# TOCETHE TOWER HAMLETS

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Issue 121 April 2009 The magazine for Tower Hamlets Council's staff



Continuous learning sets good performance apart from the mediocre - at both organisational and individual level. That's why it's one of the council's core values and why we invest time, money and effort in learning – from experience, from others and from mistakes.

Consider our past recycling performance, when we were one of the very worst in the country. We introduced ways of making recycling much easier for residents and then launched a major information campaign to encourage them to do more. After just six months we are on track to exceed our recycling target of 19 per cent. There is still much more to do and more to learn, but this is already a great improvement over the previous high of 13per cent.

These things do get noticed. Our ground-breaking scheme to recycle all waste from Whitechapel market was highly commended at last month's Local Government Chronicle Awards.

There are many other ways of improving the environment. Look at page 5 for news of our Carbon Reduction Strategy. As a council, we use huge amounts of energy. If everyone working for large organisations did their bit we could make a really big difference. So switch off and save.

After all, this is not just about saving the planet; it's also helping us to direct as much money as we can towards the sharp-end services, yet another example of what we do having a direct impact on people's lives.

Martin Smith, Chief Executive

General news

## Welcome Can you spot room for improvement?

Could you look at litter with a fresh pair of eyes? Could you speed up an invoice on its tour around the council? If you could, them maybe you should be a peer improvement reviewer.

Peer improvement reviews - a process where managers from one part of the council attempt to help another service with a sticky and intractable performance problem – have been piloted over the past few months.

Partnership Area Director William Roberts and Complaints Manager Ruth Dowden volunteered to be the first to undertake these reviews. William looked at the differences between the way the council cleans its street and the way Tower Hamlets Homes cleans its estates, and Ruth looked at how to speed up and simplify the process of invoice payments.

"It was a great opportunity to get to know about another part of the council's work," explains Ruth. "I found it personally very rewarding, and very helpful as part of my own development as a senior manager."

"Its never easy trying to deal with problems that have been

going on for years," adds William. "However, a friendly face asking difficult questions can be much more productive than people coming in from outside."

Ruth and William were also assisted by Aspiring Leaders Sara Rahman and Chris Southworth as well as Scrutiny Policy Officer, Shanara Matin. All agreed that it was a stretching experience that took them into completely new areas.

Feedback from the managers and teams being reviewed was also positive - 'a thoughtful and thorough review with an impressive final report' was one comment. Compared with other approaches, one manager commented that it was 'less bureaucratic, fewer people are involved but it engages the key people...it's more effective and quicker.'

The pilot reviews are now completed, but we are planning more from May and looking for good managers to lead the reviews, so keep your eye out for more information in the Managers' Briefing and if you would like to know more contact Louise Russell, Head of Business Improvement.

## Park sparks planning prize

Radical plans to transform a concrete maze into a brand new public park have won the council a prestigious planning award.

Our imaginative Aldgate Masterplan has scooped the 'Best Conceptual Project' award

at this year's London Planning Awards.

The scheme will see part of an infamous traffic blackspot, known as the Aldgate gyratory, closed - to be replaced by a brand new public park.

#### General news

## Can we build it – yes we can!

The hard hats are on and the cranes are in place – work on a £300m project to transform Tower Hamlets' schools is now well underway.

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) is a government programme that will see every secondary school in the country either rebuilt or refurbished.

As part of the programme, St Paul's Way Community School is being completely rebuilt, whilst Bethnal Green Technology College will be part-rebuilt and partrefurbished.

The construction work is being carried out by Bouygues UK, who are working with the council to ensure local children and young people will soon enjoy their lessons in exciting buildings – fully

fit for 21st century education.

As well as these schools, building work has also started on a brand new sixth form centre. Based on the site of the Wessex Centre in Bethnal Green, Cambridge Heath 6th Form is being developed as a partnership between three local schools: Morpeth, Oaklands and Swanlea.

Construction is being delivered by Borras, and will give students in the north of the borough somewhere local to continue their studies past Year 11.

The work at the first three sites is just the start of a programme that will literally build on the progress that has already made our borough one of the most improved education authorities in the country.

## Market rolls up for award

Tower Hamlets Council's groundbreaking scheme to recycle all waste from Whitechapel Market was Highly Commended at this year's Local Government Chronicle Awards.

