

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL****HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 23 MARCH 2016****THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

During the meeting the Council agreed to vary the order of business. To aid clarity, the Decision Sheet is presented in the order that the items originally appeared on the agenda.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Amina Ali
- Councillor Gulam Robbani
- Councillor Rabina Khan
- Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury
- Councillor Craig Aston

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillors Helal Uddin and John Pierce declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 12.2 - 'Motion regarding Poplar HARCA'. This was on the basis that the Councillors employers had a working relationship with Poplar HARCA. The Councillors stated that they would leave the meeting room for the consideration of the motion.

Councillor Joshua Peck declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 12.4 - 'Motion regarding the Government's attack on a Council's right to follow an ethical policy in relation to procurement and Pension Fund investments'. This was on the basis that his employer had contracts with a number of pension funds (Motion not debated due to lack of time).

Councillor Abdul Asad declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 12.4 - 'Motion regarding the Government's attack on a Council's right to follow an ethical policy in relation to procurement and Pension Fund investments'. This was on the basis that the Councillor had a Pension with the Authority. (Motion not debated due to lack of time)

3. MINUTES**DECISION:**

That the unrestricted minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 January 2016 and the Budget Council meeting held on 24 February 2016 be

confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

(Action by: Matthew Mannion, Committee Services Manager, Democratic Services)

4. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE SPEAKER OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Please see the minutes.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition relating to Ayasofia Primary school.

Mr Mohammed Umair addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Rachael Saunders, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

DECISION

That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Children's Services for a written response within 28 days.

(Action by: Debbie Jones Corporate Director, Children's Services)

5.2 Petition relating to the Glenkerry Co-Operative Housing Association

Petitioners addressed the meeting and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Sirajul Islam Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management & Performance then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

DECISION

That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Development and Renewal, for a written response within 28 days.

(Action by: Aman Dalvi, Corporate Director, Development and Renewal)

5.3 Petition relating to Anti-Social Behaviour on the Aberfeldy Estate

Petition not presented due to the absence of the petitioner.

DECISION

That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Development and Renewal, for a written response within 28 days.

(Action by: Aman Dalvi, Corporate Director, Development and Renewal)

6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The following questions and in each case supplementary questions were put and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member:-

- 6.1 Question from Mohbub Ali and Ruhul Tapader on Poplar HARCA Parking Charges.
- 6.2 Question from MD Sumsul Talukder about the Council's burial subsidy.
- 6.3 Question from Jamir Chowdhury about spending on the Mayor's Office and other budget decisions.
- 6.4 Question from Tahera Ayazi regarding the Incontinence Laundry Service.
- 6.5 Question from Emma Adams about Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services support
- 6.7 Question from Jack Beaken about the Hereford Estate new build infill programme and consultation process run by Tower Hamlets Homes.

Question 6.6 was not put due to the absence of the questioner. A written response would be provided to the question.

(Action by:— Matthew Mannion, Committee Services Manager, Democratic Services to arrange written response)

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor presented his tabled report to the Council. The Leaders of the other political groups then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following questions and in each case a supplementary question were put and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member.

- 8.2 Question from Councillor Oliur Rahman about the Mayor's views on academies and free schools.
- 8.3 Question from Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed about school admission statistics.
- 8.4 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill about the Council's appointment process.
- 8.5 Question from Councillor Sabina Akhtar about the provision of Bed and Breakfast accommodation to local families in 2015 and 2016.

- 8.6 Question from Councillor Maium Miah about traffic congestion on the Isle of Dogs and efforts to prevent this.

Question 8.1 was withdrawn as the issue had already been dealt with at the meeting. Questions 8.7- 26 were not put due to a lack of time. Written responses would be provided to the questions.

(Action by:– Matthew Mannion, Committee Services Manager, Democratic Services to arrange written responses)

9. REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

9.1 Report of the Human Resources Committee, Pay Policy Statement 2016/17

The Council considered the report from the Human Resources Committee meeting on 21 January 2016 regarding the adoption of a Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17 as required by the Localism Act 2011.

The recommendations set out in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**.

DECISION:

1. That the Authority's Pay Policy Statement for the year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 be adopted as recommended by the Human Resources Committee and attached at Appendix A to the report.
2. That it be agreed that if any minor changes to the 2016/17 pay policy statement are required as a result of future government guidance, these amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Service Head (HR and WD), the Chair of the HR Committee and the Monitoring Officer. Should any fundamental changes be required, the pay policy statement will be sent back to the HR Committee for consideration.

(Action by: Zena Cooke, Corporate Director, Resources)

10. TO RECEIVE REPORTS AND QUESTIONS ON JOINT ARRANGEMENTS/EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS (IF ANY)

There was no business to transact under this agenda item.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Community Safety Partnership Plan Review and Extension

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Director Communities, Localities and Culture in respect of the Community Safety Partnership Plan Review and Extension.

The recommendations set out in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**.

