

Tower Hamlets Council
Conservative Group Questions and Motions
Council meeting 15th July 2020

Questions

Cllr Peter Golds

Will the Mayor confirm whether he and or his cabinet member had any meetings, with officers and the applicant and or consultants regarding the Westferry Printworks site?

Cllr Andrew Wood

Can the Mayor provide us with the additional COVID costs reported to MHCLG each month since March 2020?

Main Motion Regarding Anti-Social Behaviour & new Public Space Protection Orders

Proposer: Councillor Andrew Wood

Seconder: Councillor Peter Golds

This Council notes:

The release of national statistics which show a change in the distribution of anti-social behaviour post lockdown with the two Tower Hamlets constituencies showing the highest absolute numbers of anti-social behaviour incidents in the country.

In April-May 2020 for total number of crimes reported per constituency

Bethnal Green & Bow highest number in England & Wales 5,471 (of which 3,416 ASB or 64%) out of 591 constituencies

Tottenham 2nd highest

Poplar & Limehouse 3rd highest 5,336 (of which 3,394 ASB or 62%)

West Ham 4th

In April-May 2019 as a comparison

Bethnal Green & Bow 6th out of 591 constituencies

West Ham 11th

Poplar & Limehouse 27th

So a big change in one-year, highest number of crimes in 2019 in Cities of London and Westminster, Manchester Central, Leeds Central, Holborn and St Pancras - major urban centres with lots of night time activity

In April - May 2020 highest number of ASB incidents in England & Wales

Bethnal Green & Bow 1st in-country out of 591 constituencies

Poplar & Limehouse 2nd

BUT for violent crimes in England & Wales April-May 2020

Poplar and Limehouse 125th out of 591 constituencies

Bethnal Green and Bow 130th

We are a high crime area mainly because of ASB less so for other crimes, we are not as dangerous as other areas

Leeds Central 1,553 violent incidents 1st in country, Poplar & Limehouse 604 incidents by comparison

But have high rates of ASB which is what pushes us to the top

What about crime on a per hectare basis as a comparison in 2020?

Bethnal Green and Bow 1st out of 591

Hackney North and Stoke Newington 2nd

Poplar and Limehouse 3rd

What about crime on a per capita basis (per person)?

Bethnal Green & Bow 7th highest out of 591

Poplar & Limehouse 18th

What about violent crime on a per capita basis (per person

Bethnal Green & Bow 309th out of 591

Poplar & Limehouse 354th out of 591

In other words, compared to other areas we have a below-average chance of being involved in violence in April/May 2020

What about ASB on a per capita basis (per person)?

Bethnal Green & Bow 2nd highest out of 591

Poplar & Limehouse 6th highest

This Council further notes:

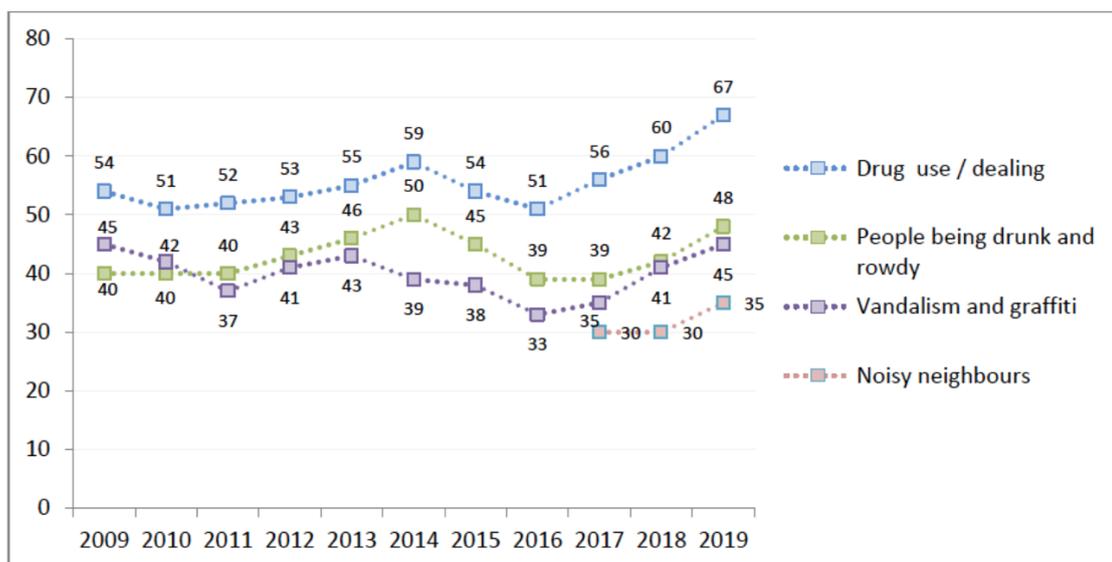
- Opposition motion September 2018 as amended - regarding anti-social behaviour & crime in Tower Hamlets. Which started off with this introduction.

“The results of the 2018 Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey show that the top concern for residents was crime with 41% concerned. Only 48% rated Policing as excellent, very good or good, the lowest rating of the subjects surveyed. 60% felt drug use or drug dealing issue was a big problem.

It is clear that residents are deeply concerned about the impact of ASB and drug dealing on their neighbourhoods.”

- Opposition motion September 2019 as amended - regarding the Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey 2019 which included this summary from the 2019 annual residents survey. It clearly indicates ASB getting worse.

Figure 5: Views about ASB in Tower Hamlets, 2009 to 2019



- The proposed extension of the Borough wide Responsible Drinking Public Space Protection Order.

