COUNCIL

Meeting held on 15th July 2019
at Main Hall - Old Town Hall, Stratford

Present:  Councillor Joy Laguda MBE (Chair)
Nazir Ahmed, Muhammad Ali, Zulfiqar Ali, James Asser,
Daniel Blaney, Rohit Dasgupta, Mariam Dawood,
Omana Gangadharan, Joshua Garfield, Belgica Guaña,
Nilufa Jahan, Genevieve Kitchen, Carleene Lee-Phakoe,
Jennifer Bailey, Sarah Ruiz, James Beckles,
Rokhsana Fiaz OBE, Zuber Gulamussen, Julianne Marriott,
Susan Masters, Mas Patel, Rachel Tripp, John Whitworth,
Ayesha Chowdhury, Alan Griffiths, Patricia Holland,
Lester Hudson, Anthony McAlmont, Charlene McLean,
Firoza Nekiwala, Terry Paul, Quintin Peppiatt, Lakmini Shah,
Winston Vaughan, Harvinder Singh Virdee, Neil Wilson,
Anamul Islam, Daniel Lee-Phakoe, Jane Lofthouse,
Pushpa Makwana, Riaz Ahmed Mirza, Shaban Mohammed,
Mushtaq Mughal, Mohammed Rahman, Aisha Siddiqah,
Suga Thekkeppurayil and Delphine Tohoura

The meeting commenced at 7.00 p.m. and closed at 8.27 p.m.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brayshaw, Clark,
Easter, Gray, Murphy, Rahman and T Wilson.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the last Ordinary Meeting of the Council, held on 17 June
2019, were approved as a correct record.

4. Newham’s Partners - Update

Council welcomed to the meeting, Kate Hudson, General Secretary of the
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), who delivered a talk on the
work of CND.

Ms Hudson, firstly, congratulated the Mayor and Council for its opposition
to arms exhibitions in the Borough, and globally. She said that there were
around 1,600 companies licensed to sell weaponry, “electro shock” and equipment used to torture people. Despite this, she said, the United Kingdom Government had refused to withdraw its support for arms fares.

She added that dealing in arms was big business with some £35.7 billion having been spent on arms in 2017 alone.

Ms Hudson advised Council that, alarmingly, BA Systems and Rolls Royce, both leading UK manufacturers, built parts used in weaponry available in the UK.

Council thanked Ms Hudson for her interesting and informative talk.

5. **Any Announcements by the Chair**

There were no announcements by the Chair.

6. **Any Announcements by the Mayor**

The Mayor made the following announcements:

(i) **The Newham Show**

The Mayor said that everyone had had an amazing weekend at the Newham Show, with thousands of people participating this year. She said it had been fantastic to see Newham’s amazing young people take centre stage, and the Youth Zone had been brilliant. The Mayor expressed her thanks to everyone who had made the Show possible and to everyone who had come along.

(ii) **Newham’s Partners – Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament**

The Mayor welcomed and thanked the Council’s guest partner speaker this evening, Kate Hudson, the General Secretary of CND – the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. She said that Kate had a long record of campaigning for peace and justice internationally and that her contribution this evening had been very welcome and timely, following last month’s motion of opposition to the Arms Fair at the Excel, and which committed the Council to work with partner organisations including CND, Newham Against the Arms Fair, and others.

The Mayor said that Council had had a really stimulating discussion last month, and that she was proud that, as a Council, it was one that stood for peace and working together, and for putting its energies into developing a peaceful, sustainable future, and for a peace dividend rather than wasting billions of pounds on weapons of mass destruction. She said that she very much looked forward to how the Council could work together to achieve this.
The Mayor said that, as Members would be aware, she had gathered from her recent email update, her message, as the Administration took forward its second year, was very much one of keeping up the momentum, to deliver on its promises.

She said that the Administration was continuing to drive through its absolutely essential change agenda. As with everything, she said, there were challenges on many fronts, and there was always more to be done, but the Administration was making progress. The Mayor reported that the latest developments in rolling out the Council’s corporate restructure, which was being driven forward by the Chief Executive, saw many changes afoot as the Council embedded the new structure and assemble an absolutely stellar senior team, and which Newham’s residents absolutely deserved.

