

Mayor's Report to Council

29th September 2021

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Key Events/Announcements

It has been a busy period as the Council and community are showing signs of coming to physical rather than virtual life again. I would like this to develop faster, subject to careful risk management, and I think many people in the borough would like this too. I am aware that there is still a tangible Covid-19 risk, but that it is a lot lower than it was previously.

The borough is getting busier in both good and bad ways. We are waiting for the end of furlough for a further sign of the economic damage caused to our businesses and our communities. This is a time of high risk.

Community safety and reassurance: There have been a number of serious incidents across the borough over recent weeks, sadly with one fatality on East Ferry Road. A Tension Monitoring Group meeting was held and we continue to work closely with the police and our other partners. Reassurance patrols are also ongoing.

It is with great sadness that as a community we are mourning another life lost. In recent weeks along with two murders, there has also been a small number of violent incidents across Tower Hamlets, which are all part of ongoing police investigations.

We cannot underestimate the impact violent crimes have on our community and we understand as a council that there will be concern and unease as a result. We want to assure residents that we are working closely with police, community, local third sector organisations and faith leaders and there is a robust policing plan in place, which includes increased patrols on the ground.

I would also urge residents not to share misinformation, particularly on social media, which can create further panic and worry among our communities. As a council we are here for our community. We will continue to work to provide information, reassurance and support community cohesion.

Sabina Nessa: Sabina was a young teacher with a great future, killed in yet another appalling act of male violence, in South London. On Friday evening myself and a number of other councillors attended a vigil at Weavers' Fields. Other cabinet members also attended a vigil at the Maryam Centre. We must continue to do all we can to raise the profile of and tackle gender-based violence.

Afghanistan: The situation in Afghanistan is deeply distressing, and the Government's lack of action and planning has been appalling. We are in conversation with the Government, and with other local councils across London, about what we can do to help offer support to some Afghan refugees. As you can imagine, lining up the services, including health and housing, takes a great deal of planning. We have a proud history in Tower Hamlets of being a welcoming place, and I'm very keen that we do our bit to help. Housing costs and shortages mean however that the tradition of Tower Hamlets receiving larger numbers of refugees and asylum seekers is for the foreseeable future unlikely. We have, like many other London Labour Councils, announced we will take responsibility for up to 5 families initially.

Liveable Streets: We continue to support the principles behind Liveable Streets of better, safer, calmer streets, with a reduction of rat-run traffic in residential areas, fewer unnecessary journeys made by car and a focus on improving the local environment and

people's health with better air quality. We do this mainly to tackle our poor air quality but also to improve the local street environment.

A pause was recently announced because we need to take some time to reflect on the impact the schemes have had on some journeys, to assess this and see what if any changes are needed.

We need to quickly review the programme and get it right and while we don't think it will need a large-scale reversal or abandonment of existing schemes, it does mean we will not be developing the future phases of Liveable Streets as we had planned

The seven projects currently underway are in Bow, Bethnal Green, Wapping, Old Ford West, Shadwell, Brick Lane and Barkantine.

As a result of a quick assessment, we want to proceed with most of the proposals made and agreed in the current live projects. There will be a small number of changes to make road access in some places easier for residents. To be clear:

- The schemes at Barkantine and Wapping which are largely complete should remain unaltered. We are looking at options for a resident exemption permit for the Wapping bus gate.
- The Shadwell scheme is awaiting the analysis of consultation responses.
- The Brick Lane scheme should proceed largely as agreed, but with further consideration of a small (but high profile) element, the question of part-time closures of Brick Lane itself.
- The Bethnal Green scheme will include further consideration of a small number of changes to make North-South journeys for residents easier, possibly involving resident exemptions from a small number of closures.
- The bow scheme and the Old Ford West scheme should proceed other than a need to delay and remodel some of the proposed closures at the request of TfL. At the time of doing this we will also look at resident journeys and whether possible adverse effects can be mitigated.

In addition, the council will continue to focus on other areas such as its School Streets programme which closes roads outside schools during drop off and pick up times and has resulted in reducing air pollution and making streets safer. 20 are already in place and 30 more are on the way by Spring of 2022, reaching most of our primary schools. The Council will still support other local calming and highway projects where consultation has taken place.

