

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL****HELD AT 7.04 P.M. ON MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2016****THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG****Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs	Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Rajib Ahmed	Councillor Denise Jones
Councillor Ohid Ahmed	Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Rabina Khan
Councillor Mahbub Alam	Councillor Shiria Khatun
Councillor Shah Alam	Councillor Abjol Miah
Councillor Amina Ali	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Abdul Asad	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Craig Aston	Councillor Md. Maium Miah
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Mohammed Mufti Miah
Councillor Chris Chapman	Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Dave Chesterton	Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	Councillor Joshua Peck
Councillor Andrew Cregan	Councillor John Pierce
Councillor Julia Dockerill	Councillor Oliur Rahman
Councillor David Edgar	Councillor Candida Ronald
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor Rachael Saunders
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Clare Harisson	Councillor Andrew Wood
Councillor Danny Hassell	

The Deputy Speaker of the Council, Councillor Sabina Akhtar in the Chair

During the meeting, the Council agreed to vary the order of business. To aid clarity, the Minutes are presented in the order that the items originally appeared on the agenda. The order the business was taken in at the meeting was as follows:

- Item 1 - Apologies for absence.
- Item 2 – Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.
- Item 4 – Announcements.
- Item 3 – Minutes.
- Item 5.1 – Petition on Air Quality
- Item 12.4 - Motion on Tackling Air Pollution in Tower Hamlets.
- Item 5.2 – Petition on Cuts to Early Years Budget
- Item 5.3 - Petition on Mopeds in Tom Thumb Arch
- Item 6 – Public Questions.
- Item 12.3 – Motion regarding Bow School

- Item 7 – Mayor’s Report.
- Item 8 – Members Questions
- Item 9 – Reports from the Executive and the Council’s Committees
- Item 10 –Reports and Questions on Joint Arrangements/External Organisations
- Item 11 – Other Business

Before the commencement of the council business, the Speaker of the Council said that the Members would be aware of the sad deaths of Nasar Ahmed a pupil at Bow School and Melanie Clay, the Council’s Corporate Director for Law, Probity and Governance. The Council’s thoughts were with their families and friends at this difficult time.

The Council also paid their respects to a well-known community activist who passed away recently.

In light of these events, the Council rose to observe a minute’s silence.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Danny Hassell **moved** and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, a procedural motion “that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that Item 12.3 Motion regarding the Bow School be taken as the next item of business after Item 6, Public Questions.” The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed
- Councillor Gulam Robbani
- Councillor Rachel Blake
- Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs
- Councillor Suluk Ahmed

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were made.

3. MINUTES

Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved** and Councillor Muhammad Mustaqim **seconded** an amendment to the minutes to record the Independent Group’s walk out from the Council meeting and to agree that a statement be attached to the minutes to explain their reasons for this.

The amendment was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

RESOLVED:

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 September 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

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

The Speaker of the Council congratulated Councillor Rachel Blake and Councillor Marc Francis on the birth of their baby boy, Jack. The Council passed on their congratulations and best wishes to the whole family. The Speaker also welcomed Councillor Shafi Ahmed to the meeting, the newly elected Councillor for the Whitechapel Ward following the by-election last week. The Speaker also asked noted with sadness the recent death of Councillor Suluk Ahmed's mother..

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition relating to air quality

Anisur Rahman Anis addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Mayor John Biggs then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He advised that tackling air pollution would be a priority of his administration and that the Council's Air Quality Action Plan was currently undergoing a refresh to ensure it was fit for purpose in tackling this issue.

RESOLVED:

That the petition be referred to the Chief Executive and Acting Corporate Director, Communities, Localities and Culture, for a written response within 28 days.

Procedural Motion

Councillor Danny Hassell **moved** and Councillor Ayas Miah **seconded**, a procedural motion "that under Procedure Rule 14.1.3 the order of business be varied such that item 12.4 "Motion on Tackling Air Pollution in Tower Hamlets" be taken at this point. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

5.2 Petition relating to Cuts to Early Years Budget

Christine Trumper addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Rachael Saunders, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services then responded to the matters raised in the petition. She advised there was some misunderstanding regarding the

Council's proposals for the future of this service, but further consultation is planned that would provide opportunity for residents to examine the proposals and offer comment.

RESOLVED:

That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director Children's Services, for a written response within 28 days.

5.3 Petition relating to Mopeds in Tom Thumb Arch

Ben Haigh addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Ayas Miah, Cabinet Member for Environment then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He advised that the requested remedies proposed in the petition could not be pursued due to conflicts with statutory obligations, but he has asked officers to investigate options for promoting safer use of the Arch.

RESOLVED:

That the petition be referred to the Chief Executive and Acting Corporate Director, Communities, Localities and Culture, for a written response within 28 days.

6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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:-

6.1 Question from Nick Garland

With the Tory Government hammering the NHS, what, investment has the Council made in our local health services?

Response by Councillor Rachael Saunders Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services

I am covering for Councillor Amy Whitelock-Gibbs as she is on maternity leave.

Conservative Government cuts to the council budget means we will have £58m less to spend on services by 2019/20. This has left us with difficult decisions to make, but we are investing in our local health services.

We have secured over £15m of investment from developer Section 106 contributions in health services across Tower Hamlets including these GP surgeries:.

- £3.1m in Aberfeldy Practice – Lansbury ward
- £2.5m for the Globe Town GP Practice

- £3.4m for the Whitechapel Health Centre and City Wellbeing Practices
- £3.1m for the new GP practice at the William Cotton Place development – in Mile End ward, in my ward.
- £3.1m for the Wellington Way Health Centre – Mile End ward, which used to be in my ward.

From the two that are in the area that I represent I know how important it is that we invest in our GP surgeries because there is huge pressure and a real need for appointments and a better quality of care.