She said that, among new appointments to the Council was Conrad Hall, as Director of Resources, who would be taking forward the Council’s approach to budget planning, a strategic approach with greater grip and certainty, which would be absolutely key in delivering the Administration’s promises. She added that, as part of the Council’s affordable housing delivery plans, it had appointed Deborah Heenan as permanent Chief Executive for Red Door Ventures. This, she said, was central to the Council’s regeneration projects linked to both the Council’s community wealth building agenda and its sustainability goals in light of the climate emergency.

The Mayor congratulated Amanda Reid on her appointment to the permanent post of Chief Planning Officer.

She went on to say that the Council was embedding its restructure with new directorates already established, of Resources, People, Policy and Performance, Adults and Health, and Children and Young People. There were, she said, some shifts in other functions as a result, and these all pointed to the fact that the Council’s structural and culture change was well under way, and it would soon have many of the permanent roles in place.

The Mayor said that she was especially proud that the recruitment for the Council’s 33 new full-time youth workers was also well underway. She said that nothing illustrated more vividly what was at the heart of the Council’s mission – the largest recruitment campaign for youth workers it had ever had, and the largest in England and the Borough’s young people deserved nothing less.

Celebrating Pride in Newham

The Mayor said that this part of the year was very much a celebratory time, as Pride in London was marked this month in
some lovely warm weather. She said she had been delighted, as ever, to have joined LGBT+ colleagues at a whole host of community events, with this year’s events being even more significant in the context of the 50th Anniversary of Stonewall. She said that underlining the Borough’s united community, and standing for equality for all, was as important as it ever had been.

(v) Relationship Education Issues

The Mayor was pleased to report upon the work that the Council was doing with schools in terms of Relationship Education. She said that it would be doing this with the support of Claire Clinton, who was a Religious Education expert and who supported the Council’s SACRE Board, and would be working with schools to ensure that the changes coming into law in September 2020 were taken forward in the best possible way.

The Mayor said that the Council would also be co-funding, with its schools, a dedicated consultant to work with Claire in providing advice and support, to consult with parents, and help provide materials and give any other necessary advice.

The Mayor said that she was aware of the question on this which would come up later, and what she did say was that she was confident that the Council was taking forward steps to positively ensure that the important and necessary work was done within the Council’s schools and communities, to ensure that Newham was an inclusive Borough, and that its children were taught to understand and respect difference and celebrate diversity.

The Mayor went on to say that the Council’s Social Integration Strategy would also be central to ensuring that a number of voices were heard, and importantly that of the LGBT+ community.

(vi) London Black Women’s Project and Building Community Capacity

The Mayor referred to another question to be taken later on the agenda, concerning the London Black Women’s Project. She said that, from the outset, she was limited in what she could say on the specific issue of the tender for the refuge provision, because this was a live process and therefore it would not be appropriate or proper for her to get into the detail.

She said that she was also acutely aware of the issues and concerns which had been raised by the Project and their supporters, and that she had met representatives just two weeks ago.

The Mayor said that she wanted to recognise the longstanding presence of the London Black Women’s Project in the borough, and the important place historically that it had in Newham. She said that
the London Black Women’s Project, formerly the Newham Asian Women’s Project, had a thirty-year history in Newham, and its backgrounds in a generation of black and Asian women, first generation diaspora community from the 1960s, and who organised in response to the specific circumstances and needs of women in particular, which were not provided for elsewhere. She said that, like many other Black and Asian organisations in the voluntary sector, they had been able to provide a unique service which originated from the experience of those who had been well placed to understand the needs.

The Mayor said that, across the board, the voluntary sector had faced a huge assault in terms of funding and resources, as part of the Government’s austerity offensive, and the black voluntary sector had often borne the brunt of that.

The Mayor said that, whilst it was not possible for her to speak about the details of a live procurement, and this decision would be made fully in accordance with the requirements of procurement law, what she could say was that she was committed to working with this and other organisations to build the capacity of the voluntary sector including an active commitment to consider the needs of Black and ethnic minority residents. She said that this needed to be done strategically, and that is why it would form part of one of the Council’s key, overarching initiatives — its Community Wealth Building Programme. She stated that the Council was at the beginnings of this new approach, looking at genuinely building wealth from within the Borough, which would empower and enrich its residents. This, she said, also meant the Borough’s local organisations, businesses and, importantly, the voluntary sector. The Mayor said that, with Cabinet and officers, the Council had been working hard to drive this agenda and she was pleased to announce that the Council would be launching its strategy on 14 October. This strategy, she said, would outline how the Council aimed to use its procurement spend to benefit the local economy, how the Council would tackle low pay, its approach to skills and employment, as well as a range of cutting edge initiatives. She said that the Council had engaged with key stakeholders in the Borough, including trade unions, businesses and voluntary sector organisations to ensure that its strategy reflected the needs and opportunities in Newham.

