

## Philip Glanville Labour Mayor of Hackney

Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, E8 1EA Tel: 020 8356 3220

[www.hackney-labour.org.uk](http://www.hackney-labour.org.uk) / [philip.glanville@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:philip.glanville@hackney.gov.uk)

Twitter: [MayorofHackney](#) or [PhilipGlanville](#) / Facebook: [PhilForHackney](#)

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Dear Member,

Welcome to my January – February Mayor's Report.

This month has been dominated by finalising the Council's budget and responding to some of the challenges we face around business rates reevaluation, threats to the local NHS and the MOPAC consultation on policing (update next month).

Hackney has been one of the boroughs hit hardest by Tory austerity measures. Since 2010, the Council has had to find £152 million to balance its annual budget, due to cuts to the grants we receive from Government, and rising cost pressures of £42m. More cuts in future years mean that from 2010/11 to 2020/21, the Government's annual grant to Hackney will have fallen by £139m, a drop of 45%. We have to pass a balanced budget, but in the decisions we make, including to increase Council Tax, we will always focus on how we can preserve services, especially for the most vulnerable. I go into more detail on the budget below.

While we have to make difficult decisions, we can't manage decline, that's why the budget I'm proposing also commits us to: invest in our streets and parks, maintain and expand our supply of council homes, build the new schools we need, invest in our leisure centres and take the long term-decisions we need to improve and grow our town centres. I have also taken the time to meet with representatives of the borough's voluntary sector about the difficulties they face and we have to work together on regeneration, young people and employment and skills.

Best wishes and apologies that I can't be at the GMs this month hope to see you on the 'Keep our NHS Public March' on 4<sup>th</sup> March,



## Mayor's Diary Highlights

### February 22

Visit with Cllr Williams to ELATT a local training charity that specialises in IT and ESOL

Hackney Budget press briefing with the Hackney Gazette and Hackney Citizen

Future Fifty and Tech City UK event

### February 21

Visit to HCVS with Cllr Williams to discuss their Talent Match Programme which brings together a partnership of local voluntary organisations to support young people into training and work

Shoreditch Trust Board Awayday

Hackney Labour Group

### February 20

Capital Investment Board

Britannia Board

### February 19

Visited Hackney Play Street at Winston Road Stoke Newington including discussing the borough wide success of Play Streets with the Tokyo Play Association and Radio 4

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## A Hackney Labour Budget investing in the future of Hackney and protecting key services

These are very challenging times for public finances across the UK. Labour Councils like Hackney, which serve populations with high levels of need, have been hit particularly hard by Tory austerity. Since 2010, we've had to save £152 million from our annual budget, due to cuts to the grants we receive from Government, and rising cost pressures.

I'm proud of the fact that we have managed this huge challenge, whilst protecting local services. I'm also proud Hackney Labour froze Council Tax for 10 years in a row up to 2015, the only Council in the country to ever achieve this, saving households in Hackney on average £1,400. The cost of living in London is a challenge for many of our residents, and we're still committed to keeping this regressive tax as low as we can, a commitment Hackney Labour made to the electorate in our manifesto back in 2014. This year, because of the decision we took to bring Hackney Homes back into the Council, as well as reducing Council rents we're also able to freeze the service charge for tenants and keep leaseholder's service charges low.

However, I believe we've reached a turning point and given the pressures we face I'm proposing a Council Tax increase of 3% this year. 2% is the extra amount the Government is allowing us to raise to go towards the costs of social care for older and disabled people. 1% will go towards other council services. In total, a band D property will see a rise of about 60p a week. I've been working on our 2017/18 budget as part of the previous administration and more recently with my new Cabinet and the Labour Group since September, it's not been easy, but we have been firmly focused on minimising the impact on Hackney of these cuts to the funding of Hackney Council.

This firmly Labour budget for 2017/18 sees us having to make another £13.8 million in savings. As you would expect from a Labour Council where possible we have found those savings through income generation, through efficiencies, and reducing the costs of management and delivery of services. We've had to make changes to the way some services are commissioned and delivered (including from next year pooling many of our budgets with the local Clinical Commissioning Group), such as our housing support service, which provides assistance to tenants with mental health problems and those in temporary accommodation. Across the Council, we will need to provide more services online or on the telephone, rather than face to face.

