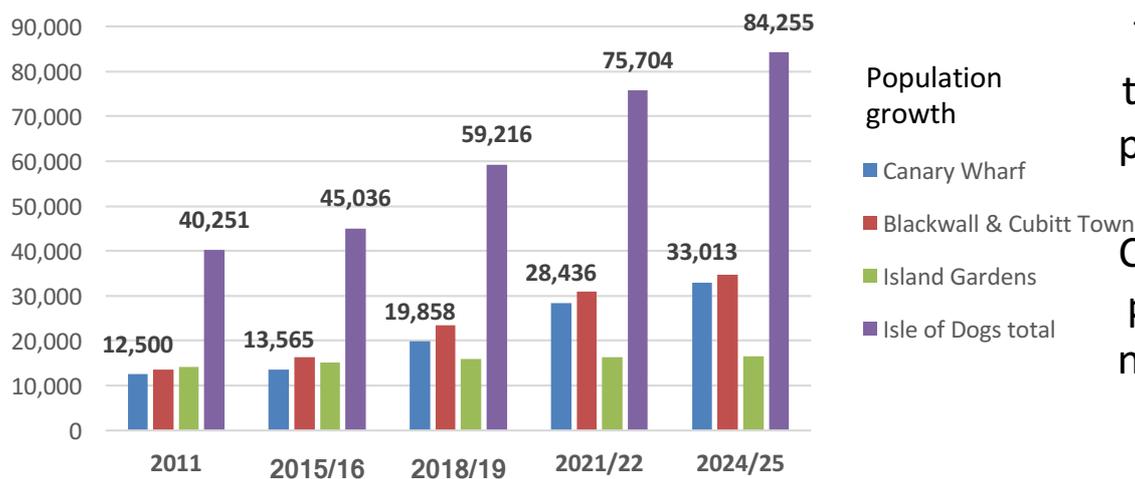


What have I done on development?



The Isle of Dogs is the fastest growing place in the UK, the table shows the Councils forecast of population growth numbers by ward & year. With Canary Wharf in blue.

Name	Developer	Storeys	Height (meters)	Apartments
Spire	Greenland	67	242	861
Landmark Pinnacle	Chalegrove	75	239	984
South Quay Plaza	Berkeley Homes	68	220	1,284 (3 towers)
Newfoundland	CWG	60	218	575
Wardian	Ballymore	55	188	756 (2 towers)

Plus many more. By comparison Pan Peninsula on the corner of Millharbour & Marsh Wall is 48 storeys and 147 meters tall!

One of the biggest problems we have is that many people in government & even the development industry do not realise the scale of development here so a lot of my work is raising awareness about the scale of what is coming including meetings with Ministers to try and get their help.

My role in the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Planning Forum

After I was elected in 2014 I quickly realised three things:

- Nobody had a plan to deal with the scale of development underway, and with loads more to come
- That the Council was not then structured to deliver such a plan
- That the 2011 Localism Act gave residents useful legal powers including the ability to write their own Neighbourhood Plan for their area

So in autumn 2014 I asked residents if they wanted to start a Neighbourhood Planning Forum for the Isle of Dogs. The answer was yes and over the last few years I have worked hard to help local residents get the Forum recognised, consult the community, write a Neighbourhood Plan, get that consulted on, get it ready for inspection and it will hopefully go to referendum this summer, when it will become official Council policy for the Isle of Dogs.

A totally non-political organisation, the Forum's plan will change the planning environment on the Isle of Dogs by setting new rules that developers and the Council have to follow. It will stop more huge residential towers being approved unless all the necessary supporting infrastructure – like schools, doctors and police – has been guaranteed. And just as importantly, [for the first time in London] it will give residents the right to vote on whether their homes will be affected by regeneration schemes. Only the Isle of Dogs community will have these kinds of protection from this summer thanks to the Forum, and it's been my privilege to have helped make this happen.



Protecting the most vulnerable people in Tower Hamlets

I sit on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee whose job it is to scrutinise the actions of the Council. In January 2017 OFSTED inspected the Council's Children's Services department.

