

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.08 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 24 JANUARY 2024

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present:

Mayor Lutfur Rahman (Member)	Councillor Iqbal Hossain (Member)
Councillor Faroque Ahmed (Member)	Councillor Kabir Hussain (Member)
Councillor Kabir Ahmed (Member)	Councillor Kamrul Hussain (Member)
Councillor Leelu Ahmed (Member)	Councillor Shahaveer Shubo Hussain (Member)
Councillor Musthak Ahmed (Member)	Councillor Asma Islam (Member)
Councillor Saied Ahmed (Member)	Councillor Sirajul Islam (Member)
Councillor Shafi Ahmed (Member)	Councillor Ahmodul Kabir (Member)
Councillor Suluk Ahmed (Member)	Councillor Saif Uddin Khaled (Member)
Councillor Ohid Ahmed (Member)	Councillor Ahmodur Khan (Member)
Councillor Sabina Akhtar (Member)	Councillor James King (Member)
Councillor Amina Ali (Member)	Councillor Amy Lee (Member)
Councillor Asma Begum (Member)	Councillor Abdul Malik (Member)
Councillor Nathalie Bienfait (Member)	Councillor Abdul Mannan (Member)
Councillor Rachel Blake (Member)	Councillor Ana Miah (Member)
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin (Member)	Councillor Ayas Miah (Member)
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury (Member)	Councillor Harun Miah (Member)
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury (Member)	Councillor Amin Rahman (Member)
Councillor Jahed Choudhury (Member)	Councillor Rebaka Sultana (Member)
Councillor Abu Chowdhury (Member)	Councillor Maium Talukdar (Member)
Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury (Member)	Councillor Bellal Uddin (Member)
Councillor Marc Francis (Member)	Councillor Abdal Ullah (Member)
Councillor Peter Golds (Member)	Councillor Abdul Wahid (Member)

The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Jahed Choudhury in the Chair

The Speaker of the Council provided his update to the Council. He noted that he had attended several events, including events to celebrate new businesses, educational and sporting achievements as well as welcoming new citizens to the borough. Other highlights included:

- Attending the 52nd anniversary of Victory Day of Bangladesh;
- Attending the London in Bloom ceremony last year and seeing the success of the Borough's Parks and Gardens;

- Joining civic colleagues at the London Government Dinner in January and
- Holding a successful Speakers event for the charities he is fundraising for – St Joseph’s Hospice and Eden Care UK.

Finally, the Speaker reminded members Holocaust Memorial Day was to take place on Saturday 27th January 2024 and said it was a day for everyone to remember the millions of Jewish people murdered in the Holocaust along with many minority groups, under Nazi persecution and the other genocides around the world which followed.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Maisha Begum
- Stephen Halsey – Chief Executive LBTH for whom Denise Radley, Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director, Health and Adults Social Care was deputising

Councillor Sabina Khan was unable to join the meeting in person but joined remotely. It was noted that she would be unable to vote as she was not formally in attendance.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

Councillor Musthak Ahmed declared an Non-Registerable Other Interest in Agenda Item 5.1 Petition on Saving THCAN as he was a Council appointee to the East End Citizen Advice Bureau who had links with THCAN. He remained in the meeting for discussion on that item.

3. MINUTES

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Agreed that the minutes of the ordinary Council meeting of 15th November 2023 be approved as a correct record of the proceedings and the Speaker was authorised to sign them accordingly.

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

Announcements from the Chief Executive.

Denise Radley, Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director, Health and Adults Social Care provided an update to the Council meeting, highlighting the following issues:

- She informed Council Saturday 27th January was Holocaust Memorial Day, a day to remember the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, alongside the millions of people murdered under Nazi persecution of other groups and during more recent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. To mark the day, the Council was working with faith and community groups in the borough to hold a series of free events during the week.
- In relation to Free School Meals, Tower Hamlets featured as a case study in an ITV piece about a new study into the benefits of free school meals. The piece was on ITV national news and all regions outside of London. In addition, Tower Hamlets had been named a finalist for the APPG Group Excellence in School Food Awards which was being held on Thursday, 25th January 2024.
- Lastly, Ms Radley said she was delighted to announce that the Town Hall had won a Civic Trust Award with the ceremony in March.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition requesting Save THCAN

Sarah Sauvat, Vicky Scott and Shuhel Alom presented their petition requesting the saving of THCAN. Ms Sauvat stated the network had been instrumental in supporting advice services in Tower Hamlets for many years. She said that without funding THCAN could not support organisations and individuals like it had done in the past - through workshops, signposting, information and advice, training plus upskilling of staff in various disciplines such as bid and contract writing.

Ms Sauvat and her colleagues requested Members to continue to support THCAN as a vital network organisation.

Members asked questions of the petitioner before Councillor Saied Ahmed Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost-of-Living responded to matters raised in the petition. Councillor Ahmed stated that the importance of the voluntary sector in delivering critical support to residents is recognised. The Mayor's Community Grants Programme is one source of funding for advice provision and funding was based on applications meeting the required criteria. He said it was unfortunate the THCAN applications were unsuccessful because on one project they did not meet the minimum scoring threshold required as set out in the prospectus. On the second project it was not recommended for funding as there were other higher scoring projects that were more relevant to the theme priorities.

The Council **RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director for Communities for a written response within 28 days.

5.2 Petition regarding restricting events in Victoria Park

Lauma Kalns-Timans and Anwar Miah presented their petition regarding the restriction of events held in Victoria Park. They called upon the Mayor to reverse the decision to increase the number of events held in Victoria Park. They stated local residents and the 'Friends of Victoria Park' group had not been consulted about the changes in policy. Ms Kalns-Timans said the extra events would increase the number of people who would attend each event from 5,000 to 20,000 and would ruin the park's environment and reduce accessibility to local residents, children and families especially during the summer holidays. Ms Kalns-Timans and Mr Miah asked the Mayor to reverse his decision.

Members asked questions of the petitioner before Councillor Iqbal Hossain, Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation responded to matters raised in the petition. He said an additional two major event days per annum can be considered through the Major Events Policy for Victoria Park, subject to event organisers obtaining a Premises License and meeting the council's robust requirements for holding an event.

The council assesses applications on a case-by-case basis. All major events and events with a capacity over 499 that include regulated entertainment and /or sale of alcohol require a Premises License. He said the Council had a strong track record of responsibly managing events and activities across its parks and open spaces with major events going through an enhanced planning process.

The Council **RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director for Communities for a written response within 28 days.

6. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Lutfur Rahman presented his report to the Council.

The Opposition Group Leader, Councillor Sirajul Islam then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

Mayor Rahman provided concluding remarks.

7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE

MOTION ON COUNCIL'S PTS AND CFZ SCHEME

Council considered a motion as printed in the agenda on the Permit Transfer Scheme and Car Free Zone that had been moved by Councillor Kabir Hussain and seconded by Councillor Kabir Ahmed.

Council also considered the amendment proposed by Councillor Asma Islam and seconded by Councillor Rebeka Sultana as set out in the supplementary agenda.

ADDITIONS BOLD

DELETIONS STRUCKTHROUGH

This council notes:

- The high levels of overcrowding in the borough, with over 23,000 residents currently on the housing waiting list, and 14,000 in acute overcrowding.
- The detrimental impact that such levels of overcrowding have on residents, affecting health; educational attainment; employment opportunities; and quality of life.
- That some residents rely on their cars and vehicles for business and familial duties of care.
- That despite this, Tower Hamlets has one of the lowest car ownership rates in the country, and the third lowest in London.
- That many residents refuse the chance to move to larger properties that could relieve some of these pressures associated with overcrowding, due to these properties' lack of a parking space.
- That this has contributed to the growing list of residents waiting for suitably-sized homes.
- **That the Car Free Zone policy was brought in nearly twenty years ago in an effort both to mitigate the impact of new development on the environment in Tower Hamlets and ensure existing car owners were not disadvantaged by significant numbers of new residents obtaining parking permits;**
- **That there were many complaints from social housing tenants who were forced to give up their resident parking permit when they moved into a larger property within a scheme covered by a Car Free Zone restriction;**
- **That Some tenants moved into properties which were not advertised as being in a Car Free Zone, and some only belatedly became aware when LBTH began enforcing the restriction two or three years later;**

- **Residents living within a Car Free Zone development were not even entitled to Visitors Parking Scratch-cards;**
- **That on 29th November 2023 Mayor Lutfur Rahman and his administration agreed to change and amend the council's policy on PTS criteria however this change is not applied retrospectively to those who already are affected by this policy dating back over a decade.**

This council believes:

- That the existing Permit Transfer Scheme (PTS) was unsuitable and incompatible with the needs of residents in Tower Hamlets.
- That the criteria to qualify for the Permit Transfer Scheme was too restrictive, and dissuaded residents from moving into new properties due to their fear of losing their car parking space.
- That a newer, bespoke approach to the scheme was required, and that this has been captured in the new PTS strategy adopted on 30th November.
- That the following principles will contribute to a reduction in overcrowding in Tower Hamlets:
 - Families will now qualify if they live in overcrowded properties and are moving into larger properties with two or more bedrooms, instead of three or more bedrooms.
 - A resident is no longer required to have held an on-street resident parking permit for 12 months prior to moving into a car-free property.
 - A resident no longer loses their right to a permit if it is cancelled or expires.
 - If one member of the household cancels their permit, then another member can apply for a new one.
 - An individual or family can now downsize and keep one resident permit under the PTS.
- That the related Car Free Zone (CFZ) scheme also unfairly punishes those residents who rely on their vehicles for work.
- That the proposed changes to the CFZ scheme being explored by the Mayor will complement the changes enacted by the review of the PTS scheme, where the new CFZ scheme would:
 - Apply to all residents living in car-free properties.
 - Allow for a maximum of three permits per household.
- That this new approach to the CFZ scheme – that would apply to residents who live in a car-free development who are not currently eligible to apply for an on-street parking permit, and their own vehicle is crucial to their

livelihood and their ability to work, such as licensed mini cabbage (including Uber) – will halt the penalisation of those who rely on their vehicles to work, many of whom do so as second or third jobs.