I know that some of these decisions will not be popular. But they are decisions we've had to take to protect those services we all value, such as: our libraries, Children Centres, youth services, parks maintenance and street cleaning, as well as those which serve the most vulnerable, such as children's social care, supporting our older and disabled residents and providing temporary accommodation for residents facing homelessness.

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### February 18

London Mayor's (Civic) Association Annual Dinner

### February 17-18

Local Government Association and Association of Labour Councillors conference at Warwick, where Deputy Mayor Bramble spoke out against Tory Education Policy

### February 16

Meeting with Edward Benyon on new affordable housing in De Beauvoir

Consultation meeting with MOPAC, Deputy Mayor Linden, Cllr Selman, Borough Commander Simon Lawrence and Hackney the community safety team on various changes to funding and borough priorities

Meeting with Agudas Israel Housing Association with Cllr Rennison

[Launched the new exhibition at the Hackney Museum: 'A Golden Age of Social Housing?'](#)

Barbican Annual Dinner

(Couldn't attend, but Cllr McShane spoke at the Healthwatch Hackney event on the NHS Crisis, STP and the Council's response)

### February 15

Meeting with the Hackney Liberal Democrat Group

Meeting on Crossrail 2

Meeting with Woodberry Down Community Organisation

In our budget we're also continuing to invest to make sure that Hackney continues to have some of the best public facilities in London. So we're proudly planning to spend £398m on: our schools, investment in our leisure centres, our parks, existing and new council housing, streets and pavements, our much loved listed buildings and town centres. Nearly all of this badly need investment has to be funded locally with no Government support, and so we are finding new ways to raise that money, such as building and selling private housing, making sure that the profits from new homes in Hackney go into public infrastructure rather than being lost to developers. We're also investing in land to create new income streams to protect services in the future.

The budget will go to Cabinet and Council next week and you can look at the full [budget papers here](#) and see what I've said [through the Council](#) on our plans. More information will be included in the Council Tax booklet and future editions of Hackney Today. If you have any questions, please do email me.

## Working to support refugees and the Dubs Amendment

We continue to work with local campaigners and Citizen's UK who have been instrumental in securing more homes for Syrian refugee families in Hackney. Cllr Rennison, Mayoral Adviser for Advice Services and Preventing Homelessness and Hackney Speaker Cllr Sales at a recent meeting discussed how we could continue to work together as Hackney looks to place further families and we still have a shortage of suitable homes impacting our ability to house the seven families I committed to housing in Hackney. With Citizens UK we're planning an event in April to celebrate everything Hackney residents have done to support refugees in the borough.

Like so many across the country I was appalled that the Government backtracked on their commitment to the Dubs Amendment and settling child refugees in the UK. I had signed the Liberty/Dubs pledge last year and with London Councils we committed to supporting a minimum of 0.07% of the local population as unaccompanied minors. This meant that we offered to the Home Office spaces for an additional 17 children bringing our total up to 42. If the same offer had been made by all local authorities the Government could have met the 3000 places they agreed to when they supported the Dubs Amendment.

Both Cllr Rennison and I have written to the Government strongly urging them to not close the scheme and instead continue to support the Dubs Amendment and reiterating our offer spaces for these vulnerable children. We continue to support refugees in Hackney and on a more positive note have recently been successful in getting more funding for this work from the Home Office.

## Responding to Sisters Uncut

In response to last week's protest by campaign group Sisters Uncut, I wrote a blog responding to their claims and explaining the work Hackney Council are doing to support victims of domestic violence.