This Council resolves:

1. To call on the Mayor of London and MOPAC to verify this shift in reported offenses and anti-social behaviour and to re-allocate Policing resources within London if proven.
2. To implement recommendations approved in the September 2018 and September 2019 amended motions.
3. To consult residents on the possible wording for a new Borough wide Public Space Protection Order that would have three objectives, the objective of all of them would be to discourage activity that harms the quality of life of those in the community;
 - a. To ban the use of legal highs like laughing gas as is done by Lambeth Council and the City of Lincoln. To consider including banning the sale of legal highs as well as maybe quicker and more effective than a prosecution in the Courts.
 - b. Ban using a car in an anti-social manner as is done in Kettering. To discourage the use of cars as party tools where groups of people visit residential areas to socialise in normally quiet areas to the disadvantage of residents of those areas. That if car drivers cannot prove they have a legitimate need to park that they can be asked to leave and banned from returning. This should include the tunnel runners who visit the area several times a year.
 - c. Discourage groups of people congregating outside in residential areas to socialise to the disadvantage of residents of those areas as is already done in Ropemakers, Limehouse. That this maybe be set based on time of night, size of groups and closeness to homes. This should not discourage groups chatting in the park on a sunny day but should discourage alcohol fuelled parties late at night by large groups just outside people’s homes in areas

that are normally quiet. To include areas that are private but are required to be publicly accessible like the Thames path or dockside.

4. To look again at how anti-social behaviour is reported including providing a dedicated new phone number given how busy 101 can be.
5. Extending the Council CCTV network to new growing residential areas.
6. Build new youth and leisure centres in new growing residential areas.

2nd Motion - To increase Democracy and ensure the transparency of decision making within Tower Hamlets Council

Proposed by: Councillor Peter Golds

Seconded by: Councillor Andrew Wood

This council notes that the Local Government Association, the representative body of local government in within the country outlines to members and residents, the duties of elected councillors are to:

- respond to their queries and investigate their concerns (casework)
- communicate council decisions that affect them
- know your patch and be aware of any problems
- know and work with representatives of local organisations, interest groups and businesses
- represent their views at council meetings
- lead local campaigns on their behalf.

Therefore, to achieve this the council itself must commit itself to transparency within its working practices and members must commit themselves to support their residents within the law and the Nolan principles, namely:

- **Selflessness** – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity** – Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity** – Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness** – Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty** – Holders of public office should be truthful

- **Leadership** – Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Holders of public office includes not just those who are elected but public officials, appointed members of public organisations, the judiciary at every level and those responsible for enforcing the law.

This council has previously expressed regret for the abuses that took place in the management of the council between 2020-15.

These include the abuses in procedure whereby:

- Confidential written enquiries by members, on behalf of residents, were provided to members of the administration and used to publicly attack other members.
- The former mayor refused to answer questions submitted by members at council meetings and attend overview and scrutiny to answer questions as to his policy and decision making.
- Maintaining such secrecy in decision making that officers even refused to confirm to elected councillor's the meeting dates and membership of the Mayors Advisory Board.

These three actions all contravened the Nolan principles and section 100H of the Local Government Act 1972, whereby members have a vital role in holding the executive and administration to account.

The council notes that:

For councillors to discharge their role effectively they need access to information. Members have a right to see the majority of information which the council holds so they can carry out their duties as councillors which includes information about services and information about constituents. The law is:

Any document which is in the possession or under the control of a principal council and contains material relating to any business to be transacted at a meeting of the council or a committee or sub-committee of the council shall, subject to conditions, be open to inspection by any member of the council.

These conditions include confidentiality relating to personal matters concerning individuals or items of commercial confidentiality.

Restrictions should not include, as was discovered thanks to a whistleblower, that during the Rahman administration an expensive city solicitor was retained at council expense, who, amongst other tasks, read Private Eye on behalf of a senior officer in the legal department.

The council confirms:

Members statutory rights include being able to see documents which contain information relating to:

- business transacted at meetings of the executive (including sub committees and panels), the council and its committees.
- any decision taken by the mayor or a portfolio holder in accordance with council's constitution, and
- any key decision made by the officer.

Members must accept when seeking information that they are bound by the Code of Conduct, the Law and certain restrictions, which may include looking at documents under supervision and not copying such documents.

The council notes and expresses its concern that:

Despite the duty of members to “respond to their queries (of residents) and investigate their concerns,” Tower Hamlets has placed restrictions on raising these matters by way of enquiry. This restriction is that a member may not raise an enquiry on behalf of a resident unless the resident concerned has personally exhausted their own contacts.

In an authority such as Tower Hamlets where many residents do not speak English as a first language, difficulties arise when members are expected to explain the council bureaucracy to residents rather than raise their concerns by way of the enquiry process.

The council also expresses concern that:

Enquiries to officers regarding council policy which affects residents and “enables members to communicate council decisions to residents” are being rejected and members directed to use the FOI process. This is completely unsatisfactory, because of the time delay and the breaking of the link between residents and their elected members representing their interests and concerns.

The council reiterates its commitment to ensure that it never again returns to the secrecy and obfuscation that so disfigured local government in this borough between 2010-15.

The council therefore proposes to:

- Incorporate the LGA definition of duties of councillors into the constitution.
- Resolves that Tower Hamlets will be an open, transparent and forward thinking authority that does not place impediments to members and the public seeking information to which they are entitled.
- Include a commitment to transparency across the council ensuring that members and residents have the right of access to information to which they are entitled.

- Confirm that members may represent their constituents by asking questions on behalf of the constituent relating to the council and its subsidiary bodies.
- Ensure residents are aware that they have every right to contact councillors to seek their assistance in making representation to the council and its subsidiary bodies.
- Publish details of what exactly is defined as “sensitive information” under the Data Protection Act enabling members and residents to know the limits as to what information the council may be expected to divulge.