In addition, the Mayor advised that the Council had also begun to develop its Social Integration Strategy, which would involve reinvigorating its relationship with voluntary sector organisations, and through both of these major initiatives, the Council hoped that it could build its capacity and therefore the valuable work they did for Newham’s residents.

There were, she said, many challenges, and of course the Council
needed to do things better than had been done in the past, but this work was under way. She said the Council would not be able to change things overnight and it needed to respect its legal obligations but this would be the start of a major change in strategy to strengthen wealth within Newham’s community. She said that the Council wanted to build capacity within the Borough: for communities, for its voluntary sector, for businesses, and for individuals.

(vii) Focus E15 Deputation and Housing

The Mayor was delighted to take the opportunity to welcome all of those at tonight’s meeting from “Focus E15” for their deputation on behalf of five of the residents from Victoria Street, formerly Brimstone House, who Council would hear from later.

The Mayor said that whilst she was not in a position to refer to any individual matters, she could, of course, say that these would be referred to the Council’s Director of Housing and Lead Member, Councillor John Gray. She added that she had met residents and Focus E15 last year in relation to a number of strong concerns about housing in Brimstone House, and that she had agreed to meet twice a year with them. The Mayor apologised that whilst there should have been a meeting earlier in the year, this unfortunately did not happen and she was in the process of arranging a further meeting with them on a date that suited all parties.

The Mayor said that she had been informed by officers that they had been working on 31 separate issues from last July onwards, which the Council had been dealing with individually, and on a range of matters and that the Council’s officers had been working to resolve these, with residents.

Of course, she said, there were some very challenging and difficult issues in relation to housing, and not least the situation with the Council’s temporary accommodation at Victoria Street. She said that there was a massive housing crisis across the country and that, here in Newham, the Council was tackling some of the worst aspects of this, where the borough had more people in temporary accommodation than the whole of the north of England combined.

The Mayor confirmed that the Council had initially purchased Brimstone House/Victoria Street so that it could accommodate people in temporary accommodation within the Borough, rather than having to house people outside of Newham. She acknowledged that the Council was operating in very difficult times, year on year cuts were impacting, along with policies such as right to buy, which drained the Council’s social housing, and a failure of government to do anything about soaring rents, leaving many people in
increasingly desperate situations. But, despite all of this, she said that the Council was doing all that it could to address the housing crisis as a priority, most notably by building new council homes. The Mayor referred to the meeting of the Cabinet held last month, at which, it approved a significant report, which related to the construction of 1,000 new homes at social rent. She said that the Council’s ambitious plans, funded by a £276 million cash boost to assist its intervention, put Newham within the top two or three Councils in London in relation to council house building.

The Mayor recognised that this would not solve the immediate problems for every person, or for every family, who were bearing the daily brunt of the affordable housing shortage, rising rents and exploitative landlords. She appreciated that there was much to be done, but she was proud of the incredible start that the Council had made. She added that the Council’s housing company, Red Door Ventures, had been turned from an organisation developing market rent properties with an affordable element to solely delivering affordable homes at social rents.

The Mayor said that the Council would also be stepping up its campaigning against Right to Buy and for rent controls – something which would be centre stage as the London mayoral election approached over the next year. She said that the Council was also taking forward its Task Force on Homelessness, which had been agreed at the last Full Council Meeting.

(viii) Democracy and Civic Participation

The Mayor wished to bring Members up to speed with progress in relation to the Democracy and Civic Participation Commission, with an update of where the Council was at since the report, which was considered at last April’s Full Council, and which set out the scope and basis for the work. The Mayor was pleased to report that the Council had been working to establish the Commission, to look at potential composition and to explore best practice in relation to this area.