### February 14

Housing Development Board

### February 12

Attended as a judge the Boroughs United Talent Show at the Hackney Empire

### February 11

Campaigning with Hackney Labour in the Stoke on Trent Central By-election

### February 10

Visited North London Muslim Centre including their children's centre, a meeting with service users and a meeting with Hackney Muslim Leaders

Lunch with Hackney Co-operative Developments and an afternoon tour of their Dalston Projects including Gillet Square

### February 9

Hosted Millfields Primary School children with autism at Hackney Town Hall, holding a Q&A with Deputy Mayor Bramble

Interview with BuzzFeed

Event at the Geffrye Museum to welcome their new director

### February 8

Spoke at a business breakfast hosted by London First

Meeting with Rabbi Pinter

[Hackney Sports Awards with the Speaker, Cllr Burke and Cllr Desmond](#)

Tackling domestic violence in Hackney is something I take extremely seriously. That's why one of my first acts as Mayor was to appoint an advisor to lead on our work to eliminate abuse and make sure this commitment was at the top of the Council's agenda.

The In 2015 there were 2,500 reported incidents of domestic abuse in Hackney, but the real number is believed to be much higher. That is simply unacceptable. So despite continued government cuts, we have increased spending on domestic abuse services and ensured we continue to fund one of London's highest number of refuge spaces.

Last year I met the campaign group Sisters Uncut for constructive discussions about how we could further improve the support we provide to abuse survivors, and I made a number of commitments about expanding our use of empty homes for temporary accommodation, renewing staff training and exploring if we could use hostels more appropriately.

We've made progress on each of these. More than 50 extra homes set for demolition under regeneration plans have been refurbished so we can use them to temporarily house families most in need of somewhere to live. All staff in Council-run hostels have been given extra training about domestic violence, and the vast majority of survivors who approach us for help are now placed in self-contained flats or in Council-run accommodation.

Some of these changes take time, and I'm frustrated that we haven't been able to make as much progress as I'd have liked. But our commitment remains resolute – we will do everything we can to improve the domestic violence services we provide and make sure that anyone experiencing abuse knows that when they are ready, we are here to support them. We will continue to invest in these services, make the support we offer better, expand the use of empty homes and most importantly, build as many truly affordable Council homes as we can.

Some of the claims Sisters Uncut make are simply not true. Our estate regeneration schemes will see a net addition of social housing and every Council tenant has the right to return to a brand new home at the same rent. We are also reviewing several of our schemes – including Marian Court – to see if we can deliver even more badly needed social housing. And last year, we launched our new Housing Supply Programme, which will see the Council directly deliver hundreds more new homes, with 70% of the homes for genuinely affordable social rent and shared ownership.

I have been extremely vocal about how the Government's housing reforms will exacerbate London's housing crisis and do nothing to help residents in Hackney struggling to find an affordable place to live. Through speaking out in Parliament, joining marches and writing to ministers, we have secured victories to stop some of this damaging legislation. Recently, the Government backtracked on its damaging Pay to Stay proposals and delayed forcing councils to sell so-called

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### February 7

London Councils Labour Group and Leaders Meetings

Meeting with Berkeley Homes

Hackney Labour Group Executive

(Couldn't attend, but Deputy Mayor Bramble spoke at NUT Education Event at Urswick School)

### February 6

Catch up with Hackney Citizens

(Couldn't attend, but Cllr Patrick with Cllr Selman, Cllr Demirci and Living in Hackney hosted an event with Thames Water on the recent floods at Stoke Newington Town Hall)

### February 5

Community breakfast with politicians and the Kurdish Community from across North East London at KCC

### February 3

Summit meeting and open Q&A with local voluntary sector at HCVS

### February 2

Meeting with Hope Not Hate to discuss Hackney #MoreinCommon event

King's Park and Homerton Joint Ward Meeting

### February 1

Meeting with Deputy Mayor James Murray

[Launch of Hackney LGBTQI+ History Month at Hackney Museum](#)

high-value homes. We will continue to make the argument to Government about the scale of the housing crisis and that their response so far will only make things worse.

In November, I stood on the steps of Hackney Town Hall to launch a landmark campaign to end the scandal of violence against women and girls in our borough – alongside abuse survivors, charity workers, NHS staff, police officers, trade unionists, young people and ordinary local people.

Rather than launch protests, which previously have caused thousands of pounds worth of damage to the Town Hall – money that could be better spent on frontline services – Sisters Uncut should join these partners in tackling the scandal of domestic violence and target Government policies that make it harder to respond to the challenge.

## School Streets

I've been working closely with Cllr Demirci on this new project and I'm pleased to say we have announced the first two schools who are working with us to deliver 'school streets'.

