

## **APPENDIX A – WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS THAT WERE NOT PUT AT THE MEETING**

### **6.1 Question from Alan Haughton**

Following Mayor Johns Biggs public support of a Heathrow Third Runway, can the Mayor confirm if this is a personal view or the view of Tower Hamlets Council? Can the Mayor also confirm that if a Heathrow Third Runway is built, will Tower Hamlets be overflowed more or overflowed less with the additional runway, than it is currently?

### **Response of Mayor John Biggs**

I can confirm that it is my personal view that Heathrow should be expanded, and a third runway should be built. Tower Hamlets does not have a policy on Heathrow, though a policy does exist in relation to City Airport, from where morning and night flights in particular cause significant nuisance.

It is of course likely that a new flight path would emerge, and I understand that that may affect the north west portion of the borough, but that the height of aircraft at this point of the descent would be such that there would be little or no effect on residents.

There will of course be other negative consequences – including air quality, and increased carbon emissions. But this must be balanced against the economic impact on our city of not having sufficient air capacity for our city to remain competitive – something which is even more important following Brexit – as well as the thousands of jobs, investment, and improved infrastructure that would also result.

### **6.5 Question from Charlotte Norton**

Can the Mayor tell me whether or not the residents' data has been recovered after it was illegally acquired from Tower Hamlets Homes and used in the previous mayoral election by the Tower Hamlets First candidates?

### **Response of Mayor John Biggs**

Despite an investigation finding that the confidential contact information of almost 6,000 residents was illegally leaked from Lutfur Rahman's office to his political party Tower Hamlets First the information has not been recovered.

### **6.7 Question from Lillian Collins**

Why did the current Mayor John Biggs fail to acknowledge the hard work of residents who campaigned hard for the Poplar Baths project, as well as the former Mayor Lutfur Rahman and his Deputy Mayor at the Poplar Baths launch event as without their effort it wouldn't have happened?

## **Response of Mayor John Biggs**

I was very pleased to be able to open the new Poplar Baths in August. Maybe you missed my speech but I am happy to report I did indeed recognise the contribution of local campaigners and am more than happy to repeat that praise now. In what must have been a moment of weakness I can report I even recognised the role of the previous Mayor, though not admittedly the former Deputy Mayor.

Poplar Baths was definitely a victory for local residents which I welcome. That said I don't necessarily welcome the way the previous administration went about it, resorting to incredibly expensive PFI deals to fund the development and signing the council up to increasing costs for years to come.

### **8.2 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman**

Can the Mayor provide an update on the motions passed by the Council Chamber since 2010 with a breakdown of how many were implemented and/or remain outstanding since 2013, with a percentage breakdown for each year?

## **Response of Mayor John Biggs**

As the Councillor chose to walk out of this meeting of Full Council, it is disappointing that he was not present to properly ask this question on behalf of the residents who elected him to represent them. A written reply is below:

The number of motions passed each municipal year is as follows:

2010/11 – 21  
2011/12 – 33  
2012/13 – 20  
2013/14 – 28  
2014/15 – 15  
2015/16 – 15  
2016/17 – 1

More detailed analysis shows that since 2013/14 there have been 59 motions, of those 39 are marked complete, 16 are in action or partly complete and 4 are incomplete.

### **8.6 Question from Councillor Mahbub Alam**

Has current mayor of Tower Hamlets John Biggs written to Labour's new Mayor Sadiq Khan of London asking him to save the people of Tower Hamlets from the dreadful plans which the developers have for Bishopsgate Goods Yard?

## **Response of Councillor Rachel Blake (Cabinet Member for Strategic Development)**

As the Councillor chose to walk out of this meeting of Full Council, it is disappointing that he was not present to properly ask this question on behalf of the residents who elected him to represent them. A written reply is below:

The planning application, originally submitted to Tower Hamlets and Hackney Council's to develop Bishopsgate Goods Yard was called in by the former Mayor of London, Boris Johnson on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015 for his determination. A planning hearing was scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> April 2016. The GLA planning officers prepared a report which recommended that permission be refused. On 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016 the former Mayor confirmed that the hearing would not take place, to allow the developer the opportunity to amend the application and address the proposed reasons for refusal.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016 senior officers at Tower Hamlets and Hackney wrote jointly on behalf of both councils and their respective Mayor's to the GLA noting that the changes required to the proposals would need to be substantial in order to address the boroughs' and the GLA officers objections. The letter also formally requested that the Mayor return the application to the two boroughs for their determination. In addition the Mayor, both in his role as Mayor of Tower Hamlets and in his previous GLA role, repeatedly lobbied against the Goodsyard scheme.

