

## Mayor's Report to Council

17<sup>th</sup> March 2021

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

### Key Events/Announcements

**Sarah Everard:** We have all been moved and saddened by the brutal killing of Sarah Everard.

She was a daughter, a friend, a colleague and she had her life ahead of her. It feels so unfair that she should choose to walk and never return home. The apparent randomness is painful and worrying – she could have been our daughter, our friend, our colleague.

Since this tragedy many other women have spoken up as they have also been subject to abuse or harassment. It was a stark reminder that 118 women and girls have been killed by men in the UK this year and their names were read out in Parliament to remind us of this. This should not be what is considered normal in 2021.

Women should not feel unsafe going about their daily business – or bear the responsibility for attacks based on their gender. This is unacceptable and we want you to know we stand in solidarity with you.

I was very concerned by the police response to the vigil in Clapham earlier this week and, alongside others including the Mayor of London and the Home Secretary, believe it is right that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary conducts a review into what happened.

I joined many others in lighting a candle on their doorstep to remember Sarah Everard and all women affected by and lost to violence.

As a council we offer a range of services and support to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls, with details on the council's website, and we encourage our residents to report any incidents of harassment or violence to the police.

**Covid-19:** The council's response to the pandemic continues and we are working hard to drive up vaccination rates, including by addressing 'vaccine hesitancy', with vigorous targeted outreach and promotion.

We have just submitted a revised 'Local Outbreak Management Plan' and continuing to promote and encourage both testing and vaccination are crucial aspects of our response. Although many indicators show we are moving in the right direction, with children back in school we could experience an increased infection rate and we must remain vigilant.

The pandemic threw multiple inequalities under the spotlight, especially those impacting our nation's school children, like free school meals and access to online learning. Even with children back in school, the digital disadvantage that many face will continue to impact children's ability to catch up, and to access other online opportunities that would benefit their education.

One-in-four school children in Tower Hamlets, approximately 10,000 students, are digitally disadvantaged and so we've launched our Every Child Online campaign, including a pledge of £50,000 from the council. As well as lobbying the Government to do more, we're working with the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership to raise £1 million to buy devices, which can be distributed through local schools to children in need. With support from Community Fibre,

its hoped every school child in the borough can get both the kit and the connectivity they need to access online learning.

**Council budget:** We agreed our council budget at our last meeting. A budget which, despite the huge pressures we face, protects spending on our residents' priorities:

We will:

- Continue to fund free school meals for all primary school children, one of only a small number of councils in the country to do this.
- Continue to invest to tackle crime and ASB by funding additional police officers to keep our streets safe, and a council operated ASB service.
- Protect our Children's Centres to give future generations the best start in life.
- Continue our Tackling Poverty Fund providing financial support and advice for our most vulnerable residents.
- Build hundreds of new council homes, three new secondary schools and invest to create Liveable Streets and improve air quality across our borough.
- Continue to fund our 100% council tax discount for the poorest in our community, one of the few places in the UK to offer this.

As I announced at our last meeting, we are also developing options for our £3m Covid-19 Recovery Fund, which will help kickstart our community's recovery from the pandemic.

We are also retaining five days opening at Cubitt Town & Bethnal Green Library and Watney Market Idea Store including Saturdays and a late night at the two libraries.

**50th anniversary of Bangladesh:** At our last meeting I updated members about an allocation of £50k of funding to mark the anniversary of the founding of Bangladesh, and that we are looking at ways that we can celebrate the occasion during 2021, dependent on Covid-19 regulations.

I'm delighted to say that celebrations from March to December 2021 are being coordinated by Tower Hamlets Council, working with Bangladeshi artists, community organisations, businesses, the National Portrait Gallery, the Local History Library & Archives, residents, and the Bangladeshi High Commission in the UK. Thank you to everyone involved in marking this important anniversary.

**Tower Hamlets Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission:** We launched this Commission following the killing of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests, including in Tower Hamlets, where we removed the statue of a slave trader.

The Commission, led by Cllr Asma Begum, was officially launched last September with a special focus on education, employment, health inequalities and community leadership, and their report will be launched tomorrow (18<sup>th</sup> March). The publication of this report is an important milestone for our borough.

I'm grateful for the work of the Commission and everyone who has supported its work and been involved, and we now need to get on and put in place the right steps to create tangible and positive change.