School streets is a proposed scheme where the road outside a school is closed to traffic at school opening and closing times. Closing the street to school and through traffic would help to achieve a safer, more pleasant environment for everyone using the street whilst maintaining access for residents, businesses, pedestrians and cyclists.

Primary schools in Hackney were invited to apply to take part. Thirteen expressed their interest and two schools have been selected to pilot the scheme this year:

St John the Baptist School, Crondall Street, N1 6JG  
Tyssen Community Primary School, Oldhill Street, N16 6LR

If you want to know more please visit: <https://www.hackney.gov.uk/school-streets>

## Mayor's 'I love Hackney' Civic Awards

After the success of last year's first I Love Hackney Mayor's Civic Awards, the Council is again looking to recognise, celebrate and reward the special people of our borough.

Hackney is the great place it is today thanks to the hard work of those who go the extra mile for their community. The 'I love Hackney' Civic Awards allows them to get the recognition they deserve.

### January 31

Catch up with the Hackney Gazette on their Hidden Homelessness Campaign at King's Crescent

Meeting on cycling in Hackney with Cllr Demirci

### January 30

Hackney Design Awards

### January 28

Hackney Cycling Campaign Annual Burn's Night

### January 27

[Holocaust Memorial Day with Speaker, councillors, faith leaders and the community](#)

Third Mayor's Advice Surgery

Hackney South and Shoreditch Labour Burn's Night

### January 26

Meeting with Cllr McShane and the Chair of the Homerton

Meeting with the team building new homes at Atkin Court

Hackney: Schools for Everyone Event at City Academy with Deputy Mayor Bramble

Hackney North and Stoke Newington GM

Hackney South and Shoreditch GM

I would encourage everyone who knows someone who has made an important contribution to life in Hackney to put in a nomination and help us celebrate the best of our borough.

Perhaps you know someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in the community? Somebody who has overcome an extraordinary difficulty; a fabulous teacher or carer; a person who has shown immense courage; a tireless fundraiser or volunteer; or an individual who has gone that extra mile to better their neighbourhood. We want to hear their stories.

Nominees for the civic awards can be of any age and from any background. All nominations will be considered by a panel of judges.

Please submit your nominations by [downloading an application online here](#) and emailing it to [tara.hudson@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:tara.hudson@hackney.gov.uk). Or you can pick up the forms at libraries across the borough and post it to: Tara Hudson, Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street. E8 1EA.

Nominations close on Monday, 3 April. The three winners will be announced at the Council's AGM in May, where they will receive trophies and certificates.

## Essential work to secure future of Hackney Town Hall

Following local press reports, I thought it was worth explaining why the essential health, safety and maintenance works have been undertaken to Hackney Town Hall.

Hackney Town Hall, which is 80 years old this year, is one of the finest Art Deco buildings in East London and we are pleased that we've have been able to bring this important building fully back into use as a community asset.

Since December 2012, we have undertaken essential health, safety and maintenance works, overseen by Historic England, to tackle a backlog of issues that have built up since it was first built.

Some of the work that's taken place includes: the replacement of electrical wiring from the 1930s which posed a significant risk of fire, the removal of asbestos, the repair of leaking windows and balconies and repairs to some of the stonework which was in a state of disrepair. Most of the building was also not accessible or DDA compliant, did not meet current health and safety regulations and was not energy efficient or environmentally friendly.

Other local authorities have sold off some their most important and precious buildings after years of underinvestment, or neglect, after continued budget cuts from Central Government. This wasn't an option for the Council. We want to keep our Town Hall for its civic value and the important role it plays in the lives of local residents who have been married, registered a new member of the family or have become a British citizen at the Town Hall. It is also a space where key decisions about Council services are made with discussion and debate. Without taking action now the Council would have continued spending money on simply patching up the Town Hall, most of which was unusable, diverting much-needed funding from other areas.

I know it isn't easy for people to hear about the Council spending money on its own buildings, when at the same time residents are being told about the need to make further savings or the challenges of responding to homelessness. However, I want to reassure residents that the money for the Town Hall works has not been taken away from the day-to-day running of Council services, or our plans to investment in homes, schools, parks, or other projects. We've used money that was set aside in our capital programme to pay for these works.

