1,000, have all had a significant impact on children and young people;

7. The Government's failures on Covid-19 testing have left pupils out of school when they do not have symptoms but cannot access a test, worsening the attainment gap;
8. That the Department for Education informed some schools last month that the number of laptops they were promised had been cut by 80% after changes to the allocation process;
9. That the Government has failed to prepare and respond to the challenge of the Covid-19 situation in universities;
10. The Government's threat to remove free travel for under 18s as part of a TfL deal, which was rejected by the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan;
11. Tower Hamlets Council funds a wide range of tackling poverty measures, including providing a Council Tax Reduction Scheme with council tax reductions of up to and including 100% depending on circumstances (meaning the most disadvantaged don't have to pay a single penny of council tax), of which nearly 32,000 households in the borough receive some level of council tax discount. The council also funds holiday hunger programmes and provides universal FSM to all primary school pupils, going significantly beyond the Government-funded FSM programme which only funds FSM for some children;
12. That our Tackling Poverty work and other support schemes are under increasing threat unless the Government adequately funds the council.

**This Council believes:**

1. That since 2010, austerity has significantly affected our children and young people, with child poverty on the increase;
2. That the Government's approach to supporting people during the pandemic – leaving families to sink or swim – is having a devastating impact;
3. The Government has failed our children and young people.

**This Council resolves:**

1. To condemn the Government for its failure to tackle child poverty;
2. To ask the Mayor and Cabinet Member to write to every member of the council, setting out how Tower Hamlets Council is tackling poverty in the borough, supporting families, and how the council is working to seize every chance for every child or young person to be healthy, safe and successful;
3. To demand that the Department for Education responds to the points raised in this motion, and to warn that Tower Hamlets Council's Tackling Poverty work and other support schemes are under increasing threat unless the Government adequately funds the council;
4. To continue to lobby the Government for proper funding for our schools, councils and youth services, and to continue to lobby against detrimental changes to the welfare safety net.

**8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE****Opposition Motion for Debate from the Conservative Group - Regarding Fire Safety & The Security of The Housing Sector in Tower Hamlets**

Councillor Andrew Wood **moved** and Councillor Peter Golds **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Rabina Khan **moved** the following friendly amendment

**Council Resolves to:**

1. Support the End Our Cladding Scandal campaign.
2. Implement the ten steps set out in the End Our Cladding Scandal campaign.
3. Urgently carry out an audit and consultation with resident associations of all habitable buildings in Tower Hamlets (regardless of tenure) to establish the scale of the cladding, EWS1 and snagging issues. This audit should be completed by the end of 2020, and a report provided to Cabinet in January 2021.
4. Urge all Housing Associations and private building owners in Tower Hamlets to take urgent action to rectify outstanding issues and achieve EWS1 certification. In cases where the owners are not the original developer, they may require the Council's assistance to locate these developers or find alternative ways of tackling the problems to avoid passing any costs onto the leaseholders.
5. With regard to future planning applications, an EWS1 form should be provided prior to first occupation.
6. Work in collaboration with MPs, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, and the Mayor of London to devolve powers to Tower Hamlets Council to enable the council to enforce remediation of housing of all tenures, thus enabling the Council to support local affected residents. Implement the practical recommendations of the MHCLG Select Committee to reform the EWS1 in order to provide clarity to lenders and insurers, and instil confidence in homeowners and buyers who wish to re-mortgage, or buy and sell properties, assuming there is no immediate threat.

Councillor Wood indicated that he accepted the amendment and altered his motion accordingly.

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved** and Councillor Eve McQuillan **seconded** the following amendment to the motion.

*Inserted text underlined and deleted text scored out.*

**This Council notes:**

Shortly after the Grenfell fire, the council wrote to the owners and managing agents of over 700 private sector tall buildings.

Following responses from landlords and further investigations by officers the council identified 39 private sector residential buildings with ACM and a further 10 under investigation.

Council officers are in liaison with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, the Greater London Authority, and London Councils on this matter.

That 282 buildings in Tower Hamlets have registered for the government's £1bn building safety fund to fix cladding issues. That the local authorities with the next highest numbers of affected buildings were Manchester with 136 buildings, 130 in Newham, 127 in Westminster, 126 in Southwark, 102 in Greenwich.