This, she said, had included engagement with leading figures and organisations in the field, such as former MP Graham Allen from the Citizens’ Convention on UK Democracy, the Democratic Society, and other interested local stakeholders such as Birkbeck College, who had hosted a very stimulating evening on Remaking Democracy at its Stratford Campus. There were, she said, some really exciting ideas and practices developing which could help inform the framework of the Council’s own Commission.

In addition, the Mayor said that the Council also had a new principal policy officer, appointed to work with her in delivering this work. She said that a list of potential commissioners had been compiled and
The Commission, she said, would meet for up to six months from September, and would form part of the timeline for taking forward the proposals for our the Council’s own democracy and governance system in advance of the referendum, and further proposals on that would be brought forward to the September Full Council meeting, but a lot of work was underway to ensure that this happened in line with her manifesto commitment.

To conclude, the Mayor advised that there were no Full Council meetings in August and wished everyone an enjoyable Summer break for those who were going on holiday, and she looked forward to Members collectively continuing to build the momentum needed on all of these, and other, issues over that time and when the Council met again in September.

7. Any Announcements by the Chief Executive

There were no announcements by the Chief Executive.

8. Any Updates by Cabinet Members

There were no updates from Cabinet Members.

9. Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Work Programme and Future Commissions

Councillor Anthony McAlmont, Chair of the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee, made the following statement:

“Thank you Chair,

Since the last update I provided to Full Council, I can report that work has been ongoing to develop the scrutiny work programme for 2019/20.

Scrutiny work will primarily be undertaken through the four themed scrutiny commissions. Each of which, have met since the last meeting of the Council, to carry out their work planning workshops.

Topics for scrutiny have now been selected by the commissions and a report will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 July for consideration and final approval of the Scrutiny Work Programme. May I take this opportunity to thank those Cabinet Members and senior officers that assisted with our work planning process. I will present the finalised Scrutiny Work Programme to a meeting of the Full Council in September.

The next stage for us is to fully scope those topics, setting out the objectives for the scrutiny work and how the scrutiny will be undertaken. As
part of this, we are working with the various departments determine what aspects within the work plan are time-critical, so we can timetable accordingly.

This year I plan to build on the developments in scrutiny that we started last year and continue to include as many non-executive councillors as possible in the Scrutiny process, so that we can engender an inclusive approach to influencing the Council’s policy programme and holding decision makers to account in an open and transparent manner.

In addition to work programming, other aspects of scrutiny work has been on-going. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is due to meet tomorrow evening to consider the issues of rough sleeping homelessness, with a particular focus on issues relating to the Stratford Mall.

The Committee is also due to meet on 23 July, as I previously mentioned. At this meeting, the Mayor and Chief Executive have been invited and the Committee will be questioning them on issues regarding the Corporate Plan, the Mayoral Priorities and gaining an update on the Council restructure.

In addition to this, we are holding our Scrutiny Family event on Wednesday for all Members of Scrutiny. At this event, we have arranged a Scrutiny Member Development session with the Centre for Public Scrutiny and we also intend to discuss the aspirations and expectations for the year ahead for Scrutiny.

Thank you and I look forward to reporting further on our upcoming activities to you in future.”

10. Deputations

The Council had received a request for a Deputation on behalf of “Focus E15”, which had been referred to Council by the Chief Executive.

The Council welcomed to the meeting, five local people from the Council-run temporary accommodation building in Victoria Street, Brimstone House, and addressed the Council about their housing and experiences there.

In addressing Council, members of the Deputation said that the living conditions at Brimstone House were damp, cramped, infested, unsafe and totally unacceptable for the residents, which included disabled and pregnant women. They added that there was a lack of freedom for young persons that lived there, who had little or no space to amuse themselves and that this impacted upon the physical and mental health of the children.

They stated that they were aware of other empty properties in the Borough, and cited the Carpenter Estate.
The deputation also commented on the alleged bullying and threatening nature of Council staff and the number of residents' complaints which remained unanswered.

The Deputation then responded to questions from Members.

11. Petitions

The Council received three petitions as detailed below. In respect of Petition 1, the Chair moved (and it was subsequently agreed) that Council Procedure Rule 25 be waived to allow for students from the NEWVIC to present the petition in person.

Petition 1

Councillors Lofthouse and N Wilson had accepted a petition on behalf of students from the NEWVIC, entitled “Support Cycling to Help Tackle Air Pollution”, and had requested that they be allowed to present it to Council in person. Seven students spoke on the petition, which was then formally presented to Council.