**NHS privatisation:** I have written to the Health Secretary, alongside Cllr Rachel Blake and Cllr Gabriela Salva Macallan, calling for an urgent review of the decision to approve the takeover of AT Medics, which operates GP surgeries within the North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) including two GP practices here (Whitechapel Health Centre and E1 Health), by a UK subsidiary of an American company.

We have deep concerns that there was a lack of scrutiny around this decision but also that this is an example of further privatisation of a vital health service. We believe that the Care Quality Commission should investigate as a matter of urgency.

**Climate Emergency:** It has been two years since we declared a climate emergency in Tower Hamlets, and our administration motion highlights some of the progress we've made since then:

[https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/environment\\_and\\_waste/Sustainability/Climate\\_emergency.aspx](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/environment_and_waste/Sustainability/Climate_emergency.aspx)

I'm proud of the positive action we're taking as a council, but there is a great deal more to do and there is no room for complacency.

**Levelling Up Fund:** Details of the Chancellor's 'Levelling Up Fund' have been announced which, astonishingly, places Tower Hamlets in the lowest category of need whilst the Chancellor's own constituency, rural and mainly wealthy, is placed in a higher category.

This is further evidence that the Government intends to move more funding from London to other parts of the country and we should expect this agenda to make our finances even tougher over the coming years.

**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 21<sup>st</sup> January to 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

#### **Engagements and Meetings 21 January 2021**

##### **21 January 2021**

- Covid 19 - NE London Leaders and Mayors meeting
- Central London Forward meeting
- Adults, Health & Wellbeing portfolio meeting
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Isle of Dogs & South Poplar Area Board meeting
- Pre-Meet Explorers Court Cladding
- Explorers Court Cladding Resident meeting
- Community Safety & Youth portfolio meeting

##### **22 January 2021**

- LGA commercial leadership and decision making
- Westferry Printworks meeting

- Annual Governance Report

### **25 January 2021**

- Liveable Streets meeting
- Central London Forward Employment and Skills Board pre-meet
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### **26 January 2021**

- Mayor's casework surgery
- Meeting with Councillor Sirajul Islam
- Strategy & Equalities portfolio meeting
- Brick Lane meeting
- RSE meeting

### **27 January 2021**

- Central London Forward Partnership Board
- Children & Schools portfolio meeting
- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Cabinet Meeting

### **28 January 2021**

- Covid 19 - NE London Leaders and Mayors briefing
- South Poplar Masterplan meeting
- Strategic forward planning meeting
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Communications portfolio meeting
- Audit Committee meeting

### **29 January 2021**

- Councillor Rachel Blake

### **2 February 2021**

- Corporate Leadership meeting
- Central London Forward meeting
- Regeneration Board pre-meet
- Town Hall Project Board
- Traffic meeting
- London Bangladeshi Community Covid-19 Webinar

### **3 February 2021**

- Resources - Mayor's Portfolio meeting
- Environment & Public Realm Portfolio meeting
- Mount Anvil follow up meeting

- RSE meeting
- Mayor's Advisory Board Meeting
- Grants Determination sub-committee

#### **4 February 2021**

- Covid 19 - NE London Leaders and Mayors Meeting
- Mayor's casework surgery
- Evening Standard interview
- Idea Store Public consultation meeting
- Rushanara Ali MP
- Meeting with resident
- Liveable Streets briefing with Rushanara Ali MP

#### **5 February 2021**

- Meeting with Councillor Rachel Blake
- ITV London - work of Tower Hamlets Stay Safe Ambassadors and role of council
- LGA Labour - Leaders Summit
- Meeting with Divisional Director Kevin Bartle regarding Oxford House
- Meeting with Councillor Rachel Blake

#### **6 February 2021**

- East London Mosque- BBC London re: Vaccinations
- Meeting with Councillor Asma Islam

#### **8 February 2021**

- Corporate Induction
- Mayor's casework surgery
- Meeting with Apsana Begum MP
- Wapping Station meeting with Transport for London

#### **9 February 2021**

- Channel S Interview
- Culture, Arts & Brexit Portfolio meeting
- 25th Anniversary of the Docklands Bombing

#### **10 February 2021**

- City Fringe Area Board pre-meet
- Central London Forward Leaders CAZ research meeting
- Housing portfolio meeting
- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny sub committee

### **11 February 2021**

- Liveable Streets meeting
- Greater London Employment Forum
- Councillor Rachel Blake
- Homelessness and housing policy meeting
- Meeting with Mayor Glanville
- Assets/Property Portfolio meeting
- London Housing Group - Homelessness Q&A

