

Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 15 January 2020	
Report of: Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Motion for debate submitted by an Opposition Group	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of 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 Motion submitted by an Opposition Group. 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. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, submission of the Opposition Motion for Debate will alternate in sequence between the opposition groups. This Opposition Motion is submitted by the Conservative 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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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.

8 – Opposition Motion by the Conservative Group – regarding the Queens Speech and Manifesto Commitments

Proposer: Councillor Andrew Wood

Seconder: Councillor Peter Golds

This Council notes:

- The election on the 12th December 2019 of a new majority Conservative government.
- A Queens Speech on the 19th December 2019 containing a large number of proposed Bills, some of direct relevance and interest to Tower Hamlets Council.
- That the government was elected with a new manifesto containing a number of sections of direct relevance and interest to Tower Hamlets Council as noted below.
- The increase in the Public Works Loan Board interest rate from 1.82% to 2.82% in October 2019.

This Council further notes:

That the new Conservative manifesto & Queens Speech contains a number of sections directly relevant to Tower Hamlets. Some examples (but not limited to) include:

“We will maintain our commitment to a Right to Buy for all council tenants. We will also maintain the voluntary Right to Buy scheme agreed with housing associations. Following the successful voluntary pilot scheme in the Midlands, we will evaluate new pilot areas in order to spread the dream of home ownership to even more people.”

For example we in Tower Hamlets could ask to be one of the new pilot areas in order to ensure that the new voluntary scheme works in London.

“As Boris Johnson has promised, we will bring forward a Social Housing White Paper which will set out further measures to empower tenants and support the continued supply of social homes. This will include measures to provide greater redress, better regulation and improve the quality of social housing.”

We in Tower Hamlets need to be influencing this White Paper given both the large stock of existing as well as the large number of new build social homes we have which bring with them unique issues.

“Infrastructure first. We will amend planning rules so that the infrastructure – roads, schools, GP surgeries – comes before people move into new homes”

Given that Tower Hamlets is the most important deliverer of new homes in the country (exemplified by a record 10th year of New Homes Bonus receipts) this is a critically important for us to ensure that those new planning rules work for us here in Tower Hamlets.

“In particular, we will make the UK the leading global hub for life sciences after Brexit.”

We should work with the government to make the Life Sciences centre in Whitechapel the leading centre in London if not the country.

“We will invest £1 billion in completing a fast-charging network to ensure that everyone is within 30 miles of a rapid electric vehicle charging station.”

With more than 40,000 vehicles registered in Tower Hamlets it is clear that we need to substantially expand the charging network as a new generation of electric vehicles arrive so we should be aggressively bidding for a share of this money.

There are many more similar examples in the manifesto and Queens Speech which we need to explore.

This Council resolves:

Following the election of a new majority Conservative government Tower Hamlets to set up a new working group (modelled on the Tower Hamlets Brexit Commission) to work with other London Boroughs, the GLA and London MPs to secure the interests of London as an integral part of one nation.

That this group should seek to constructively engage with the new governments legislative agenda in order to ensure that the voice of Tower Hamlets specifically and other London Boroughs more generally are heard in the legislative process to ensure that those new Acts of Parliament work effectively here.

That as a first step that we write to Sajid Javid and Robert Jenrick seeking a change to the Public Works Loan Board interest rate policy. We should request that borrowing to invest in building much needed new Council homes and new infrastructure should be charged at a lower interest rate than borrowing to buy commercial properties to generate a financial return for local authorities.