DECISION:

1. That the content of the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2013-16 Revised for Year 3 (Appendix 1 of the report) be noted;
2. That the content of the report and the decision made under the relevant legislation by the CSP to extend its current CSP Plan by 1 year, so that it remains aligned with MOPAC's Police and Crime Plan 2013-16 and expires on 31.03.17 be noted;
3. That the CSP's extension of its Plan term for a further year until 31st March 2017 be agreed for the reasons set out in the report.

(Action by: Stephen Halsey, Corporate Director Communities, Localities and Culture)

11.2 Members' Allowances Scheme 2016/17

Council considered the report of the Director, Law, Probity and Governance in respect of the Members' Allowances Scheme 2016/17.

The recommendations set out in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**.

DECISION

That the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Members' Allowances Scheme 2016 as set out at Appendix 'A' to the report be adopted.

(Action by: Melanie Clay, Director, Law, Probity and Governance)

11.3 Calendar of Council and Committee Meetings 2016/17

Council considered the report of the Director, Law, Probity and Governance setting out the proposed dates of Council and Committee meetings for 2016/17.

The recommendations set out in the report were put to the vote and were **agreed**.

DECISION

1. That the proposed calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2016/17 as set out in Appendix A of the report be approved.
2. To delegate to the Director, Law, Probity and Governance the authority to agree meeting dates for any new Committees or Panels that are set up subsequent to this report being presented to Council, subject to appropriate consultation with Members.

(**Action by:** Melanie Clay, Director, Law, Probity and Governance)

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**12.2 Motion regarding the Poplar HARCA**

Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Rajib Ahmed **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

DECISION:

This Council notes that while rent cuts are of course popular for tenants they are in reality a cynical move by the Government to reduce its Housing Benefit bill by transferring costs to housing providers. Poplar HARCA, like many Registered Providers, faces a challenging time financially as a consequence of the year-on-year 1% rent cuts imposed by Government. However, the draconian decisions taken by the HARCA in part-response to this have caused massive disquiet, particularly as they have hit the pockets of residents through increased charges.

We acknowledge:

1. Poplar HARCA has increased charges for parking and hire of sheds on their estates.
2. Parking spaces have increased in cost from £1.96 per week to £7 per week.
3. The price of hiring a shed has also increased from £1.96 to £7 per week.
4. Residents do not believe that they have been properly consulted, or forewarned, about the increases in charges.
5. We note that there have been a series of other cuts, less immediately affecting residents but which will also severely affect the services they receive.

This Council believes:

1. While recognising the challenges faced by the HARCA, the costs of hire for parking spaces and sheds should be kept as low as reasonably possible.
2. Poplar HARCA should ensure that the prices of parking spaces and sheds should take into consideration the financial means of residents and levels of deprivation locally as well as rising costs of living locally.
3. As a locally based and supposedly resident-led organisation Poplar HARCA should be doing all it can to keep costs to residents as low as possible.
4. There needs to be a proper accounting for the consequences of the other cuts implemented by the HARCA. The lack of transparency is in stark contrast to the openness of the Council's own recent budget debate and consultation.

This Council resolves:

1. To call on the Mayor to write to Poplar HARCA expressing the concern of this Council to the large increases in charges, and other cuts.
2. To call on Poplar HARCA to stop the implementation of these new charges and to engage in consultation with residents about increasing charges.

(Action by: Aman Dalvi, Corporate Director, Development and Renewal)

Motions 12.1, 12. 3 – 4 were not debated due to lack of time.

13. URGENT MOTIONS

The Council agreed to suspend Procedure Rule 13.1 to enable the following urgent motions to be debated without notice:

13.1 Motion Regarding Britain First and the East London Mosque

Mayor John Biggs, Councillors Oliur Rahman and Peter Golds **moved** and **seconded**, the motion as **tabled**.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was **unanimously agreed**.

DECISION

This Council notes the attempt by Britain First to provoke violence in our borough with their unannounced and hostile acts outside the East London Mosque on Saturday 12th March. This followed a previous visit on Tuesday 1st March. Britain First attempted to block the entrance to the Mosque, used offensive, provocative, Islamophobic and racist language, and clearly attempted to incite a reaction. East London Mosque is in a predominantly Muslim area of our Borough.

The Council further notes the strength of response to these events from the community, Council members, partners and services and welcomes action

taken by the Mayor to address the events including attending a solidarity with the Mosque demonstration promoted by United East End where both the Mayor and Leader of opposition were joined by a cross section of community groups including representatives of various faiths and none. We have fought hard to secure and maintain good community relations, based on respect, in our borough and will continue vigorously to do so.

This Council believes that the actions of Britain First are dressed up as a 'passive protest' but are clearly designed to provoke a reaction, obstructing local people from going about their lawful and proper business and increasing the risk of violence.

The Council further believes that we must remain vigilant and send a clear message that groups such as Britain First are not welcome in any corner of our Borough.