The scheme, the first of its kind in the country, gives market stall holders the chance to recycle all their waste in specific numbered recycling bins which are placed on numbered locations. The bins are locked over-night to ensure that they are not misused by local businesses and residents.

The market's food traders have been provided with special food recycling bins for their waste, which is collected twice daily. This prevents contamination of the other recycling materials which has proved a problem in the past.

When it was launched last August the scheme attracted

national interest.

Tower Hamlets was also a finalist for the Council of the Year Award.

The LGC Awards aim to reward the very best in local government and recognise the excellent service they deliver to the communities they serve.

David Blackman, acting editor of LGC magazine commented: "The awards pay tribute to the individuals, teams and departments that are working tirelessly within local government to make their communities happier and healthier places to live.

Local Government Chronicle is delighted to be able to show our support of these teams and individuals who through their drive, ambition and vision are making it their priority to increase efficiency and accountability throughout their councils."

### GLA launches Information Services Portal

GLA Information Services supports London Borough officers and councillors through the provision of a range of specialist library and information services on urban and social policy matters.

We are pleased to announce the launch of our new Information Services Portal website, providing a new way to access the latest publications and research.

IS Portal is a single, easily searchable database containing details of around 400,000 books, reports, journals and press items relating to all aspects of urban and social policy. Subjects covered by the service include urban and regional planning, regeneration, environment, transport, housing and homelessness, equality and diversity, economic development, education, skills and training, crime and community safety, emergency planning, culture, health, public finance and the Olympics and Paralympic Games. Many of the records on the database contain links to electronic versions of the documents. You can submit and track enquiries, set up email research alerts on over 100 different subject areas and save the searches you make on the database.

IS Portal can be accessed at http://isportal.london.gov.uk/. You need to register to use the service. To receive your username and password, or for more information, please email the Service Development and Promotion Team at isinfo@ london.gov.uk or call Claire O'Kane or Lorraine Sperring on 020 7983 4673/4647.

#### News in brief

> Free swimming
Tower Hamlets pools are
overflowing with free
swimming opportunities in
a drive to get the borough
fit and healthy.

Starting on Friday 3 April residents will be able to swim for free at one of the borough's four pools.

Delivered by the council in partnership with GLL (Greenwich Leisure Limited) the council's notfor-profit leisure operator, the free Friday swims join a host of swimming offers that launch in April.

The free Friday swimming joins free swimming for over 60s and under16s along with free swimming sessions aimed at women. The sessions are part of the Tower Hamlets Healthy Borough Programme, which aims to make regular physical activity and healthy food choices easier for local communities in a drive to tackle obesity. They start on 1 April 2009.

Free Friday swims take place at Mile End Park, York Hall, St George's and Tiller leisure centres, the sessions run from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.



#### General news



### The hottest ticket in town

Move over Guy Ritchie, the Collins twins will be cornering the gangster movie market when their hard-hitting documentary The End launches this year's East End Film Festival (23 – 30 April 2009).

The full-length UK premiere opens the eight-day film extravaganza. The first time filmmakers turn the camera towards their father Les Falco and his gangster friends, including bank robber Victor Dark, debt collector Mickey Goldtooth, and infamous bare-knuckle fighter Roy Shaw.

Brought up a stones throw from Whitechapel's Genesis Cinema, where the movie will be screened, Nicola (director) and Teena (producer) have learnt from the best appearing in gangster classic Snatch.

Nicola said: "I'm delighted that The End has been selected as the opening night film for the East End Film Festival.

"The East End of London is as much of a character in my film as

the guys are. It couldn't be a more perfect setting."

The original cut of The End has already picked up a string of awards, but they have saved the extended version for a UK premiere on home turf in Tower Hamlets.

The premiere takes place at Genesis Cinema on Thusday 23 April at 7pm. The screening will be followed by a question and answer session with Nicola and Teena Collins, alongside guest appearances by many of those featured in the film.

The East End Film Festival is organised by Tower Hamlets Council and boasts screenings of premieres, documentaries, and shorts programmes, plus a host of gala events, live music, street art, networking opportunities and seminars at 10 venues across the East End.

