

Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 17 January 2018	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Motion for debate submitted by the Administration	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Committee Services Manager, Democratic Services.
Wards affected	All wards

SUMMARY

1. Council Procedure Rule 11 allows for time at each Ordinary Council meeting for the discussion of one specific Motion submitted by the Administration. The debate will follow the rules of debate at Council Procedure Rule 13 and will last no more than 30 minutes.
2. The motion submitted is listed overleaf. The Administration Motion is submitted by the Labour Group.
3. Motions must be about matters for which the Council or its partners has a direct responsibility. A motion may not be moved which is substantially the same as a motion which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.
4. Notice of any proposed amendments to the Motions must be given to the Monitoring Officer by Noon the day before the meeting.

MOTION

Set out overleaf is the motion that has been submitted.

7 – Administration Motion regarding Housing in Tower Hamlets

Proposer: Councillor Sirajul Islam

Seconded: Councillor Rachel Blake

This Council notes that:

1. The population of Tower Hamlets has broken through the 300,000 mark. It is predicted there will be a further 87,400 people living in the Borough over the next 25 years.
2. A lack of affordable housing is now the main concern for residents, as highlighted by the Annual Residents Survey 2017.
3. Since 2010 rough sleeping has more than doubled and the number of homeless households has increased by half to almost 60,000. This is a direct result of the Government's failed housing policies: no proper investment for affordable homes; benefit changes; reduced funding for homelessness services, and a lack of action to help private renters.
4. The Government announced in its Autumn Budget that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) cap would be lifted for some councils, up to £1bn, starting in 2019/20, but that councils will need to bid for this in the future rather than automatically being given the power now.
5. The new Local Plan will set out how the Council intends to manage the scale and pace of development and ensure that all residents benefit from the opportunities growth brings to the borough and will deliver more schools, transport, GP surgeries and jobs alongside new housing.
6. Mayor Biggs pledged to deliver 1,000 council homes and the Council is on track to meet this target.
7. Council figures show Tower Hamlets delivered 1,070 affordable homes last year (2016/17) and another 1,073 the year before (2015/16).
8. Under Mayor Biggs' new Living Rent policy, rents for new affordable homes are far more affordable to those on low incomes, saving residents up to £6,000 a year. This was a recommendation of the Tower Hamlets Affordability Commission, which was set up by Mayor Biggs in 2015 following his election.
9. That Mayor Biggs unveiled 148 new council homes at Watts Grove in September; a scheme which was scrapped in 2013 by the previous administration but reinstated after a local Labour-led campaign to save the housing. The housing is covered by new rent levels, introduced by Mayor Biggs, which means that compared to the previous Mayor's rent levels, a family living in a new three bed property will be up to £5,791 better off.
10. The Mayor's Neighbourhood Refresh scheme will invest £3million in local neighbourhoods to make them safer, cleaner and greener. Practical improvements such as new lighting, more green space, traffic calming and new bins will make a positive difference to local areas.

11. The rights of private renters in Tower Hamlets are being protected with the launch of the Tower Hamlets Private Renters' Charter. This, alongside innovative new measures such as the landlord licensing scheme, means a better deal for private renters.
12. The Government's housing policies such as the benefit cap and bedroom tax have led to the total number of households in temporary accommodation – including bed and breakfast style housing, hostels, women's refuges and housing leased from private landlords –increasing by 55% from 50,400 in 2010 to 78,180 in 2017.
13. Families are no longer housed in B&B accommodation for longer than the 6 week legal limit, compared to the 174 families that were left to languish in B&Bs under the previous administration.
14. The Development Viability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which ensures transparency in the planning process and encourages reviewing viability at each phase of large schemes, aims to provide greater clarity to both applicants and the public and ensures that the principles of sustainable development are at the forefront of decision-making in Tower Hamlets.

This Council believes:

1. Population growth will bring Tower Hamlets numerous benefits as well as challenges.
2. The Borough benefits from the approach of this Council administration which is meeting the challenge of the housing crisis head on by providing high quality affordable housing, a better deal for private renters, improved local environments and 1,000 council homes.
3. The 174 families left to live in B&B accommodation for over 6 weeks, and their original decision to scrap the Watts Grove development, illustrates the approach of the previous administration: a failure to serve residents; a failure to properly manage council budgets; and a failure to plan for the future.
4. The Government's HRA cap proposals do not go far enough – borrowing caps should be lifted significantly higher, and not limited to a bidding process.

This Council resolves:

1. To work with Mayor John Biggs to continue to deliver more affordable housing for local people.
2. To support Mayor Biggs in his campaign to lift the HRA cap significantly and immediately, to ensure that councils including Tower Hamlets can provide the good quality social housing that is so badly needed.
3. To support Mayor Biggs in his campaign to make sure that the Government does not impose High Value Sales on Local Authorities.