

Non-Executive Report of the: Council 20 th November 2024	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Linda Walker, Interim Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Questions submitted by Members of the Council	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services
Wards affected	All wards

SUMMARY

1. Set out overleaf are the questions that were submitted by Members of the Council for response by the Mayor, the Speaker or the Chair of a Committee or Sub-Committee for this Council meeting.
2. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.4, questions relating to Executive functions and decisions taken by the Mayor are put to the Mayor unless he delegates such a decision to another Member, who will therefore be responsible for answering the question. In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor will answer questions directed to the Mayor.
3. Questions are limited to one per Member per meeting, plus one supplementary question unless the Member has indicated that only a written reply is required and in these circumstances a supplementary question is not permitted. Oral responses are time limited to one minute. Supplementary questions and responses are also time limited to one minute each.
4. Council Procedure Rule 10.7 provides for an answer to take the form of a written answer circulated to the questioner, a reference to a published work or a direct oral answer.
5. There is a time limit of thirty minutes at the Council meeting for consideration of Members' questions with no extension of time allowed and any questions not put within this time are dealt with by way of written responses.
6. Members must confine their contributions to questions and answers and not make statements or attempt to debate.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

28 questions have been received from Members of the Council as follows:-

11.1 Question from Councillor Bodrul Choudhury

Can the Lead Member provide an update on the recent Best Value Inspection and its findings?

11.2 Question from Councillor Asma Islam

Aspire pledged to tackle the housing crisis, yet they have repeatedly failed to hit their target to build 1000 social rent homes a year. Can the Mayor explain how the Housing Department's performance aligns with Aspire's promises and delivers best value for residents desperately waiting for affordable homes?

11.3 Question from Councillor Amin Rahman

Can you confirm that the Council is delivering against its best value duty to continuously improve as set out by the Local Government Act 1999?

11.4 Question from Councillor Amina Ali

Aspire has directed millions to consultants and advisors, creating a 'Two Council Culture' that obstructs decision-making. Can the administration explain how this spending provides best value and aligns with Aspire's pledge to make the council more efficient and transparent?

11.5 Question from Councillor Iqbal Hossain

The Council has made good progress on signing off historical accounts but it is important to keep making progress to avoid issues returning. Could the Lead Member provide an update on the council's accounts?

11.6 Question from Councillor Abdi Mohamed

Aspire promised to address health inequalities, yet the borough's own annual health report and statistics from the Trust for London show that Tower Hamlets continues to rank as a borough with poorer health outcomes than many other London Boroughs. How is the administration ensuring that public health funding is being used effectively to deliver best value and address the root causes of health disparities across Tower Hamlets?

11.7 Question from Councillor Abdul Mannan

Could the Lead Member provide an update on what the BVI Inspection team found concerning the surety and sustainability of the Council's finances?

11.8 Question from Councillor Asma Begum

Despite Aspire's promises to improve public spaces, they have placed our most treasured asset, Victoria Park, out of action for most of the summer holidays with a new music festival being announced in the last few weeks. How does the mayor justify the current state of our green spaces including Victoria park, and what steps are being taken to ensure these areas are maintained to provide best value and open access for the community?

11.9 Question from Councillor Ahmodul Kabir

The previous Secretary of State Michael Gove in his letter to the CEO and Lead inspector set out a number of specific areas that inspectors were tasked to review as they were a matter of concern to him. Can the Lead Member comment upon the Council's position in respect of these specific areas?

11.10 Question from Councillor Abdal Ullah

The decision to place a drugs treatment centre above a nursery in Wapping has caused great consternation amongst local residents I have spoken to – can the lead member tell

me how consultation with the local community was carried out on this decision and can he elaborate how conducting consultation in this way delivers best value for residents in Wapping?

11.11 Question from Councillor Harun Miah

Can the Lead Member comment upon the Council's position in respect of its use of resources, continuous improvement and service delivery?

11.12 Question from Councillor Rebaka Sultana

Aspire has pledged to support education, but I have spoken to parents in my ward who say that they are yet to see new support from schools from the council. What steps are being taken to ensure that resources directed to education and schools are truly providing best value and contributing to better outcomes for students?