I visited Harry Gosling Primary School last week to have a look at our school streets programme and to see the difference it's making. It was a wonderful event and it's very clear that the children and teachers are very pleased with the results of the programme.

Free School Meals: Last week I visited Marner Primary School to talk to children and teachers about our Free School Meals programme. We fund 19,000 school meals for children who otherwise wouldn't be eligible, meaning no primary child in Tower Hamlets pays for their meal. We are only one of 4 boroughs to do this.

This programme, at a cost of around £3m per year, makes a huge difference to many families in the borough and I am proud that we've been able to protect the scheme despite the huge budget pressures we face.

Poverty Review: We have just completed our Poverty Review, led by Cllr Mufeedah Bustin. This was informed by a series of workshops led by community researchers and Toynbee

Hall (a leading charitable institution that works to address the causes and impacts of poverty in the East End) with residents with experience of living on a low income. A reference group of residents, and partners including the Child Poverty Action Group and Age UK East London provided expert advice to the review team.

You can read the report here:

<http://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s191230/6.2a%20Appendix.%201%20for%20LB%20Tower%20Hamlets%20Poverty%20Review.pdf>

This is a really important piece of work to guide our next steps, but it also highlights the huge amount of positive work we do to tackle poverty in the borough.

Black History Month: October marks Black History Month and the council will be hosting and supporting a varied programme of activities. Full listings are available at:

https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lqnl/leisure_and_culture/Black-History-Month/Black-History-Month.aspx

Battle of Cable Street, 85th anniversary: This anniversary is fast-approaching and I will be attending a number of events to mark the occasion. This is a huge part of our history in Tower Hamlets, when our community rallied together to face down Oswald Mosley and his British Union of Fascists.

The importance of standing firm together against those who would seek to divide us is just as relevant today as it was then, and I am incredibly proud that our East End spirit of togetherness continues to shine.

Big Clean Ups: As a council we relaunched our programme of Big Clean Ups in July, following a pause due to the Covid-19 crisis, and asked residents to name a local litter hotspot. Almost 160 residents responded, and these suggestions will be used for future clean ups.

These clean ups are happening all over the borough. One event last week, on the Isle of Dogs, saw more than 100 volunteers out tackling litter and fly-tip hotspots.

Like elsewhere in London, littering and fly-tipping is an issue here in Tower Hamlets and we spend more than £690,000 a year on clearing and getting rid of illegally dumped waste, which is money that could be spent on other services.

We want to see a cleaner and greener borough and we are cracking down on fly-tippers and have increased on-the-spot fines to the maximum of £400 allowed under law.

We also have dedicated street cleaning teams working seven days a week and work with the local community and our partners in our Big Clean Ups programme.

Adult Social Care Strategy 2021: We are developing a new strategy in adult social care. This will set out our plans over the next 3-5 years, outlining what we will do differently and what difference it will make. If you would like to help shape the new strategy, share your views through our online consultation: https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/asc_strategy_2021

Goodman's Fields health centre: I was delighted to visit the new health centre in Aldgate last week, which is funded by Tower Hamlets Council and will provide high quality health services to the borough's growing population. This is another example of investment in local services and our work to address the barriers to good health that many of our residents face.

Individual Mayoral Decisions taken since last meeting

- [22 Sep 2021 2.22 p.m.](#) - Agenda; 211 - Island Gardens new build Café with public accessible toilets
- [9 Aug 2021 3.00 p.m.](#) - Agenda; Decision Nos 207-210:
 - Food and household goods purchases
 - Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan – Examiner’s Report and Referendum
 - Cyril Jackson Primary School Academy Conversion
 - Making of Article 4 direction for the removal of permitted development rights for the change of use from E-class uses to residential (C3)

Mayor’s engagements and meetings

Below is a summary of my main engagements and meetings from 21st July to 29th September 2021.

