

Tower Hamlets' newly elected Speaker pledges support for two charities

Tower Hamlets Borough Council's newly elected Speaker has pledged his support for two charities at last night's annual general meeting.

Councillor Suluk Ahmed, representative for Spitalfields & Banglatown, was elected Speaker after Saif Uddin Khaled stepped down following the conclusion of his year-long term.

In Mr Ahmed's opening address to the council, he pledged to support two charities focusing on young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and individuals who are sleeping rough.

Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services for Tower Hamlets Borough Council, said before the election: "There are always lots of people who are interested in the role," but only two were nominated yesterday evening, councillors Suluk Ahmed, Aspire, and Rebaka Sultana, Labour.

The London Borough Council implemented two five-year strategies in 2024. One for Special Educational Needs, Disabilities and Inclusion, another for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping.

Education is a priority in the community, and in Tower Hamlets schools, nearly one in five pupils (19.2%) have SEND, while "6.8% of pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan", according to the borough council.

Last November, the cabinet of Tower Hamlets Council approved a homelessness strategy setting out six priorities, including: early prevention, suitable accommodation for those at risk of homelessness, customer service improvements, and access to appropriate support services.

It was estimated that the total number of homeless people in Tower Hamlets reached 8,500 in 2024, with one of the highest local rates of homelessness in the country, according to housing charity Shelter's research.