This Council resolves:

1. To call on the Mayor to continue updating all members on the response and planning for any possible future attempts by groups such as Britain First to divide communities and provoke violence.
2. To request that the Mayor, the leader of opposition, and minority opposition group leader, on behalf of Council, write an open letter to local residents to reassure them that they stand united to their opposition to any effort to divide our communities.
3. To call on the Mayor to write, jointly with the leader of opposition and minority opposition leader, to the Home Secretary exploring options to ban Britain First from demonstrating in any part of our Borough, including in particular outside a faith building, where their intent is to provoke violence and spread their message of hatred.

(Action by: Mayor's Office)

13.2 Urgent Motion regarding the Future of Old Ford Housing Association

Councillor Marc Francis **moved**, and Councillor Sirajul Islam **seconded**, the motion as **tabled**.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was unanimously **agreed**.

DECISION

This Council notes:

- Old Ford Housing Association was established in 1998 as the successor body to Tower Hamlets Housing Trust;

- OFHA was a subsidiary of Circle 33 Housing Trust for financing purposes, but was accountable to its own Board of tenants, leaseholders and independent members;
- In 2005, Circle 33 merged with Anglia Housing to form Circle Anglia Ltd, and that other associations joined later to form Circle Housing Group;
- In July 2007, LBTH transferred the “Parkside” council estates to OFHA with the promise to refurbish individual flats and the estates within five years;
- In 2015, following complaints from LB Islington and LBTH about the performance of its repairs service, the Homes & Communities Agency found evidence of “serious detriment” to tenants and downgraded Circle Housing Group, requiring an action plan to improve governance;
- It has now become clear that Circle’s “action plan” essentially involves closing down its subsidiaries, including Old Ford HA, and centralising services, moving most staff to a new call-centre in Kent;
- Circle has also announced its intention to merge with Affinity Sutton “to create the largest housing association in Western Europe”;
- While Circle ended its repairs contract with Kier Group, it retained Kier gas to carry out boiler maintenance, and that many residents have been left without heating and hot water for weeks on end over the winter;
- Old Ford has the worst performance on Members Enquiries of any housing association in Tower Hamlets;
- Residents of Old Ford HA are now calling on the Mayor and MP to raise concerns about Circle’s performance and future plans with the HCA regulator and Minister.

This Council believes:

- That the service provided by Old Ford was undermined by Circle’s centralisation of contracts and that the closure of Old Ford and merger with Affinity Sutton will worsen the situation;
- The Bow estates were transferred to Old Ford on the basis that it would be a “community-based housing association”, and that residents voted for the transfers on that basis;
- The Board members of Old Ford HA must now be allowed to seriously explore the option of leaving Circle Housing Group without the threat of their removal;
- Residents should be given the final say on whether Old Ford stays with Circle or stands alone or in partnership with another locally-based association;

This Council resolves:

- To call on the HCA regulator to urgently investigate why Circle’s Management Board retained a failing contractor Kier Gas to provide its

gas safety/maintenance service, and whether this decision, which left many tenants without heating and hot water for weeks amounts to further “serious detriment”;

- To ask that the Mayor suspend Circle as a Preferred Development Partner in Tower Hamlets with immediate effect;
- To request the Mayor to instruct officers to explore options for legal proceedings against Circle Housing Group for breach of Schedule 17 of the Transfer Agreement and to report back to members on the possibility of such proceedings within 28 days.

(Action by: Aman Dalvi, Corporate Director, Development and Renewal)

13.3 Urgent Motion calling on the Council to support the UK’s membership of the European Union

Councillor Andrew Cregan **moved**, and Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs **seconded**, the motion as **tabled**.

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

DECISION

This Council notes:

- That there is a referendum on the United Kingdom’s membership of the European Union (EU) on 23rd June.
- Over half Britain's exports go to EU countries, worth £227 billion last year to the UK economy, and many UK businesses large and small are dependent on trade with the EU, supporting many thousands of jobs.
- Access to the Single Market is a major factor in making Tower Hamlets, in-part, home to the leading global financial centre and major employers from across the world choose to locate in Britain and in Tower Hamlets because we are a gateway into the European Union.
- EU membership has given vital rights to British workers and the EU's rules provide important protection to consumers, workers and the environment. Rights to equal pay, paid holidays, maternity and paternity leave, equal rights for part-time workers and health and safety regulations are all protected under EU law.

This Council believes:

- This Council has a role in explaining the consequences of the referendum outcomes and helping the residents of Tower Hamlets to reach an informed decision.
- That our membership of the EU makes the UK stronger, safer and better off. It is in the best interests of residents and businesses the Borough and the whole of the UK to remain a member of the European Union.

- There are direct benefits to Tower Hamlets communities of EU membership including that linked to being, in part, home to the world's leading financial centre which supports jobs and economic growth in the Borough and the UK as a whole.
- That leaving the EU risks a loss of jobs, would weaken the UK's attractiveness to international investors, and would create prolonged uncertainty for business while the practical implications of a withdrawal are put in place.
- EU reform should make the EU better for the UK and that means remaining a member to lead that reform, not being a spectator on the sidelines.

This Council resolves:

- We support the United Kingdom's continued membership of the EU.

The meeting ended at 10.40 p.m.