Petition 2

Councillor Mushtaq presented a petition on behalf of residents of Lancaster Road, who did not support the two hours free parking provision on their road.

Petition 3

Councillor Firoza Nekiwala presented a petition on behalf of residents opposed to fly-tipping.

12. Members’ Questions

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 24.2 (Members’ Question Time), the following questions were submitted by Members:

Question 1 from Councillor Rohit DasGupta to the Mayor

“I have recently been made aware of the devastating news that the London Black Women’s Project (LBWP), has lost its tender for its accommodation based refuge provision in Newham. LBWP (formerly Newham Asian Women’s Project) has been delivering its independent, specialist and dedicated ‘by and for’ accommodation based services for Black and minoritised women in Newham for over 30 years. The loss of LBWP’s specialist life-saving provision in Newham, will be huge blow to Black and minoritised women and children, the BME ending VAWG sector and the wider VAWG sector. Can the Council respond how we can continue providing this important specialised service for the borough?”
Published Response

The Council has a legal duty to re-procure services when existing contractual arrangements are coming to end if the Council seeks to continue service provision. The alternative being to decommission provision. In this case, the Council chose to re-procure the Refuge service. This ensures that we are able to meet needs, including for some of our most vulnerable groups.

Like all other procurement the Council arranges, the refuge service procurement was agreed by Cabinet at its meeting of 21 January 2019. As part of the procurement process a detailed Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken to ensure “the decision” complies with the Council’s legal responsibilities and that any impact, positive or negative, as a result of a proposed decision is fully considered and mitigated against.

The proposed service specification tendered made no change to the level of refuge provision sought in the most recent procurement activity. In addition, the Mayor wants to make clear that under this administration a revised policy position is in the process of being developed that may in future change the method by which tenders are assessed. One of the things this will look at is social value from a local perspective.

This revised policy position will incorporate the Mayor’s Community Wealth Building agenda as a strategy to rebuild the local capacity of the community and third sector in Newham.

The Council will always make decisions in accordance with its legal obligations and procurement process. Given that this is still a live procurement process it would be inappropriate to comment any further at this point.

Supplementary Question

Councillor DasGupta questioned the Council’s tendering process itself.

In response, the Mayor said that the Community Wealth Programme would return £1 out of £4 back to the local economy. She said she hoped that, in subsequent conversations on the procurement process, Members would engage with her.

The Mayor said that she had noted in the letter from a representative of the London Black Women’s Project, a reference to the procurement procedure, relating to the quality impact statement, which she had passed on to the Chief Executive to investigate.

In conclusion, the Mayor said that work was currently being undertaken on a review of the current procurement evaluation process in response to the community wealth building agenda, as it currently did not reflect the aspiration her administration had for the people of Newham.
Question 2 from Councillor Rohit DasGupta to the Mayor

“Energy centres in the new developments around Canning Town and broadly this borough has been seen by residents as anti-competitive and pricing them out. These energy centres charge residents well above the market price for energy and given the development blocks have long running contracts there is no way for residents to change providers. Private and social housing residents have complained about this. What can the Council do for the present residents in this predicament and can the Council make sure new developments being given planning permission does not have the provision to tie their residents to these exploitative energy centres.”

Published Response

Any major developments are determined in accordance with local and regional planning policies and proposals and the National Planning Policy Framework which promotes the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat; particularly for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential lead customers and suppliers. The Local Planning Authority is unable to depart from the legislative framework it functions within. Additionally as a planning authority Newham Council cannot compel a developer to choose a particular energy supplier as this would be in contradiction to competition law. However, the Mayor is minded as the portfolio lead for planning to write a letter of concern to Ofgem regarding the concerning matter raised by Councillor DasGupta.

On the subject of community heat contracts, I know that there are issues. Officers have recommended that you refer the matter to Ofgem, as regulation of utility charging is not something the Council has any power over.

Supplementary Question

As most of these companies had 25 year leases, could the Council ensure that no application proposing a 25 year lease would be supported?

In response, the Mayor said that, as set out in the published response, the Council had to be mindful not to breach competition law.

The Mayor did say that she shared Councillor DasGupta’s concern about being tied into 25 year contract, as there was something anti-competitive about that. She said that the letter she would write to Ofgem, would also mention the contradiction.