It is not unusual for a historic building, and for a project of this size, that work that may not have been planned at the

beginning is then added during the course of the project. Again, these additional works have been funded from our capital programme and will also prevent further works to the building in the future that would cause significant disruption and damage to the Town Hall.

The works, which are now at last coming to an end, enable greater use of the Town Hall, increasing office space by 60% and significantly increasing the amount of usable public and civic space available. The works are also helping the Council to save money as part of an ongoing programme to reduce the number of buildings that the Council uses by making a better use of existing spaces; the capitalised value of the Council buildings that will be released, the revenue costs saved from simply not continuing to spend money on assets in poor condition, and the new revenues generated from the refurbished Town Hall will recover the monies spent on the Town Hall many times over.

At the end of the wider programme, the Council will have moved from occupying a series of shabby to near derelict buildings, costing in excess of £3M a year, to a position of occupying modern, efficient space. This was crucial to the original decision to restoring the Town Hall and will create from those vacated buildings new opportunities to generate more than £2m a year towards front line Council services. This is a process we have recently gone through when the Council vacated Kelton House on Mare Street, that used to cost us money to manage and will soon generate more than a £1m to support services.

I have asked for a review of the final stages of the project, including a clear timeline of when it will reopen, and will continue to work with colleagues across the Council to ensure the cost of the Town Hall works remains within the new budget set for this important and complex project.

I want everyone in Hackney to experience and enjoy our Town Hall which will remain a focal point for the borough and its communities for generations to come. Later this year, when it reopens I can't wait to invite residents to return to our newly refurbished Town Hall and see the improvements and new spaces for themselves.

## Fairtrade Fortnight

The Council will be marking fairtrade fortnight again this year, with a range of activities planned.

Fairtrade fortnight runs from 27 February to 12 March. The nationwide initiative, led by the Fairtrade Foundation aims to increase awareness about our power as consumers, and how we can affect change through ethical consumption. Fairtrade is a commitment to a better deal for producers in developing countries, which ensures they receive a decent price for a good product.

Hackney Wick FC will be using ethically sourced footballs from Bala Sport Fairtrade in their match on Saturday 4 March. The Council will also be giving out the ethically sourced footballs to schools and youth groups across the borough during Fairtrade fortnight, with ethical under-11s matches planned for Hackney Marshes on Saturday 11 March. The Fairtrade footballs are produced in Sialkot Pakistan, by men and women who are paid a fair wage and benefit from fair working conditions and a Fairtrade premium that helps fund health and education projects.

The Hackney Fairtrade group will also be hosting a family fun day in Gillett Square on Saturday 11 March from 2-5pm. Families will be able to play games and learn more about how shopping Fairtrade can make a difference to people's lives in some of the poorest countries around the world.

The Speaker will also be hosting a Fairtrade reception for local residents and community groups on 7 March, which I am looking forward to attending.

Hackney is a Fairtrade borough and has hosted Fairtrade events for the last ten years, with the Hackney Fairtrade Group operating since 2007 to promote this ethos to local businesses and organisations, and help influence where they get their supplies.

## Consultations and campaigns:

### Business rates

We're continuing to call on the Government to rethink its plans to reevaluate business rates, which will see huge hikes in the rates that many small local firms will have to pay, and could tear the heart out of our communities and our local economy.

In April, many small firms across the Capital will receive a rates bill thousands of pounds higher than in 2016. They could then face even higher rises each year until 2021/22.

Hackney, where the 'rateable value' of some premises has more than doubled, is the most severely affected borough in London. It has an average rateable value increase of 46% – five times the England average. More than 370 businesses could face a rise in their rates of between £10,000 and £100,000 in April, with some looking at an even greater hike.

Compounding this is that many businesses which previously qualified for small business rates relief will no longer be eligible because their property value has risen so much.

Over 3000 people have so far signed a petition (<https://www.change.org/p/theresa-may-mp-protect-businesses-from-the-rates-hike-which-will-tear-the-heart-out-of-our-communities-1596433d-75ec-4e65-b78a-ec2582571f6e>) in opposition to the plans, which the Council has launched with the East End Trades Guild, which represents small businesses.