For more information about the festival visit www.eastendfilmfestival.com



#### General news

## The big switch off!

Pick up any newspaper or turn on the television and you are sure to hear about the damage already being caused by Climate Change. Left unchecked, it is set to cause a global humanitarian and environmental disaster affecting species, habitats and people everywhere. If we are to avoid the worst effects of Climate Change (and to avoid dangerous tipping points) we have to stay below a 2°C increase in average global temperatures, compared to what they were before the industrial era.

The scale of the problem requires action from us all – central and local government down to every individual. Have you thought about what steps you can take to reduce your carbon footprint at work?

One simple way you can help is to simply switch off your PC as well as shared printers and photocopiers at the end of the day. Such a small gesture can have a big impact – doing this in the council's four main staff buildings (Anchorage, Mulberry, Gladstone Place and 62 Roman Road) will save 340 tonnes CO2 and save the council over £26,000 each year. This is one of

the easiest and most effective ways to reduce our carbon emissions.

Sustainability Officer Rachel Carless said; "With energy prices likely to continue to rise over the coming months and years (and with an 80 per cent rise from June 2007 to 2008 alone), the council needs to manage its energy consumption well. There will also be significant financial penalties to pay for poorly performing Local Authorities under a national carbon trading scheme (the Carbon Reduction Commitment) which starts in 2010. Every member of staff can play a part in helping to reduce the council's CO2 emissions both helping to reduce the effects of Climate Change whilst helping the council serve its residents better."

So what else is the council doing to tackle Climate Change? The council launched its Carbon Management Plan on 8 April. The Plan sets out the council's ambitious targets of a 25 per cent CO2 reduction from council emissions by 2012, 40 per cent by 2016 and a massive 60 per cent reduction by 2020.



How are we going to do it? Every Directorate is preparing carbon reduction schemes and so far 19 projects have been identified. These include:

Westferry Circus Street Lighting Scheme By swapping to more energy efficient bulbs at Westferry Circus last year we saved 37 tonnes CO2.

Mulberry Voltage Optimiser By connecting this piece of equipment, which is in place and ready to be connected, the Council will save 386 tonnes CO2 and around £36,000 per year.

Pool covers at our Leisure Centres

Pool covers help prevent heat being lost from the pool water into the atmosphere thereby saving on building energy consumption. Pool covers at three of the Borough's Leisure centres will save around 100 tonnes CO2 per year.



#### What can you do to help?

Switch off your PC! By simply switching off your computer at the end of the day you will help the council save 340 tonnes CO2 and over £26,000 each year! So join the council's Big Switch Off and help the council to tackle Climate Change!

The council is looking for Green Champions to help us achieve our carbon reduction aims.

For more information please contact Rachel Carless, rachel.carless@towerhamlets. gov.uk, Ext x6649. More details of this scheme will be released soon.

## And now for something completely different

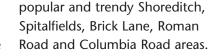
Whether you're looking for a vintage frock, organic groceries or even the latest cutting-edge fashions, staff can find an alternative to traditional chain stores in the Quirky Shopping Guide.



The guide, a 70plus-page romp
through the huge
range of
individual,
independent and
innovative
retailers
available in
London's East
End, is part of
the council's
continuing
drive to

generate employment and support local businesses.

It's designed to be of use to both visitors and locals alike and features almost 150 different shops spread across the borough - with a particular focus on the



Featured shops are split across 11 categories. Practically every shop in the guide is independently owned, each with its own unique style and panache. There are one or two branches of small chain stores whose unusual or individual merchandise fits in with the ethos of the book.

A handy map at the back of the guide helps shoppers track down their bargains, and there's even a mention for London's oldest business – the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, founded in 1570.

The largest section in the guide is devoted to fashion, with 36 stores featuring designers' own



lines or hand-picked collections of unusual, funky or cutting-edge styles. There's a separate section focusing on vintage clothing, in deference to east London's status as the epicentre of the vintage fashion scene.

Other unique stores can be found in the Accessories, Furniture, Food, Music, Books, Gifts, Gardening and Galleries sections. Finally, the Treatments, Therapies & Beauty section contains a listing of spa, salon and other facilities where bargainhunters can relax and unwind when they're all shopped out.

In addition to the various shops, the guide also contains information on the vibrant and colourful street markets of





#### General news



Spitalfields, Brick Lane, Columbia Road, Petticoat Lane, Roman Road and the Sunday (Up)Market at the Old Truman Brewery.