We understand that the GLA are considering the request and are taking legal advice on whether the application could be returned. At this stage the application is in abeyance and no formal decisions have been made on the application. There is therefore no immediate need to lobby Sadiq Khan on this issue.

### **8.10 Question from Councillor Ohid Ahmed**

The current Mayor was made aware of unacceptably high increase in parking charges by Poplar HARCA and how strongly the residents who are affected felt about this unjust and high level of increase. Can the Mayor confirm if Poplar HARCA is treating freeholders and leaseholders differently and whether or not, and if, the issue has now been resolved?

### **Response of Mayor John Biggs**

As the Councillor chose to walk out of this meeting of Full Council, it is disappointing that he was not present to properly ask this question on behalf of the residents who elected him to represent them. A written reply is below:

The Mayor and various Ward Councillors have continued to liaise with Poplar HARCA around their proposed parking increases as they affect Poplar HARCA properties. Freeholders are not Poplar HARCA residents and their properties are not Poplar HARCA properties, therefore we are advised that

they would not be considered for the same concessions in the parking scheme as a leaseholder.

Following representations by the Council, the Board of Poplar HARCA has approved a revised parking scheme that lessens the financial impact on residents as follows:-

	Tenants and resident leaseholders	Others living at PH address	Others
2008	£1.49	£1.79 (incl VAT)	£3.50 (incl VAT)
2015	£1.96	£2.35(incl VAT)	£7 (incl VAT)
2016 (proposed)	£7	£15 (incl VAT)	£15 (incl VAT)
2016 (revised)	£4	£15 (incl VAT)	£15 (incl VAT)

Although these revisions are more reasonable than those previously outlined, I will continue to monitor the feedback from residents which will be a crucial determinant as to whether any further intervention is required by the Council. The HARCA have advised that the matter will be considered again by the Board in the near future. They are very aware of our opposition to these increases.

#### **8.14 Question from Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim**

Residents of Northesk House, Tent St E1 signed a petition and submitted to the current Mayor. John Biggs responded to elected local councillor that the Council will set up a meeting on 1 August for local residents to discuss the issue. However, that letter was sent to the local councillor after 16 August (more than 2 weeks after the actual meeting). I checked with residents who signed the petition and majority don't seem to know anything about the meeting arranged. Can the current mayor explain why such incidents are becoming a regular theme in his mayoralty?

#### **Response of Councillor Ayas Miah (Cabinet Member for Environment)**

As the Councillor chose to walk out of this meeting of Full Council, it is disappointing that he was not present to properly ask this question on behalf of the residents who elected him to represent them. A written reply is below:

Your assertion is factually incorrect. The response was sent to you by my office on 28<sup>th</sup> July. The letter stated that 'a site meeting is set for Monday 1st August at 10.00am with a local Councillor to discuss the parking issues'. I understand this meeting had been arranged with you directly by officers from Parking.

### **8.15 Question from Councillor Candida Ronald:**

Lincoln Plaza on the Isle of Dogs has recently been awarded the Carbuncle Cup for this year's worst designed development – "jarring, unsettling and shambolic" according to critics. What is the Mayor/Lead Member doing to ensure that developments in Tower Hamlets are fine examples of great design rather than the opposite?

### **Response of Councillor Rachel Blake (Cabinet Member for Strategic Development)**

Much has been made of Lincoln Plaza, a residential building by Galliard Homes on the Isle of Dogs, winning Building Design Magazine's "Carbuncle Cup" recently.

We always strive for the highest quality in design in all new developments, big or small. Ultimately design can be subjective but should be founded on sound design principles and appreciation. While the nominations for the shortlist for this award came from members of the public, a private panel of judges made the final decision. Many comments on social media since, have not all agreed with the judges' decision.

Tower Hamlets has a rich history of innovative design. That diversity and quality is what helps to makes this borough such a great place to live. There are many examples where development in Tower Hamlets has been commended for excellent design. Development at St Andrew's (Bromley by Bow), Peabody Estate (near Shadwell), St Paul's Way School (Poplar) and an affordable housing scheme at Claredale Street, Bethnal Green have all won, or been shortlisted, for architectural and good design awards in recent years.

The urban design capacity within the Planning Service has recently been strengthened with a view to maintaining a robust approach to high quality development design standards going forward. New members have also been invited to join the Council's design review panel (CADAP) and this panel will be reviewing the majority of large scale developments at pre-application stage, before designs are fixed.

Additionally, the Local Plan review is underway and opportunities to strengthen existing policies to encourage the highest quality design will be considered to help deliver buildings and places to further improve the quality of the built environment in the borough.

### **8.16 Question from Councillor Peter Golds**

With the contract with Veolia due to expire within the next twelve months, will the Mayor confirm to residents that they will be continue to be expected to perform in accordance with the existing contract and remove rubbish when timetabled, the difficulties of which are an ongoing problem on the Isle of Dogs?