### **12 February 2021**

- Councillor Rachel Blake
- Councillor John Pierce

### **15 February 2021**

- Susmita Sen
- Councillor Asma Begum
- Voluntary and Community Sector conference call
- HR policy meeting
- Berkeley Group meeting

### **16 February 2021**

- Liveable Streets Brick Lane
- Mayor's casework surgery
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- COVID 19 Local Engagement Board

### **17 February 2021**

- City Fringe Area Board
- Mayor and Speaker Martyr's Day memorial
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- National Education Union public meeting
- Covid-19 Q&A and panel discussion

### **18 February 2021**

- Covid 19 - NE London Leaders and Mayors meeting
- GLA & LB Tower Hamlets meeting
- Housing meeting with THH
- Partnership briefing
- Meeting with Poplar Harca
- ITV London interview on vaccine hesitancy

### **19 February 2021**

- Cllr Rachel Blake

### **22 February 2021**

- Appointments Sub-Committee - Shortlisting for DD, Education and Partnerships
- Pauline Maddison, Interim Divisional Director, Education and Partnerships
- NEL ICS leaders' meeting
- High Commissioner of Bangladesh
- Community Safety & Equalities Portfolio meeting

### **23 February 2021**

- Rapid testing site - Canary Wharf Photo/Video
- MHCLG Ministerial Webinar
- Christ Church Garden Meeting
- 999 Cenotaph Briefing
- Civil Contingencies & Emergency Planning
- Communications Portfolio meeting
- RLH Patient and Families Group Meeting with Mayor

### **24 February 2021**

- Children Education & Youth Services Portfolio meeting
- Mayor's Planning & Social Inclusion Portfolio meeting
- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- Community Buildings briefing

### **25 February 2021**

- Mayor's casework surgery
- Housing association meeting
- Housing Portfolio meeting
- Cllr Sirajul Islam
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Planning meeting
- Adults, Health & Wellbeing Portfolio meeting
- Virtual interfaith gathering

### **26 February 2021**

- Cllr Rachel Blake

### **01 March 2021**

- Covid 19 Leaders and Chief Executives weekly briefing
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### **02 March 2021**

- Registrars team meeting
- Mayor's faith leaders teleconference

- Channel S and ATN interview

### **03 March 2021**

- Resources Portfolio meeting
- Regeneration Board
- Clarion housing association re. improvement plan
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Cabinet

### **04 March 2021**

- Director of Education and Partnership interviews
- Budget Council

### **05 March 2021**

- Councillor Rachel Blake
- Councillor Sufia Alam
- Sutton Wharf meeting with residents
- Rushanara Ali MP

### **08 March 2021**

- TH Partnership Executive Group
- London TULO
- NJC Pay Regional Consultation Briefing
- Growth Borough Partnership meeting
- Digital inclusion briefing
- Brick Lane meeting
- Covid 19 Leaders and Chief Executive weekly meeting

### **09 March 2021**

- Mayor's casework surgery
- Councillor Amina Ali
- Swan housing association
- Councillor Sirajul Islam
- Access to Remote Learning in Tower Hamlets briefing
- Will Tuckley, Chief Executive
- Culture, Arts & Brexit Mayor's Portfolio meeting
- International Women's Day Event
- Sharon Godman, Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance

### **10 March 2021**

- Work & Economic Growth Portfolio meeting
- Environment and Public Realm Portfolio meeting
- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- Mayor's Advisory Board
- Vaccination rates briefing

**11 March 2021**

- Meeting with TfL re. Arnold Circus bus routes
- Covid 19 - NE London Leaders and Mayors briefing
- Paul Rock, Head of Audit
- Capital Strategy Board
- Unmesh Desai AM
- Berner estate meeting
- Shortlisting for Divisional Director, Customer Services
- Explorers Court residents meeting

**15 March 2021**

- JBP Round Table
- Councillor Rachel Blake
- Liveable Streets and TFL
- Executive Committee
- Labour Group

**16 March 2021**

- Head of Mayor's Office
- Mayor's casework surgery
- Councillor Asma Begum
- One Housing Group
- Will Tuckley, Chief Executive
- Press Conference on 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Bangladesh celebrations
- Janet Fasan, Divisional Director, Legal
- Covid 19 Local Engagement Board

**17 March 2021**

- Poplar Harca quarterly meeting
- Climate engagement summit
- Assets Property Portfolio meeting
- Council Meeting