There's also a useful listing of distinctive and individual cafés and restaurants in each of the main shopping areas to tempt shoppers to linger over their purchases and make a day out of their visit to the area.

Thanks to partnerships with organisations like Visit London and VisitBritain, the council is able to promote and distribute the



guide widely to both a national and international audience. This has helped to reinforce east London's growing reputation as one of the city's most lively and diverse places to visit, eat and shop.

The Quirky Shopping Guide has proved to be an invaluable tool for bringing east London's exciting selection of lively street markets and independent, one-of-a-kind shops to a wider audience.

Now in its seventh edition, the Guide has grown year-on-year to reflect the ever-increasing choice and diversity of shops in the area.

"The Quirky Shopping Guide has been greatly influential in attracting shoppers away from the more traditional shopping districts in the West End," said Pat Holmes, investment and business team leader.

"Whatever you're looking for you're bound to find it – and more – with the help of the latest edition of the guide".

The Quirky Shopping Guide can be obtained by emailing tourism@towerhamlets.gov.uk

## Extra Litter pickers give borough a boost

Extra litter pickers are blitzing hotspots in the borough in an intense street cleansing drive.

The litter pickers are highly visible wearing fluorescent jackets and are working across the borough systematically. They are responsible for sweeping and also for picking up rubbish that will be collected for recycling.

They have so far collected 6.15 tonnes of litter for recycling – almost the same weight as a London bus.

As well as targeting areas in the borough that attract high levels of complaints about street cleanliness, the teams will also respond to calls from the public about any areas they report as being littered.

The key points will be housing estates, parks, main roads, schools, tube and bus stations and near food shops. The teams will be deployed rapidly to any areas that are reported as needing swift action.

Staff and residents are urged to call in if they see any area of litter that needs to be cleaned up.

To report litter, staff should call ext. 5004.



## Annual Residents Survey

2008-09 results

The Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey results for 2008-09 are now available. The survey comprised a face-to-face survey of 1,180 residents who were chosen to be representative of the borough. The survey explores residents' perceptions across a wide range of topics including views about council services, the local area, community cohesion and anti-social behaviour.

The results highlight improvements in perceptions around crime and anti-social behaviour over the past year, and an increase in satisfaction ratings for health, street cleaning and council tax collection. But, as always, there are pointers to areas where we need to improve.

The full results can be found on the staff intranet at the following link:
http://towernet/Intranet/staff\_
services/comms\_\_consultation/
consultation/residents\_surveys.aspx

An article with full analysis will follow in a later edition of Pulling Together.



#### Policy page



## Communities in control

In July 2008 the Government published the Communities in Control White Paper. The White Paper looks at who has power, on whose behalf is it exercised, how are those with power are held to account, and how can power can be accessed by everyone in local communities.

The White Paper makes a number of proposals that aims to boost vibrant local democracy and shift power and influence from central government to local communities and people. It is proposed that local authorities hold a new duty "to promote democracy" - essentially, taking an even stronger role in promoting understanding and participation in democracy. The Paper also proposes a number of other ways in which communities can become empowered, including: promoting volunteering and active citizenship, enhancing access to information, making sure petitions are heard and acted upon, giving communities a greater say in how local budgets

are spent, boosting the powers and visibility of Overview and Scrutiny, changing the executive system to produce more visible and accountable local leaders, encouraging more local people to stand for office, and helping citizens make complaints and seek redress when things go wrong.

The White Paper presents us with a number of challenges and opportunities, relating both to new processes and structures, and new ways of thinking about local democracy.

A Communities in Control Project has been established to co-ordinate the various pieces of work occurring across the council relating to these proposals. A project board with members from across Chief Executive's and other directorates has been established, and will meet monthly to explore and co-ordinate action across the council in response to the White Paper. If you would like to find out more about the project, please contact Judith Colvin, Communities in Control Project Co-ordinator, on ext. 4126.

#### Performance page

## Council does the double

The council has added two more Beacon awards to our haul of seven, demonstrating our drive and commitment to achieve excellence for residents.

We were awarded Beacon status for our outstanding work in the positive engagement of older people and preventing child poverty.