That this list does not include most housing association properties which have a separate application process.

That this list also does not include other buildings with non-ACM cladding issues but where there are other fire safety issues. And it also does not include any building under 18 meters in height.

~~It is therefore probable that the total number of buildings affected by fire safety issues in Tower Hamlets may be between 300 and 400. Tens of thousands of residents must be affected by this.~~

~~That there is almost no information in the public domain about which buildings are affected except for some examples quoted in Council documents (Maltings and Brewster) or where residents have advertised their problems.~~

~~That some of these buildings were built by developers still active in the Borough although some buildings affected were built decades ago.~~

Tower Hamlets Council officers meet weekly to monitor progress with the remediation of blocks with ACM and the work of this group has widened to include collating the results of the External Wall Systems Survey (EWS).

In respect of EWS, the council has written to over 800 building owners and has received 673 replies to the online survey. All returns from building owners are being entered on to a Government database which is checked by government and the council, with council officers undertaking further checks where more investigation is needed.

The NLA Tall Building Survey 2020 shows 78 tall buildings in the planning pipeline in Tower Hamlets with 18 completed in 2019. Both numbers substantially in excess of any other Borough.

It is clear that Tower Hamlets is the home of both the most tall buildings (as well as tallest) and the greatest number of buildings with fire safety issues

We welcome the government's Hackett review and will lobby for changes to building regulations – which include fire safety regulations – to be robust. The GLA is also producing policy on Fire Safety in the London Plan. We will ensure plans in Tower Hamlets comply with this.

**This Council further notes:**

That residents face huge uncertainty in two areas;

1. Living in buildings whose fire safety is suspect or where regulations are now different, who may now have 247 fire wardens and emergency evacuation procedures;
2. Living with huge financial uncertainty that could result in bankruptcy, inability to sell their properties, increased service charges or financially crippling bills;

That housing associations may also face financial pressures for similar reasons.

The draft Building Safety Bill which puts the financial onus on homeowners rather than those who built, approved, signed off or regulated those buildings.

That some buildings were approved by Tower Hamlets Council own building control team, although we note that the team were assessing in accordance with the regulations at the time.

That as yet except for national charities like Leasehold Knowledge Partnership and neighbour assisting neighbour there is no local help nor advice available. Residents are having to become experts on these issues but with no support nor assistance.

The funding available from central government to remediate both ACM and EWS issues is inadequate and could leave leaseholders bearing the brunt of costly remediation work.

That on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019 an amended motion 11.1 Motion regarding Restoring Fairness to the Leasehold System was adopted by Tower Hamlets Council and that the CMA issued its investigation report in February 2020.

**This Council resolves:**

- That we ~~need to compile~~ urge the Government to publish a database of every affected building of all types, so that we capture in detail the kinds of problems, types of buildings, height etc;

- That list needs to be published in a summarised and anonymised way so that we understand the scale of the issue in Tower Hamlets and across the country, how many residents live in unsafe buildings?;
- That we call on the Government to make access to the building remediation fund less complicated and time consuming;
- That where developers are submitting new planning applications but have unresolved issues in their older buildings which they have chosen to not help resolve that they justify why they should be allowed to build again, although we note that the applicants themselves are not a material consideration and that applications are assessed on their merits in accordance with relevant development plan policies;
- That we ask the Lead Members and officers to explore and report back on:
  - What advice is already available, and whether it would be beneficial to add to the advice already available through ~~That we establish using s106 or New Homes Bonus LIF to funds a Help & Advice team for a time limited period (3 years tbc), whose role it is~~ could be to advise residents and to keep them informed as well as ensure developers and managing agents are aware of their responsibilities;
  - ~~That LBTH provide~~ providing assistance with access to planning permission/building regs if required for Fire Remediation and also access to technical drawings for older buildings which are not on the LBTH portal for free if the purpose is to deal with fire safety issues;
  - ~~That~~ A piece of work to sit alongside the High Density Living Supplementary Planning Document ~~be expanded to~~ with a focus on the management issues caused by tall buildings as well as fire issues even if it can only include recommendations;
- That we ask government to expand the funding available to deal with these issues as it cannot be right for home owners to foot the bill for failures in regulation and oversight by professionals and government;
- That S106 is paid to deliver on specific issues so cannot be used for remediation, but where a building has fire safety issues ~~and where the s106 remains unspent that it be spent on resolving these issues,~~ it would be unfair for residents to have to pay s106, which remains unspent and then again to fix their homes;
- ~~That the same is done for any buildings that gained New Homes Bonus for us.~~