The Chair allowed a question, without notice, to be put by Councillor Shah, as follows:

“I understand that women were placed outside of the Borough when they
faced domestic violence.

We have women who live in Newham who go to the London Black Women’s Project. Is there any way of letting them continue, to provide the services they have been providing for the last 32 years?"

In response, the Mayor said that she had taken an interest in these issues. Whilst she did not want to talk about the detail of procurement process, the Mayor said she was committed to having conversations to ensure there was survival in Newham. She said she understood they had a cultural insight to enable women, and to give them a voice.

In conclusion, the Mayor said that she deeply regretted that the process had led to this situation and that she was committed to resolving this.

**Due to public disturbance, the meeting adjourned at 20.27 and reconvened at 20.32**

Question 3 from Councillor Rev Quintin Peppiatt to Councillor Julianne Marriot

“I welcome the possible employment of an expert advisor in RSE working with Clare Clinton, Local Authority and schools to help with consultation and to develop a common approach across the schools surrounding the introduction of the new RSE curriculum by September 2020. Could the Mayor explain how the LGBTI+ community will be consulted in the drawing up of this curriculum?

**Published Response**

The Government has stated that from September 2020 relationship education will be compulsory in all schools. Statutory guidance sets out the content of relationship education but does not stipulate when and how topics should be taught leaving schools responsible for delivering the curriculum in consultation with parents.

In preparation for the change in September 2020, we will be working in partnership with our schools to create a common approach and template policies for the teaching of relationship and health education and sex education. This will include healthy friendships and relationships, family, boundaries, bullying and online relationships in line with age appropriate expectations set out nationally. Our schools also need to abide by the Equality Act 2010.

In creating these materials we will be consulting with a wide range of communities groups, organisations and stakeholders which will, of course, include LGBT groups, as well as members of the Council. We are in the process of mapping out those stakeholders and will be able to update in the autumn. In the meantime I would welcome any suggestions from Councillor Peppiatt.
Supplementary Question

Could the Cabinet Member explain the make-up and the remit of the Equality Board, and how it feeds into this process?

In response, Councillor Marriott said she would need to look again to see what that involved, however, as always, she was very happy to talk to Councillor Peppiatt outside of the meeting.

The Mayor added that the review would be undertaken by expert consultants. She said that there was no Equality Board at present but she had mooted that a Committee take forward the proposal, with the Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE) to ensure discussions. There would, she said, be no formal Equality Board outside of the Council.

The Mayor said that what had been seen in some parts of Newham did not compare to Birmingham and that Newham was stronger than Birmingham.

In conclusion, the Mayor said that the issue of equality would be discussed at SACRE, at local safeguarding boards and with teachers.

Question 4 from Councillor Daniel Blaney to Councillor Mas Patel

“In managing corporate risk, what is the assessment of the threat of any legal challenges with regard to our statutory requirements in relation to air quality, sustainability and climate change?”

Published Response

Air quality is captured through legislation and statutory requirements under Clean Air Act 1993 and Environment Act 1995 as outlined in the background information paragraph below. The Government’s Clean Air Strategy 2019 makes various announcements for reform of the air pollution framework. In particular, new powers will be granted to local authorities to take action in high pollution areas. In addition, a new Air Quality Bill will be put forward in 2019, updating the legislative framework for air pollution under the Clean Air Act 1993. Although the focus has been on the UK Government for non-compliance with EU air quality directives so far it is important that LB Newham follows closely the new Air Quality Bill proposals and corporate risk responsibility devolved to LAs as taken by Non-government organisations (NGOs) as detailed in the background information.

From the planning and development service area perspective, topics of sustainability and climate change are captured through consideration of policy requirements set at national, regional and local levels. Legal challenges would arise through the judicial review process available to applicants via the High Court.
Supplementary Question

Can I ensure that Newham Officers and Cabinet Members are conscious of the levels of accountability the Council could expect in the years ahead on this area?

In response, Councillor Mas Patel said this was an excellent question, which tied-in with the petition presented earlier in the meeting by the NewVic Students. He referred to photographs taken of the Council’s Members and Mayor supporting last weekend’s demonstration in Stratford.