- That this new approach to the CFZ scheme will contribute to the reduction of those numbers of residents currently on the housing waiting list and towards reducing overcrowding in the borough.
- That as well as implementing **the new PTS + CFZ** schemes to all future developments, the new provisions should be ~~—where possible—~~ applied retrospectively to existing developments, to ensure that opportunities to support the reduction of overcrowding in the borough, as well as those residents who rely on their vehicles for work, can be maximised.

This council resolves:

- To support and promote this new PTS scheme, with a view to encouraging a shortening of the housing waiting list.
- To thank the Lead Member and officers for their work on the revised PTS scheme.
- To support the Lead Member and officers in the continued revision of the CFZ scheme.
- **To call on the Mayor Lutfur Rahman to ensure his PTS policy will be in effect retrospectively across all existing affected residents as well as new residents.**
- **To ensure that the retrospective application of the PTS are accommodated through the 2024/25 budget.**

Following debate, the amendment moved by Councillor Asma Islam was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

The motion as moved by Councillor Maium Miah Talukdar was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

This council notes:

- The high levels of overcrowding in the borough, with over 23,000 residents currently on the housing waiting list, and 14,000 in acute overcrowding.
- The detrimental impact that such levels of overcrowding have on residents, affecting health; educational attainment; employment opportunities; and quality of life.

- That some residents rely on their cars and vehicles for business and familial duties of care.
- That despite this, Tower Hamlets has one of the lowest car ownership rates in the country, and the third lowest in London.
- That many residents refuse the chance to move to larger properties that could relieve some of these pressures associated with overcrowding, due to these properties' lack of a parking space.
- That this has contributed to the growing list of residents waiting for suitably-sized homes.

This council believes:

- That the existing Permit Transfer Scheme (PTS) was unsuitable and incompatible with the needs of residents in Tower Hamlets.
- That the criteria to qualify for the Permit Transfer Scheme was too restrictive, and dissuaded residents from moving into new properties due to their fear of losing their car parking space.
- That a newer, bespoke approach to the scheme was required, and that this has been captured in the new PTS strategy adopted on 30th November.
- That the following principles will contribute to a reduction in overcrowding in Tower Hamlets:
 - Families will now qualify if they live in overcrowded properties and are moving into larger properties with two or more bedrooms, instead of three or more bedrooms.
 - A resident is no longer required to have held an on-street resident parking permit for 12 months prior to moving into a car-free property.
 - A resident no longer loses their right to a permit if it is cancelled or expires.
 - If one member of the household cancels their permit, then another member can apply for a new one.
 - An individual or family can now downsize and keep one resident permit under the PTS.
- That the related Car Free Zone (CFZ) scheme also unfairly punishes those residents who rely on their vehicles for work.
- That the proposed changes to the CFZ scheme being explored by the Mayor will complement the changes enacted by the review of the PTS scheme, where the new CFZ scheme would:

- Apply to all residents living in car-free properties.
- Allow for a maximum of three permits per household.
- That this new approach to the CFZ scheme – that would apply to residents who live in a car-free development who are not currently eligible to apply for an on-street parking permit, and their own vehicle is crucial to their livelihood and their ability to work, such as licensed mini cabbage (including Uber) – will halt the penalisation of those who rely on their vehicles to work, many of whom do so as second or third jobs.
- That this new approach to the CFZ scheme will contribute to the reduction of those numbers of residents currently on the housing waiting list and towards reducing overcrowding in the borough.
- That as well as implementing these new schemes to all future developments, the new provisions should be – where possible – applied retrospectively to existing developments, to ensure that opportunities to support the reduction of overcrowding in the borough, as well as those residents who rely on their vehicles for work, can be maximised.

This council resolves:

- To support and promote this new PTS scheme, with a view to encouraging a shortening of the housing waiting list.
- To thank the Lead Member and officers for their work on the revised PTS scheme.
- To support the Lead Member and officers in the continued revision of the CFZ scheme.

8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE

LGA Peer Review

Council considered a motion as printed in the agenda on the LGA Peer Review that had been moved by Councillor Marc Francis and seconded by Councillor Amina Ali.

Council also considered the amendment proposed by Councillor Maium Talukdar and seconded by Councillor Kabir Ahmed as set out in the supplementary agenda.

Councillor Sabina Akhtar raised a point of order under the Council's Constitution Part B – Responsibility and Functions and decision-making procedures and referred to paragraph 13.6 and said the Labour group strongly objected to the re-writing of their motion. The Monitoring Officer accepted significant changes had been proposed but said the changes did not completely rewrite the original motion.

ADDITIONS BOLD**DELETIONS STRUCKTHROUGH****This council notes:**

- An LGA Peer Review is designed to provide a **rigorous** critical-friend **review**. ~~external support, rather than an independent audit or inspection of the quality and performance of local authority services.~~
- **The LGA Corporate Peer Review is entirely independent of the Council and examines the performance of the Council holistically examining all of the Council's key performance metrics and their performance against them as well as addressing structure, the political interface, governance, leadership of place and organisation culture. The peer review is conducted by senior figures in the world of local government that in our case included Labour's Steve Bullock (ex-directly elected mayor of Lewisham) and Carolyn Downs who spent many years as Chief Executive of Brent, has previously been Chief executive of the LGA, Chief Executive of the Legal Services Commission and Deputy Permanent Secretary and Director General for Ministry of Justice. The Comment also ignores the fact that subsequent to the LGA review the Council underwent a further independent inspection and improved its performance for Investors In People confirming that the organisation had a robust and healthy approach to its staff and staff management.**
- **As you would expect** ~~However, this did not inhibit the LGA peer group from providing some stark wording in the~~ **useful** narrative ~~in~~ of the report itself and offer **valuable** ~~serious~~ recommendations ~~to address concerning issues~~ regarding the political and executive management of the council.
- **In fact it was a well-considered balanced report that compares well with recent LGA reports into other local authorities given the unique social and economic profile of the Borough.**
- **The report concluded that the new administration:**
 - **had provided a fresh impetus to the Council,**
 - **Members and Officers had done well to delivery of election promises to date including free school meals and implementation of the educational maintenance allowance,**
 - **had a sound financial base.**
 - **had an ambitious set of priorities that were widely understood by Members, Officers and Partners,**

- Praised the Councils Communications team,
- Had a highly skilled, dedicated workforce evidently committed to delivering the best outcomes for the Borough,

Their report also:

- Commended the Council for developing a three year financial plan which will enable investment in services and priority areas once completed.
- Commended the Council for some very effective partnership working in Tower Hamlets
- Recognised statutory partnership working to be particularly strong.
- Commended the council for being committed to being a learning organisation with a genuine appetite to explore and adopt best practice.
- Acknowledged that the council demonstrated a high degree of organisational maturity in its positive response to critical challenge.
- Commended the Council for creating the Transformation Board.
- That the LGA Peer Review **agreed with the concerns that had been raised with it in advance of the review by the Mayor and the current CEO found that** “there are ‘two councils’ in operation at Tower Hamlets which is impacting on the speed and effectiveness of decision making.”
- The LGA also **expressed concerns around trust, sign off of decisions and delays to decision making.** ~~found “there is a lack of trust between the Mayor’s Office and senior officers, with examples of inappropriate questioning and pressure to feed things into the Mayor’s Office for ‘sign off’”.~~
- ~~• That this had led to: “unnecessary delays, with an example of one service area waiting for four months to receive a decision on something which would have previously been a delegated decision to officers.”~~
- **This was a legacy of the previous administration and Mayor who delegated significant mayoral powers to officers, which in our**

opinion left behind a culture of two councils. By contrast, the LGA concluded that 'The Mayor is providing strong political leadership and is seen as approachable by both members and officers alike. Cabinet members are passionate about delivering the council's priorities and want what is best for the residents across the borough'.