Due to lack of time, the amendment and the substantive motion were put to a vote without discussion under Council Procedure Rule 9 relating to the guillotine

The amendment was put to a vote and was **agreed**

The motion as amended was put to a vote and was **agreed**.

**This Council notes:**

Shortly after the Grenfell fire, the council wrote to the owners and managing agents of over 700 private sector tall buildings.

Following responses from landlords and further investigations by officers the council identified 39 private sector residential buildings with ACM and a further 10 under investigation.

Council officers are in liaison with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, the Greater London Authority, and London Councils on this matter.

That 282 buildings in Tower Hamlets have registered for the government's £1bn building safety fund to fix cladding issues. That the local authorities with the next highest numbers of affected buildings were Manchester with 136 buildings, 130 in Newham, 127 in Westminster, 126 in Southwark, 102 in Greenwich.

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In respect of EWS, the council has written to over 800 building owners and has received 673 replies to the online survey. All returns from building owners are being entered on to a Government database which is checked by government and the council, with council officers undertaking further checks where more investigation is needed.

The NLA Tall Building Survey 2020 shows 78 tall buildings in the planning pipeline in Tower Hamlets with 18 completed in 2019. Both numbers substantially in excess of any other Borough.

It is clear that Tower Hamlets is the home of both the most tall buildings (as well as tallest) and the greatest number of buildings with fire safety issues

We welcome the government's Hackett review and will lobby for changes to building regulations – which include fire safety regulations – to be robust. The GLA is also producing policy on Fire Safety in the London Plan. We will ensure plans in Tower Hamlets comply with this.



**This Council further notes:**

That residents face huge uncertainty in two areas;

1. Living in buildings whose fire safety is suspect or where regulations are now different, who may now have 247 fire wardens and emergency evacuation procedures;
2. Living with huge financial uncertainty that could result in bankruptcy, inability to sell their properties, increased service charges or financially crippling bills;

That housing associations may also face financial pressures for similar reasons.

The draft Building Safety Bill which puts the financial onus on homeowners rather than those who built, approved, signed off or regulated those buildings.

That some buildings were approved by Tower Hamlets Council own building control team, although we note that the team were assessing in accordance with the regulations at the time.

That as yet except for national charities like Leasehold Knowledge Partnership and neighbour assisting neighbour there is no local help nor advice available. Residents are having to become experts on these issues but with no support nor assistance.

The funding available from central government to remediate both ACM and EWS issues is inadequate and could leave leaseholders bearing the brunt of costly remediation work.

That on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019 an amended motion 11.1 Motion regarding Restoring Fairness to the Leasehold System was adopted by Tower Hamlets Council and that the CMA issued its investigation report in February 2020.

**This Council resolves:**

- That we urge the Government to publish a database of every affected building of all types, so that we capture in detail the kinds of problems, types of buildings, height etc;
- That list needs to be published in a summarised and anonymised way so that we understand the scale of the issue in Tower Hamlets and across the country, how many residents live in unsafe buildings?;
- That we call on the Government to make access to the building remediation fund less complicated and time consuming;
- That where developers are submitting new planning applications but have unresolved issues in their older buildings which they have chosen to not help resolve that they justify why they should be allowed to build again, although we note that the applicants themselves are not a material consideration and that applications are assessed on their merits in accordance with relevant development plan policies;
- That we ask the Lead Members and officers to explore and report back on:

- What advice is already available, and whether it would be beneficial to add to the advice already available through using LIF to funds a Help & Advice team for a time limited period (3 years tbc), whose role it could be to advise residents and to keep them informed as well as ensure developers and managing agents are aware of their responsibilities;
- providing assistance with access to planning permission/building regs if required for Fire Remediation and also access to technical drawings for older buildings which are not on the LBTH portal for free if the purpose is to deal with fire safety issues;
- A piece of work to sit alongside the High Density Living Supplementary Planning Document with a focus on the management issues caused by tall buildings as well as fire issues even if it can only include recommendations;
- That we ask government to expand the funding available to deal with these issues as it cannot be right for home owners to foot the bill for failures in regulation and oversight by professionals and government;
- That S106 is paid to deliver on specific issues so cannot be used for remediation, but where a building has fire safety issues it would be unfair for residents to have to pay s106, which remains unspent and then again to fix their homes;

## **9. REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES**

### **9.1 Annual Report of the Standards Advisory Committee 2019-20**

The Council considered the Annual Report of the Standards Advisory Committee 2019-20

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Annual Report of the Standards Advisory Committee 2019-20 be noted

### **9.2 Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2019-20**

The Council considered the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2019-20, including an amendment to the report published in the supplementary agenda.

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2019-20, be noted

### 9.3 Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019-20

The Council considered the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019-20

#### RESOLVED:

1. That the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019-20 be noted

## 10. OTHER BUSINESS

### 10.1 Governance Model Referendum

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer on a number of options relating to the Council's Governance Arrangements. This includes options to hold a referendum on the Council's Governance Model.

During the debate, Councillor Andrew Wood **moved** and Councillor Peter Golds **seconded** the following alternative recommendations to the report:

#### This Council resolves:

- To agree to the principle of a referendum in 2021 or 2022 but not rush into a fixed choice today without due process, we can learn from what other Councils have done to guide us;
- That if there is not enough time for a full debate tonight that we hold a dedicated Council meeting on this subject only in the coming month;
- That we ask for a working group to form with the help of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny which will report back to the next Council meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> January with more detail on the choices available to us, timings and how we can make the decision;
- That no referendum be held until it is clear;
  - How each option will work in practise, who will hold responsibility & power?
  - What happens within 28 days of a vote for each option?
  - How and by whom the final two referendum choices are chosen and that this is done in public.
- That we ask the Head of Electoral Services what options exist to reduce the cost of a referendum later in 2021 by voting on a Saturday, using publicly owned facilities, counting delayed until a working day etc and to also report back to us on the 20<sup>th</sup> January;
- That we also consider a May 2022 referendum so that Mayoral candidates can make clear their views, and that voters can then decide whether to keep the Mayoral system or switch to an alternative model;
- That a referendum late in 2021 or 2022 would:
  - Allow time to formulate the referendum options in public;
  - Reduce the impact of COVID on polling stations;

- Allow the referendum to be conducted in a neutral manner as would then be clear that the current Mayor continues in post until the May 2022 elections.
- That we engage the wider public before making any decision and that decisions are made with a full set of publicly available information after a detailed debate.

During the debate, Mayor John Biggs **moved** and Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE **seconded** the following recommendations from the report.

That the Council agrees to:

- Recommendation 2 - To hold a referendum on the Council's governance arrangements.
- Recommendation 3 - That the Council selects as the alternative model, to the Mayor and Cabinet Model, the Leader and Cabinet Model of Executive.
- Recommendation 4 - To hold the referendum on Thursday 6 May 2021

Councillor Andrew Wood's amendment was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

The recommendations in the report, including those proposed by Mayor John Biggs were put to the vote and were **agreed**.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Council

1. Note the contents of the report and in particular the comments of the 'Counting Officer' in Paragraph 3.22
2. On the basis of the report and its appendices, to formally ask the Counting Officer to hold a referendum on the Council's governance arrangements.
3. Agree that the model of governance to be available to electors to choose at the referendum, as the alternative to the current Mayor and Cabinet Model shall be:
  - Leader and Cabinet Model of Executive.
4. To hold the referendum on Thursday 6 May 2021 at the same time as the elections for the London Mayor and Assembly and the Neighbourhood Planning Referendum to be held on the Isle of Dogs.
5. To agree:

- a) the referendum timetable at Appendix 2; and
  - b) to receive a report at its next meeting to agree the referendum proposals based on the council's decision and as required by the Local Government Act 2000 (LGA 2000) for publication.
6. To make the resolutions in 2 - 4 above available for inspection and to publish them as required by LGA 2000.
  7. To note the financial cost to the Council of holding a referendum either in conjunction with other polls and elections or separately as set out in the comments of the Chief Finance Officer.

