

Item 12.2 - Martyn's Law and the Protection of our residents and visitors' Labour Group amendment to the motion

Proposer: Cllr Sirajul Islam

Seconder: Mayor John Biggs

Added text underlined

Deleted text scored out

This council notes:

That there have been a number of attacks in London identified as terrorism, these have involved the lethal use of knives and the use of vehicles to knock down, kill and maim vulnerable pedestrians in well visited areas of the city and in a location in the vicinity of a Mosque. Tower Hamlets is a borough with many tourist attractions and places of worship, many located on streets which have large numbers of pedestrians in the past and are likely to have again once travel resumes.

A feature of concern has been crowded places which includes shopping centres, sports stadia, bars, pubs and clubs and residential areas which are easily accessible to the public and attractive to terrorists. Concerns have grown with regard to public security inside venues where people congregate as well as measures to protect our streets. The Shoreditch Triangle which includes, Bishopsgate, Spitalfields and parts of Bethnal Green is already a visitor hotspot with a large night-time economy and is intersected by busy roads. We now also have the prospect of a major Embassy moving to Tower Hamlets.

Since 2018, the local authority has employed a Protective Security Manager – one of few councils to do so – to develop our protective security response and work closely with the police and other partners on mitigating identified areas of risk. The Protective Security Manager has a close working relationship with the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Security Advisors and is a standing member of the Metropolitan Police monthly Security Review Meeting. The CONTEST Board oversees the protective security work for the local authority.

The Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Security Advisors have their own 'priority location assessments' which is part of their normal business and which the local authority may not necessarily be part of. The CTSA's also provide routine protective security advice to businesses as part of their normal business.

The Council also invests significantly in public space CCTV, which plays an important role in security and policing, and the Council is also upgrading the existing infrastructure through a £3m capital investment programme.

The government on the 26th February 2021 set out its proposals on a new Protect Duty; a legal requirement for public places to ensure preparedness for and protection from terrorist attacks. It would require those in scope to consider terrorist threats, and consider and implement appropriate and proportionate protective security and organisational preparedness measures.

The Home Office's proposed Protect Duty, which is currently out for consultation, delivers on a manifesto commitment to improve the safety and security of public venues and spaces, drawing on lessons learned from previous terrorist incidents. Tower Hamlets Council will be responding to the consultation.

These changes follow a campaign run by the mother of Martyn Hett who was among 22 people killed in the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing. The changes will be to consider airport-style security checks to be mandatory at major sporting and entertainment venues. No such law currently exists so security remains the decision of individual operators.

That the proposed new law would require venue operators to consider the risk of a terrorist attack and take "proportionate and reasonable measures to prepare for and protect the public from such an attack", according to the Home Office. This could include increased physical security, training, incident response plans and exercises for staff on what to do during an attack

There is an existing Capital Project for the development of protective security measures around identified key locations on the borough including the East London Mosque, Brick Lane and Columbia Road Market. All work in these locations goes through a rigorous technical assessment process with relevant experts in the protective security field including our Protective Security Manager. In addition the Liveable Streets project is improving local infrastructure at Brick Lane, Columbia Road and Whitechapel to reduce vehicle access in these areas which complements the protective security work. Both the CTSA's and the Protective Security Manager are providing advice and support to Liveable Streets and Planning as appropriate.

All faith centres on the borough have previously been invited to bid for additional funding from the Home Office 'Places of Worship' fund for any specific protective security work they wished to undertake, and the Mayor has also lobbied the Home Office to provide more funding. During 2019, 13 locations applied, with 4 locations accepting funding. Other institutions were either not successful or withdrew their applications for various reasons. In 2020 only one institution applied and were successful.

That the City of London continues to invest in security measures which include manned checkpoints, rising street bollards, restricted roads and crash-proof barricades. These precautions follow a warning by MI5 that the "eastern cluster" of towers planned around Bishopsgate is "highly sensitive to the threat of a hostile, vehicle-borne" attack and will replace the previous ring of steel installed to ward off IRA attacks.

That in addition the City of London is seeking S106 funds from developers in order to help fund this work.

That within Tower Hamlets only the Canary Wharf estate and the Tower of London has a similar level of physical protection.

That elsewhere in London concrete or other barriers have been erected to protect pedestrians from vehicle attacks.

The Council further notes;

That in February 1996 the IRA bombed Marsh Wall which killed two and injured and maimed many more, some who died of their wounds years later. This location was deliberately chosen as a less defended target than Canary Wharf estate to the immediate north but one with the same level of publicity value.

That like the City of London Tower Hamlets has emerging clusters of tall towers in Aldgate, Blackwall, Marsh Wall and the areas to the north of Canary Wharf.

The Chinese Embassy planning application.

That some areas containing high value targets have no public CCTV cameras.

This Council believes that;

The borough needs to continue to review our security measures and have appropriate security measures in place to protect and deter potential attacks.

The Council resolves ~~calls on the Mayor to;~~

Forward a copy of this motion to the Protective Security Manager and the BCU Commander to ensure that these matters are raised with the relevant security professionals and to ensure that ~~Initiate a full security and safety is continually reviewed of the Borough which will be submitted to Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny and the full council for consideration and final recommendations, and;~~

1. Continue to c~~onsult~~ with the Security Services on the potential threats to Tower Hamlets given its strategic location and national assets
2. ~~Consider adding to~~Explore the role of future S106 agreements additional funding for additional security measures over and above those funded through CIL
3. Note the ongoing work of the Protective Security Manager and others in ~~Identifying~~ in advance likely targets and considering what steps would be required to mitigate the impact of any future attack using vehicles or other methods as the new Protect Duty requires us to do.
4. Publicise such preparation where appropriate, in order to reassure residents and deter potential attackers
5. Implement existing capital projects for the development of protective security measures including areas ~~security measures in the areas adjoining Canary Wharf and other possible targets~~ such as the Whitechapel Road, Brick Lane, Columbia Road Flower Market and mosques including the East London Mosque.