

Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 17 January 2018	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Amendments to 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 Administration Motion is submitted by the Labour Group and is listed at Item 7 of the main agenda pack.
3. Council Procedure Rule 11 allows for amendments to the Administration motion to be submitted to the Monitoring Officer by Noon the day before the meeting. The content of amendments must comply with Council Procedure Rule 13.6.
4. One amendment to the Administration Motion was received by the Monitoring Officer by the above deadline and is set out overleaf.

Amendment to the Administration Motion regarding Housing in Tower Hamlets

Proposer: Councillor Oliur Rahman

Secunder: Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim

Additions in bold and deletions struck through:

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 **genuinely** affordable housing is now the main concern for residents, as highlighted by the Annual Residents Survey 2017.
3. Since **the 2010 General Election**, 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~~ **must** 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. **The Plan must ensure that it does not have a funding gap and ensures a fair, transparent and accountable distribution of local infrastructure levy and any development related funding is fairly distributed to all parts of the Borough – particularly the areas and neighbourhoods which are more deprived, poorer or those with the highest levels of child poverty and other needs.**
6. Mayor Biggs pledged to deliver 1,000 council homes and the Council is on track to meet this target. **However, Council considers that the current target is without any meaningful timescale, transparency and accountability and is not only unimaginative, lacks ambition and essential details but is also a poor attempt to steal the credit for the hard work already carried out by the previous administration led by former Mayor Lutfur Rahman, former Deputy Mayor Councillor Ohid Ahmed and the Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Alibor Choudhury and their team.**

7. Council figures show Tower Hamlets delivered 1,070 affordable homes last year (2016/17) and another 1,073 the year before (2015/16) **all of which were approved by the previous administration.**
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. **However, Council considers that Mayor John Biggs did not need to spend taxpayers' money to set up a 'Commission' to figure out that the Council should make the rents more affordable. The lowering of some of the rents is also partly due to the imposition of a government requirement to cut social housing rent by 1% a year for four years.**
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. However Council believes that this had been approved by the previous administration at Cabinet on 5 November 2014 as shown on the Council website and that it is highly irresponsible for the current administration to claim otherwise. In its lazy and politically convenient manner, The Biggs Administration tries to claim its credit otherwise without listing the full facts which were that:~~
 - a. **The previous administration paused on the first draft of the scheme in 2013 because it wanted to secure better value for money, secure additional funding and push for more affordable and Council housing.**
 - b. **The Biggs' Administration also fails to understand that the initial delay was to secure a grant of £7 million from the Greater London Authority to provide 150 homes but at a "significantly lower cost to the Council". In fact the previous administration achieved these objectives and delivered £26.33 funding to build Watts Grove Homes saving the Council millions, securing best value for money and providing much needed homes for local people.**
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 is a positive step in the right direction in principle but two years too late.**
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. **However, Council notes that this was a project that begun under the previous Mayor Rahman Administration.**

12. The Government's housing policies such as the benefit cap and bedroom tax, **along with local failures by the current administration**, 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.~~ **However, Council considers that the current Mayor's lack of leadership and failures, mean that many families, out of nearly 19,000 on the housing waiting list, are primarily being bused out of the Borough or put in inadequate accommodation. Council also notes that it was the previous Labour Administration which sold Tower Hamlets housing stock to RSLs which was a catastrophic decision – ironically some of those properties which were sold by Labour are now being bought back by Mayor John Biggs using £60 million of taxpayers' money (despite some of these being not fit for purpose or provide value for money) – as part of £119m decision which the Biggs Administration sneaked through the full council meeting without any meaningful or a proper debate.**
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 **that the previous administration was working hard to plan ahead and tackle proactively.**
2. The Borough benefits **when** ~~from the approach of this Council Administration which~~ **proactively** 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~~ **and more** council homes, **as was the case under the previous administration.**
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 **are neither adequate nor do not** go far enough – borrowing caps should be lifted significantly higher, and not limited to a bidding process **and the local authorities provided with appropriate flexibility to deliver for communities they serve.**

The Council believes:

1. **The former Mayor Lutfur Rahman's administration, supported by Deputy Mayor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources, Alibor Choudhury and their team , embarked on an ambitious journey to tackle the housing issues including by:**
 - a. **Dealing with the poor standards of maintenance and upkeep within the private sector introducing 'licensing for private rented sector housing'.**
 - b. **Delivering a record 5,590 affordable homes (as confirmed by the Department of Communities and Local Government), the highest in the Country.**
 - c. **Securing the release of £53 million in New Homes Bonus by 2015 – again the highest in the Country. An achievement acknowledged in a recent report by City Hall.**
 - d. **A number of regeneration projects such as the London Docks project which helped to secure a space for a 1,500 strong secondary school in Wapping.**
 - e. **Other major regeneration schemes, led by Councillor Ohid Ahmed included the Ocean Estate and Blackwall Reach/Robin Hood Gardens.**
 - f. **Developing the Whitechapel Vision - along with its Master Plan, which was the brainchild of the former Mayor and his Cabinet Member for Finance/Resources Cllr Alibor Choudhury – that included support for local businesses, a 'tech city' and the expansion of medical research facilities. The historic regeneration of Whitechapel is a testament to their commitment and ambition to improve the Borough.**
 - g. **The Whitechapel Vision, its Master Plan and associated regeneration will also provide: at least 3,500 new homes; 5,000 new local jobs; school improvements; transformed public spaces; enhanced local heritage; and a new civic centre at the heart of the community.**

2. **The leadership and achievements of the Rahman Administration's policies and delivery between 2010 and 2015 were recognised by Government and commentators across the UK.**

This Council resolves:

1. **That Mayor John Biggs should stop taking the credit for the achievements of the previous administration led by former Mayor Lutfur Rahman, Deputy Mayor Cllr Ohid Ahmed and the team. Instead he must learn to take responsibility for a series of catastrophic failures under his watch, instead of indulging in lazy and politically convenient point scoring and excuses.**
2. **To acknowledge the historic achievements of the former Mayor, former Deputy Mayor and their administration in delivering the record level of affordable housing as acknowledged by the Government, the GLA and others.**
3. ~~For to work with~~ **The Biggs Administration ~~Mayor John Biggs~~ **to work with all groups including the largest opposition, Independent Group (and its mayoral candidate, former Deputy Mayor Councillor Ohid Ahmed) to continue to work to deliver more affordable and social housing for local people.****
4. ~~For To support Mayor Biggs~~ **The Biggs Administration to work with all parties and stakeholders to 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.**
5. ~~For To Mayor John Biggs~~ **The Biggs Administration to work with everyone in the interest of residents, on a cross-party basis, to lobby support Mayor Biggs in his campaign to make sure that the Government does not to impose High Value Sales on Local Authorities.**