

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2009

**MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY
MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE HEAD,
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

SUMMARY

1. Thirteen motions have been submitted by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 13 for the Council meeting on Wednesday 14th October, 2009.
2. In accordance with the protocol agreed by the Council on 21st May 2008, the order in which the motions are listed is by turns, one from each group, continuing in rotation until all motions submitted are included. The rotation starts with any group(s) not reached at the previous meeting.
3. Motions must be about matters for which the Council has a responsibility or which affect the Borough. 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 unless notice of motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.
4. There is no specific duration set for this agenda item and consideration of the attached motions may continue until the time limit for the meeting is reached. The guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9.2 does not apply to motions on notice and any of the attached motions which have not been put to the vote when the time limit for the meeting is reached will be deemed to have fallen. A motion which is not put to the vote at the current meeting may be resubmitted for the next meeting but is not automatically carried forward.

MOTIONS

Set out overleaf are the motions that have been submitted.

11.1 Motion submitted by Councillor Tim Archer regarding ESOL classes at Tower Hamlets College

Proposed: Councillor Tim Archer

Seconded: Councillor Ahmed Hussain

This Council notes the Learning and Skills Council cuts of £1.75m to Tower Hamlets College for the provision of ESOL classes.

This Council notes that the Learning & Skills Council has spent £400,000 on hiring celebrities to various awards evenings and publicity stunts.

This Council believes that nothing entrenches poverty more than a resident not being able to speak English.

This Council resolves to fill the gap from its own resources to ensure that ESOL classes at Tower Hamlets College are not cut.

11.2 Motion submitted by Councillor Abdul Asad regarding ESOL provision in Tower Hamlets

Proposed: Councillor Abdul Asad

Seconded: Councillor Lutfur Rahman

This Council notes:

That the provision of English as a second language (ESOL) training is crucial to social cohesion in Tower Hamlets.

That in the wake of alterations to funding by the Learning and Skills Council, Tower Hamlets College reduced the amount of community based ESOL it delivered

That the College has brought to an end a long-running dispute with unions with only 6 compulsory redundancies from 400 part-time staff.

That the College continues to provide around 1350 ESOL places.

That the Council has committed money from WNF funding to commission around 650 ESOL places. £1.178m from WNF for ESOL over a period of eighteen months (April 2009 – Sept. 2010)

That further funding is being sought which would increase this to around 870 places.

That a Scrutiny Review is due to take place on 27 October to see how the Council can help the College and ensure that ESOL provision continues to reflect the needs of the community.

That the proposal by some members of the opposition to use Council reserves to shore up the College is:

- a) Outside the statutory instrument of the Council and therefore technically illegal.
- b) Not a long term solution to the College's funding problems as the Council would have to continue filling the black hole in the College's finances.
- c) Nothing more than theatricality and cynical manipulation of a serious issue for short-term political gain.

This Council resolves:

To continue working closely with the College to help it overcome its financial issues.

To lobby the government to ensure that Tower Hamlets receives the ESOL funding that is crucial to the social cohesion of the borough.

To continue increasing its own ESOL provision and commissioning to meet the needs of residents with the aim of creating 250 new ESOL places in the next 12 months.

11.3 Motion submitted by Councillor Stephanie Eaton regarding safeguarding the environment

Proposed: Councillor Stephanie Eaton

Seconded: Councillor Azizur Rahman Khan

This Council believes that:

A. A healthy natural environment is crucial not only to quality of life but also to the sustainability of life on the planet; it provides humankind with food, clean water and clean air, employment, opportunities to improve physical and mental health and the enjoyment of beauty and tranquillity.

B. Humans are using the planet's finite natural wealth at an ever-increasing and unsustainable rate, threatening to exhaust key resources by the middle of the century unless net consumption is curbed.

C. The planet's delicately balanced ecosystems and the diversity of plant and animal life are crucial to humankind's future health, well-being and ultimately survival;

D. Public policy on the natural environment should be guided by technical and scientific evidence but also by the value placed on the natural environment by people.

This Council proposes to:

1. Introduce policies to cut net consumption and ultimately achieve zero waste to landfill by 2020 by:

a) developing waste recovery plans for all types of waste in Tower Hamlets to maximise the recovery of useful resources and bring efficiencies of scale.