Chief executive Martin Smith, said: "Achieving not one but two Beacon awards is testament to our commitment to improve our services and enhance local people's quality of life.

"Our innovative approach towards engagement and preventative work with older people has lowered health and social care needs by encouraging healthy, fulfilling and active lifestyles.

"Our work preventing child poverty is particularly significant when families up and down the country are feeling the effects of the credit crunch. By providing children and young people with excellent education and access to top quality facilities, our children can enjoy healthy, happy and successful futures."

Tower Hamlets has the largest forecast population increase in London - 16.9 per cent by 2012 - including significant increases in adults aged 45 to 64, and those over the age of 85. The council's award-winning approach to





engaging older people has led to a decrease in admissions of older people into long-term institutional care by 15 per cent from 2006/07 to 2007/08, and an increase in the average admission age of older people to residential or nursing care from 80 years in 2004/05 to 83 in 2007/08.

By looking beyond older people's needs in narrow 'health and social care' terms, the innovative approach has seen vast improvements in health, wellbeing, social engagement, and independence.

With Tower Hamlets often cited as one of the most deprived areas in the country, the award for preventing and tackling child poverty is recognition of the excellent work being done to help local children and their families in difficult circumstances.

Children's centres have been opened in the borough – helping under-fives and their families learn and develop together, whilst also advising parents how to access affordable childcare and employment and training opportunities. GCSE results put Tower Hamlets as one of the most improved education authorities in the country, whilst the council has impressively halved the number of local young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

## The Council's Strategic Priorities

#### One Tower Hamlets

- 1. To reduce inequalities, foster strong community cohesion and provide strong leadership and inclusive services
- 2. Working efficiently and effectively as One Council

#### A Great Place to Live

- 3. Provide affordable housing and strong neighbourhoods
- 4. Strengthen and Connect Communities
- 5. Support vibrant town centres, and a cleaner, safer public realm
- 6. Improve the environment and tackle climate change

## A Prosperous Community

- 7. Support lifelong learning opportunities for all
- 8. Reduce worklessness
- 9. Foster enterprise

## A Safe and Supportive Community

- Empower vulnerable people and support families
- 11. Tackle and Prevent Crime
- 12. Focus on Early Intervention

#### A Healthy Community

- 13. Improve health and reducing differences in people's health by promoting healthy lifestyles
- 14. Support mental health services to improve mental health
- Improve access to, and experience of, health services

Name:

lob title:

#### Thank you



Sometimes it can feel like your hard work goes unnoticed, but this is often not the case. Without the tireless hard work and dedication of staff we could not have been named as a four star authority.

Your efforts really do make a difference, both to your colleagues and to members of the public.

On this page you can thank a colleague for the extra work or excellence they have demonstrated that makes a difference.

So if you want to say thank you to a colleague simply pick up a Thank You card from Human Resources, fill in the details and return it to Steve Wiggett, 6th floor Anchorage House, c/o Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, E14 2BG. All entries will be entered in to a prize draw with one member of staff being selected at random for a £25 gift voucher.

It's now even easier to nominate colleagues that you think deserve a special thank you.

The thank you card is now available to download from Towernet, the council's intranet, making it quicker and easier for you to let colleagues know that you appreciate the work they do.

To nominate someone visit http://towernet/ Intranet/staff\_services/learning\_development/staff\_ recognition\_strategy/staff\_thank\_you\_scheme.aspx Name: Joe Crossley

Job title: Customer Services Advisor

Thanked for: Putting forward an innovative idea

to improve customer services at the

Chrisp Street One Stop Shop

Name: Angela Dillon

Job title: District Building Manager
Thanked for: Responding promptly, always

listening and being willing to look

for alternative solutions

**Monica Joseph** Home Care Worker

Thanked for: Providing care services in the recent

extreme weather conditions

Name: Christopher Monk

Job title: Customer Liaison Officer

Thanked for: Sitting in on an interview with a

difficult client and being a calming

influence

Name: **Karen Gallagher**Job title: Home Care Worker

Thanked for: Providing care services in the recent

extreme weather conditions

Name: Theresa Berecz lob title: Admin Officer

Thanked for: Always being helpful and keeping on

top of things

Name: **Tahmina Ferdusi**Job title: Admin Officer

Thanked for: Exceptional contribution to data

quality within Adults Health and

Wellbeing

Name: **Georgina Farrelly**lob title: Reception/ Admin Officer

Thanked for: Exceptional customer care and service



## Occupational Health in the workplace

### What is it and why we need it

Life in general can be challenging these days. Juggling home, family, finance and your career responsibilities can sometimes leave us with little time to input into looking after our own health or, indeed, to cope with additional pressures arising out of the normal peaks and troughs of our working lives.