Cllr Nicholson, Cabinet member for Planning, Business & Investment, also wrote to the Chancellor Philip Hammond in November about the impact of business rates revaluation in Hackney. He followed this up with a letter last week and I will be joining him and other local leaders and businesses at a campaign event in Shoreditch on 24 February. We hope to deliver the petition to Downing Street in early March.

### Education

**Until 28<sup>th</sup> February** the Council is still asking residents what they think about education including: forced academisation, the Council's role in Hackney's schools, selection based on academic results and the role of parent governors. We have already had over 2,300 responses and have also held events across the borough, especially with hard to reach groups.

To take part please visit: [https://consultation.hackney.gov.uk/hackney-learning-trust/hackney-schools-for-everyone/consult\\_view/](https://consultation.hackney.gov.uk/hackney-learning-trust/hackney-schools-for-everyone/consult_view/)

### Hackney Gazette #HiddenHomeless Campaign

It would be great if individual members could join me, many councillors and our MPs and show their support by signing the Gazette's pledge which can be found at: [www.hackneygazette.co.uk/news/the-hidden-homeless-campaign/pledge-your-support](http://www.hackneygazette.co.uk/news/the-hidden-homeless-campaign/pledge-your-support)

### Help shape the future of Dalston

Hackney Council is gathering views on the principles which could shape the development of a new cultural quarter in the centre of Dalston, aimed at protecting and building on the area's reputation as one of London's most creative and dynamic neighbourhoods.

The 'Dalston Quarter' refers to a group of Council-owned buildings in the area around Ashwin Street and parts of Dalston Lane. Over the last few years, the Council has been working with local residents, businesses and community

groups to explore how it can ensure the long-term future of these buildings and their role in providing future cultural spaces and creative industry-led employment spaces, which could include affordable workspace.

If you want to know more or take part please visit: <http://news.hackney.gov.uk/help-shape-the-development-of-the-dalston-quarter/>

### **Help to shape the future of Stamford Hill**

Residents can help to shape the future of Stamford Hill by having their say on the latest stage of the local Area Action Plan

Hundreds of residents have so far shared their views and ideas as part of the drafting of Stamford Hill's Area Action Plan. Once adopted, this planning document will provide a detailed planning framework for the next 15 years.

It aims to manage the pressures and demands of future growth in the neighbourhood in a way that benefits the local community.

If you want to know more or take part please visit: <http://news.hackney.gov.uk/help-to-shape-the-future-of-stamford-hill/>

### **Previous Motions and policy updates**

#### **Albion Kids Show**

I know many members are concerned about this issue and I wanted to respond to both the motion and these concerns, this week we discussed this at Labour Group and I also wrote to Albion Kids Show directly.

I recognise that Albion Kids Show has been providing play facilities to children and young people in the borough for many years, and is a much loved local resource; indeed I have seen it in action at many fun days and festivals across Hackney. I have raised this matter with officers from the Council's Property Services and Investment & Partnerships teams, to request a briefing on the AKS rent situation, and what further support might be offered.

I understand that AKS have been in occupation of 80a Eastway since around 1990. 80a Eastway comprises a 4622sqft (429.4sqm) warehouse with adjacent yard space to the rear of 80 Eastway. Originally, occupation was on the basis of a licence at a fee of £1 per year and this arrangement continued until discussions for a new lease took place after the Council approved its VCS Lettings Policy in 2011.

I understand that AKS was unwilling to move onto a VCS lease in 2011 as it could not afford the rent of £4 per square foot, which equates to £18,500 per annum. After several years of negotiations, a new lease was completed in March 2014 on the basis of a rent of just £3,000 per annum, which was all that AKS could afford. In return, AKS gave up any security of tenure rights and agreed to regular break options, which would enable the Council to take possession if this was necessary to facilitate a development or alternative use of the site. I've been advised that it was also made clear to the trustees that this was a short term arrangement to regularise the position, and that it would not be possible to sustain such a low rent in the medium or long term.