Councillor Patel went on to say that Newham Council had supported a motion in April on declaring a Climate Emergency and that a report on the Strategic Intent would be presented to Council in September, along with a range of initiatives, some soft, some harder hitting. In conclusion, Councillor Patel said that nothing was off the table in this regard.

Question 5 from Councillor Lester Hudson to Councillor James Asser

“Unite The Union has served notice on Newham Council for strike action in Waste Services. Has this dispute been resolved? Should the strike go ahead will agency staff be used to avoid rubbish piling up?”

Published Response

The Council has undertaken constructive negotiations with staff and Unite over a historic grading issue. All parties have recently entered into talks with the conciliation service ACAS in a further attempt to reach a binding and amicable agreement.

A jointly agreed resolution has been reached and Unite are currently consulting with their members to seek agreement for the proposal. Unite have suspended strike action whilst a ballot on the proposed resolution takes place.

If the strike were to proceed, the Council would put in place a contingency plan to ensure refuse collection across the borough was not disrupted. The use of agency workers is not permitted during strike action and therefore would not be considered.

Supplementary Question

Was the Council still paying for the previous Chief Executive, Katherine Kerswell or, if not, when did the Council stop paying for Katherine Kerswell?

At this point, the Council’s Monitoring Officer said he thought, to be fair to Councillor Hudson, Officers could provide Members with an answer to that
question in writing, if that was acceptable.

In response, the Mayor said that a response would be provided, in writing, and it would be circulated to every single Member, so that everyone was aware of the current situation.

13. Questions by the Public

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 26 (Questions by the Public), the following questions were submitted by members of the public:

Question 1 – from Briony Crush to Councillor James Asser

“Newham Council is currently one of the worst London boroughs at recycling. What plans are the Council soon to action to improve recycling and creating a more sustainable future for local residents?

Published Response

The Council is aware that we lag behind most other boroughs in terms of recycling and we have identified this as an area we must address and try to improve. We have been working with expert help to identify the challenges that Newham faces to improving its recycling and looking at things we can do to overcome them or reduce their effect.

A key issue for the borough remains the Private Finance Initiative contract between the East London Waste Authority (ELWA) and waste contractor Renewi which has been in place since 2002 and which runs until 2027. When this contract was drawn up national policy was focused on reducing the use of landfill rather than increasing recycling. Our current waste contract therefore focuses on ensuring we reduce waste to landfill.

The current facility extracts food waste, metals and glass from the waste and sends them off for recycling elsewhere and then treats the remaining waste to create a fuel used in energy generation. The four east London boroughs in the ELWA area successfully reduced landfill use long before the majority of other councils, and whilst recycling rates are low we continue to see over 95% of our waste avoiding landfill.

ELWA and the four boroughs in the area have already begun the process of developing a new strategy that will shape the future contract. The next ELWA waste contract will determine the type of recycling services available after 2027 and will be designed to ensure that recycling is increased.

More immediately the Council are looking at a range of projects to encourage people to recycle more, to reduce the amount of contamination in recycling bins, to expand the range of materials we recycle, to promote recycling, to reduce the amount of waste and to look at how we currently offer recycling facilities and services to produce a better strategy for recycling.
**Question 2 from Briony Crush to Councillor James Asser**

"Why does Newham Council not recycle food waste currently? With new housing developments arising locally and hence more food waste generated and methane gas pollution, does the Council not agree that food waste collection would benefit the community?"

**Published Response**

We are currently unable to offer our residents a separate food waste collection. Our current waste contract delivers waste to a facility that uses a mechanical-biological treatment process (MBT) that converts the waste into a fuel known as refuse derived fuel (RDF).

The food waste that is disposed of in your bin is an important component in the RDF that is produced from this process and at the moment can’t be collected and treated separately.

We are currently working with our three neighbouring boroughs in East London Waste Authority (ELWA) on developing a new strategy for ELWA which will include reviewing all opportunities to increase recycling and change the way we collect waste (including food waste) in the future.

In the short term we are looking at what opportunities we can take to encourage and educate households on reducing their food waste. We are also looking at options on helping households with home composting.

14. **Speeches from Members**

There were no speeches from Members.

15. **Motions**

No motions were received in accordance with Rule 11 of Part 4.1 of the Constitution.

16. **Appointments**

There were no appointments made by the Mayor or the Chief Whip.

17. **Conclusion of Business of Council Meeting**

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.47pm.