

Parliament Matters

by Sir Robin Wales, Mayor of London



iwitness24 Photo by: Ron Jeffries

Housing a key issue for next London Mayor

Tomorrow morning at 7am polling stations will be opening across the borough. I hope you, like me, will be voting in the Mayor of London elections and for who you want to represent us on the London Assembly.

The Mayor of London has great influence and power over what happens across this city. They have a platform to promote London across the globe, the ultimate say over large planning applications and manage our fire, police and transport network.

No matter who is sitting in the driving seat of City Hall come Friday, we will be making sure that we continue to champion the borough and strive to get the best outcomes for our residents.

The biggest challenge for the capital is housing. We are doing our bit by building new homes, buying more housing stock and working to keep rents affordable - I'll be announcing more about this soon.

But the Mayor of London has lots of land, including pockets in Newham, which should be used for more affordable housing. We will be putting pressure on the new Mayor of London to introduce a more joined-up approach with council planning departments to ensure that developments are focused towards local needs rather than the coffers of City Hall.

We will also be putting pressure on them to boost London's economy and support our residents by improving transport connections in east London. We want to see Stratford International Station made truly international, Crossrail 2 coming to east London and a commitment to building more river crossings in the east - including at Gallions - sooner.

We have high expectations for the new Mayor of London and so should you. But the best way to influence the future of this amazing city is to vote, because your vote counts and will make a difference to the outcome.

So whether it's before work, after the school run, or just before you go to bed make sure you make the time to vote and have your say.

“ Make sure you make the time to vote and have your say

and finally

by Shagufta Nasreen, director of Skills Rethink

Election debate is all you will hear these days, on TV, radio and read in newspapers.

One of my colleagues asked me which candidate I will be supporting in the London Mayoral elections? Sadiq Khan, I replied.

The next question was, is it because he is from a BAME background? No, I said being a professional person, I have a habit of matching CVs

with job specifications, and Sadiq Khan's CV matches exactly with what job is required to be done as a mayor of London. And yes he is from the BAME community but it is like a cherry on top.

A multi cultural and vibrant city such as London needs a mayor like Sadiq Khan, who can complete the picture of our diverse and dynamic city. Much is writ-

“ One can feel the sharpness of his thinking

ten on his policies and about his vision for London in the press already, to me personally, his ability to approach ordinary people with such an ease and his solid will



■ Spring blossom bursts out in warm sunshine across east London parks.

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Museum proves we all are refugee descendants

A remarkable house in Spitalfields is home to the extraordinary Museum of Immigration and Diversity, the oldest museum of its kind in Europe.

The architecture, with its many alterations and additions, reflects the changing face of east London and the different waves of newcomers over the centuries. Sadly lack of funding means it isn't open all the time, but our humanist group was lucky to enjoy an arranged tour.

The house was first occupied by one of the many Huguenot families who originally fled France to escape persecution for their religious beliefs. They described themselves as 'refugiés', or what we now call refugees. Huguenots added significantly to the popula-



■ Paul Kaufman, chairman East London Humanists

tion of London and started their own distinctive shops, businesses and places of worship.

One contemporary politician compared them to a 'swarm of frogs,' a dehumanising comment with striking parallels to the language which some poli-

“ The museum also features poignant stories and letters

ticians who should know better still use occasionally. Despite such prejudice and ostracism they went on to make an invaluable contribution in every walk of life.

Huguenots were followed in the 19th century by an influx of Irish fleeing the potato famine, then around the turn of the century by Jews fleeing persecution and poverty in Eastern Europe. Jews were responsible for building a synagogue in the back garden of the house. The last

few decades have seen the area transformed again by migrants from Bangladesh and, more recently, Somalia.

One important message which visitors to the museum take away is that every one of us is an immigrant or the descendant of immigrants. It is just that some of us, or our ancestors, came to these shores longer ago than others.

The museum also features poignant stories and letters written by local school children, often themselves immigrants or the children of immigrants, who have been asked to put themselves in their shoes.

This important lesson in empathy, a universal human quality essential to social cohesion and success as a species, is one that many adults would do well to emulate



Khan's team.

It is about time that we have more BAME candidates to reflect the true multicultural face of London.

Sadiq Khan, a son of a Pakistani migrant bus driver, has become a household name in London and a hot favourite to win.

Elections are also more closer to home for the Newham residents as a local candidate Cllr Unmesh Desai is also fighting for a Greater London Authority City & East seat. If elected he could be a strong part of