### **Response of Councillor Ayas Miah (Cabinet Member for Environment)**

We are currently negotiating a potential extension with Veolia until 2020. Current contract conditions will be extended in accordance with any agreement, and we will ensure that Veolia deliver on their responsibilities. Should Cllr Golds have concerns about their performance I would welcome further information so I can investigate and rectify this.

#### **8.17 Question from Councillor Clare Harrisson:**

Following our recent visit to Middleton Green in St Peter's ward, can the Mayor or lead member update me on progress so far in dealing with the ASB issues raised by local residents?

### **Response of Councillor Shiria Khatun (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety)**

A ward walk about was carried out the Mayor and partners at Middleton Green on the 17<sup>th</sup> August. The following actions have taken place as discussed:

- The deployable CCTV camera was agreed to remain at site to act as a deterrent for ASB with a view to look at a permanent camera on site
- High visibility signage was put in place to note that CCTV is in place and inform drivers of it in order to also deter some speeding in the area
- We have been exploring with highways alterations to highways and parking bays to restrict the possibility of speeding cars on the adjoining street, this includes possible use of chicanes.
- We have been in discussion with the lighting department and have sought quotes to upgrade to white lighting in the park in order to improve the lighting in the area.
- We have requested from parks to reduce the crowns on the trees and low level foliage in order to improve lighting and also reduce the potential for any items to be hidden and stored under low growth.
- THEO's, SNT and Rapid Response continue to patrol and are tasked to this area. This is reviewed each fortnight and feedback suggests a significant reduction in ASB and at the last walk about the measures with CCTV, additional patrolling and support were being positively responded to and welcomed by residents in attendance.

#### **8.18 Question from Councillor Rabina Khan**

Does the Mayor believe that children and young people's interests are of importance in the borough?

## **Response of Mayor John Biggs**

As the Councillor chose to walk out of this meeting of Full Council, it is disappointing that she was not present to properly ask this question on behalf of the residents who elected her to represent them. A written reply is below:

Yes. Do you?

## **8.19 Question from Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs (Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Services)**

Can the Lead Member for Culture please update us on how the council has been supporting the Stairway to Heaven Memorial to progress and what the timescale is for the memorial to be completed?

## **Response of Councillor Asma Begum (Cabinet Member for Culture)**

The Council has provided a total of £152,000 in two separate grants to assist with the cost of the works. The Council has also provided the land comprising a prominent location in a public park for the siting of the memorial. The Council is committed to provide maintenance and repair of the memorial at the Council's expense in perpetuity. It is difficult to say when the memorial will be completed. The length of the work is in the Trust's control, but there have been significant delays agreeing the legal terms. However, the terms are due to be agreed by Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September and the Trust is keen to commence phase 2 of the works immediately afterwards.

## **8.20 Question from Councillor Craig Aston**

There have been a number of recent incidents on Three Colt Street in Limehouse including a bride being punched in the face on her wedding day by a robber as well as long standing ASB issues in Ropemakers Fields. Now that the Regulation 123 list has been approved specifically mentioning CCTV as a strategic investment will the Mayor indicate when Limehouse can expect to receive its first Council funded CCTV camera?

## **Response of Councillor Shiria Khatun (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety)**

The Council and the Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) are aware of issues around Ropemakers & Three Colt Street and this remains a ward priority for the SNT.

The SNT and THEOs have carried out extensive patrols and have used dispersal powers in Ropemakers Fields which has resulted in a number of warnings being issued.

The Council has trimmed back vegetation in the park and installed a half lock gate at the entrance of the park to provide better visibility and prevent vehicles entering the park. The Council and SNT also considered locking the gates of the park at night and removing some benches that were being used by groups to congregate. However, residents objected to the proposals as the park has a heavy footfall and the park is considered a safer route by some residents.

The Council and SNT are considering a soft closure of the park which would allow partners to restrict access and remove individuals engaging in ASB without physically locking the park. The proposal has been considered by the Council's Legal Team. Partners are now looking at wider implications of implementing a soft closure such as consultation, cost and how the soft closure will be enforced.

In Three Colt Street the SNT and THEOs carried out extensive patrols in the area and have issued over 40 warnings. The design of the area attracts young people to the area and the vast majority of the individuals stopped were not repeat perpetrators, therefore no further action could be taken other than issuing warnings.

The Council and its partners are also considered installing gates and bollards in the area to restrict vehicle access. However, this was not progressed as the area is required for access. The machine access doors (high access doors to allow lorry access) for the equipment are located on this side of the building and are used for pump and electrical item replacement. A local company recently approached the Council interested in renting the land from the Council if they could use it for parking, this is currently being progressed and if agreed will help resolve problem in relation to access.