I understand that the short term lease expires in March 2017, so officers from Property Services and Investment & Partnerships met with the trustees in December 2016 to discuss the next steps for the organisation, and to explore the option of moving AKS onto a VCS lease. Whilst the Council has been accused of 'imposing a 600% increase in rent', the

reality is that AKS has benefitted from a reduction at this level against the already heavily discounted VCS rent of £4 per square foot for the last three years, and before that paid a notional rent of just £1 per year for the entire site.

Whilst I recognise the challenges that this presents AKS, a £3,000 a year rent (equivalent to 65p per square foot) is not a rent level that could continue for any organisation. The Council must be fair and transparent in its support of local community groups, and it would be rightly open to criticism from other VCS organisations if it allowed an ongoing financial subsidy to one group that sat outside the VCS lettings policy that all other VCS groups are expected to adhere to.

Nevertheless, I recognise that AKS has not been able to improve its financial position and remains unable to pay VCS rent levels at this point in time. In light of this and the concerns that have been raised, I understand that Property Services have agreed to meet with you on 24 February to discuss what further support the Council can provide; this will include the offer of a six month extension of the current lease to 30 September 2017.

Unfortunately the Council does not have another site in its VCS portfolio that could accommodate AKS, due to the type of space that is required by the organisation. However, in recognition of the fact that the current site is likely to be unsustainable for AKS in the longer term, I've asked Property Services to work with Council's Housing Asset Management team to trawl the asset databases, including garages and other such spaces, to see if there is any unused space that could accommodate AKS' vehicles and resources.

In relation to the Council's voluntary sector grant funding, I understand that AKS submitted two applications for grant funding in 2017/18; a main grant application for the value of £30,000, and a holiday playscheme application for the value of £8,000.

The Council has a rigorous grants assessment process. Each application was scored individually against the grants programme priorities by a team of three assessors from the Council or a partner organisation from the VCS; the assessors then came together to agree a moderated score for each application. I have been advised that the Main grant application from AKS (£30,000) failed the initial gateway stage in relation to project costs. The assessment team identified that the budget breakdown would have benefited from a detailed breakdown of the costs and from demonstrating value for money.

The Holiday Playscheme application (£8,000), was considered by the Grants Panel; Panel members looked at the comparable merits of each application and the outcomes delivered from each and as far as possible, took into account the impact of any proposed disinvestment. However due to the high number of stronger applications the AKS Holiday Playscheme was not recommended for funding.

The process included the Right to Reply (for both grants) which gave organisations the opportunity to advise the Council if the organisation's sustainability was at risk or there would be a material impact to the services provided to the community as a result of no longer receiving a Hackney Council Main Grant. I understand that Albion Kids Show submitted a Right to Reply Statement, however on this occasion, the panel were unable to recommend the application for funding.

The Council is committed to its support of the voluntary sector; there can't be many councils that have increased their voluntary sector grants budget over the past decade, for instance, but Hackney is one of them. Hackney's VCS grants

scheme has been maintained at c. £2.5m p.a., and in fact has increased in line with inflation over past 7 years. However, demand for funding inevitably always exceeds the funds available, and the Council does need to ensure that any approved bids represent value for money, meet agreed priorities and deliver clear outcomes.

For 2015/16, the Council offered feedback on the proposals and funding application and suggested that AKS needed to seek help with organisational development. For 2016/17 part of the funding arrangement was explicitly intended to improve organisational sustainability through the organisation accessing external support through HCVS or a similar organisation.

### **Homelessness Reduction Bill (responding to last month's motion)**

We continue to argue for additional funding for councils, and for the Government to commit to truly fully funding all new duties introduced in the Bill.

The level of homelessness in Hackney has been steadily increasing since 2010 and the number of households in temporary accommodation (TA) has more than doubled since 2010 when 1,250 homeless households were in TA to over 2,800 homeless households who are currently living in TA.

Current estimates indicate that the total cost of implementing the Homelessness Reduction Bill in Hackney could be in the region £11m (c) when all of the additional staffing, advice, accommodation and support costs to people approaching the Council are taken into account. This is also the projection for the first year only and is likely to increase in successive years.