We have also just launched an Ethical Care Charter in Tower Hamlets, which guarantees the London Living Wage for all home care workers, including for travel time. This is not only an investment in our homecare workers and in the high quality of work that they provide.

No supplementary question from Nick Garland.

6.3 Question from Matthew Dickinson

Please could the Council provide an estimate of the costs incurred as a result of the legal case against Councillor Shahed Ali for housing fraud?

Response by Mayor John Biggs

It's a disgrace that instead of serving his constituents Shahed Ali chose not only to commit housing fraud but then to lie about it, costing taxpayers tens of thousands more in legal fees.

That decision to lie about his criminality meant that Cllr Ali cost the council over £70,000 in legal fees. Had he pleaded guilty when he was first charged it would have simply cost, we estimate, £3,428.

In my opinion we should use all the forces of the law that we can to pursue that debt, because as far as I am concerned he has cost the people of Tower Hamlets money and he should be asked to pay it.

Just by way of comparison, what we could have spent that on would have been 30,434 free school meals, for example, or an extra housing fraud investigator to check other people are not doing the same thing. But there are many other examples of things that we could have spent it on. His behaviour was an outrage.

Supplementary question from Matthew Dickinson

I would also just be interested to know what current safeguards are in place to ensure that a similar case doesn't happen again. Or is the Council introducing anything new on the back of this case?

Mayor John Biggs response to supplementary question

We have an anti-fraud initiative within the Council. We employ people and we have increased our resources in that area to pursue people in that area who are committing housing fraud. It can be quite a difficult offence to detect as people might informally pass the keys to a property to somebody else, but somebody obtaining a property as a tenant through deception does require extra checks and safeguards and we are looking at how we can better introduce those and copy good practice from other places as well. But I think also good exemplary behaviour in terms of the sentences and punishments to people that have been found out will help to deter this sort of behaviour as well.

6.4 Question from Abukor Essa

What steps is the Mayor taking to tackle the housing crisis in Tower Hamlets?

Response by Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Performance

Over the past 6 months the Council has developed its first new Housing Strategy since 2009, which is later in the agenda.

The Strategy aims to tackle the housing crisis through a number of interventions which impact across both the public and private sector.

Progress has already been made: In the last year over a thousand affordable homes were built in the borough, over 400 more than the year before.

The Council built more family sized homes at social rents than at any time in the last six years with over 300 completed in the last year. Over 1,000 overcrowded families were also rehoused last year too.

The Mayor has pledged to build 1,000 genuinely affordable council homes. Over the past year it has made significant progress on this front and we have now completed the process of identifying the schemes which will enable the Council to meet this target.

All our new council homes will be let at rents which are genuinely affordable to local residents. Either social or genuinely affordable rents.

Working in partnership with the borough's existing Developers and Registered Providers we estimate that at least 2,200 social, affordable homes will be built between 2015 and 2018.

We will also be working with the GLA to take advantage of the £3.5bn awarded to London in the Autumn Statement for 90,000 homes after Sadiq Khan's excellent work highlighting the need to tackle the housing crisis.

In the private rented sector, where many of our residents face short-term tenancies and poor conditions. The Council has introduced a landlord

licensing scheme across three wards in the west of the Borough to push up standards and give private tenants more protection.

We have rehoused 238 homeless families who were in bed and breakfast and now there is none, not a single Tower Hamlets family who has been in temporary B&B accommodation for more than six weeks. I think we are probably the only borough that is statutorily compliant.

The Government's Housing and Planning Act will make things harder for boroughs like Tower Hamlets but the Mayor and I are dedicated to protecting residents and tackling the housing crisis in this part of London.

Supplementary question from Abukor Essa

As a voluntary worker I regularly see families who are overcrowded. I know houses are being built in the borough, but I am not sure how these properties are meeting the local community's needs. Strategically, are these houses that are being built meeting the needs of the local community, including the family sizes, affordability etc? I know the Deputy Mayor slightly covered these things, but I want him to go deeper into these issues a little bit.

Councillor Sirajul Islam response to supplementary question

We are as an Administration under the leadership of Mayor Biggs, we want to tackle the issue of affordable rent which Mayor Biggs himself says that affordable rent is not affordable. Therefore, after getting elected, Mayor Biggs set up a housing commission that recommended that as a Council we should be building more homes at social rent, or a genuinely affordable rent that is a Tower Hamlets living rent product, which we feel would be affordable to local people. As an example we inherited a scheme in Watts Grove when I was chair of the Planning Committee which is affordable rent and the difference between social and affordable rent is, on a three bedroom social rent it is about £150 to £160, affordable rent is about £280 to £290. You can see the difference. Even on the Watts Grove scheme our Mayor has asked officers to look at how we can bring the rent down to social rent and this is our commitment. The 1,000 homes that the mayor has pledged to build will also be social rent. We know things are very difficult, we know about the Government's U-turn on pay to stay where they were proposing to charge our residents who are earning £40,000 a sub-market rent, this has been a turnaround due to the campaign that London Councils have done overall. So we are pledging as an Administration to deliver homes that people can afford, to reduce our waiting list as well as our commitment to housing homeless people who are living away from Tower Hamlets.

6.5 Question from Dipa Baidya

A recent study into air quality has suggested that air pollution is causing more traffic accidents. The study, covering west London, showed that as many as four extra traffic accidents a day could be triggered by a spike in dirty air levels. What is the Council doing to improve air quality in Tower Hamlets?

Response by Councillor Ayas Miah, Cabinet Member for Environment

The Mayor has made tackling poor air quality a priority and the Council is taking action to tackle this significant public health issue.

The Council will review the LSE study, which suggests that air pollution may have a causal effect on road traffic accidents.