21 July 2021

- Bethnal Green Liveable Streets Meeting
- Meeting with One Housing
- ICS Leaders Working Group
- St. George Leisure
- Full Council meeting

22 July 2021

- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Mayoral Voluntary & Community Sector Meeting
- Ask the Mayor: Building Safety

23 July 2021

- Councillor Rachel Blake
- London Government Summit on tackling youth violence

26 July 2021

- Corporate Induction
- Scrutiny Pre-meet
- Informal Labour Group catch-up
- Overview & Scrutiny Committee

27 July 2021

- Central London Forward Breakfast Board meeting
- Mayor John Biggs/Deputy Mayor Rachel Blake/James Purnell re East Bank/LCF building
- Pre-Meet St. George's Leisure
- RSE meeting (East London Mosque & London Muslim Centre)
- St. George's Leisure Meeting
- Royal Mint Court Residents Association (RMCRA) follow-up meeting

28 July 2021

- Thames Estuary Growth Board Update June 2021
- Food For Health Awards Virtual Event
- Planning Meeting
- Pre-Cabinet meet with the Mayor
- Induction for young mayor candidates
- Mayors Advisory Board
- Cabinet

29 July 2021

- Chief Executive Will Tuckley, Mayor, Marcus Barnett - Bi-monthly Catch Up
- Life-sciences at Whitechapel Road
- Freedom of the Borough Panel Meeting
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Independence of Bangladesh
- Carbon and climate taskforce
- Hybrid Audit Committee Meeting

30 July 2021

- Meeting with Lord Bob Kerslake
- London Councils Labour Group Meeting
- 200k vaccines photocall

31 July 2021

- Redchurch street event

9 August 2021

- Meeting with Janet Fasan (Director of Legal Monitoring Officer)
- Partnership Exec Group
- Cressy Place - Stifford Centre Meeting
- Revised draft petition response for review

- IMD signing
- Briefing on Proposals for Republic
- Susmita Sen (Tower Hamlets Homes Chief Executive Officer)
- Strategic Forward Planning
- Derai Thana Development Organisation

10 August 2021

- A Level Results Day George Green School
- Visit Introducing The Utilize Project
- All Points East - Mayoral, Lead Member and Ward Councillors briefing
- TH Partnership Executive Group meeting
- Children Education & Youth Services Portfolio Meeting
- Mayor's Portfolio Culture, Arts & Brexit Meeting
- Community Meeting - Policing / Community Safety / Partnership in Tower Hamlets
- St George's Leisure Meeting

13 August 2021

- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Growth Borough Partnership

15 August 2021

- Bengali National Mourning day
- CEG (Children Education Group) - CEG UK Carrom Championship 2021

16 August 2021

- Arnold Circus update
- Mayor's Surgery
- Councillor Asma Begum
- My London Interview
- Ridhima Tomar (British Council & Common Purpose Bangladeshi Leadership Programme in the UK)
- Informal Labour Group

17 August 2021

- Photocall with the borough commander
- Visiting New Youth Contract Providers
- Mayor's COVID recovery fund photocall
- Ocean Estate Walk About
- COVID 19 Local Engagement Board

18 August 2021

- Southern Housing Group- Pre-Meet
- Southern Housing Group - land ownership
- The Great Eastern Parks Route
- Mayor and Marcus Barnett Met Police Catch up
- Mayor's Traffic Meeting
- Denise Radley (Corporate Director Health, Adults and Community)
- Walkabout in Wapping

19 August 2021

- Adults, Health & Wellbeing - Mayor's Portfolio Meeting
- O & S Chair Cllr M. Pappu
- Regeneration Portfolio Meeting
- Sharon Godman
- Cavell St Visit
- Brick Lane Liveable Streets

20 August 2021

- Catch up with Cllr Rachel Blake
- Co-Op Commission Meeting Rob Bates and Jake Richards

21 August 2021

- Labour party council candidate taster session
- Anti Racist Summer event

29 August 2021

- Greater Sylhet Upazila Cup 2021 organised by Sonali Othith UK

31 August 2021

- Interviews Labour Group Political Advisor
- All Points East In the Neighbourhood
- Denise Radley (Corporate Director Health, Adults and Community and Deputy Chief)
- Mayor's Surgery
- Aberfeldy Masterplan