- The very positive IIP inspection that followed the LGA review suggests that the two-council culture issue is being addressed quickly and constructively and the new management team are bringing the staff with them on an improvement journey.
- The Action Plan report includes a review of the Mayor's office which has already been completed leading to savings for the Council. ~~states "Some of the functions of the Mayor's Office are duplicating existing structures causing confusion regarding internal governance processes within the council and as a result is. The size of the Mayor's Office is an outlier when compared to other mayoral authorities and this is largely because there are many officers there who would ordinarily be located elsewhere in the council."~~
- The Mayor has empowered the Council, through strong central leadership and strategic direction, which has enabled the Council to reinvest in services. His Office has worked with services across the Council to deliver one of the most ambitious, progressive and expansive policy programmes seen in Local Government.
- ~~Under the previous administration the 2021 LGA Peer review found that: "There is a strong and cohesive Senior Leadership Team well led by the Chief Executive, with all elements of the leadership team describing good member-officer relationships upon which decision-making is based."~~
- The 2023 LGA peer review makes clear that there has been a very considerable churn in senior management since May 2022 – **which is not uncommon following a change of political and managerial leadership'** and it noted that **the Council's recruitment process was well underway**, ~~which is potentially destabilising to the authority and unhelpful in securing improvements to performance.~~
- ~~To note further departures of senior staff and the failure to find appointable candidates to the roles of Corporate Director of Children's Services and Housing & Regeneration.~~
- During this period the Council has successfully embarked upon a major transformation and improvement programme, significantly improved its financial position, secured long overdue audit sign off of Council accounts, improved its IIP rating and supported the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge.
- The actions included in the Action Plan are drawn directly from the 70+ positive suggestions and recommendations contained

within the LGA report. All of these have been addressed, often using the wording in the report to frame the action. To this extent there was limited necessity for content discussion. All of the LGA suggestions and recommendations are to be addressed via specific actions. This does not preclude collaboration or engagement in respect of the development of solutions and project leads are encouraged to engage all relevant stakeholders where practical. The CEO has extended an invitation to members of the Council to discuss the LGA Peer Review findings. The Corporate Peer Action Plan will be the subject of review by the Overview and Scrutiny committee on a regular basis. The first date for the committee to consider progress in relation to the action plan is currently being scheduled and will be revisited on a quarterly basis. This approach has been agreed with the Chair of the overview scrutiny committee and further details will be available on the councils committee website.

- ~~In response to the LGA Peer Review, Labour councillors offered to work with the Mayor and Corporate Leadership Team to help devise solutions to address these concerns, but that this offer was simply ignored and so Opposition councillors~~ **are being invited to attend a meeting with the Chief Executive to discuss the Corporate Challenge Review Report and Action Plan.**~~have been invited to a meeting with the~~ ~~have had no input into what a corporate response should be.~~
- The peer review **noted** ~~was critical of~~ how scrutiny is conducted and found “the chair of the scrutiny committee and all sub committees are currently from the **majority** ruling party (Aspire) **as is common practice.** ~~which does not reflect best practice. This also means that all the Chairs are male. Similarly, it~~ **notes** ~~draws attention to~~ the absence of women in both the Cabinet **despite Aspire offering positions to opposition female councillors which were refused.** ~~itself and the political decision-making process. as being ‘concerning’.~~
- The Action Plan put forward in November ~~simply ignores the~~ **sets out actions to define current best practice in relation to chairing, membership, and cross party working in and of committees including** the Overview & Scrutiny Committee **its Sub-Committees** and the Audit Committee. **It will conduct a review of current terms of reference for committees based on best practice including the appointment of women to lead or undertake senior political positions within the council. The Mayor will receive recommendations from that review and agree any necessary actions. The Mayor’s conclusions will be published.**~~recommendation that should be Chaired by an Opposition councillor.~~
- The Audit Committee has already considered the CIPFA recommendations on how its membership should be structured and agreed changes to ensure it remains robust and effective.

- In 2022 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to Cllr Sabina Khan's appointment as a Scrutiny Lead. This year again the position was offered to a female opposition councillor. It is unfortunate that this was refused and a male labour Councillor was proposed. ~~Aspire councillors blocked the appointment of the Labour Group's nominee to the Lead Scrutiny Member for Resources portfolio, preferring to leave this position vacant to avoid a Labour councillor having the power to lead the scrutiny of Tower Hamlets Council's finances.~~
- ~~The report notes that under this administration relationships with some third sector/voluntary partners "have weakened" possibly due to the introduction of the new mayor's community grant programme which has increased the number of organisations who can access Council grants. and that they "felt that they have not been properly involved in the co-design of the programme and as a result their confidence is low".~~
- The Council recognises the need to maintain good working relationships with all voluntary sector organisations where possible but also recognises that it may not be possible to please everyone when making structural decisions about the way in which resources are allocated. The Council continues to work closely with the Voluntary Sector to co-design new and improved partnership infrastructure via PEG and the root and branch review they are currently undertaking. The Council's partnership work also includes the development of a New Partnership Plan (recently approved) and it continues to work hard to strengthen and improve relationships with all our partners. The previous administration cut grants services to only 39 organisations funding 50 projects, to £2.6million per year. This has been increased to £4.5million a year with the transformed *Mayor's Community* and *Mayor's Small* grants scheme, which will see 86 organisations delivering 110 projects.
- Under the previous administration, the 2021 LGA Peer Review stated that: "Those in the Council reflect that partnership working came to the fore during the pandemic and continues to go from strength to strength for the benefit of residents and businesses and it was made clear to the peer team that partners are strongly committed to the ambitions of the Place". **Which was in large part a commentary on statutory and health partnerships. The latest LGA report states that these 'statutory and health partnerships are of a good quality with health partners in particular referencing the strength of relationships in place with adult social care. These partnerships were strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic, when an operational management group with health and care leaders was established. This strengthened trust has led to more effective partnership working which has resulted in improvements in many areas including reducing the number of delayed transfers from acute settings'. The corporate peer challenge report also referenced the council relationship with the Metropolitan Police**

stating that ‘the Council’s community safety work is considered sector leading by the Police who highly value their professional working relationship with the Council’. It is therefore not an accurate reflection of the LGA report to infer that partnership working under the previous administration was stronger.

This Council believes:

- The Action Plan’s proposal of a Tower Hamlets Women Commission **must ensure that** ~~is a completely inadequate response to the lack of~~ female voices and those of people with different backgrounds to Aspire’s Cabinet members **are effectively engaged** during decision-making processes.

- There are further commitments that are directly relevant to and supportive of the need to improve the profile of women in the Council and public life generally. These comprise:
 - Working with the LGA’s Be a Councillor Campaign to encourage residents (especially women and those from under-represented groups) to stand for election,

 - conducting a review of terms of reference for committees based on best practice including the appointment of women to lead in the Council,

 - all parties will be encouraged to support this campaign and publish how they will actively encourage women candidates,

 - new initiatives to capture feedback from women regarding their experience of contributing to council meetings,

 - better codifying dedicated time for staff led group chairs to develop staff equalities networks,

 - review and re-run relevant staff and member awareness programmes.

- The Action Plan ~~does not adequately~~ addresses the LGA’s recommendation that in the case of both grants and property disposals there should be involvement and oversight from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with there also being an ability to ‘call in’ decisions **in line with the Council’s Constitution.**

- **Both grants and property disposals can be and are scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. As with all Member level decisions they can be called in.**
- The process proposed for “reviewing” the Mayor’s Office **will follow the LGA Peer Review Recommendations.** ~~will not do anything to end either the perception or the reality of a “council within a council” culture identified by many staff and the LGA Peer Review Team.~~
- In the absence of meaningful cross-party engagement or even discussions by the Corporate Leadership Team with Opposition councillors, residents can have no confidence in the draft Action Plan. **Therefore, the Chief Executive has been liaising with Group Leaders on the Council about attending a meeting with the Chief Executive to discuss the Corporate Challenge Review Report and Action Plan.**

This council resolves:

- To **welcome the LGA Peer Review report and agree the comprehensive** ~~withdraw the draft Action Plan and instruct the Corporate Leadership Team to engage with all Opposition councillors~~ **on the progress of the Action Plan.** ~~about what would be a realistic and useful set of changes to meet the criticism of Tower Hamlets Council’s governance and to bring back a new Action Plan to Full Council within three months.~~

Following debate, the amendment moved by Councillor Maium Talukdar was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The motion as amended by Councillor Maium Talukdar was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED:

This council notes:

- An LGA Peer Review is designed to provide a rigorous critical-friend review.
- The LGA Corporate Peer Review is entirely independent of the Council and examines the performance of the Council holistically examining all of the Council’s key performance metrics and their performance against them as well as addressing structure, the political interface, governance, leadership of place and organisation culture. The peer review is conducted by senior figures in the world of local government that in our case included Labour’s Steve Bullock (ex-directly elected mayor of Lewisham) and Carolyn Downs who spent many years as Chief Executive of Brent, has previously been Chief executive of the LGA, Chief Executive of the Legal Services Commission and Deputy Permanent Secretary and Director General for Ministry of Justice. The Comment also ignores the fact that subsequent to the LGA review the Council underwent a further independent inspection and improved its

performance for Investors In People confirming that the organisation had a robust and healthy approach to its staff and staff management.

- As you would expect the LGA peer group provided useful narrative in the report itself and offer valuable recommendations regarding the political and executive management of the council.
- In fact it was a well-considered balanced report that compares well with recent LGA reports into other local authorities given the unique social and economic profile of the Borough.
- The report concluded that the new administration:
 - had provided a fresh impetus to the Council,
 - Members and Officers had done well to delivery of election promises to date including free school meals and implementation of the educational maintenance allowance,
 - had a sound financial base.
 - had an ambitious set of priorities that were widely understood by Members, Officers and Partners,
 - Praised the Councils Communications team,
 - Had a highly skilled, dedicated workforce evidently committed to delivering the best outcomes for the Borough,

Their report also:

- Commended the Council for developing a three year financial plan which will enable investment in services and priority areas once completed.
- Commended the Council for some very effective partnership working in Tower Hamlets
- Recognised statutory partnership working to be particularly strong.
- Commended the council for being committed to being a learning organisation with a genuine appetite to explore and adopt best practice.