We have made it a priority in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy as well, which is currently out to public consultation. A communications campaign is being planned for residents and organisations, aiming to:

- increase awareness of poor air quality, how to minimise exposure and adopt less polluting behaviours;
- introduce pledges from individuals and organisations to minimise their impact on air pollution.

The Council is currently reviewing its air quality action plan which will incorporate a range of measures to improve air quality.

Working with partners will be crucial, and residents will need to play their part as well – by walking and using public transport where possible, instead of making unnecessary car journeys. As much of the most-polluting traffic in the borough is through-traffic to and from central London, we will be working with City Hall to tackle this aspect of the issue.

Both myself and the Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Services have already met with GLA members to discuss how we can tackle poor air quality, and we will continue to work with colleagues and partners on this vital area.

No supplementary question.

6.6 Question from Muhammad Sulaman Alipir

Recently I had visited a One Stop Shop in Bethnal Green and I had noticed that there are no toilet facilities for customers! At our One Stop Shop local people come including children and families for their council services. Often they have waited for an hour or more.

Could the mayor look into staffing levels and service provision to see, if any improvements can be made to the time taken to resolve enquiries and serve people especially families with young children including toilet facilities for them?

Response by Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Resources

As you say there aren't any toilets at Bethnal Green One Stop Shop and this is clearly not an ideal situation. Apparently the constraints of the space and the layout of the building make it difficult to put the toilets in. When there was a refurbishment several years ago it wasn't possible to add them. I am told that if people, for example parents with babies ask to use toilets, they are

given access to staff toilets. I appreciate that that is not an ideal arrangement. In future as we develop any One Stop Shops and integrate them with Idea Stores we need to make sure that toilets are available because, as you say, people sometimes have to wait a while and in any event there should be toilets.

On the point about the waiting time and the staffing levels, the average waiting time I am told is about 15 minutes, but clearly there are situations particularly at peak times when people have to wait longer and although some people are able to be flexible about when they turn up that is not going to be true for everybody. What we have done though is recognised that although there are constraints on the budget that limits the staffing levels, we have been able to recruit for additional staff on a temporary basis, so that during the winter months when demand is higher we hope that will help keep waiting times down. What we are also doing is trying to move as many services as we can online so for those people that would be able to get an answer to their question or do the business that they want to with the Council online are able to do it, which I think will help to reduce the pressure from the number of people who actually need to go to the One Stop Shop and have a face to face conversation. I think over time we will begin to see the benefits, both for those who are happy to use things online but also for those people who need to go to one of these shops in order to get an answer face-to-face, often for more complex issues.

Supplementary question from Muhammad Sulaman Alipir

I never visit any other One Stop Shop in Tower Hamlets, but Bethnal Green One Stop Shop when it was in the previous location, I saw that in that office were toilet facilities, so why is this shop not facilitated for the citizen?

Councillor David Edgar response to supplementary question

On the position my understanding is that the layout, the structure of the One Stop Shop in Bethnal Green, is simply one where it is quite hard to fit a toilet in. When there was some refurbishment a few years ago then the cost of putting that toilet in was seen as too high, but I think the things I've talked about are things that I hope will ease the pressure on that and if there was anything that we could do in the meantime I am happy to try to facilitate that, so I will have a conversation with Council staff but I wouldn't want to raise hopes too high because I think what we'll need to do is the measures I have outlined to ensure that any future facilities we have do have adequate toilet facilities.

Questions 6.2, and 6.7 were not put due to the absence of the questioners. Written responses would be provided to the questions (the written responses are included in Appendix A to these minutes).

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor made his report to the Council, referring to his written report circulated at the meeting, summarising key events, engagements and meetings since the last Council meeting.

When the Mayor had completed his report and at the invitation of the Speaker the leaders of the Conservative Group, Independent Group and Tower Hamlets Peoples' Alliance responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

8. 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, relevant Executive Member or Councillor:-

8.1 Question from Councillor M. Abdul Mukit

Can the Lead Member update Council on what progress has been made in the regeneration of Brick Lane to boost business there?

Response from Councillor Joshua Peck, Cabinet Member for Work & Economic Growth

Anyone who has read the scrutiny review I did in opposition will know how important I think our town centres are, not just because they make for good places to live, they give access to goods and services for residents, but more importantly they are places of real economic growth. Where residents can easily start businesses and find jobs. We are working across the whole of the borough to have a vision and intervention plan for each of our town centres and Brick Lane is just one of those. Brick Lane is particularly special, it is not just a town centre for the people who live in and around Spitalfields, but it is also one of our pre-eminent visitor and tourist attractions and while some parts of it, particularly the northern part of it in your ward, Councillor Mukit, is really struggling, especially many of those historic curry restaurants without whom Brick Lane wouldn't be the same. We have started a Brick Lane regeneration program. Members will know about the curry festival we ran recently and that the mayor switched on the Christmas lights there.

Supplementary question from Councillor M. Abdul Mukit

I really congratulate the lead member for the work He has done and I had a very overwhelming report from residents of Brick Lane. As a lead member, how do you propose the initiative can progress and create new jobs and also improve the environment for the visitors and tourists?

Councillor Joshua Peck response to supplementary question

Jobs are absolutely central to Brick Lane, it has been a place historically where a lot of people have been employed. Part of that is about real business

support to restaurants. When those businesses are thriving they employ a lot of people, local people and we are putting in place a whole range of business support. But as he says the environment is also important and I think, as I have discussed with my colleague a number of times, the cleaning and graffiti removal and all of that on Brick Lane isn't good enough and we are doing as much as we can to improve that as well. Progress will not be overnight. The regeneration of Brick Lane is going to take some time but we are in it for the long term and we intend to get it right.