We have been arguing that these additional costs should be fully funded by the government and that the existing homeless prevention grant should be reassessed and increased for the London boroughs. We have also consistently argued that the existing LHA rates and the overall benefit cap should be increased as these are two major contributing factors towards households having to move out or be evicted from the PRS as a result of housing unaffordability.

Throughout the passage of the Bill we have been raising consistently the need for additional resources to implement the Homeless Reduction Bill. This issue was raised again recently when I directly met with the Housing Minister. We will continue to argue these points directly with the Government and will press this point in our comprehensive response to the Government's Housing White Paper.

Over the past three years the Council has, through our lobbying work around the Housing and Planning Act, consistently and forcibly made the case that the Government should remove the centrally imposed financial restrictions and barriers that it has placed on Councils in order to allow Councils to build more homes and to tackle homelessness.

We have and will continue to argue that:

- The Government's artificial cap on Council borrowing through the Housing Revenue Account should be removed across the board, or at a minimum boroughs such as Hackney who have a significant housing development programme should be given the freedom to borrow more so we can build even more homes in the borough.
- The Council should be able to retain all receipts that are generated through the right to buy in order to help fund the construction of new homes in the Borough. We have also been arguing that the Council should be able

to fund a higher percentage of the build cost, as well as having longer to spend the receipts before being forced to return them to the DCLG.

We will be responding to the Government's recent financial regulations consultation and the Housing White Paper and will again be make the argument for the removal of centrally imposed Government restraints on the Council which stop us building new homes to our full potential.

The average rent in Hackney is now in the region of £1,800 per month (d) for two-bedroom flat - a 34% increase since 2011. However, this increase in the level of rent has not been matched by housing benefit.

The Council wants to see more affordable rents in the PRS and we have been campaigning for this through our 10 steps campaign, which involved a public petition to the Housing minister as well as the issue being raised direct with the Housing Minister, MPs and peers.

This campaign is continuing and will be re-launched shortly during PRS fortnight where we will continue to focus on the issue of unaffordable rents in the PRS and make the argument for measures to help us tackle these. The Council has consistently argued throughout the passage the Housing & Planning Act, through written and verbal evidence, suggested amendments to the Bill, and through our direct contact with the DCLG that the forced sale of Council homes would lead to:

- Increased homeless temporary accommodation costs – due to declining Council voids and in the longer term steadily reducing Housing Association nominations
- Increasingly economically polarised communities and an rise in the number of Hackney neighbourhoods which are classified as highly deprived, which already stood at 17% in 2015.

We argued throughout the passage the Housing & Planning Act that it and subsequent regulations should be amended to take into account the following:

- Local authorities should be exempted from any forced sales regime where the number of households in temporary accommodation exceeds the number of annual lettings available to a Council.
- Local authorities are exempted from any forced sales regime when they are located in an area of acute housing stress, as defined by overcrowding, homelessness acceptances, high and increasing levels of household in temporary accommodation.
- Local authorities are exempted from any forced sales regime where an authority's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) defined housing need exceeds projected lettings and new supply

As a result of lobbying from the Council and others the Government has delayed the wider roll out of the forced sales regime. We will continue to make the argument with the government and others that the forced sale of council homes should not be taken forward in areas such as Hackney where there is a high degree and increasing level of homelessness. We will raise this issue again in our response to the Government's recent Housing White paper, which I have already described as [very much style over substance](#).

## Picture House Strike

I continue to support the campaign and I know many members have been involved in supporting staff members and BECTU in their fight for the London Living Wage. Hackney South supported a motion last month and further strikes are planned in Hackney and across London. I have still not had a reply to my letter to Cineworld: Picturehouse's owner and I'm redoubling my efforts to push for a meeting to try and resolve this dispute. Sadiq Khan has also written to the chain and where we can I have pushed for the Council to stop using the venue.

## Visiting, speaking and reporting back to branch Labour Parties

I am due to speak at **Clissold Branch** in March, **Hackney Central** in April and **Stamford Hill West** in June and **Hoxton West** in July. I am not attending meetings in May as I will be at my home branch, but I can do a second ward meeting in June at 7pm and I'm keen to book August (if you meet), September, October and November meetings. If you want to invite me please email [philip.glanville@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:philip.glanville@hackney.gov.uk)