- Acknowledged that the council demonstrated a high degree of organisational maturity in its positive response to critical challenge.
- Commended the Council for creating the Transformation Board.
- That the LGA Peer Review agreed with the concerns that had been raised with it in advance of the review by the Mayor and the current CEO that “there are ‘two councils’ in operation at Tower Hamlets which is impacting on the speed and effectiveness of decision making.”
- The LGA also expressed concerns around trust, sign off of decisions and delays to decision making.
- This was a legacy of the previous administration and Mayor who delegated significant mayoral powers to officers, which in our opinion left behind a culture of two councils. By contrast, the LGA concluded that ‘The Mayor is providing strong political leadership and is seen as approachable by both members and officers alike. Cabinet members are passionate about delivering the council’s priorities and want what is best for the residents across the borough’.
- The very positive IIP inspection that followed the LGA review suggests that the two-council culture issue is being addressed quickly and constructively and the new management team are bringing the staff with them on an improvement journey.
- The Action Plan report includes a review of the Mayor’s office which has already been completed leading to savings for the Council.
- The Mayor has empowered the Council, through strong central leadership and strategic direction, which has enabled the Council to reinvest in services. His Office has worked with services across the Council to deliver one of the most ambitious, progressive and expansive policy programmes seen in Local Government.
- The 2023 LGA peer review makes clear that there has been a very considerable churn in senior management since May 2022 – which is not uncommon following a change of political and managerial leadership’ and it noted that the Council’s recruitment process was well underway.
- During this period the Council has successfully embarked upon a major transformation and improvement programme, significantly improved its financial position, secured long overdue audit sign off of Council accounts, improved its IIP rating and supported the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge.
- The actions included in the Action Plan are drawn directly from the 70+ positive suggestions and recommendations contained within the LGA

report. All of these have been addressed, often using the wording in the report to frame the action. To this extent there was limited necessity for content discussion. All of the LGA suggestions and recommendations are to be addressed via specific actions. This does not preclude collaboration or engagement in respect of the development of solutions and project leads are encouraged to engage all relevant stakeholders where practical. The CEO has extended an invitation to members of the Council to discuss the LGA Peer Review findings. The Corporate Peer Action Plan will be the subject of review by the Overview and Scrutiny committee on a regular basis. The first date for the committee to consider progress in relation to the action plan is currently being scheduled and will be revisited on a quarterly basis. This approach has been agreed with the Chair of the overview scrutiny committee and further details will be available on the councils committee website.

- Opposition councillors are being invited to attend a meeting with the Chief Executive to discuss the Corporate Challenge Review Report and Action Plan.
- The peer review noted how scrutiny is conducted and found “the chair of the scrutiny committee and all sub committees are currently from the majority ruling party (Aspire) as is common practice. Similarly, it notes the absence of women in the Cabinet despite Aspire offering positions to opposition female councillors which were refused.
- The Action Plan put forward in November sets out actions to define current best practice in relation to chairing, membership, and cross party working in and of committees including the Overview & Scrutiny Committee its Sub-Committees and the Audit Committee. It will conduct a review of current terms of reference for committees based on best practice including the appointment of women to lead or undertake senior political positions within the council. The Mayor will receive recommendations from that review and agree any necessary actions. The Mayor’s conclusions will be published.
- The Audit Committee has already considered the CIPFA recommendations on how its membership should be structured and agreed changes to ensure it remains robust and effective.
- In 2022 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to Cllr Sabina Khan’s appointment as a Scrutiny Lead. This year again the position was offered to a female opposition councillor. It is unfortunate that this was refused and a male labour Councillor was proposed.
- The report notes—that relationships with some third sector/voluntary partners “have weakened” possibly due to the introduction of the new community grant programme which has increased the number of organisations who can access Council grants.
- The Council recognises the need to maintain good working relationships with all voluntary sector organisations where possible but also recognises that it may not be possible to please everyone when

making structural decisions about the way in which resources are allocated. The Council continues to work closely with the Voluntary Sector to co-design new and improved partnership infrastructure via PEG and the root and branch review they are currently undertaking. The Council's partnership work also includes the development of a New Partnership Plan (recently approved) and it continues to work hard to strengthen and improve relationships with all our partners. The previous administration cut grants services to only 39 organisations funding 50 projects, to £2.6million per year. This has been increased to £4.5million a year with the transformed *Mayor's Community* and *Mayor's Small* grants scheme, which will see 86 organisations delivering 110 projects.

- Under the previous administration, the 2021 LGA Peer Review stated that: "Those in the Council reflect that partnership working came to the fore during the pandemic and continues to go from strength to strength for the benefit of residents and businesses and it was made clear to the peer team that partners are strongly committed to the ambitions of the Place". Which was in large part a commentary on statutory and health partnerships. The latest LGA report states that these 'statutory and health partnerships are of a good quality with health partners in particular referencing the strength of relationships in place with adult social care. These partnerships were strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic, when an operational management group with health and care leaders was established. This strengthened trust has led to more effective partnership working which has resulted in improvements in many areas including reducing the number of delayed transfers from acute settings'. The corporate peer challenge report also referenced the council relationship with the Metropolitan Police stating that 'the Council's community safety work is considered sector leading by the Police who highly value their professional working relationship with the Council'. It is therefore not an accurate reflection of the LGA report to infer that partnership working under the previous administration was stronger.

This Council believes:

- The Action Plan's proposal of a Tower Hamlets Women Commission must ensure that female voices and those of people with different backgrounds to Aspire's Cabinet members are effectively engaged during in decision-making processes.
- There are further commitments that are directly relevant to and supportive of the need to improve the profile of women in the Council and public life generally. These comprise:
 - Working with the LGA's Be a Councillor Campaign to encourage residents (especially women and those from under-represented groups) to stand for election,

- conducting a review of terms of reference for committees based on best practice including the appointment of women to lead in the Council,
 - all parties will be encouraged to support this campaign and publish how they will actively encourage women candidates,
 - new initiatives to capture feedback from women regarding their experience of contributing to council meetings,
 - better codifying dedicated time for staff led group chairs to develop staff equalities networks,
 - review and re-run relevant staff and member awareness programmes.
- The Action Plan addresses the LGA's recommendation that in the case of both grants and property disposals there should be involvement and oversight from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with there also being an ability to 'call in' decisions in line with the Council's Constitution.
 - Both grants and property disposals can be and are scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. As with all Member level decisions they can be called in.
 - The process proposed for "reviewing" the Mayor's Office will follow the LGA Peer Review Recommendations.
 - In the absence of meaningful cross-party engagement or even discussions by the Corporate Leadership Team with Opposition councillors, residents can have no confidence in the draft Action Plan. Therefore, the Chief Executive has been liaising with Group Leaders on the Council about attending a meeting with the Chief Executive to discuss the Corporate Challenge Review Report and Action Plan.

This council resolves:

- To welcome the LGA Peer Review report and agree the comprehensive Action Plan and instruct the Corporate Leadership Team to engage with all councillors on the progress of the Action Plan.

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

9.1 Report of the Executive: Youth Justice Board Annual Report

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning, presented the annual report. He outlined the achievements of the Youth Justice Board before members added their comments.

RESOLVED:

Council **AGREED:**

- 1) the Youth Justice Plan set out in Appendix 1 to the Youth Justice Board report attached to the cover sheet.

9.2 Report of the Executive: Council Tax Discounts and Premiums for Empty Properties and Second Homes

Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and Cost-of-living introduced the report. He stated the report set out the proposed Council Tax Discounts and Premiums for Empty Properties and Second Homes. He said this formed part of the Budget and Policy framework which required approval by Council. Members of the Council commented on the report.

RESOLVED:

Council **AGREED** to:

The Council is recommended to:

1. Reduce the current 100% discount awarded to unoccupied and unfurnished and uninhabitable dwellings to zero (0%) for the financial year 2024/25 onwards.
2. From 1 April 2024, amend the application of the levy of 100% premium for long-term empty properties to 1 year reducing this from the current 2 years.
3. From 1 April 2024 levy an additional premium on long-term empty property vacant for over 5 years at the maximum permitted level of 200%. The resulting charge will be 300% of the standard Council Tax.
4. From 1 April 2024 levy an additional premium on long-term empty property vacant for over 10 years at the maximum permitted level of 300%. The resulting charge will be 400% of the standard Council Tax.
5. Council be given the discretion, delegated to the Head of Revenues and Benefits to reduce or waive the long-term empty premium charge in exceptional circumstances.
6. Give 12 months' notice that the Council will introduce a second home premium of 100% from 1 April 2025.

10. OTHER BUSINESS**10.1 Proportionality and Allocation of Places on Committees of the Council 2023/24**

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning introduced the report. He stated that due to a change in the political composition of the Council, with a member of the Labour Group becoming an independent (ungrouped) Member, the Council had to review the allocation of places on Committees and other bodies covered by the proportionality requirements as set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Members of the Council commented on the report.