2. Boost water efficiency by:

a) Providing stronger planning guidance in favour of compulsory rainwater harvesting systems, greywater recycling, green roofs and sustainable urban drainage systems.

b) Introducing smart water metering by 2020 to inform and support fair billing and reduce energy and water use.

3. Defend the natural environment at local level by:

a) Introducing policies, to be agreed between neighbouring local authorities, with measurable objectives which could include the promotion of biodiversity, the restoration and protection of natural features such as water channels, the reduction of flood risk, increased tranquillity, the encouragement of local food production and the protection green spaces.

b) Using environmental capacity as the key guidance for identifying sites for development.

c) Creating a new designation – similar to SSSI (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) status – to protect green areas of particular importance or value to the community (such as parks and other green spaces in our urban environment).

d) ensuring the full environmental cost of demolition and replacement of useable buildings is included in sustainability calculations by planning officers.

4. Act on noise and light pollution, with policies to:

a) Improve and enforce noise pollution regulations, tackling the noisiest vehicles and planes and strengthening building regulations.

b) Recognise the threat of burgeoning external lighting to both wildlife and people's enjoyment of their local environment and the skies, working with government agencies to control and where possible reduce the impact of artificial lighting.

5. Provide proper enforcement of environmental legislation by:

a) Ensuring environmental crimes, including water pollution and wildlife crime, are properly enforced and the penalties truly reflect the damage done and the cost of clean-up.

11.4 Motion submitted by Councillor Abjol Miah in support of a directly elected Mayor

Proposed: Councillor Abjol Miah

Seconded: Councillor Fozol Miah

1) This Council notes that

a) a consultation exercise is currently being undertaken on the future leadership structure for the authority - i.e. a 'New Style' Leader and Cabinet model or a Directly Elected Mayor - as required by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, ending on 22nd October

b) there have been no less than four different 'New Style' Leaders of the Council over the last four and a half years

c) these Leaders have been selected from within the ranks of the Labour group without reference to the wishes or the knowledge of the voters

d) these Leaders have exercised huge power over council decision-making through the Cabinet system

e) these Leaders have remained unknown to the vast majority of Tower Hamlets voters despite the huge power they exercise

f) the consultation exercise has been executed impeccably by the council officers responsible but that a lack of interest in the exercise by the Labour and Conservative parties has meant that little publicity has so far been attracted to the consultation process

g) Eastendlife has carried adverts for the consultation but with the rider that the standing policy of the Council is in favour of the 'New Style' Leader and Cabinet system

h) belatedly more profile was given to this consultation with the positions of the different political groups represented briefly but that this did not represent a proper debate about the issues

i) opinion surveys show that a majority of Tower Hamlets residents would prefer a directly elected mayor

2) This Council regrets that Eastendlife did not provide the opportunity for the arguments for and against the two systems to be properly represented in order to stimulate education, debate and interest in this issue

3) This Council believes that

a) there is a need for a radical shake-up in the way the Council is run

b) Tower Hamlets needs strong council leadership to deal with its many very serious problems

c) that strong leadership may be properly democratically accountable to the voters of Tower Hamlets

d) a directly elected mayor would provide both strong leadership and direct democratic accountability

e) notwithstanding the fact a decision on a referendum is to take place at the December full Council meeting, the Council should change its standing policy in advance of the end of the consultation process and agree to support a change to a directly elected mayor

f) a referendum should be held to decide the future governance of Tower Hamlets Council in order to let the voters themselves decide the issue, with the final decision on this to be taken at the December meeting of the Council

11.5 Motion submitted by Councillor Rachael Saunders regarding road crossing outside Mile End tube station

Proposed: Councillor Rachael Saunders

Seconded: Councillor Ann Jackson

This Council notes that:

The pelican crossing outside Mile End Tube is extremely dangerous and that there have been five accidents on this stretch of road in the last three years, including one fatality at the beginning of 2009.

That in a meeting with local Councillors and London Assembly Member John Biggs on the 20th April Transport for London (TfL) committed to making a number of changes to the crossing to make it safer, including changing it from a pelican to a puffin crossing and reducing the traffic from three lanes to two.

That this work has still not been done 7 months later and TfL are now renegeing on their commitment to complete the works.