Ofsted finds council's Children's Social Care services need improvement after previous Mayor's cuts and poor management -

To the left is what Mayor John Biggs reported in his summer 2017 Labour leaflet about the results of the inspection. Below are screenshots of what OFSTED actually said in their report. Note the differences.

Executive summary

There are widespread and serious failures in the services provided to children who need help and protection in Tower Hamlets. As a result, too many children remain in situations of actual or potential harm for too long. Insufficient scrutiny by the chief executive, the director of children's services (DCS) and politicians has meant that they did not know about the extent of the failures to protect children until this inspection. In the majority of cases referred to them by inspectors, managers and leaders had to take immediate action to ensure that children were safe, that their needs were met and that plans to safeguard them were progressed appropriately. In addition, as a result of identifying current risks to children, inspectors requested that the local authority review several aspects of the service urgently, including private fostering arrangements, care leavers in custody, the arrangements for the Public Law Outline (PLO) and the psychosocial team meetings.

Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers
and
Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board¹

Inspection date: 23 January to 16 February 2017
Report published: 7 April 2017

Children's services in Tower Hamlets are inadequate	
1. Children who need help and protection	Inadequate
2. Children looked after and achieving permanence	Requires improvement
2.1 Adoption performance	Requires improvement
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Requires improvement
3. Leadership, management and governance	Inadequate

What Labour said	What OFSTED actually said
Need improvement	Inadequate – OFSTED have 4 levels of ratings – Outstanding, Good, Requiring Improvement & Inadequate – Tower Hamlets got Inadequate, the lowest level
Blames previous Mayors cuts and poor management	When OFSTED inspected in June 2012 under the previous Mayor they said Children's Services were a mixture of Outstanding & Good. He had been Mayor then for just under 2 years. By the time of the 2017 inspection John Biggs had been Mayor for 19 months when OFSTED said <i>"Insufficient scrutiny by the chief executive, the director of children's services (DCS) and politicians has meant that they did not know about the extent of the failures to protect children until this inspection. In the majority of cases referred to them by inspectors, managers and leaders had to take <u>immediate</u> action to ensure that children were safe... there has been insufficient rigour by senior leaders in challenging weak management oversight... The local authority as a whole has failed to ensure professional accountability"</i> These were management failings by the current administration

The Council failed the most vulnerable people in our Tower Hamlets, our children. The Council has substantial financial reserves which could have been spent if money was really the issue. But if you read the detailed OFSTED report it makes clear this was a management failure.

From case work I was doing with parents I knew there were problems but the need to protect the confidentiality of families and children meant that it is very difficult to find out what is really going on. Not helped by the Council's reluctance to be open & transparent when things go wrong.

The Labour leaflet shows why you need Councillor's from other parties to hold a Labour administration to account. Scrutinising the work of the Council is an important part of our job.



Investigating issues

Last year there was a story in the Sunday Times about alleged corruption in the Tower Hamlets planning system. The paper suggested that Councillor's would be paid £500k each to approve a planning application in the ward, Alpha Square between Marsh Wall & Byng Street.

Despite receiving information from the developer (who did not pay a bribe) & later a recording of the bribery offer Council officers and the Mayor chose not to immediately inform police

about this alleged crime but only informed the Police seven months later after being told they had to do so by a lawyer. The Police are still investigating so we do not know if the bribery attempt was serious or not. But this is why you need opposition Councillor's to keep an eye on issues like this. Although I objected to the height & density of the scheme I supported the new primary school, doctors offices, hotel & preservation of the North Pole pub as part of the Alpha Square scheme.



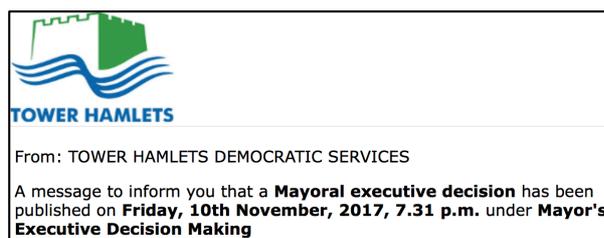
Value for money?