<b>Results of Vote on Councillor Andrew Wood's alternative recommendations</b>	
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	Against
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Against
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Against
Councillor Sufia Alam	Against
Councillor Amina Ali	Against
Councillor Shah Ameen	Against
Councillor Asma Begum	Against
Mayor John Biggs	Against
Councillor Rachel Blake	Against
Councillor Kevin Brady	Against
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	Against
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	Against
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	Against
Councillor Dipa Das	Against
Councillor David Edgar	Against
Councillor Marc Francis	Against
Councillor Peter Golds	For
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	Against
Councillor Danny Hassell	Against
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	Against
Councillor Asma Islam	Against
Councillor Sirajul Islam	Against
Councillor Denise Jones	Against
Councillor Rabina Khan	For
Councillor Tarik Khan	Against
Councillor James King	Against
Councillor Eve McQuillan	Against
Councillor Ayas Miah	Against
Councillor Harun Miah	Abstain
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE	Against
Councillor Victoria Obaze	Against
Councillor Mohammed Pappu	Against
Councillor John Pierce	Against
Councillor Leema Qureshi	Against

Councillor Zenith Rahman	Against
Councillor Candida Ronald	Against
Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	Against
Councillor Dan Tomlinson	Against
Councillor Helal Uddin	Against
Councillor Abdal Ullah	Against
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	Against
Councillor Val Whitehead	Against
Councillor Bex White	Against
Councillor Andrew Wood	For
<b>Rejected</b>	
<b>Results of Vote on Recommendations in the report 2,3 and 4 as moved by Mayor John Biggs</b>	
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	For
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	For
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	For
Councillor Sufia Alam	For
Councillor Amina Ali	For
Councillor Shah Ameen	For
Councillor Asma Begum	For
Mayor John Biggs	For
Councillor Rachel Blake	For
Councillor Kevin Brady	For
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	For
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	For
Councillor Shad Chowdhury	For
Councillor Dipa Das	For
Councillor David Edgar	For
Councillor Marc Francis	For
Councillor Peter Golds	For
Councillor Ehtasham Haque	For
Councillor Danny Hassell	For
Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain	For
Councillor Asma Islam	For
Councillor Sirajul Islam	For
Councillor Denise Jones	For
Councillor Rabina Khan	Abstain
Councillor Tarik Khan	For
Councillor James King	For
Councillor Eve McQuillan	For
Councillor Ayas Miah	For
Councillor Harun Miah	Abstain
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE	For
Councillor Victoria Obaze	For
Councillor Mohammed Pappu	For
Councillor John Pierce	For
Councillor Leema Qureshi	For
Councillor Zenith Rahman	For

Councillor Candida Ronald	For
Councillor Gabriela Salva Macallan	For
Councillor Dan Tomlinson	For
Councillor Helal Uddin	For
Councillor Abdal Ullah	For
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	For
Councillor Val Whitehead	For
Councillor Bex White	For
Councillor Andrew Wood	Against
<b>Carried</b>	

**11. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

Due to lack of time the Questions were not put. Written provided to these questions are attached at Appendix A.

**12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

Due to lack of time, no motions were considered.

The meeting ended at 10.30 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

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## **11.1 Question from Councillor Rajib Ahmed**

With the disproportionate impact of Covid on Black and Asian communities how is the Council supporting these communities to stay safe?

### **Response from Deputy Mayor for Community Safety, Youth and Equalities, Cllr Asma Begum:**

Studies and statistics have shown the impact of covid-19 to disproportionately affect the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

While the LBTH Outbreak Control plan set out our response to the coronavirus pandemic, including a community engagement strategy (which is also available on the council website), we have gone further by engaging directly with community groups, as well as commissioning grassroots community groups to work with our Black and Asian residents, namely our Somali and Bangladeshi communities.

We are also working with these community groups in faith settings to promote covid-19 guidance and on the test and trace programme.