8.2 Question from Councillor Maium Miah

Does the Council need to learn any lessons from the tragic death of Bow School boy Nasar Ahmed?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

It is entirely understandable that Nasar's parents want full clarity about the reasons for his death, as we all do. The school staff are cooperating fully with the independent police investigation into the circumstances of the case. The police are also liaising with the Health and Safety Executive and the Coroner. So we almost certainly do need to learn lessons, but they need to follow those investigations.

Once the police investigation has concluded and the coroner's report has been published, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board will then consider if a lessons learnt review should be conducted. This will comment on the individual circumstances of the case, identify any matters of concern affecting the safety and welfare of children in the Local Authority area and any wider public health or safety concerns.

The school staff and governors as well as council officers who work with schools will implement any changes in policy and procedures required.

Ofsted recently undertook a safeguarding inspection in Bow school and the final report is due to be published in the near future. The verbal feedback from the Inspectors and the draft report indicate that safeguarding policy and practice in the school, in their opinion, is sound.

No Supplementary question from Councillor Maium Miah

8.3 Question from Councillor Amina Ali

Now that a number of months have passed since it was launched, can the Cabinet Member for Housing provide an update on the landlord licensing scheme and gauge how effective the scheme has been so far?

Response from Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management & Performance

We introduced the landlord licensing scheme to tackle anti-social behaviour, to drive up standards in the private rented sector and to improve the

management of homes that are privately rented. All private landlords with residential property in the selected area need to apply for a licence at a cost of £520 for five years.

There are a number of stringent checks that are carried out before a licence is granted. The licence holder and manager will need to meet the 'fit and proper' person requirement. The application is assessed by an environmental health officer and an inspection of the property may be carried out. A licence will be issued with mandatory conditions that must be followed.

1,245 applications have been received since the scheme launched on the 1st of October, and 309 licences have been issued so far.

Landlords who successfully applied for Selective Licences, met me and the Mayor in the council chamber. They were handed their licences, and had an opportunity to talk to the Mayor and officers about the scheme.

The scheme has had a positive response so far with over one thousand applications received and, with the number of checks that take place before a licence is issued, we expect the scheme to drive up standards in the private rented sector and give tenants more protection.

Supplementary question from Councillor Amina Ali

Would the Lead Member support the scheme being extended to the whole borough, and not just three wards?

Councillor Sirajul Islam response to supplementary question

The scheme currently applies to Spitalfields and Banglatown, Weavers and Whitechapel wards.

Yes, I would absolutely support implementing a landlord licensing scheme to apply to the whole borough, but unfortunately the law states that we can only have the scheme in three wards – to only 20% of our private stock. I notice there is a Labour Group motion on the agenda that would ask the Mayor to write to the Minister for Housing & Planning asking for a change in the law so we could bring together standards to the private rented sector across the whole borough.

The scheme is giving us a clearer picture of the private rented sector in the three wards and it would be really positive for private tenants across Tower Hamlets if we could apply the scheme to the whole borough.

8.4 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman

Will the Mayor consider the Council deducting Council Tax from the allowances of Councillors who are in arrears for non-payment, as is the practice in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham?

Response from Councillor David Edgar, Cabinet Member for Resources

There are currently no Councillors two months or more in arrears for council tax payments. Clearly deductions from allowances is one of the routes you could take in order to recover money that is owed and that has been done in the past by the Council, but clearly with councillors, as with anyone else you would first ask for payment to be made, agree a payment plan, if that payment plan was kept then it wouldn't be necessary to do an attachment of earnings or deductions in this way, but it clearly is an option and would be used if it was felt to be the most appropriate thing to do.

Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Chapman

Does the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Mayor not feel that some of the breaches that we have seen, that have been obtained under Freedom of Information, are so egregious, that a sort-of nudge and voluntary system payment plan system is just not appropriate when these elected members are receiving substantial sums of taxpayers money, many of whom sit in this very chamber and lecture members on this bench on behalf of the Tory Government, the ever-evil Tory Government, and its spending plans when they themselves are not even paying their own council tax and contributing to the operation of this Council? It is shameful, particularly when we know that Shahid Ali, who I will name, owed £864; there are members on the Labour benches that owed £980 and £561; and members of The Tower Hamlets first, second, third, fourth, whatever it is division, who owed £1,180. This is far beyond payment plan. There needs to be action.

Councillor David Edgar response to supplementary question

Clearly if people are asked to make payment and they make payment then there is no need to implement a deduction process, but we should always keep that as one of the options available. And it is an interesting fact, for which I hold Chris Chapman in no way responsible, that the Councillor according to the work that was done by Private Eye who owed the biggest amount that any Councillor in the UK was a Conservative councillor in West Oxfordshire, and he owed £3,316 and it took a court case to get him to pay, but I don't hold you responsible for all of that.

8.5 Question from Councillor Marc Francis

Will the Lead Member for Environmental Services update me on the action that has been taken since March by LBTH and the Environment Agency and London Legacy Development Corporation to deal with the alleged fly-tipping of industrial waste at 616 Wick Lane?

Response from Councillor Ayas Miah, Cabinet Member for the Environment

In April the Council received a complaint about the fly-tipping issues. While the Environment Agency advised they couldn't intervene, the LLDC accepted they are the responsible authority.

We carried out a joint visit with LLDC and witnessed a large amount of waste on site.

Both LBTH and the LLDC have served a number of notices on the land owners, Sagamount Limited, to deal with the waste and to properly secure the site against fly-tipping.

In November, the Council received a complaint about burning on the site. Environmental Health officers and an LLDC planner investigated the complaint. They witnessed a bonfire and discovered that contractors were burning the waste.

On the 15th of November, Environmental Health issued an abatement notice on the land owners.

Two days later, travellers arrived on the site and illegally dumped rubbish. Council officers attended and then contacted the owners. The travellers vacated the site on November 22nd.