The cost of converting the former Royal London Hospital into a new Tower Hamlets Council town hall was forecast to cost £77 million but the cost went up to £105 million in 2017. It is the largest and most complex project that Tower Hamlets Council has ever undertaken. Other town hall projects elsewhere have gone substantially over budget and this is an area where Councils decisions need to be properly scrutinised to make sure it is does not become poor value for money.



£119 million but no new homes!

At 7.31pm on a Friday night last year Councillor's got an email to say that the Mayor has signed off an Executive Order agreeing to spend £119 million on acquiring affordable homes. This was 7 hours after the deadline to submit questions at the next full Council meeting. Then at 10.15pm in full Council we had less then 2



minutes to discuss & then vote on the £119 million due to the Labour group wanting to discuss national issues first (over which we have no control). The Conservative group called in the decision as we wanted to spend more time understanding where the money is being spent. But the discussion did not start until 9.30pm, 3 hours into the meeting and Labour Councillors talked for so long that there was no time to ask Council officers any detailed questions. So what is there to hide given that this should be good news given the need for new affordable homes?

Well £19 million will be spent on buying existing homes from Poplar Harca, £40 million on acquiring additional dwellings for temporary accommodation & £60 million to acquire s106 properties. In other words none of this money will build any new properties just buying existing properties or those already with planning permission. £119 million is a lot of money and should have been properly debated to ensure we get the best possible deal and the most new affordable homes.



Lots of meetings

Council meetings are where the boring but important work of scrutiny happens. In 2017 I attended 61 Council meetings, one more than Mayor John Biggs himself, I was the 2nd highest attending Councillor in Tower Hamlets after Cllr Peter Golds. I attended the following meetings:

Cabinet	10 meetings	Appointments	5 (where we appoint senior staff)
Council	7 “	Grants scrutiny	7 (which I now Chair)
Audit	5 “	Overview & Scrutiny	14 (including Housing Scrutiny)
Pension	4 “	TH Best Value Improv. Board	1
Other	1 “	Planning Committee	7

I also attend residents association meetings, police meetings, Neighbourhood Planning Forum meetings, meet developers etc – in total about 3 evening meetings a week. Every 2 to 3 weeks I also run a Councillor surgery at Cubitt Town library on Saturdays between 1pm and 2pm in rotation with other Conservative Councillors. Please come if you have any issues.

Lots of reading

A selection of what I have had to read over the last few months to understand what the Council is doing. As an example the Cabinet papers for the 27th February ran to 309 pages. The pink papers are confidential papers.

To understand what the Council does I need to read these documents and understand what they say.

Lots of leaflets

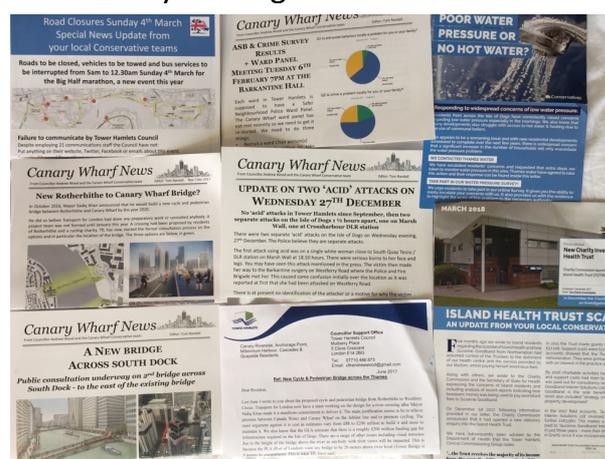
It takes about 50 hours for one person to deliver a leaflet to every homes (& there are many we cannot enter). It also costs hundreds of pounds to print leaflets but Tom Randall & I have done our best to get as many leaflets out as possible for those of you not on the internet but it is not easy with 7,000 households to get everywhere so apologies if we missed you.



Tom Randall & Cllr Andrew Wood



My reading material



Some of our recent leaflets

You can find out more about Tom & I here:

Website www.towerhamletsconservatives.com

Twitter @andrewwood17 @Tom_Randall

Facebook www.facebook.com/Towerhamletsconservatives

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