We are also working with THCVS to establish a supporting programme of work on the structural inequality factors as part of the Covid recovery. And finally, we have been using our Covid-19 community champions platform to hear from the community on this issue and amplify those voices locally.

Tower Hamlets is one of the most diverse boroughs in London and we are committed to reducing the spread of the virus to our residents, including our most vulnerable.

## **11.2 Question from Councillor Peter Golds**

In light of the proposed closure of Cubitt Town library, a number of residents are proposing a joint venture with the council for the premises to be used for library, communal and educational purposes to be organised by volunteers with assistance from the council. Will the Mayor meet with residents to discuss this proposal?

### **Response from Mayor John Biggs:**

There will be a public consultation about the future of Cubitt Town library running from 23 November to 29 January.

As part of this, local residents, organisations, businesses and stakeholders will be able to express their views and we will encourage suggestions for alternative ways of providing library services on the Isle of Dogs, in addition to the Canary Wharf Idea Store.

It's possible that one of the suggestions coming out of the consultation will be along the lines you describe and it's something we could consider if this was the case.

Similar community-based models exist in other local authorities, but it and it does not always bring the expected outcomes. One risk is that is that after some initial enthusiasm volunteers fade away and the quality of the service can suffer.

In principle, we are open to the idea if there is an appetite for in the community but at this point it's best to wait until the end of the consultation.

### **11.3 Question from Councillor Kyrsten Perry**

Can the cabinet member provide an update on the Barkantine Liveable Streets scheme?

#### **Response from Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (job share), Cllr Dan Tomlinson:**

I'm pleased to say that that the works at Malabar Street are now complete.

The next phase of works, starting on the 23rd November are the street lighting, raised tables and new crossing points on the Quarterdeck. Residents should receive notification letters this week.

In early December works will start on Tiller Road and Mellish Street, including footway widening, traffic calming and the changes to the one-way system.

One-way changes will then follow in Strafford Street and Alpha Grove in early 2021.

Proposals around Cuba Street and Byng Street have been delayed and have not been programmed due to the impact of the large housing developments that are currently being built on these streets. We will continue to liaise with developers to align future works.

### **11.4 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood**

How can the Council help to ensure that Working from Home does not become a direct threat to the economy of Tower Hamlets, what can we do to encourage workers to return to their offices in 2021?

#### **Response from Mayor John Biggs:**

As the Government guidance makes very clear, everyone who can work effectively from home should do so.

Where people cannot do so – including for example people who work in construction, or manufacturing, or indeed providing essential services to others that require physical presence – they should continue to travel to their workplace in a safe manner.

Clearly this advice will be revisited as the situation develops.

The impact of Covid-19 on our national and local economy has been enormous, as the recent employment statistics show. And it has been particularly devastating on areas such as ours which depend on public transport, where much normal life involves large numbers of people in close proximity, and large numbers also work in service industries.

As a council we have an important role to play in working with business-owners, landlords and transport operators to ensure that workers are safe.

Through our work with others, in particular at Central London Forward, our sub-regional partnership with 11 other Central London Councils, we have highlighted and lobbied on the pressures this has caused our area.

As well as supporting the development of spaces and encouraging affordable workspace provision to maximise the number of jobs in the borough, we are encouraging new business investment and new business growth.

Given the impact of the anticipated business rate rebase will be huge to our budget, perhaps the Tory Group could raise this as an urgent concern with their colleagues in Government.

We do an enormous amount of work with employers in our borough, and with residents through WorkPath, and I'm very proud of the work we do locally. We also know that this is an extremely difficult time for everyone and so I want to assure Cllr Wood that this is something we are taking very seriously.

### **11.5 Question from Councillor Amina Ali**

How is the Council tackling loneliness?

#### **Response from Deputy Mayor for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, Cllr Rachel Blake:**

Thank you for your question and for the work you're doing in your role as Mayoral Adviser for Mental Health, and to Cllr Denise Jones for all her work as Older People's Champion.

The Loneliness task force is working to several key themes to address the loneliness and social isolation which has been such a focus during the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Raising awareness of loneliness and its causes
- Building on and fully utilising the community assets that we already have
- Supporting and enabling people to be actively involved in shaping and delivering local action on loneliness
- Taking a strategic approach on loneliness

The task force is developing a Wellbeing Toolkit to help staff of the Council and partners to support people that are feeling isolated and disengaged with practical help.