On the 1st of December, the Council contacted LLDC to arrange a meeting with the land owner to discuss the notice breaches and to agree a way forward. We are currently waiting for a response from the owners.

Supplementary question from Councillor Marc Francis

The lead member knows, because I have mentioned it to him before, that this fly-tipping has been taking place over the course of more than a year now and it has come to a situation where, as he has described, where materials are now being burnt on the site. I really welcome the intervention that he has made and the progress that is finally being made against it. Will he give us an assurance that he will continue to monitor the situation and update us and ensure that officers take further action, by this authority and also to encourage the Environment Agency and the LLDC to take their enforcement powers seriously as well?

Councillor Ayas Miah response to supplementary question

I will finish my previous answer. Two days later, travellers arrived on the site and illegally dumped rubbish. Council officers attended and then contacted the owners. The travellers vacated the site on November 22nd.

On the 1st of December, the Council contacted LLDC to arrange a meeting with the land owner to discuss the notice breaches and to agree a way forward. We are currently waiting for a response from the owners. Once we have the formal response I will update you and we need to work together to improve the situation. Can I request that if the Ward member has any further information to contact me.

8.6 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman

Does the Mayor believe that the Council's communications team should solely serve the Mayor and his administration or do they have some responsibility towards assisting and informing other Cllrs as well?

Response from Mayor John Biggs:

The Council's communication activity is driven by the Council's organisational strategic objectives and necessarily they are going to tend to involve us as an authority speaking on behalf of the Executive, which would be myself and Cabinet members. When it is appropriate other members will be involved in the communications strategy.

Supplementary question from Councillor Oliur Rahman:

Keeping the Best Value and accountability demanded by the Commissioners and the residents, why is the team working for the new Council's communication head, who was hired by the current Mayor as I understand on nearly £100k initially, but since has been given further pay rises, will not send the standard daily media headlines which are blocked, standard public domain articles to all Council members? Certainly not to me or my group and has the Mayor asked him not to send this to anybody else? And by the way the commissioners agree with me that he should.

Mayor John Biggs response to supplementary question:

I have been working closely with the Commissioners on our Communications Plan as was required under the Directions. I don't believe it is accurate that the newly appointed Service Head has had a pay rise, since he has only been here around three months and if he had I would want to find out why and I would be gobsmacked if that was the case. I think it is clearly the case that the department is going through a reorganisation which its staff members are finding quite stressful, I appreciate that and we need to act in a forthright way, not least, because we have to stop publishing East End Life, we need to change the skill set within the communications department. We need to also get a bit more up to date with modern media than we have been in the past.

8.7 Question from Councillor Clare Harrisson

Is the Mayor concerned about the NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plan for North East London and what steps are he and the Cabinet Member for Health taking to ensure plans are not signed off in secret?

Response of Councillor Rachael Saunders, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services.

I am also a Member of the Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board. Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs and the Mayor have called for the latest draft of our Sustainability and Transformation Plan to be published and it is now

available publically on line. It's a good thing that the local team have been open throughout the process. They have ignored NHS England's instructions to keep the plans secret and they have published iterations on the draft and they have presented several times to the Health and Wellbeing Board and other stakeholder. And it's actually NHS officers based in Tower Hamlets that are taking a broader responsibility across East London, so we are in a good position in terms of some kind of insight as to what's happening. We have had assurances that there will be no further hospital closures in East London although our rapidly growing and ageing population means we will need all the possible hospital capacity that we currently have and very possibly more. We do need to see a shift away of activity from hospitals and into broader community services and prevention. We will still need to see much more detail about what service changes will mean in practice. I think we all know though that the Conservative government cuts to Council budgets inevitably leads to pressures on social care budgets which inevitably places pressure on the NHS. Whereas I think we have good local senior NHS officers and a good local relationship with them, we do need to see a shift in government policy to really have the NHS that local people deserve.

Supplementary question from Councillor Clare Harrison

One of the worries that has come up through Scrutiny is that the STP plans will put a lot of increased pressure on social care budgets. A lot of things about moving things out of hospitals is about moving it into the community which obviously has a price tag on it. Will the Mayor and Lead Members be joining with other Labour Councillors to lobby the Government to massively increase funding into social care. It's a big issue and it is in crisis and there is a worry that the STP plans will only make that worse.

Councillor Rachael Saunders response to supplementary question

Of course we will be lobbying the government on social care funding. Further collaboration with the NHS could be an opportunity if we find the right way to work together. What we are doing our best to work out is how we collaborate whilst still maintaining the democratic oversight and accountability and keeping hold of what's best about both the health and the social care system. Collaboration is welcome with the NHS partners and of course we have to lobby government. There is a long way to go until we are confident we have got this right and a shift in government policy and funding would really help.

8.8 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood

Will the Mayor update the Council on the status of the Isle of Dogs & South Poplar Opportunity Area Planning Framework and in particular how the negotiation over the new housing targets is going?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

It is likely that the draft OAPF planning guidance will be issued for consultation in April next year with final approval by the end of 2017. Its status is that it cannot introduce new policy. All it can do is to supplement the

policies in the existing London Plan and it cannot introduce new housing targets either. Housing targets are set at the regional level by the London Plan and at local level in the local plan. So the question over whether we have negotiations with City Hall over housing numbers is not really pertinent to this. What the strategy has to do though is look at how we can manage the inevitable growth on the Isle of Dogs, which I am pretty sure will slow down now, in terms of its demands on infrastructure and capacity, a subject that I know both you and I have a deep interest in.

No supplementary question was put.