Whilst there are many issues that can affect our health in the workplace, there is also a lot we can all do to look after ourselves—making sure we take proper screen breaks, adjusting our chairs properly, not ignoring early signs of problems, talking to your manager about any difficulties as they arise, or if you work in a hazardous

environment, wearing personal protective equipment.

173 million working days were lost in 2007 due to sickness absence [Source CBI] and the 2008 Black Review of the health of the working age population reported that the cost to the economy of working age ill-health in the UK is estimated at around £100bn each year. Increasingly it is being recognised that good health is good for business and that a healthy workforce is a productive one.

Occupational Health Services Your Occupational Health Service (OHS) is an independent, confidential health service provided by the council. The OHS is delivered by a team of health professionals who have specialised in the branch of medicine that deals with the relationship between work and your health. Working to high professional standards, you can expect the team to treat you courteously and with respect for your privacy and dignity. The team will provide you with advice and will work with you to enable you to have a safe and healthy working life.

Our aims are to:

- Enable the rehabilitation of employees returning to work following ill health.
- Assist employees to achieve good health by providing health advice and support
- Assess health issues of employees in a confidential manner for their impact on sub-optimal attendance and performance in order to identify where improvements can be made e.g. advice on alternate assessment and treatment options, alternate practices or modifications to role or environment etc.

The OHS will not replace the service that you have from your General Practitioner (GP). Your GP has overall responsibility for your health assessment and accessing treatment for you, but the OH team will work in partnership with your GP and other health professionals particularly in instances where your health affects your ability to work or ill-health appears to be caused or made worse by your work.

The OH team will also work in partnership with you and the organisation to identify the blockages to returning to work safely or to reduce the risks from hazards in the workplace that have an adverse effect on your health.

Together we hope to ensure that your wellbeing at work is maintained and given the priority it deserves. After all, good health at work is good for everyone.



## London Golf Show 1-3 May ExCeL London



The London Golf Show is returning to ExCeL London from May 1-3 for its fifth outing and will once more offer everything in golf under one roof.

Ryder Cup star Lee Westwood was among the thousands of golfers to attend last year's event and was impressed with what he saw



Westwood said: "The show has been great. From a golfer's point of view it is terrific because they get to see all the equipment under one roof and actually give it a try.

"I've enjoyed having a go at the 100ft putt, although my attempt on the putting green was abysmal."

Visitors to the 2009 show will have just as many chances to swing a club with a host of interactive features on offer with some fantastic prizes to be won.

The golfing bonanza will offer everything golfers' hearts desire including big brands, customfitting, a huge indoor driving range, a massive American golf store and celebrity appearances.

In addition visitors can take in everything from the latest fairway fashions and hottest destinations to the latest golfing gadgets and gizmos.

To buy tickets or for more information call 0844 847 1650 or go to www.londongolfshow.com

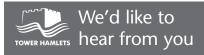
### Win Tickets to the London Golf Show!

We have teamed up with our friends at the London Golf Show to give our readers 10 pairs of tickets to the event. To stand a chance of winning two tickets simply answer the following question:

Which Ryder Cup golfer attended last year's London Golf Show?

Please e-mail your answer, along with your name, address and phone number, to ellarybakowska@excellondon.co.uk – please quote Tower Hamlets in the subject line of your e-mail.

Competition closes on Friday, 17th April 2009



If you've got a story to tell in Pulling Together please contact your directorate lead or editor Claire Rudd.

Chief Executive's Kevin Kewin ext. 4075

Development and Renewal

Lee Lixenberg x4754

**Children's Services** Sukhjinder Nunwa x4149

Communities, Localities and Culture
Sarah McLaughlin ext. 2860

Adult Services Lorna Bayford ext. 2189 Or email claire.rudd@towerhamlets.gov.uk

A large print version is available by contacting 020 7364 7791



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