RESOLVED:

Council **AGREED** to:

1. Consider the review of proportionality as at Section 3 of this report and the allocation of seats on Committees and Sub-Committees for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2023/24 as set out at paragraph 3.6.
2. Note the Committees set out for the municipal year 2023/24 listed in paragraph 3.6 as agreed at the Annual Council meeting held on Wednesday 17 May 2023.
3. Agree any changes to the memberships (and substitutes) of those Committees as tabled at this Council meeting for approval.
4. To note that the Monitoring Officer is authorised to approve the appointment of Councillors required to fill positions that fall vacant during the municipal year in line with the proportionality arrangements set out in this report from nominations received from the political groups.
5. Agree that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to approve the appointment of ungrouped Councillors to any committee places not allocated by the Council to a political group, after consultation with those Councillors and the Speaker of the Council where there is only one application for the position (where there is more than one application these will be presented to Council for decision).
6. **AGREED and APPROVED** the appointment of Councillor Peter Golds to the General Purposes Committee and Councillor Nathalie Bienfait to the Strategic Development Committee from nominations tabled at the meeting.

11. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following questions and in each case supplementary questions were put (except where indicated) and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member.

11.1 Question from Councillor Amin Rahman

Could the Lead member provide an update on the council's outstanding accounts requiring sign off? These accounts were left unsigned for 6 years under the previous administration.

Response of Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost-of-living

The council has signed off audited accounts for financial years 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20. The council has published draft accounts for 2020/21 and 2021/22 – these accounts are subject to audit.

Supplementary question from Councillor Amin Rahman

Can you give us an update on the Accounts for 2023?

Response of Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost-of-living

The 2022/23 draft accounts are expected to be published by the end of January 2024 – which will also be subject to audit.

11.2 Question from Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury

Can the Cabinet Member follow up on suggestions at the recent Health and Wellbeing Board that housing officers be part of the consultation in combatting drugs work?

Response of Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Social Care

As part of the Combatting Drugs Partnership strategy, Housing Officers have been engaged as part of the strategy development. The Housing Senior Management Team considered the priority areas on the 6th of November 2023 and the fuller draft document was circulated for them to comment. Housing officers were also present at the initial workshop on the 27th of July 2023. The Hostels Forum was consulted on the 19th of October 2023. A further discussion is planned for Tower Hamlets Homes officers to comment on the draft strategy.

The strategy should be completed in February and each area will have an action plan and group that oversees the delivery of actions sitting beneath the strategy. One of the priorities identified is to provide settings that sustain recovery - housing colleagues across all service areas will be invited to help develop actions within that area, providing future opportunities to shape the direction of services and our approach as a partnership.

11.3 Question from Councillor Ahmodul Kabir

Residents in Wharton House in Bethnal Green East recently went without heating and hot water for weeks, and in some cases over a month. In an emergency such as this can the Lead Member tell us what the council doing to a) ensure that the registered provider, in this case One Housing is supporting residents and b) deploy its own resources to assist those most vulnerable.

Response of Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding

The outage at Wharton House was caused by a defective boiler that unfortunately took several weeks to repair. One Housing Riverside was in regular contact with residents to provide updates on the progress of the work as well supporting them with a Resident Liaison Officer who was on hand to provide information and individual support for those that needed it. Portable heaters were also provided by One Housing for those residents that required them. We are also aware One Housing Riverside was communicating with the Mayor's Office to keep them aware of changes in the scheduled completion date, and reassurance that compensation would be provided to residents once the repairs had been completed.

Supplementary question from Councillor Ahmodul Kabir

What can the council do to protect the residents and hold registered providers accountable?

Response of Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding

The effect of a service failure could mean residents are affected in a multitude of different ways. Where that happens, it is incumbent on RPs to support, and where necessary, compensate residents using their own resources. If for any reason that does not happen, we will liaise the RP concerned to help residents get the support they need. If an RP refuses to comply, we will encourage residents to raise a complaint with the RP concerned using their formal Complaints Procedure. Once this process has been exhausted residents can then refer the RP to the Housing Ombudsman Service for further investigation and enforcement action if necessary.

Officers are working with the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum that consists of the main RPs in the borough, (including One Housing Riverside), to have a protocol in place for communicating service failures. Where a failure is reported that is likely to have an adverse effect on residents within their housing stock RPs have agreed to notify residents as well as the Council and the Lead Member as soon as possible. The notification should include details of the nature of the problem, what they doing to resolve it, how they are

supporting affected residents and when they expect the problem to be rectified.

11.4 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Can the Mayor and Lead Member provide details of the number of applications that were in the queue awaiting an Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment in each month since April 2022? It would also be helpful to know how many assessments were carried out (a) within and (b) outside the two-month target time, broken down by (i) Homelessness and (ii) Lettings in each of 2022/23 and so far in 2023/24?

Response of Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding

Unfortunately, the team does not hold the historical data requested regarding how many housing need assessments (along with our other non-housing need assessment tasks) are received per month, when they are allocated or when advice reports are completed, however we can provide data relating to the numbers of people still on the waiting list covering the period requested:

Homeless waiting list – 13 total

Aug 23 – 4

Oct 23 – 2

Nov 23 – 6

Dec 23 – 1

Lettings cases waiting list – 170 total

June 23 – 20

July 23 – 16

Aug 23 – 32

Sep 23 – 38

Oct 23 – 17

Nov 23 – 30

Dec 23 – 11

Jan 24 – 6

Supplementary question from Councillor Marc Francis

Thank you for the figures. A considerable amount of people are still waiting for an OT assessment and have been told it will be several more months before they are assessed. What is being done to resolve this?

Response of Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding

This is one of many services where we have listened to staff as well as residents. We are aware the service needs enhanced investment and as such we'll be taking this up with the Corporate and Divisional Director for Housing, to reduce the wait times for these vulnerable people.

11.5 Question from Councillor Shafi Ahmed

I thank the current administration for introducing a borough-wide Public Spaces Protection Order to curb drug related Anti-Social behaviour, particularly the use of NOX (laughing gas) on our streets. Can the Lead Member set out the impact this has had in addressing the problem to date?

Response of Councillor Abu Talha Chowdhury, Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Safer Communities

In May 2021, following growing public concerns about the use of Nitrous Oxide and associated antisocial behaviour, the Council introduced a Public Space Protection Order. One of only two in London. This allowed Council Officers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to people using or in possessing psychoactive substances, including nitrous oxide, where they were causing or likely to cause harassment, alarm, distress, nuisance, or annoyance to members of the public. Between May 2021 and November 2023, 220 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued to address this issue.

In November 2023, the Government changed the Misuse of Drugs Act, to include Nitrous Oxide as a Class C drug. This makes Nitrous Oxide illegal to possess and takes it outside of the scope of the current PSPO. We will continue to support police enforcement of this drug through THEOs and CCTV.

Supplementary question from Councillor Shafi Ahmed

Are there any awareness programmes for residents as well as users?

Response of Councillor Abu Talha Chowdhury, Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Safer Communities

In addition to our enforcement work, and in partnership Queen Mary's University, Barts Health NHS Trust, the Police, and Osmani Trust, we have

developed our groundbreaking “Know the Risks” project. The project has three main aims.

(1) Prevention through borough-wide educational workshops to raise awareness of the dangers of NOX abuse in diverse settings including schools, colleges, places of worship, and community hubs. These workshops are the first of their kind in the UK. These prevention workshops have already reached 2000 individuals, with plans to further embed them in schools.

We are working with the police to establish crucial referral pathways to connect individuals with our prevention and diversion program. This is to steer young individuals away from the path of criminalisation. All our enforcement officers have undergone specialised training to deliver harm minimisation and interventions on the street. The Met Police are seeking to replicate our successful model in other London boroughs.

(2) The second objective is to improve the NOX-treatment pathway in East London hospitals. This is to address the rising health burden associated with NOX-related harm. At the Royal London Hospital, this care pathway supported around 200 patients in the last year.

(3) The 3rd objective centres on advancing research led by Professor Alastair Noyce (our partner) into the significant health effects of NOX.

Our response to the dangers posed by Nitrous Oxide are holistic and collaborative, addressing challenges in our borough. Through education, diversion, and proactive healthcare measures, we strive to create a safer and more informed community.

11.6 Question from Councillor Mufedah Bustin

Following the allocation of NCIL to fund the Mayor’s Community Grants programme, when will councillors receive copies of:

- 1) the legal advice provided to the Mayor validating the use of NCIL in this way
- 2) the breakdown of NCIL allocation to grants at a project and location level

Response of Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost-of-living

No external legal advice was obtained regarding the use of NCIL (Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy) for the Grants process. Internal legal input and approval can be seen in the Cabinet Report from June 2023 that adopted the new NCIL approach. The external legal advice referred to at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on the Mayor’s Community Grants Programme was in relation to the grants process itself, not the funding source. In a response to a previous members enquiry regarding that legal advice, the

response confirmed that the advice is subject to legal professional privilege and is therefore considered to be exempt from disclosure at the present time.

Supplementary question from Councillor Mufedah Bustin

Why is the legal advice exempt from disclosure?

Response of Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost-of-living

We don't know the details of the member enquiry but a briefing note on the breakdown of the NCIL allocation to grants in each NCIL area is being drafted to go to Overview and Scrutiny Committee later this year.