Ropemakers Fields has been surveyed twice in the past 12 months to look at the possibility of a temporary CCTV Camera and each time it has been decided that CCTV is not a viable option for this area or type of issue. The park has a lot of trees and installing a camera will mean the youths move one bench down and avoid the camera again.

#### **8.21 Question from Councillor Marc Francis:**

Where will the Age UK centre and pensioners lunch club be located if Gateway Housing Association secures planning permission to redevelop Appian Court?

#### **Response of Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs (Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Services)**

Thank you Cllr Francis for raising this important issue. We really value the services provided by Age UK to older people in the borough and will continue to work closely with them and Gateway to ensure their centre and lunch club can continue to operate.

I am advised that Gateway have been helpful in working with Age UK to identify alternative, interim premises. Discussions between Jane Ball of Gateway and Jane Caldwell of Age UK have identified the option of using Vic Johnson House, 74 Armagh Street, E3. This would be by far the best solution for this group as it is close to Appian Court and has two big rooms.

I understand the two organisations are working on the timeframe and work schedule, as Vic Johnson House is also being redeveloped. I will ask officers to keep me updated on progress and I am very happy to meet with you and anyone else who has concerns about this to discuss further.

*An earlier version of this response was previously circulated to Councillors.*

### **8.22 Question from Councillor Gulam Robbani**

Following a petition signed by a record number of residents, will the Mayor inform us if he is minded to give the local Weavers residents an opportunity to have a say whether or not they wish to host the Boisakhi Mela locally?

#### **Response of Councillor Asma Begum (Cabinet Member for Culture)**

As the Councillor chose to walk out of this meeting of Full Council, it is disappointing that he was not present to properly ask this question on behalf of the residents who elected him to represent them. A written reply is below:

A decision on a 2017 Mela has yet to be made. This year there were a number of opportunities for local residents to give their views on the Mela as part of the formal consultation around the granting of a licence but we note that no representations were received during the requisite 28 day period.

The Council also held a public meeting at Oxford House to allow for resident feedback and questions well ahead of the event.

The 2016 Mela went very well with few incidents or complaints, indeed the Mela was highly praised by the residents I heard from which suggests that fears of major disruption to the local community were not realised.

As we did this year the council will of course consult local people on the arrangements for the 2017 Mela both as part of the licencing process and more broadly.

### **8.23 Question from Councillor Amina Ali**

Can the Deputy Mayor and Lead Member for Children's Services update me on the plans to open a new primary school on the site of the former Bow Boys Secondary School on Fairfield Road?

#### **Response of Councillor Rachael Saunders (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services)**

As reported to Cabinet on 6 September, it is proposed to develop the site as a primary school. A scheme has been agreed and planning consent obtained. The programme for the opening of the school is subject to review of the specific need in the east of the borough but it was agreed that the initial consultation on the specification for the new Bow Primary School should proceed.

#### **8.24 Question from Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury**

Does the current mayor John Biggs supports our schools turning into academies in Tower Hamlets? Could the current Mayor be transparent and provide a straight forward answer whether or not he supports the principle of turning schools into academies?

#### **Response of Mayor John Biggs**

As the Councillor chose to walk out of this meeting of Full Council, it is disappointing that he was not present to properly ask this question on behalf of the residents who elected him to represent them. A written reply is below:

It is clear hypocrisy for Cllr Choudhury to criticise the council for a school converting to an academy, when under his political group's administration four schools were converted to academies. Perhaps it is possible Cllr Choudhury simply doesn't understand how the school system works.

The Conservative Government has changed the law so that schools have the freedom to become academies if they choose – this is government policy and there is nothing that councils can do to prevent this from happening. Labour MPs and councillors fought against this change at the time and I supported that position.

We are currently setting up a Tower Hamlets Education Partnership, to ensure the council and schools work as closely as possible to continue improving the quality of education in our borough and discourage schools from seeking Academy status.

Perhaps the Independent Group should themselves spend a little more time studying so they would know how the schools in our borough actually work.

#### **8.25 Question from Councillor Dave Chesterton**

Is the Mayor yet in a position to set out the allocation process by which the operators will be chosen for the new secondary school planned for the Westferry Printworks site?

#### **Response of Councillor Rachael Saunders (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services)**

The process is determined by legislation.

Following consultation, the Council will publish a specification for the school and invite Expressions of Interest from prospective operators. The Council will evaluate the bids and pass the evaluation and all the bids received to the DfE. The Regional Schools Commissioner, on behalf of the Secretary of State, takes account of the Council's evaluation in reaching the decision on the operator to be appointed.

The programme for consultation and inviting the expressions of interest is yet to be determined.