1 September 2021

- Resources Mayor's Portfolio Meeting
- Mayors Housing Meeting
- Poplar HARCA Meeting
- Poplar Rate Mural event with Sister Christine
- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- Mayor John Biggs and Councillor Asma Islam Poplar HARCA Quarterly Meeting

- Mayors Advisory Board
- Grants Determination Sub -Committee Meeting
- LCF

2 September 2021

- Phone call with resident
- ICS Leaders Bi-Monthly Meeting
- Planning Meeting
- Whitechapel meeting
- Liveable Streets Meeting
- Photo for Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund
- Brick Lane mural photocall
- BAME Inequalities Commission follow up

3 September 2021

- Catch up with Cllr Rachel Blake
- London Councils Labour Group Meeting
- MHCLG Ministerial Webinar
- Waste Meeting

4 September

- Re-opening event of Bethnal Green Police Station
- GCSE/A level AWARDS ceremony
- Poplar rates rebellion refurbished mural launch
- Invitation to Cap Foundation's Dinner Event

6 September 2021

- Mayors Surgery
- Regeneration Board
- Wapping Projects
- Truman Brewery Meeting

7 September 2021

- Councillor Rachel Blake
- Councillor Asma Begum
- Freedom of the Borough Panel Meeting
- Children Education & Youth Services Portfolio Meeting
- Recognition Award Tower Hamlets Carers Association

8 September 2021

- Central London Forward Partnership Board
- Social Inclusion Portfolio Meeting

- Cabinet Pre-Meet
- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- Secondary School Provision on the Isle of Dogs
- Mayors Advisory Board
- Cabinet

9 September 2021

- Every Child Online
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Liveable Streets meeting
- Councillor Sirajul Islam
- RSE meeting
- Waste meeting
- Shortlisting, Adults & Social Care Director
- Poplar and Limehouse CLP

20 September 2021

- Adult Social Care Practice Week
- TH Partnership Executive Group meeting
- Meeting with Will Tuckley and Apsana Begum MP
- Mayor's Portfolio Culture, Arts & Brexit Meeting
- Overview & Scrutiny Committee

21 September 2021

- Preparedness Review Meeting
- Newlon Housing Meeting
- Meeting with Will Tuckley and Rushanara Ali MP
- Homes England Meeting
- Resident Visit
- Labour Group

22 September 2021

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- Mayor's Traffic Meeting
- Capital Strategy Board
- Marners Primary School
- Cabinet run through
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- Waste Meeting
- Cabinet

23 September 2021

- Practice Week with Supporting Families
- Stoptober Campaign
- Press Conference
- Mayor's Portfolio Adults, Health & Wellbeing Meeting
- Cascade Conversation with Sir Steve Bullock
- CLF Board Members dinner

24 September 2021

- Ann Lucas, THH
- Will Norman, TFL
- School street event
- Opening events for new health clinics at Suttons Wharf and Goodman's Fields

25 September 2021

- Norman Grove street party
- Friends of Meath Gardens event

26 September 2021

- Wapping Clean up

27 September 2021

- Leisure Centres
- Mayor's Surgery
- Chat with Cllr James King
- New Town Hall Members Consultative Steering Group Tour
- Dave Hill, On London blog
- Councillor Mellen catch up
- Executive Committee
- Labour Group

28 September 2021

- LGA Meet & Greet Peer Review/Corporate Health Check – Placeholder
- Discussion re GLPC Agenda
- Maria Future for London Catch up
- Limehouse Mosque Matter Meeting
- Peer Review Interview
- Meeting with Stifford Centre Representatives
- Phone Call to resident
- Catch up with Susmita Sen Tower Hamlets Homes
- Mayor's Portfolio Civil Contingencies & Emergency Planning Meeting
- LGA Peer Review/Corporate Health Check End of Day Meet – Placeholder

- Spitalfields Housing Association Meeting

29 September 2021

- Introduction to interim Human Resources Director
- Mayor's Housing Portfolio Meeting
- Shortlisting for Director, Supporting Families
- Waste Meeting
- Communications Portfolio Meeting
- LGA Corporate Health Check Feedback Session – Placeholder
- Mayor's Community Safety Portfolio Meeting
- Council