That this is just the latest in a long line of TfL's failures to discharge their responsibilities towards the safety of Tower Hamlets residents.

This Council believes that:

For TfL to take no action to make safer this dangerous crossing after a fatality belies a serious lack of interest in the safety of residents of Tower Hamlets.

That despite statements to the contrary, TfL and the Mayor of London see the unimpeded flow of traffic as a higher priority than the lives of pedestrians.

This Council resolves to:

Call on TfL to urgently honour their commitments made on the 20th April to make this crossing safer.

Explore using the Sustainable Communities Act to transfer responsibility and funding for pedestrian crossings to this Council.

11.6 Motion submitted by Councillor Harun Miah regarding 'Parking free' developments

Proposed: Councillor Harun Miah

Seconded: Councillor Abjol Miah

1) This Council notes that

a) new build housing in this borough financed with so-called section 106 money has been designated 'parking free', meaning that residents were not permitted the normal residency rights to residents parking permits

b) some residents of these properties were not properly informed that these properties were 'parking free'

c) confusion was compounded by the fact that residents permits were issued to a number of residents over a number of years in error and were then suddenly withdrawn when the error came to light

d) these 'parking free' developments discriminated against those who were dependent on owning and using a vehicle for their livelihood

e) these 'parking free' developments discriminated against people dependent on vehicle ownership and use to cheaply transport their families

f) these 'parking free' developments have not significantly reduced car ownership in use in Tower Hamlets and therefore are not an effective means of dealing with the environmental problems of car ownership and use

2) This Council welcomes the decision that future housing development in the borough should not be 'parking free'

3) This Council believes that

a) existing 'parking free' estates and developments coming on stream should have the 'parking free' restrictions lifted, allowing residents equal rights with other existing residents and future residents of the borough

b) if lifting these restrictions means there need to be legislative changes, then the Council should urgently approach the government to secure those changes.

11.7 Motion submitted by Councillor Oliur Rahman regarding redevelopment of Limehouse Practice

Proposed: Councillor Oliur Rahman
Seconded: Councillor Mohammed Shahid Ali

This Council notes:

The concern of the patients of the Limehouse practice at proposals by the PCT to move the practice to from its existing site.

The opposition of GPs at the practice to the proposed move.

The concern of the residents of Farron Street at suggestions by the PCT that the practice may be moved to their location.

The flawed designs proposed by the PCT which involve the placement of the surgery on the ground floor and a basketball court on the roof – raising health and safety concerns.

The failure of several high ranking PCT officials to attend meetings with the patients of Limehouse practice, despite having agreed to do so.

This Council resolves:

To instruct the Chief Executive of the Council to write to the Chief Executive of the PCT asking her to meet with the patients of the Limehouse practice and residents of the area.

To encourage the PCT to find the funds to redevelop the current site rather than moving to a new location.

To identify land for a temporary practice while the redevelopment is taking place.

11.8 Motion submitted by Councillor Fozol Miah regarding Overcrowding Strategy

Proposed: Councillor Fozol Miah
Seconded: Councillor Abjol Miah

1) This Council notes that

a) over 15,500 families are estimated to be overcrowded in Tower Hamlets

b) more than half the overcrowded families live in so-called 'social housing'

c) the percentage reduction in overcrowding has been very small in recent years

d) overcrowding is a scourge which makes life miserable for those who are overcrowded and can lead to educational under-achievement, anti-social behaviour and poor mental and physical health

e) with estimates of population increase of 25% in the borough between 2006 and 2016, the scourge of overcrowding is likely to get worse rather than better unless radical action is taken

2) This Council welcomes

a) proposals to change the priority allocation of housing so that, in general, overcrowded households will enjoy equal status to homeless households

b) any initiatives to expand the amount of larger housing available for social rent to alleviate overcrowding

3) This Council recognises that

a) changes to the priority allocation will not resolve the underlying problem of a mismatch in the supply of and demand for housing that is genuinely affordable by many residents of this borough

b) the recent proposals to increase the supply of housing that might be made available to overcrowded families will fall considerably short of helping the proclaimed target of 500 families over three years and is, anyway, far from adequate given the scale of the problem

c) the relatively small percentage of new build properties designated for social rent is one of the major reasons why supply is failing to keep in line with demand

4) This Council regrets the fact application was made to build just 17 council houses in the first round of bidding for government money made available for council house building and that that bid was, at least initially, rejected as not 'value for money'

5) This Council believes that

a) only a massive council house building programme will address what is already and crisis of overcrowding and will become an overcrowding catastrophe on available predictions

b) central government should make far more money available for this council house building programme

c) a massive council house building programme will have other beneficial effects to the economy including creating a large amount of employment at a time when unemployment is rising rapidly.