Questions 11.8 to 11.27 were not put due to lack of time. The written responses are attached to at **Appendix A**.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Motions 12.1 and 12.2 were not considered due to lack of time.

The meeting ended at 10.08 p.m.

Speaker of the Council

This page is intentionally left blank

Item 11: Member Questions and Answers

11.1	<p>Question from Councillor Amin Rahman</p>	<p>Could the Lead member provide an update on the council's outstanding accounts requiring sign off? These accounts were left unsigned for 6 years under the previous administration.</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The council has signed off audited accounts for financial years 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20. The council has published draft accounts for 2020/21 and 2021/22 – these accounts are subject to audit. The 2022/23 draft accounts are expected to be published by the end of January 2024 – which will also be subject to audit.</p>
11.2	<p>Question from Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury</p>	<p>Can the Cabinet Member follow up on suggestions at the recent Health and Wellbeing Board that housing officers be part of the consultation in combatting drugs work?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>As part of the Combatting Drugs Partnership strategy, Housing Officers have been engaged as part of the strategy development. The Housing Senior Management Team considered the priority areas on the 6th of November 2023 and the fuller draft document was circulated for them to comment. Housing officers were also present at the initial workshop on the 27th of July 2023. The Hostels Forum was consulted on the 19th of October 2023. A further discussion is planned for Tower Hamlets Homes officers to comment on the draft strategy.</p> <p>The strategy should be completed in February and each area will have an action plan and group that oversees the delivery of actions sitting beneath the strategy. One of the priorities identified is to provide settings that sustain recovery - housing colleagues across all service areas will be invited to help develop actions within that area, providing future opportunities to shape the direction of services and our approach as a partnership.</p>
11.3	<p>Question from Councillor Ahmodul Kabir</p>	<p>Residents in Wharton House in Bethnal Green East recently went without heating and hot water for weeks, and in some cases over a month. In an emergency such as this can the Lead Member tell us what the council doing to a) ensure that the registered provider, in this</p>

		<p>case One Housing is supporting residents and b) deploy its own resources to assist those most vulnerable.</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The outage at Wharton House was caused by a defective boiler that unfortunately took several weeks to repair. One Housing Riverside was in regular contact with residents to provide updates on the progress of the work as well supporting them with a Resident Liaison Officer who was on hand to provide information and individual support for those that needed it. Portable heaters were also provided by One Housing for those residents that required them. We are also aware One Housing Riverside was communicating with the Mayor's Office to keep them abreast of changes in the scheduled completion date, and reassurance that compensation would be provided to residents once the repairs had been completed.</p> <p>Officers are working with the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum that consists of the main RPs in the borough, (including One Housing Riverside), to have a protocol in place for communicating service failures. Where a failure is reported that is likely to have an adverse effect on residents within their housing stock RPs have agreed to notify residents as well as the Council and the Lead Member as soon as possible. The notification should include details of the nature of the problem, what they doing to resolve it, how they are supporting affected residents and when they expect the problem to be rectified.</p> <p>RPs have also agreed to keep the Council and residents updated as remedial works progress and outline details of any issues likely to delay completion dates conveyed to residents. This will ensure the Council has advance knowledge of issues that residents are likely to refer to Members so they can be armed with information to respond to any complaints received.</p> <p>The effect of a service failure could mean residents are affected in a multitude of different ways. Where that happens, it is incumbent on RPs to support, and where necessary, compensate residents using their own resources. If for any reason that does not happen, we will liaise the RP concerned to help residents get the support they need. If an RP refuses to comply, we will encourage residents to raise a complaint with the RP concerned using their formal Complaints Procedure. Once this</p>
--	--	--

		<p>process has been exhausted residents can then refer the RP to the Housing Ombudsman Service for further investigation and enforcement action if necessary.</p>
<p>11.4</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Marc Francis</p>	<p>Can the Mayor and Lead Member provide details of the number of applications that were in the queue awaiting an Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment in each month since April 2022? It would also be helpful to know how many assessments were carried out (a) within and (b) outside the two-month target time, broken down by (i) Homelessness and (ii) Lettings in each of 2022/23 and so far in 2023/24?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The team does not hold the historical data requested regarding how many housing need assessments (along with our other non-housing need assessment tasks) are received per month, when they are allocated or when advice reports are completed, however we can provide data relating to the numbers of people still on the waiting list covering the period requested:</p> <p>Homeless waiting list – 13 total Aug 23 – 4 Oct 23 – 2 Nov 23 – 6 Dec 23 – 1</p> <p>Lettings cases waiting list – 170 total June 23 – 20 July 23 – 16 Aug 23 – 32 Sep 23 – 38 Oct 23 – 17 Nov 23 – 30 Dec 23 – 11 Jan 24 – 6</p> <p>Occupational Therapists (OT) carry out a wide range of duties in addition to housing need assessments, including viewings, new build adaptations and equipment follow-ups, as well as duties related to social care.</p> <p>By its very nature OT assessments are time consuming as it often involves home visits and this means a limited number can be completed each day. The number of requests for assessments involving autistic household member(s) has increased significantly, which requires a</p>

		<p>home visit and often in non-school hours which can limit appointment time.</p> <p>Admin support for the team is being sourced, which will free up OTs to concentrate on housing needs assessments rather than diary management.</p> <p>Furthermore, since December new referrals are being filtered to make sure referrals are appropriate i.e. applicant is mobility impaired and requires an OT assessment.</p>
11.5	<p>Question from Councillor Shafi Ahmed</p>	<p>I thank the current administration for introducing a borough-wide Public Spaces Protection Order to curb drug related Anti-Social behaviour, particularly the use of NOX (laughing gas) on our streets. Can the Lead Member set out the impact this has had in addressing the problem to date?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>In May 2021, following growing public concerns about the use of Nitrous Oxide and associated antisocial behaviour, the Council introduced a Public Space Protection Order. One of only two in London. This allowed Council Officers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to people using or in possessing psychoactive substances, including nitrous oxide, where they were causing or likely to cause harassment, alarm, distress, nuisance, or annoyance to members of the public. Between May 2021 and November 2023, 220 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued to address this issue.</p> <p>In November 2023, the Government changed the Misuse of Drugs Act, to include Nitrous Oxide as a Class C drug. This makes Nitrous Oxide illegal to possess and takes it outside of the scope of the current PSPO. We will continue to support police enforcement of this drug through THEOs and CCTV.</p> <p>In addition to our enforcement work, and in partnership Queen Mary’s University, Barts Health NHS Trust, the Police, and Osmani Trust, we have developed our groundbreaking “Know the Risks” project. The project has three main aims.</p> <p>(1) Prevention through borough-wide educational workshops to raise awareness of the dangers of NOX abuse in diverse settings including schools, colleges, places of worship, and community hubs. These workshops are the first of their kind in the UK.</p>

		<p>These prevention workshops have already reached 2000 individuals, with plans to further embed them in schools.</p> <p>We are working with the police to establish crucial referral pathways to connect individuals with our prevention and diversion program. This is to steer young individuals away from the path of criminalisation. All our enforcement officers have undergone specialised training to deliver harm minimisation and interventions on the street. The Met Police are seeking to replicate our successful model in other London boroughs.</p> <p>(2) the second objective is to improve the NOX-treatment pathway in East London hospitals. This is to address the rising health burden associated with NOX-related harm. At the Royal London Hospital, this care pathway supported around 200 patients in the last year.</p> <p>(3) The 3rd objective centres on advancing research led by Professor Alastair Noyce (our partner) into the significant health effects of NOX.</p> <p>Our response to the dangers posed by Nitrous Oxide are holistic and collaborative, addressing challenges in our borough. Through education, diversion, and proactive healthcare measures, we strive to create a safer and more informed community.</p>
11.6	<p>Question from Councillor Mufeedah Bustin</p>	<p>Following the allocation of NCIL to fund the Mayor’s Community Grants programme, when will councillors receive copies of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the legal advice provided to the Mayor validating the use of NCIL in this way 2) the breakdown of NCIL allocation to grants at a project and location level <p>Response</p> <p>No external legal advice was obtained regarding the use of NCIL (Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy) for the Grants process. Internal legal input and approval can be seen in the Cabinet Report from June 2023 that adopted the new NCIL approach. The external legal advice referred to at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on the Mayor’s Community Grants Programme was in relation to the grants process itself, not the funding source. In a response to a previous members enquiry regarding that legal advice, the response confirmed that the advice is subject to legal professional privilege and is</p>

		<p>therefore considered to be exempt from disclosure at the present time.</p> <p>A briefing note on the breakdown of the NCIL allocation to grants in each NCIL area is being drafted to go to Overview and Scrutiny Committee early this year.</p>
11.7	<p>Question from Councillor Harun Miah</p>	<p>Can the Lead Member provide an update on progress with senior management recruitment and achieving a workforce to reflect the community - in Tower Hamlets?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>7 senior management posts have recently been advertised. Recruitment is ongoing and three appointments have been made so far. Two of the candidates appointed will increase our representation of Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic staff at senior level.</p>
11.8	<p>Question from Councillor Asma Islam</p>	<p>Could the Mayor provide us with an update of the conversations he has had with THCH regarding the condition of Vollasky house?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The Mayor and his office, along with Councillor Abu Talha Chowdhury have been in correspondence with THCH about issues relating to a number of properties in Vollasky House.</p> <p>Mr Speaker, recently the Mayor's team worked with THCH to support residents of Vollasky House affected by a long-standing water leak. They helped to establish the source of the leak as well as ensure repairs to the damaged ceiling were carried out in a timely fashion while residents were moved to a place of safety.</p> <p>Mr Speaker, the Mayor is aware of the wider problems in the block, particularly the roof of the building, and despite having limited powers, is committed to getting this addressed. As the Mayor's Lead Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding, I have reached out to THCH about a number of their problematic blocks including Vollasky House. I have been contacted by many residents aggrieved about the lack of support with repairs and general maintenance. I hope THCH will respond so these concerns lead to swift remedial action.</p>