8.9 Question from Councillor John Pierce

What are the Council's final legal costs in the housing fraud case of former councillor Shahed Ali?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

I did answer this point earlier on to a member of the public. But just very briefly then, if he had pleaded guilty when he was first accused last December the costs to the Council we estimate would have been £3428. Because he pleaded not guilty we then had to secure a QC because he secured a QC, and we had to wait many months while he was still collecting allowances. The legal costs to the Council was over £70,000 as you can see that is quite a massive increase. I think most of us in this Chamber with integrity would agree that that is a scandal.

Supplementary question from Councillor John Pierce

The scandal that caused this was the housing fraud itself. Has the Council estimated how much he has defrauded the Council over the years as he committed this crime?

Mayor John Biggs' response to supplementary question

As I understand it, there is a provision known as the Proceeds of Crime Act that allows you to pursue a person for the ill-gotten gains of their misdemeanour. I think the Council will make a case to the appropriate legal tier on this and my understanding is that a sum in excess in £100,000 would be a reasonable sum to be pursuing. The Council needs to receive learned advice on this and pursue the claim to its full conclusion.

8.10 Question from Councillor Ohid Ahmed

Will the current Mayor be willing to review and reverse his decision to cut the budget of children's services, community safety, community languages and to drastically close a record number of youth centres?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

There is a whole legion of mistruths in that question, but the answer is that we agreed a budget last year and the spring of this year, which is this year's budget, which includes budgets for all of those services. A new budget will be published in December for next year and it will be indicative for the next three years. We haven't yet found a money tree so we will have to find the £58 million of savings. As I have said and I don't want to let the cat out of the bag, we need to do so in a way that protects front line services as far as we possibly can. It would not be reasonable for us to pretend we didn't have to make tough decisions. We do have to make tough decisions in an informed way. You will have a very good opportunity to scrutinise them when they come out.

Supplementary question from Councillor Ohid Ahmed

I just wanted to remind Mayor John Biggs that we faced £100 million worth of cuts when we were in the Administration and we survived without cutting any front line services. Where there is a will there is way. Mr Mayor you have heard from the petitioners earlier on that our children's services are going to face drastic cuts and I want a firm commitment from you that you are going to save the children's services and the early years budget.

Mayor John Biggs' response to supplementary question:

The fact is that under the previous Mayor, there were tough decisions as well but they were fudged, so our children's centres were hollowed out. Our youth centres were hollowed out as well. So we had places that claimed to be youth centres but has no youths in them and certainly were not centres as well they were open for several hours a week if that. We have rescued that situation and we have amongst the best resourced children's and youth centres in the country and we will continue to do so . You also hollowed out the waste service in the Borough by deleting staff and we also have inherited a mess with dumping on our streets. They are considerably cleaner now. So in answer to your question, we will have the same number of children's centres after this year's budget as we had before this year's budget and we will achieve great efficiencies and we will overcome the problems we inherited where 10 of the 12 children's centres were in need of improvement as they were not being properly managed and overseen by the Council.

8.11 Question from Councillor Helal Uddin:

Can you provide an update on the plans to build four cement and concrete plants on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park – and what representations the Mayor and Council have made?

Response from Mayor John Biggs

I happen to be a member of the board of the London Legacy Development Corporation in my role as Mayor of Tower Hamlets, so I sit on both sides of the fence. We formally oppose the proposals and I am aware that the

application is being deferred until the new year at least. I am hoping that through proper discussion we can find a way of ensuring that we don't damage the environment of this area by allowing these concrete plants to be introduced into the area which is rapidly transforming. It won't serve the interests in my opinion of anyone to pretend we can have this island of heavy industry in an area that is meant to be residential and of good environmental amenity.

No supplementary question was put.

8.12 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill

Does the Mayor have plans to apply for additional police funding from the Mayor of London, either under the London Crime Prevention Fund or the Safer Neighbourhood Board, in order to help our local police force drive down the appalling rates of anti-social behaviour in our borough?

Response of Councillor Shiria Khatun , Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety

ASB is a real problem in our Borough and one that the Mayor and I are determined to tackle. The Mayor has commissioned a full review of our approach to ASB and has expressed his determination to improve the Council's ability to help residents who are affected. In Tower Hamlets, we already fund the Police Task Force which consists of five Police Officers and one Police Sergeant which is match-funded by the Mayor of London. However, given the huge cuts made to Policing by your Government, it is not yet known whether this match funding will continue. So we will have to wait and see. Labour's Mayor Sadiq Khan, has recently announced that he will be providing London Councils with £70 million over four years for projects that address ASB including community engagement activities and crime prevention advice. We will work with our partners and the community to identify suitable projects using the evidence from our ASB review.

Supplementary question from Councillor Julia Dockerill

As part of the forthcoming redesign of the youth service, will you ensure that outreach teams are explicitly tasked with connecting with young people who are causing ASB.

Councillor Shiria Khatun's response to supplementary question:

The strange thing is that Councillor Dockerill feels able to claim that the Council should do more to support young people and the police when her own Government has cut the number of Police Officers in Tower Hamlets by more than 120.

8.13 Question from Councillor Danny Hassell:

Can the Mayor or Cabinet Member set out some of the key findings of the Somali Task Force and what the next steps are?

Response from Councillor Amina Ali:

The Somali Task Force report was approved by Cabinet last month and the work of the Borough's Somali Task Force which the Mayor set up last year to investigate the challenges facing Somali residents. The task force found that Somali residents were more likely to suffer from economic inequality with barriers such as language, skills and the lack of community representation hindering their access to Council services. The report reflects what the community told the task force were the main concerns. In total, there were 23 recommendations all of which the Council is committed to implementing. The proposals include developing a new hub for Somali residents to access Council services and provide community space for cultural and elderly groups as well as others. This will include Somali speaking staff after lack of Somali speakers was identified as a particular problem. The proposals also include: creating new employment opportunities including a new internship scheme; improved target provisions for English speakers of another language or ESOL; building community capacity and supporting Somali based community organisations to build access, resources, advice and support.