11.9 Motion submitted by Councillor Rania Khan regarding using new Licensing powers to close lap dancing venues

Proposed: Councillor Rania Khan

Seconded: Councillor Bill Turner

This Council notes that:

- We welcome the Government's plans to proceed with plans to implement the Bill to give councils more power to halt the proliferation of lap-dancing clubs, the number of which has more than doubled in the past four years to more than 300.
- The new Licensing laws allow the Council to close lap dancing venues which are inappropriately located, for example in a residential area, near schools, places of education and places of religion.
- Tower Hamlets has, at last, the opportunity to rid itself of these sexist, and unwanted sex encounter venues. It is time to give them zero tolerance.
- Women and Equalities Minister Harriet Harman's speech and her continuous support for the Police and Crime Bill, Lap Dancing Legislation
- This Legislation gives Tower Hamlets a chance to close and curb all lap dancing venues.
- For too long Tower Hamlets has been the sexual playground for City spivs and bankers.
- These venues are often associated with drugs, prostitution, human trafficking, alcohol abuse, anti-social behaviour and noise.
- The Home Office Minister, David Hanson has delivered a consultation paper last week which will require:
 - 1) All existing venues to reapply for a licence
 - 2) ALL lap dancing venues will have to apply to trade as 'sex-encounter venues'
 - 3) This should give local authorities and local stakeholders a new opportunity to stop lap dancing clubs in their area. It will allow Councils to close down clubs where Councillors and residents object.
 - 4) It is clear that Labour Deputy Leader and Women's Minister Harriet Harman has now taken against these venues.
- This council also welcomes the Women and Equalities Minister's speech to step up action to protect women from violence and sexual exploitation and to tackle human trafficking. Athens saw a doubling of women being trafficked to 40,000 women were trafficked into forced prostitutions following the Athens Games in 2004.

This Council resolves:

- To adopt a zero tolerance approach in Tower Hamlets for sex encounter venues that violate their licensing terms or that are located in inappropriate places.
- To condemn the home affairs spokesmen for Lib Debs and Conservative parties in the House of Lords for tabling a series of amendments designed to water down measures
- To condemn the Conservative party for offering £10 discount voucher from a lap-dancing club which was included in a welcome pack to conference-goers

- To welcome the move by the Women and Equalities Minister to ban City firms from claiming back tax on trips to lap dancing clubs.
- To work closely with the Police and other partner agencies to take the urgent action needed to prevent illegal trafficking of women and we need to work with ODA and other neighbouring councils to find a strategy to combat this crime.

11.10 Motion submitted by Councillor Dulal Uddin regarding Tower Hamlets College strike

Proposed: Councillor Dulal Uddin

Seconded: Councillor Abjol Miah

1) This Council notes that

a) college lecturers at Tower Hamlets College recently went on all out strike action over cuts to courses and compulsory redundancies

b) that strike has now ended as a result of the lifting of the threat of compulsory redundancies

c) courses are still being cut at the college and in particular that ESOL provision is being severely curtailed

d) the cutting of ESOL provision will lead to the dispersal of the nationally recognised expertise built up over a considerable period of time with significant success rates at the college, particularly through its outreach work

e) the cutting of ESOL provision will impact particularly severely on women from the BME communities many of whom need ESOL classes to enable them to participate fully in the community in Tower Hamlets

f) the cutting of ESOL provision will most adversely affect the Outreach programme which has successfully delivered quality courses inside local communities for a number of years, with provision currently being cut at 10 centres with 20 classes lost

g) the Government has consistently claimed that increased funding of £1.2 million to the council should offset cuts in LSC funding for ESOL provision at Tower Hamlets College