		<p>Mr speaker, I want to remind Labour Councillors that it was the Mayor's team that were on the ground supporting residents of Vollasky House during Christmas holidays. It was the Mayor and his team who stood up for residents and pressed THCH for support, and it was the Mayor and his team that have pushed for better accountability of Housing Associations like THCH.</p>
11.9	<p>Question from Councillor Abdul Mannan</p>	<p>Can the Lead Member update us on progress with the recommendations following the LGA Corporate Peer Review which took place in September last year?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The LGA published their report in December. This set out 18 core recommendations. The Council published its action plan and supporting statement on the same day on the Council Web Site, welcoming the report and outlining its response to it. The Action Plan sets out a wide range of actions responding to the core recommendations, each action linked to the relevant LGA recommendation. Some critical actions have already been delivered such as the long outstanding sign off of historic council accounts and the publication of Annual Governance Statements. Also, the Council is well advanced with the preparation of its Medium-Term Financial Strategy which is on target for final approval in February 2024. The indicative dates for delivery of the actions appearing on the Action Plan will be updated at the end of January following the completion of scoping work currently underway. Dialogue has started with the LGA to programme a light touch progress check in the summer and we hope to have agreed the date with the LGA by the end of January.</p>
11.10	<p>Question from Councillor Asma Begum</p>	<p>Could the relevant cabinet member inform me what new investment there is in the 2024-25 council budget related to the council's net zero commitments?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>Previously we have agreed multi-year projects as part of the Mayors Energy Fund to deliver net zero carbon projects, these projects include renewable energy generation such as photovoltaic panels on Council buildings, Community Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Generation project to support community groups, Residential Energy Efficiency Project to support our residents and a tree planting scheme to improve biodiversity in the borough, these projects are currently being delivered.</p>

		<p>There are no new investment planned in the 2024-25 council budget related to the council's net zero commitments. We have £3 million in the carbon fund that is unallocated and will go towards funding new net zero carbon commitments, these will include behaviour change projects for the community and residents so that we can take them on the journey to net zero, further investment to improve council assets to reduce carbon emissions and energy costs to the Council, support schools to achieve net zero carbon, investigate decarbonisation opportunities across all sectors and pilot innovation such</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material re-use initiatives – project exploring sustainable city living and low waste initiatives • City Soil – food waste scheme to soil • Biodiesel - cooking oil refining to provide biodiesel to LBTH fleet, power production through generators • Embodied Carbon Construction project – pilot programme to provide space for material storage resulting from demolition / construction activities <p>We will also explore all the external grant funding available and in most cases these require match funding by the Council, therefore we will need to carefully target our investment in this area to ensure we maximise the opportunity and get best value for money.</p>
11.11	<p>Question from Councillor Kamrul Hussain</p>	<p>Could the Lead Member share feedback from the Women In Business Festive Fair last month? What was on offer and how well was it attended?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The Women in Business Festive Fair 2023 ran from 16 – 23rd December in the Grocer's Wing of the Town Hall with the aim to support local women in the borough to showcase their businesses, develop a new business and/or access business support seminars. To drive footfall and support families to attend, art & craft sessions, facepainting, a jazz band and dance performances also took place.</p> <p>The event also supported the establishment of the new Town Hall in Whitechapel as a venue space for similar future events, and the marketing and promotion of Whitechapel and its local businesses and market traders by attracting visitors to shop, eat and play in the area.</p>

		<p>The event featured 25 women trading in a wide variety of items. These included Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani jewellery and clothing, food, artwork, paintings, plants, gift sets, knitwear, bookmarks, scrapbooks, personalised bags and notebooks, embroidery frames, home-made gifts for keyrings, pincushions, jewellery boxes.</p> <p>The event generated great interest from the community, especially other local women who expressed an interest in future events. Footfall was highest at the weekend with 500+ attendees and over 2,000 people attended the event in total. 99% of the traders have indicated they would return to a similar event in the future.</p>
<p>11.12</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Rebekah Sultana</p>	<p>Could the relevant cabinet member inform me what sort of actions are being taken to support individuals without housing during the winter months and whether the council could be take actions such as lowering the threshold in which Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) protocols can be initiated?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>This year has seen a steep increase in the need for SWEP in London due to lower temperatures.</p> <p>The Greater London Authority (GLA) holds responsibility for activating and deactivating SWEP. SWEP is provided for anyone rough sleeping in the borough during periods of temperatures being zero or below.</p> <p>The Council delivers SWEP through a mixture of commissioned services and partnerships with third sector service providers.</p> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installing emergency beds in hostels and day centres • The Street Outreach Team carrying out extra shifts • Mobilised additional capacity by working creatively and collaboratively across the council to deliver 'pop up' facilities and bedspaces in council owned buildings. <p>These efforts are set to continue during cold weather periods and the further use of council buildings may be deemed necessary. Funding is being sought from central government to support these actions.</p>

		<p>Due to a rise in demand and loss of hostel capacity this year, it is unfortunately not possible to lower the threshold for accessing SWEP without increases in funding for rough sleeping services.</p> <p>The council deploys throughout the year a dedicated Street Outreach Service who identify rough sleepers on the street and work with them to find housing solutions even when SWEP is not activated</p>
<p>11.13</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Ahmodur Khan</p>	<p>Community safety is a huge concern, and this is felt quite strongly on the Isle of Dogs. The previous administration did very little to address crime and even less to save the only police station on the Island. Can the Lead Member tell us what he is going to do help Islanders feel safer?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The Community Safety Partnership provides the strategic response to crime and antisocial behaviour occurring at a Borough level and at a locality level.</p> <p>Currently the Community Safety Division has:</p> <p>Dedicated council resources allocated to the Isle of dogs to tackle crime and asb, improve feelings of safety, provide reassurance and to work with the police, residents and partners.</p> <p>There is a dedicated team of Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers to patrol the Island, and a dedicated ASB/Community Safety officer to help with problem solving issues and to investigate ASB reports from residents. These officers work as part of a localities team with safer neighbourhoods' police, registered social landlord's residents and third sector partners. Our council officers attend all the local Ward Panel Meetings, and they undertake joint patrols with the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team. This includes the use of the Council's outreach and engagement bus and running a series of safer surgeries across the Island. Where there are additional concerns, the council funded police officers, the Partnership Task Force are proactively tasked to the area.</p> <p>To provide a holistic response to issues of youth violence the service works closely in Partnership with organisations such as the Tower Hamlets Island Community Network. Recent work included an anti-robbery initiative focusing on DLR stations with Council officers, youth providers, working alongside British</p>

		<p>Transport Police and local housing providers. Over 275 Hours of additional detached and intensive targeted street-based youth work was delivered to support and protect young people and the wider community.</p> <p>The MPS Estates Strategy is currently under review. There is an ongoing discussion with Police about opportunities for local neighbourhoods' police officers to utilise Council buildings/assets to improve access for residents and visibility of police on the Island.</p>
11.14	<p>Question from Councillor Shubo Hussain</p>	<p>How many GCSE booster classes have the council supported schools in delivering since 2022?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The council does not provide funding for GCSE booster classes. Where schools provide these, they are funded from the school's own budget.</p> <p>In addition, the Department of Education has provided two funding streams to all schools to assist pupils to catch up with their learning in recognition of the impact of the pandemic. One grant is the National Tutoring Programme for schools to access tuition partners and academic mentors, with schools contributing 50% of the costs. The other grant is the Recovery Premium which is used for any activity which enables pupils to catch up on their learning and make expected progress. Both grants can be used to support GSCE preparation.</p>
11.15	<p>Question from Councillor Saif Uddin Khaled</p>	<p>Now that the independent investigation, initiated by 31 members of staff, into housing management across housing options and homelessness has concluded, can the Lead Member provide an update as to what will happen going forward.</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The internal process to deal with the issues raised is ongoing. Senior management continue to meet with staff and trade union representatives to agree appropriate actions, including a review of the staffing structure and service delivery.</p>
11.16	<p>Question from Councillor James King</p>	<p>When is the council going to get round to fixing the front door of Padstow House on the Roche estate? It has been hanging off its hinges for six months.</p> <p>Response</p>