Supplementary question from Councillor Danny Hassell:

Thank you for the work that you have done and to colleagues, Councillors Islam and Whitelock Gibbs and the Mayor in producing this task force. Can you tell us more about what you think the impact might be of the task force report once these recommendations are acted on?

Councillor Amina Ali's response to supplementary question:

The action plan is about tackling inequality, breaking down barriers and ensuring equal treatment for everyone in our Borough. We know from the task force that the Somali community in Tower Hamlets faces sufficient challenges ranging from access to Council services, underrepresentation on the Council and their community organisations and barriers to employment. I want to ensure that the Council is doing all it can to tackle inequality and break down barriers to services and work. That is exactly what this action plan will do. The progress made in the Bengali community in Tower Hamlets is a great success story and shows the difference that can be made by targeting support for a group facing significant inequality and this is what I would like to be mirrored in the Somali community here in Tower Hamlets.

Questions 8.14- 8.18 were not put due to lack of time. Written responses would be provided to the questions (the written responses are included in Appendix A to these minutes).

9. REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES**9.1 Report from Cabinet: Gambling Policy 2016-19**

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive and Acting

Corporate Director – Communities, Localities and Culture submitting the proposed Gambling Policy 2016-19 for approval.

The recommendation set out in the report was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED

1. That the Council agree the adoption of the revised Gambling Policy.

9.2 Report from Cabinet: Community Safety Partnership Plan 2013-16 Year 4 (2016/17)

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive and Acting Corporate Director – Communities, Localities and Culture, submitting the proposed Community Safety Partnership Plan 2013-16 Year 4 (2016/17) for approval.

The recommendation set out in the report was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

1. That the Council agree the Community Safety Plan 2013-16: Year 4 (2016/17) Plan be adopted.

9.3 Report from Cabinet: Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2019

The Council considered the report of the Service Head, Safer Communities, Communities, Localities and Culture submitting the proposed Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016 for approval.

The recommendation set out in the report was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

1. That the Council agree the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy be adopted.

Guillotine Motion

At this point the meeting had sat for three hours and, with no motion to extend the meeting proposed, the guillotine came into effect. As set out in Procedure Rule 9.3, all remaining reports on the agenda were deemed formally moved and seconded and were put to the vote with no further discussion.

9.4 Report from Cabinet: Housing Strategy 2016 - 2021

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director Development & Renewal submitting the proposed Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021 for approval.

The recommendation set out in the report was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

1. To adopt the draft Housing Strategy and attached appendices.

9.5 Report from Audit Committee: Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for 2016/17

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director of Resources submitting the Mid - Year Review and Activities of Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy for 2016/17 for noting.

The recommendations set out in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED that the Council note:

1. The treasury management activities and performance against targets for the six months to 30 September 2016.
2. The Council's investment balance of £406.85m as at 30 September 2016 of which £131.62m was invested with money market funds (MMF) and £105m invested with UK Banks and Building Societies as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
3. The Council's position on prudential indicators as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

10. TO RECEIVE REPORTS AND QUESTIONS ON JOINT ARRANGEMENTS/EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS (IF ANY)

There was no business to transact under this agenda item.

11. OTHER BUSINESS**11.1 Revised Code of Conduct for Members and Revised Arrangements for Dealing with Alleged Breaches of the Code**

The Council considered the report of the Acting Corporate Director, Law Probity & Governance submitting a Revised Code of Conduct for Members and revised arrangements for dealing with alleged breach of the Code, for approval.

The recommendation set out in the report was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

1. Approve and adopt the revised Code of Conduct for Members and the revised arrangements for dealing with alleged breach of the Code as set out in Annex B to this report.

11.2 Licensing Code of Conduct

The Council the report of the Acting Corporate Director, Law, Probity and Governance updating the Licensing Code of Conduct.

The recommendation set out in the report was put to the vote and was **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

1. That the revised Licensing Code of Conduct be adopted.

11.3 Notification of Amendment to the Executive Scheme of Delegation in respect of Grants

The Council considered the report of the Acting Corporate Director, Law, Probity and Governance in relation to amendments made to the Executive Scheme of Delegation in respect of Grants decision making.

The recommendations set out in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

That the Council note:

1. That the Mayor has updated his Executive Scheme of Delegation, namely paragraph 6.2 to note that the Mayor has appointed a Grants Determination Sub-Committee and the Mayor has delegated the functions of this Sub-Committee to be carried out by the Sub-Committee collectively;
2. As the Executive Scheme of Delegation is included at Rule 3 of these Executive Procedure Rules contained with Part 4.4 of the Constitution, that the amended Executive Procedure Rules as contained in Appendix 1 will be added to the Constitution.
3. As there is now a Grants Determination Sub-Committee, the Mayor has also provided Terms of Reference for the Grants Determination Sub-

Committee and which will be added to part 3.4 of the Constitution, i.e. The Executive, as contained in Appendix 2 and which will also be added to the Constitution.

That the Council agree:

4. That the Constitution be amended by the addition of the new Executive Scheme of Delegation at Appendix 1 and the new part 3.4 of the Constitution at Appendix 2 of the report.

11.4 Review of proportionality and allocation of places on committees and panels of the Council 2016/17

The Council considered the tabled report of the Acting Corporate Director, Law, Probity and Governance reviewing the Council's proportionality and allocation of places on committees following the Whitechapel By-Election and other recent political group changes.