This is such an important area, particularly during the lockdown, and it's something we're taking very seriously.

### **11.6 Question from Councillor Bex White**

Can the Lead Member please provide an update on the work of the Social Work Academy and progress in ensuring a stable workforce in Children's Social Care?

#### **Response from Cabinet Member for Children and schools, Cllr Danny Hassell:**

Our Social Work Academy is a way of ensuring that we are recruiting, retaining and developing outstanding social workers.

This is so important as it means we can bring the best talent to help us achieve excellent outcomes for our children and young people.

The Social Work Academy continues to deliver increasingly stable Social Work staffing in Children's Social Care through:

- Leading work on both recruitment and retention, with our retention rates much better than the London benchmark;
- additional support structures for those in their first, second and third years of practice;
- developing the practice model for the borough;
- leading innovation projects;
- and deepening a model of collaborative quality assurance.

The data shows a real success story through 2020 on both recruitment and retention.

This is supporting the continued improvement of our service, which really benefits our children and young people, whilst also delivering financial savings.

### **11.7 Question from Councillor Dipa Das**

Will the Cabinet Member set out how the Tower Hamlets Free School Meal scheme is different to the national scheme and what we do to tackle holiday hunger?

#### **Response from Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (job share), Cllr Mufeedah Bustin:**

Tower Hamlets Free School meal scheme in Primary Schools differs from the National Scheme in that in addition to Universal Infant Free School Meals, the Mayor funds Free School Meals for all pupils in KS2/Junior School that are not eligible for Free School Meals.

This means 100% of pupils in Tower Hamlets Primary Schools receive a Free School Meal. Tower Hamlets is one of the very few Councils to deliver this benefit to all children in primary school.

Across each holiday since Easter the Council has arranged midday meal collection sites at a range of locations across the borough. This scheme has not been limited to children in receipt of free school meals, but open to those who need it, as we know that a number of households who are not currently eligible have been suffering as a result of the pandemic. This has been funded from the Tackling Poverty budget and from the donation of meals.

We distributed approximately 11,000 meals at Easter, over 2600 in May half term, over 32,000 in Summer and approximately 2,000 in October half term.

With the announcement of government funding for the Christmas holidays we are currently planning how we will deliver a service at that time.

### **11.8 Question from Councillor Marc Francis**

Will the Lead Member for Public Realm Services update me on when he expects the barriers in Roman Road market erected to facilitate social distancing at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic to be removed so that market traders can return to their traditional pitches?

#### **Response from Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (job share), Cllr Dan Tomlinson:**

There is currently no date set to remove the barriers that facilitate wider footways on Roman Road, but this is something that is being kept under review.

Social distancing guidelines are that people from different households should be 2 metres apart from people you do not live with where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions in place (such as wearing face coverings or increasing ventilation indoors) and this means that additional pedestrian space is required on Roman Road to facilitate this.

Our officers from Highways & Transport and the Street Markets section regularly review the situation with respect to the market and are satisfied that the current arrangement should be retained.

I'd be very happy to discuss this with you in more detail if it would be helpful.

### **11.9 Question from Councillor Victoria Obaze**

What has the Council done to prepare for health and wellbeing this winter?

#### **Response from Deputy Mayor for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, Cllr Rachel Blake:**

It's so important that we, as a council and working together with health partners across different agencies, do everything we can to tackle Covid-19, particularly as this phase comes during winter where there is even more pressure on services.

The Council has developed its adult social care winter plan, in collaboration with partners including the CCG. This sets out what steps the Council is taking over winter and was signed off by Cabinet last month. The plan is available on the council's website.

Our plan is comprehensive, including setting out how we continue to provide support to care homes, supporting providers and council staff to access and use PPE, monitor national testing arrangements for care homes, and looking at how we can work with voluntary and community sector partners.

I'd also like to take this moment to thank everyone who is involved in this huge effort, from care workers and other healthcare staff through to our own council staff, and individuals and families following the rules to keep each other safe.

#### **11.10 Question from Councillor Shad Chowdhury**

How has the council supported small businesses during the pandemic?