		Our Door Entry contractor ABCA attended on 12 January 2024 to make safe. They have raised a follow on order to carry out further repairs and have scheduled an appointment to return on 23 January 2024.
11.17	Question from Councillor Abdul Mailk	<p>Can the Lead Member provide a list of all the road safety and traffic management schemes on the Isle of Dogs delivered under the current Mayor and measures that are planned in the next 12 months?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>In the last 12 months the Transportation and Highways team has implemented the following schemes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New zebra crossing on Marsh Wall outside Novotel Hotel • New zebra crossing on Marsh Wall, west of junction with Mastmaker Road • Making permanent with amending timings an experimental school street at Arnhem Wharf School and Harbinger School. • In the next 12 months the following schemes are planned • New Zebra crossing on East Ferry Road adjacent to Canary Wharf College • New traffic calming measures on Casilla Rd & Millharbour • New zebra crossing on Marsh Wall
11.18	Question from Councillor Amina Ali	<p>What actions has the council taken to support residents and business owners affected by the recent flooding on Fish Island?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>During the 2 days after the flooding, the Economic Growth Team directly contacted all of the businesses affected to determine their position and immediate needs. Understandably, businesses were still working out exactly what damage had been caused and what the potential costs of reparation might be. The reparation cost estimates ranged from £1,500 to £35,000 at the time of speaking to the businesses.</p> <p>Details of the Government grant schemes accessible to businesses affected by flooding have been shared with all businesses. In summary:</p>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flooded households in eligible affected areas, who can apply for up to £500 cash to help with immediate costs. 2. Households and businesses significantly affected, who will be eligible for 100% council tax and business rates relief for at least 3 months. 3. Small-to-medium sized businesses in eligible affected areas, who can apply for up to £2,500 from the Business Recovery Grant to help them return quickly to business as usual. 4. Eligible flood-hit property owners, who can apply for up to £5,000 to help make their homes and businesses more resilient to future flooding via the Property Flood Resilience Repair Grant Scheme. 5. Farmers who have suffered uninsurable damage to their land will be able to apply for grants of up to £25,000 through the Farming Recovery Fund towards repair and reinstatement costs for farmers adversely affected by exceptional flooding. <p>Officers from the Business Rates and Economic Growth Teams will support businesses to apply to these schemes: Government payments for communities affected by flooding.</p> <p>Since this time, the Economic Growth Team have been speaking with the Canals and Rivers Trust to clarify issues around liability and insurance position. This work is currently ongoing.</p>
11.19	<p>Question from Councillor Bellal Uddin</p>	<p>The previous administration had very little regard for Cubitt Town Library. This historic building has received a boost from Mayor Rahman and is now also operating as a much-needed Resident Hub. Is the Lead Member aware of plans to move the library service and if so, will he work to keep the provision in Cubitt Town?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>There are no plans for the immediate future to move the library or services. We are working closely with service users to expand and develop the resident hub model being delivered from Cubitt Town Library.</p> <p>There are plans to develop an Idea Store at Crossharbour site at which point we would stop using Cubitt Town as a library but would like to retain the historic building for other community purposes.</p>

11.20	Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah	<p>Can the Mayor give us an update on progress with Mulberry Academy London Dock?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The council led construction of the new secondary school at London Dock, to be run by the Mulberry Academy Trust, remains on schedule for completion by late July 2024. It will therefore be ready to receive its first Year 7 intake in September 2024.</p> <p>Applications for admission to the new school are being administered through the council's co-ordinated arrangements, with parents of successful candidates to be notified on the 1st March 2024.</p>
11.21	Question from Councillor Amy Lee	<p>Can the Mayor tell me what representations he has made to relevant partners in regards to the boat the Ocean Diva?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>This matter was discussed with the Deputy Mayor and other ward Councillors on the Isle of Dogs when the original application was made. The Council's Environmental Health and Trading Standards Service submitted representations to Newham Council against the licence application in relation to noise concerns. The application was subsequently withdrawn by Ocean Diva and currently has not been resubmitted. We currently understand that the current proposals are not to have an embarkation or disembarkation point within Tower Hamlets. This matter is kept under review with Newham Council, who are the responsible authority for issuing relevant licences.</p>
11.22	Question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar	<p>How many £100 free school vouchers were delivered to parents over the Christmas period?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The council will be distributing vouchers to households with benefits related eligibility for free school meals as well as some additional households identified by schools. However, these were not distributed at Christmas.</p> <p>Due to the timing of additional payments from central government, it was decided that households would be better served by receiving additional funding between those two payments, timed for November and March.</p>

		<p>The tackling poverty team is currently liaising with schools to finalise numbers – expected to be in the region of 20,000 children – and will be sending vouchers to schools once all numbers have been returned.</p>
11.23	<p>Question from Councillor Faroque Ahmed</p>	<p>Could the relevant cabinet member inform me how many times the housing emergency task force has met and its membership?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>Given the extent of the challenges facing our residents and indeed, in cities across the country like London – it was agreed that a range of officer-led individual task and finish groups would be set up, providing a better and more targeted focus on specific housing issues for residents.</p> <p>Progress is routinely reported back to the Lead Member and to the Mayor, in order for them to provide a steer through 1-1 and portfolio meetings.</p> <p>The working groups which have been instigated include damp and mould, overcrowding, preparation for the enactment of the Social Housing Regulation Act, the insourcing of Tower Hamlets Homes and the establishment of resident engagement working groups, preparation for the operational impact of the draft Renters Reform Bill and a group which focuses on the transformation of the Housing Options Service.</p> <p>Additionally, there are regular Housing Away Days, held with senior officers, the Mayor and Lead Member which focus specifically on maximising the supply of affordable housing.</p>
11.24	<p>Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam</p>	<p>How many housing enforcement officers have been funded and resourced since 2022?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>We have employed two additional permanent enforcement Officers this year funded from the general revenue account. In addition we have 16 additional Officers funded through the current Housing Licensing schemes.</p>

11.25	<p>Question from Councillor Sabina Khan</p>	<p>Could the relevant cabinet member provide an update on any actions taken by the tension monitoring group over the last three months?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>The Tension Monitoring Group (“TMG”) is a community led, council facilitated group established to monitor and address community tensions. Since the commencement of hostilities in the middle east on the 7th October, eight Tension Monitoring Group (TMG) meetings have been convened.</p> <p>The following activity has taken place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A joint TMG, and Council statement has been issued reinforcing the message that Tower Hamlets “stands together” and is not a place for hate, prejudice, or intolerance. • The TMG has proactively monitored incidents, social media activity and community concerns emerging from the conflict. This has included such issues as reported hate crime, graffiti, posters and the display of flags. This dialogue has enabled us to assess and report changes in community tensions in a systematic manner to the corporate leadership team. • Information provided by the TMG concerning protests being held in and outside the borough have enabled responses. The council and police have provided a uniformed reassuring presence at key locations e.g., faith centres, parks, and offices of political parties. • In the early stages of the conflict, a WhatsApp group was created for TMG members to provide updates on emerging incidents and for the Council to share actions being undertaken in live time. This was a useful tool to build confidence in the community that the council and its partners were addressing concerns as they arose. • The TMG membership has provided feedback and guidance for the Education Service and other partners to ensure young people are able to debate, discuss, protest, and express their views in a safe, legal and appropriate manner.
-------	--	--

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Terms of Reference of the TMG are subject to review to incorporate learning and feedback from members after this sustained period of activity.
11.26	Question from Councillor Nathalie Bienfait	<p>How much progress has been made on installing new EV chargers across the borough?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please provide details of chargers installed in the last 12 months broken down by ward. Please provide details of plans to install chargers in the coming 12 months In both cases above, please provide the following information: about where and when chargers will be/were installed, what type of charger (e.g. fast/slow), where they are located on the pavement or street and whether/what proportion have a dedicated parking bay for them. <p>Response</p> <p>No new EV chargers have been installed in the last 12 months. Officers are bidding for external funding and procuring three new contracts to deliver approximately 2500 EV charging points over the next 3 years.</p> <p>There is a report going to cabinet on 31st Jan 2024, the delivery of EV is subject to cabinet approval.</p> <p>The plan for the next 12 months will depend on the terms of the new contracts, so we cannot confirm specifics at this time.</p> <p>Following a survey of the Borough, Officers have found 3000 potential slow charging point locations, resulting in 2000 being implemented as part of this project phase. In addition to this, 140 fast and 35 rapid charging point locations have been identified. However, these locations still need to be fully confirmed and amended following the required implementation systems, for example, the planning permission process. The current list is available upon request.</p>
11.27	Question from Councillor Peter Golds	<p>Pavements across the Isle of Dogs and elsewhere in the borough are increasingly being obstructed by abandoned lime bikes. These are a particular hazard to the disabled, those with sight impediments and parents with buggies. Many local authorities across London are introducing restrictions on these bikes to prevent the problems they create. Will Tower Hamlets consider implementing such restrictions?</p>

		<p>Response</p> <p>Unfortunately, the ability to carry out enforcement against dockless operators, including Lime, is extremely limited due a lack of specific legislation in place governing their use. Whilst the Department for Transport have indicated that legislation will be introduced it is currently unclear whether this will take place before the forthcoming general election. At a London level, TfL in partnership with London Councils and individual boroughs is seeking to procure a joint contract for both e scooters and dockless bikes which will set out standards for operators to adhere to. Currently it is anticipated that this will be in place for Summer 2025. In the meantime, officers liaise on an ongoing basis with Lime, raising issues on where their bikes are causing an obstruction. If there are any particular hotspot areas these can be raised too, or also passed on directly to Lime by residents and councillors by contacting london-ops@li.me</p>
--	--	--