2) This Council regrets that strike action was necessary at the college and welcomes the lifting of the threat of compulsory redundancies which has enabled the lecturers to return to work

3) This Council believes that

a) funding should not have been cut to the college

b) the Government should have stepped in to restore funding when the scale of the damage to the provision of essential education in this borough became apparent

c) the college authorities should have united with college lecturers to oppose the cuts

d) the Council should have agreed to temporarily use reserves to preserve educational provision whilst seeking a long-term solution

4) This Council agrees to temporarily use reserves to restore community ESOL provision provided by the Outreach programme at Tower Hamlets College

5) This Council recognises that using reserves to support education at Tower Hamlets College in the short run is not sustainable over the longer term

6) This Council believes that the Lead Member for Children's Services and officers directly responsible for lifelong learning ESOL provision should seek urgent meetings with representatives of the college authorities and the lecturers' union with a view to making Government funding to the Council for ESOL provision available to the college to restore the ESOL classes and the outreach work threatened by the cuts in LSC funding.

11.11 Motion submitted by Councillor Lutfur Rahman supporting Mayors for Peace

Proposed: Councillor Lutfur Rahman

Seconded: Councillor Fazlul Haque

This Council:

Recognises the dangers to global peace and security posed by nuclear weapons proliferation.

Recognises the achievement of Mayors for Peace in coordinating more than 1700 town and cities in 122 countries to promote the total abolition of nuclear weapons and pursue a lasting peace in the world.

Resolves to join the dozens of other authorities in England and Wales who have pledged their support for Mayors for Peace.

11.12 Motion submitted by Councillor Mamun Rashid regarding spending cuts auction

Proposed: Councillor Mamun Rashid

Seconded: Councillor Abjol Miah

1) This Council notes that

a) the amount of Government borrowing has had to increase both because of a bail out to prevent a total collapse of the banking system brought about by the irresponsible behaviour of overpaid bankers and to ensure that spending in the economy was maintained

b) Government policy on this has generally been in the right direction, although too little was done too late to prevent the serious downturn in the economy that is now producing rapidly rising unemployment

c) all three major parties seem to agree that, in the words of Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg, there will have to be "savage cuts" in government spending, presumably immediately the general election is over

d) both Labour and Tories are examining cuts of 10% or more in government spending and that local government will not be exempt from these drastic cuts

2) This Council believes that

a) such drastic cuts to the funding of local government in Tower Hamlets would have a devastating effect on the provision of education, care for the young and the elderly, on housing provision and maintenance and all the essential services provided by this Council

b) such drastic cuts in public spending are quite unnecessary for three reasons

* levels of public debt are not particularly high by historic or comparative standards

** taxes should be increased to raise revenue but only on those best able to pay increased taxes, ie those on high incomes and with multi-million pound bonuses

*** cuts can be made in public spending on absurdities such as the replacement for Trident now estimated to cost £130 billion and on ID cards

c) the Leader of the Council should write to all the major party leaders deploring the proposals to cut public spending drastically and expressing this Council's complete opposition to such cuts

11.13 Motion submitted by Councillor Abdul Munim regarding postal vote debacle

Proposed: Councillor Abdul Munim

Seconded: Councillor Abjol Miah

1) This Council notes that

a) a recent council by-election won by Respect in Birmingham has been mired in controversy yet again because of irregularities in the postal vote

b) there is a further police investigation ongoing in Tower Hamlets regarding allegations of illegal interference in postal voting in this borough during the European elections this year

c) some political activists are boasting even now about how many postal votes they have sown up for their party for the forthcoming general and local elections

2) This Council believes that

a) the postal vote on demand system is fundamentally flawed

b) there is no evidence genuine voter participation in elections is increased using postal votes on demand in the longer term

c) the flaws in the postal vote on demand system cannot be overcome by tightening up regulations regarding registration, signatures, etc, because the fundamental flaw is that it effectively abolishes the secret ballot and therefore enables undue pressure to be brought on voters

d) the integrity of the electoral system can only be restored if the postal vote on demand is abolished

e) problems over voter participation in the elections are better addressed by considering extending voting time over two days and at weekends and increasing the number of polling stations

f) the postal vote should be retained, as in the status quo ante, for all those with a proven need for the postal vote due to disability or absence.