11.13 Question from Councillor Ahmodur Khan

It has been over a year since the LGA Corporate Peer Review took place. The LGA Peer Review team will return at some point to check on progress against their recommendations. Can the Lead Member feedback on where we are in relation to this?

11.14 Question from Councillor James King

The failure to publish annual air quality reports or update the council's website with any data post 2022 suggest that Aspire's commitment to improve air quality and combat pollution has lacked any substance. How is the administration ensuring that its environmental policies are delivering best value and leading to measurable improvements in the borough's air quality?

11.15 Question from Councillor Abdul Malik

Earlier in the year, Mayor Rahman announced the creation of a Housing Taskforce which would oversee improvements to the falling Housing Options service. Can the Lead Member update the Council on the work done to date and programme going forward?

11.16 Question from Councillor Mufeedah Bustin

Please could the Lead Member provide an update on plans for the rebuild of George Green's Secondary School, which has been "on hold" by this administration for 2.5 years.

11.17 Question from Councillor Suluk Ahmed

Much has been made of a two-council culture failing to acknowledge that this was a problem that had been identified and acknowledged prior to the LGA inspection and long before the Best Value Inspection. Can the Lead Member comment upon the progress made in this area?

11.18 Question from Councillor Cllr Sirajul Islam

With homelessness on the rise in Tower Hamlets, how does the mayor justify the current state of homelessness services, and what steps are being taken to ensure that Aspire's approach is actually providing best value and meeting its commitment to support the most vulnerable?

11.19 Question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar

Can the Lead Member update the council on progress with delivering new homes and a community facility on the Harriot, Apsley and Patterson House (HAP Regeneration) site in Stepney?

11.20 Question from Councillor Amy Lee

Aspire promised to improve waste collection, but we continue to see missed collections and widespread fly-tipping. How does the administration justify this failure to deliver a basic

service, and what actions are in place to ensure residents are getting best value for their council tax?

11.21 Question from Councillor Shubo Hussain

Statistics show that roads in Tower Hamlets are some of the most dangerous in London with our borough being the worst in London for hit and runs, can the mayor demonstrate positive steps his administration has taken to improving road safety in our borough in order to deliver best value and contribute to a safer environment for residents?

11.22 Question from Councillor Maisha Begum

Aspire have budgeted for substantial support for youth services, but parents from my ward have told me that some youth club sessions have lacked structure and no tangible outcomes. How does the administration ensure that these services are providing best value and real opportunities for young people, rather than being symbolic gestures?

11.23 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Given Aspire's commitment to freeze council tax, how does the Mayor justify recent council tax hikes, and can he confirm how this additional revenue is being spent to deliver tangible value for residents, particularly in light of Aspire's manifesto promises?

11.24 Question from Councillor Sabina Khan

Fly-tipping continues to be rampant despite Aspire's promises to tackle this issue. Can the administration detail what, if any, concrete steps are being taken to provide best value for residents who deserve clean, safe streets?

11.25 Question from Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury

Aspire claimed it would prioritise community safety, yet crime rates have increased 6% in the last year with just this week an individual being stabbed in an Asda in Stepney. Can the Mayor provide evidence that current safety initiatives are delivering best value and leading to measurable reductions in crime?

11.26 Question from Councillor Faroque Ahmed

With millions spent on advisors and non-essential projects, what assurances can the administration provide that financial decisions are being made transparently and with the best value for residents in mind, particularly given Aspire's previous promises to cut waste?

11.27 Question from Councillor Leelu Ahmed

Aspire claimed it would improve housing conditions, but residents continue to report serious issues with repairs and maintenance in council properties. Can the Mayor explain how housing management and repair services are delivering best value for council tenants?

11.28 Question from Councillor Peter Golds

The problem of abandoned Lime Bikes is causing a problem across the borough. The disabled, elderly, families with prams particularly affected by this situation. Councils such as Brent and Lambeth have taken action to deal with these obstructions. Will the administration consider using existing powers to make our streets safer and work with London Councils and the LGA to seek changes in the law to make our streets safer.