#### **Response from Cabinet Member for Work and Economic Growth, Cllr Motin Uz-Zaman:**

It's been a really difficult year for businesses but I'm proud of the work that council's done to support the borough's vibrant small business sector.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the council has distributed over £182million in grants to small businesses.

Our officers have handled enquiries and supported small businesses to access the range of government financial support available, including:

- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
- Business Rate Relief
- Self-employment Income Support Scheme
- Business Support Grants
- Bounce-back & Business Interruption Loans

Our recently launched 'Pivot Project' pilot is providing expert advice and grant funding to 50 Tower Hamlets small businesses to help them adapt their businesses to the current climate.

On Hackney Wick & Fish Island, the Council has delivered the 'Wick Together' project which has directly supported creative freelance businesses.

We have set up a project enabling small retailers to establish delivery services during and beyond lockdown periods.

Finally, beyond council projects, officers are working with a range of stakeholders via the 'Silver Business Support Group' to develop further initiatives to support local businesses.

#### **11.11 Question from Councillor Kahar Chowdhury**

Can the lead member provide an update on the future of Hackney Road Hostel and the support plans in place for current and future residents?

#### **Response from Deputy Mayor for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, Cllr Rachel Blake:**

From April, Hackney Road Hostel is proposed to be a part of the Council's broader support to rough sleepers and the homeless who have been accommodated through

the first wave of Covid19. This will be funded by MHCLG. Existing residents of Hackney Road have individual support plans to identify their needs and appropriate accommodation to move on before this date, and they are being supported by Hackney Road and the Housing Options team.

#### **11.12 Question from Councillor Val Whitehead**

Can the Lead Member please update on the work of the council in supporting children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and ensuring services meet their needs?

#### **Response from Cabinet Member for Children and schools, Cllr Danny Hassell:**

The Integrated Early Years service supports children with ASD, and their families to access services including speech and language, social and emotional needs and to support development of self-care.

Phoenix Special School plays a key role in autism support and is commissioned by the council to provide specialist ASD guidance and training to schools and families. It is judged Outstanding by Ofsted and identified as a “Centre of Excellence” by the National Autistic Society.

The council is opening a new mainstream primary school resource base for ASD in September 2021. This will complement the two ASD Phoenix School satellites – Marnar Primary and Bow Secondary.

For children requiring more specialist provision, the number of places at Phoenix has increased over the past three years, reaching 450 places in September 2021. This has been supported by £18m investment of capital and an additional £2m in top-up funding.

We have supported the Phoenix Autism Trust to open post-19 educational provision for 50 young people so students with ASD can attend specialist provision until age 25. And the council has worked with Phoenix to develop strong partnerships with local employers.

Families can also access short breaks and respite through the Children with Disabilities service.

#### **11.13 Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah**

Can the Mayor confirm that Wapping residents with blue badge will have exception from Busgate & clarify when this will start.

#### **Response from Mayor John Biggs:**

As a council we have to balance a growing population and the need for people to use vehicles with preventing congestion and tackling our poor air quality.

We have looked carefully at the impact of the bus gate.

I have agreed that all Blue Badge holders living in Wapping (south of The Highway) will be allowed to register one vehicle for a permit to use the bus gate during operational hours.

All those residents concerned will shortly be receiving a letter advising of how they can apply for this permit as well as it being advertised on the Parking website.

As soon as a resident receives confirmation of the permit, they will be able to use the gate.

#### **11.14 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan**

Could the Mayor confirm whether he is planning to close the well-used local swimming facility St George's Pools?

#### **Response from Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit, Cllr Sabina Akhtar:**

We have no plans to close St George's Pool at this time.

But it is important to note, that the changes in the leisure market exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic means that the borough's leisure centres are reviewed on a monthly basis.

This review includes an analysis of financial viability, health & safety risk assessments, provision of community activities and activating additional areas within each centre, which may currently be closed.

The current national lockdown from 5th November to 2nd December will have a further adverse financial impact on the borough's leisure centres and this impact on each of our centres will need to be assessed.

Sports and leisure centres form a key part of Tower Hamlets' commitment to providing a healthy borough. Therefore, any major changes to our leisure centres will be made public.