The recommendations set out in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED:

1. That the review of proportionality as at section 3 of the report be noted and the allocation of seats on committees and panels be agreed for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2016/17 as set out at paragraph 4.2 of the report.
2. To note the committees and panels established for the municipal year 2016/17 as listed in paragraph 4.2 of report as agreed at the Annual Council meeting held on Wednesday 18 May 2016.
3. That Members and deputies be appointed to serve on those committees and panels in accordance with nominations from the political groups to be notified to the Acting Corporate Director, Law, Probity and Governance.
4. The Acting Corporate Director, Law, Probity and Governance 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.
5. That the draft Council seating plan as set out in Appendix 1 be noted.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**12.3 Motion regarding Bow School.**

Mayor John Biggs **moved** and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Oliur Rahman **moved** and Councillor Ohid Ahmed **seconded** a friendly amendment to the motion as set out below:

'Add the following sentences at the end of second paragraph:

Council further notes the support the family has received from friends, community groups and other councillors, including Cllr Ohid Ahmed, who was at the hospital with the family when Nasar sadly passed away. Cllr Ohid Ahmed has met the family many times and continues to do everything he can to support them.

Add the following paragraph at the end of the current motion, after the sixth paragraph ending with 'difficult time':

Tower Hamlets Council has contacted of all its maintained schools in regards to the policies and procedures 'pertaining to children with a pre-existing medical condition and/or falling ill at school' in order to provide an unequivocal formal assurance to the constituents and concerned parents that all Tower Hamlet schools are aware of their duties.

The Mayor John Biggs and Councillor Rachael Saunders indicated that they accepted the amendment

Following further debate, the motion as amended was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED:

This Council notes the tragic death of Nasar Ahmed who passed away at the Royal London Hospital.

Council notes that Mayor Biggs and Tower Hamlets Council have offered their full support to the police, Bow School and other agencies as the circumstances of his death are thoroughly investigated. Council notes that Mayor Biggs has met the family twice and has committed himself to doing everything he can to support the family. Council further notes the support the family has received from friends, community groups and other councillors, including Cllr Ohid Ahmed, who was at the hospital with the family when Nasar sadly passed away. Cllr Ohid Ahmed has met the family many times and continues to do everything he can to support them.

It is important is that the police, working on behalf of the Coroner's Service, gather the facts quickly and that we learn all the lessons we can from this incident so we can prevent anything similar from ever happening again.

Council further notes that the police have consulted the Health and Safety Executive and agreed to take the lead on an independent investigation. A Metropolitan Police central investigation team will be conducting this investigation as they have the resources and capability to carry out a complex and lengthy enquiry.

This Council resolves to fully support the police, Bow School and other agencies as the circumstances of Nasar Ahmed's' death are investigated.

Tower Hamlets Council resolves to offer all the support it can to Nasar's family, friends and fellow pupils during this extremely difficult time.

Tower Hamlets Council has contacted all its maintained schools in regards to the policies and procedures 'pertaining to children with a pre-existing medical condition and/or falling ill at school' in order to provide an unequivocal formal assurance to the constituents and concerned parents that all Tower Hamlet schools are aware of their duties.

12.4 Motion on Tackling Air Pollution in Tower Hamlets

Councillor Denise Jones **moved** and Councillor Ayas Miah **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

RESOLVED:

This Council notes:

1. Poor air quality is a significant problem in Tower Hamlets and we exceed EU limits for air pollution across the whole borough
2. Figures from the British Lung Foundation show people in Tower Hamlets are twice as likely to die from lung cancer and other lung diseases than people in London's most well off boroughs like Westminster or Kensington & Chelsea
3. Emerging research shows the impact of air pollution on children is particularly devastating, reducing their lung capacity permanently which can lead to a range of health problems
4. Pollution in London is a public health priority, and over 9,400 Londoners – including almost 200 Tower Hamlets residents – die early every year due to air pollution.

This Council welcomes:

1. Strong leadership from the Labour Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, on tackling London's air pollution, including proposals to bring forward and

expand implementation of the Ultra Low Emission Zone and to introduce green buses on London's worst polluted routes from next year

2. Local Mayor John Biggs' public commitment to make improving our air quality a priority for the whole council, working with partners within and beyond the borough, giving a much-needed new local focus to this vital issue

3. Support from our local MPs Jim Fitzpatrick and Rushanara Ali in campaigning on this issue along with residents and raising the issue in Parliament

4. Work already being done by the council with local schools such as Marnier Primary and Cubitt Town Junior schools to raise awareness of air pollution and encourage children and families to minimise their exposure and adopt less polluting behaviours.

This Council believes:

1. Tackling air pollution is a matter of social justice – it is unacceptable that people are twice as likely to die from lung diseases if they live in deprived areas like Tower Hamlets compared to more affluent areas of London

2. Improving air quality is an urgent public health priority, given the damaging impacts of pollution particularly on children and vulnerable adults

3. While we are not in full control of air pollution within the borough, there are actions the council can take in relation to planning and development, parking and traffic policies, public health awareness and campaigning, cleaning up our own and partners' fleets, incentivising active travel and use of cleaner vehicles, and greening our public spaces and streets.

This Council resolves:

1. For all councillors to pledge to champion air quality and lead by example by using cleaner travel options as far as possible

2. For all councillors to support the National Park City campaign, which aims to make London a greener, healthier and fairer place to live

3. To call on Mayor Biggs to:

a. Ensure the forthcoming Air Quality Action Plan is ambitious in its commitments to improve our air quality locally

b. Consider how to roll out the positive partnership working with local schools to more schools across the borough

c. Explore investment through the budget process in proven measures and public health campaigns to raise awareness of air pollution in the local community

- d. Explore through the Draft Local Plan (currently out for consultation) all possible measures to improve Air Quality through the planning process.

Motions 12.1,12.2 and 12.5 were not debated due to lack of time.

The meeting ended at 10.13 p.m.

Speaker of the Council