

## **MAYOR'S SPEECH TO FULL COUNCIL – 21 OCTOBER 2024**

Chair, last week, as Members will know, the Regulator of Social Housing passed its verdict on the Council's housing services. The Council has fallen significantly short of the standards I – and we all - expect for our tenants. You should know, I am deeply troubled by the findings and I am sorry, because our residents deserve better.

Last week I spent time talking to some of our Council tenants about the Regulator's report and about the work the Council will be doing with the Regulator to put in place its improvement plan. Myself and my Cabinet colleagues will be out and about meeting as many residents as possible, across the borough, over the coming weeks - as we will with our ward councillor colleagues - talking directly with them, and hearing directly from them.

I like you, I understand residents are angry and concerned. Let me make clear, as the Mayor of Newham, my job is to advocate for the people of Newham; yes, being accountable and absolutely holding those tasked with delivering improvements to account. That's why I will be holding the Council to account on the improvements in our housing services - which must be swift and rapid.

The Council will be open and transparent about its failings, and its progress in making improvements and the lessons must be learned right across the Council, in every department, in every team - as part of our ongoing work to change how we operate and perform as a public service organisation; changing the culture of the organisation, sweeping away outdated ways of working; and ensuring that our residents are treated with the compassion and respect.

Our purpose is to serve. To make life better for our residents. Since day one of becoming Mayor I have demanded that our residents are at the heart of everything we do, and they must be part of how we transform our housing services, having a greater voice, and a greater say.

Of course, we will need to demonstrate to the Regulator that we have made significant and lasting improvements in our housing services. More importantly we need to demonstrate this to our residents. The test of whether we have succeeded will be whether residents believe there has been a change, whether they see and feel a difference, whether they have confidence in reporting repairs or complaints. Confidence that they will be done, and put right. Properly. First time. And to the highest standards. This is our duty to our residents.

Chair, the theme of our meeting today is on Newham's Temporary Accommodation Crisis. I will say more about this when we deal with the substantive report presented before us on the agenda.

Members will know that the exceptional financial cost of the temporary accommodation crisis. Together with rising demand for social care is why we have had to act now to prevent an unprecedented forecast budget gap of one hundred and seventy-five million pounds by the financial year 2027/28.

Cabinet colleagues and I will be continuing our meetings with residents and voluntary and community, and faith sector partners this week to discuss our proposals, and to hear directly from them about their priorities for the future.

Yes, we are facing agonising choices, but we cannot shy away from the tough decisions we need to take. We also won't ever compromise on the outcomes we want to see for our residents as we continue with our purpose of improving our borough and enabling our people to thrive.

Finally, Chair, I'd like to update Council on appointments. Recognising the importance and priority attached to the twin challenges of improving our housing services, and tackling the temporary accommodation crisis...

I am pleased that to announce the following Cabinet appointments this evening: Councillor Amar Virdee: Cabinet Member for Housing Need, Homelessness and Private Rented Sector; and Councillor Blossom Young: Cabinet Member for Housing Landlord and Tenant Experience Improvements.

And can I take a moment to thank Cllr Shaban Mohammed for his 4 years of service as the cabinet member helping to improve Council's housing services. He was impassioned about making the changes and improvements we all want to see in that part of the council for our residents. While it didn't happen fast and as deep as he had hoped, in light of last week's Regulator judgement. In particular, I want to thank him for his grace and for the passion he has always shown in wanting to do the best for the residents he serves in Canning Town North and across Newham.