

Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 15 January 2020	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Motions submitted by Members of the Council	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services
Wards affected	All wards

SUMMARY

1. Three motions have been submitted by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 11 for debate at the Council meeting on Wednesday 15th January 2020
2. The motions submitted are listed overleaf. In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules, the motions alternate between the administration and the other Political Groups, with the Opposition Group motions starting with the largest Political Group not to have that meeting's Opposition Motion Debate slot.
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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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. 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 is the motions that have been submitted.

12.1 Motion regarding NJC pay

Proposer: Councillor Ehtasham Haque

Secunder: Councillor Tarik Khan

This Council notes

1. Local Government has endured central government funding cuts of nearly 50% since 2010.
2. Between 2010 and 2020, councils will have lost 60p out of every £1 they have received from central government.
3. The 2019 LGA survey of council finances found that 1 in 3 councils fear they will run out of funding to provide even their statutory, legal duties by 2022/23. This number rises to almost two thirds of councils by 2024/2025 or later.
4. The LGA estimates councils will face a funding gap of £8 billion by 2025.
5. Faced with these cuts from central government, the local government workforce has endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing 22 per cent of their value since 2009/10.
6. At the same time as seeing their pay go down in real terms, workers experience ever increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity. Across the UK, an estimated 876,000 jobs have been lost in local government since June 2010 – a reduction of 30 per cent. Local government has arguably been hit by more severe job losses than any other part of the public sector.
7. There has been a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than three quarters of the local government workforce.

This Council believes

1. Our workers are public service super heroes. They keep our communities clean, look after those in need and keep our towns and cities running.
2. Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services our residents rely on would not be deliverable.
3. Government funding has been cut to the extent that a proper pay rise could result in a reduction in local government services.
4. The government needs to take responsibility and fully fund increases in pay; it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding been cut to the bone.

This Council resolves to

1. Note the pay claim submitted by GMB, UNISON and Unite on behalf of council and school workers for a £10 per hour minimum wage and a 10 per cent uplift across all other pay points in 2020/21, whilst recognising that local authorities as employers are bound by the results of any national negotiations undertaken by the unions and the NJC.
2. Call on the Local Government Association to make urgent representations to central government to fund the NJC pay claim.
3. Write to the Chancellor and Secretary of State to call for a pay increase for local government workers to be funded with new money from central government.
4. Meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim.
5. Encourage all local government workers to join a union.

12.2 Motion regarding restoring faith in elected politicians

Proposed by: Councillor Peter Golds

Seconded by: Councillor Andrew Wood

The Council notes:

The imprisonment in November 2019 of former Councillor Mohammed Harun of Lansbury ward for defrauding the housing waiting list in the borough.

The jailing of three previous Councillors; Shahed Ali in 2016 for housing fraud, Shelina Akhtar in 2012 for benefits fraud and Nasir Uddin in 2006 for stealing money.

This council further notes:

That investigations continue into a number of elected politicians related to housing issues.

This council further notes:

That former Councillor Shahed Ali was jailed for five months for housing fraud.

That the Council further pursued Shahed Ali for the losses incurred and that a POCA Confiscation Order was made against him, as a result he had to pay £110,000 to Tower Hamlets Council and the government for money he made as a result of his fraud. He was also ordered to pay the council's legal costs of £70,000.

That former Councillor Mohammed Harun was jailed for sixteen months and was required to pay the council £120,000 and additional legal costs of £17,000 to the council. The latter being reduced as the former councillor pleaded guilty as charged.

This Council believes:

That to restore the faith of people in their elected representatives the Council needs to:

1. "pour encourager les autres" ensure that any elected representative alleged to have committed fraud are not seen to receive any special favours.
2. That the Council needs to perform checks on elected representatives to ensure that declarations made prior to their election are correct and that due diligence has been seen to be undertaken.

This Council therefore recommends:

1. That any elected representatives who has previously shared anti-Semitic or other offensive material online disclose this to the relevant authority and that they make a public apology.
2. That the council makes clear that rules on stalking and harassment apply also to all elected representatives.
3. That any elected representatives facing fraud or other criminal charges is pursued to the fullest possible extent under the law and restitution sought for any crimes they may

have committed. That they receive no special favours for resigning as politicians as that is not a mitigation offered to other residents.

4. That the Council is clearer about the need to declare assets & financial interests outside of Tower Hamlets. That this includes where elected representatives are in receipt of benefits and social housing.

5. To perform a due diligence on all elected representatives of the people by:

a. Checking the accuracy of information that they have provided on their nomination forms and register of interests after they are elected. Are they correct, are there any omissions?

b. Checking that the register of interests represent economic interests and not just the place of employment. The register of interests should represent who is paying the salary and the organisation that has signed any contract of employment.

c. Checking that they do live (or work) in Tower Hamlets and did so when elected.

d. Confirming whether or not they have ever occupied Council housing while owning private property.

e. To check that they have not committed benefit or other related fraud

That this work be carried out by the Councils fraud and internal audit team with the assistance where necessary of external bodies like the Department of Work & Pensions.

That if this is not legally enforceable that elected representatives voluntarily give their consent for these checks to be undertaken and that at the next full Council meeting a report be issued identifying those who have agreed to this check.

12.3 Motion regarding Housing and Homeless Households - Changing the one offer permanent home policy

Proposed by: Councillor Rabina Khan

The Council Notes:

- The average cost of a property in Tower Hamlets is now around 14 times what a typical essential worker earns.
- Tower Hamlets has the 12th highest average monthly rents in London, and one of the highest levels of poverty in the UK, with 44% of households in the Borough experiencing income poverty, high levels of deprivation and child poverty, and 67% of people living in the private rental sector living in fuel poverty.
- A key challenge is the ability to procure affordable private sector temporary accommodation to fulfil statutory duties to homeless households.
- There are nearly 2,000 households in temporary accommodation of which over 1,000 are housed outside the borough
- Crisis defines Homelessness as follows: “Homelessness is about more than rooflessness. A home is not just a physical space; it also has a legal and social dimension. A home provides roots, identity, a sense of belonging and a place of emotional wellbeing. Homelessness is about the loss of all of these. It is an isolating and destructive experience and homeless people are some of the most vulnerable and socially excluded in our society”.

The Council Notes

- Homeless and overcrowded applicants are in Band 2 of the housing allocation register.
- Overcrowded applicants are entitled to three offers before being demoted for a year on the third refusal on an offer.
- Homeless applicants are entitled to only one offer and the right of homelessness duty is removed if an applicant refuses the offer.
- Only in exceptional cases is an offer withdrawn with the homelessness applicant retaining homeless priority.
- In other cases, a homeless applicant can only contend the offer once they have moved in to avoid the risk of homelessness duty being removed.
- A consultation on proposed changes to the way social housing is allocated took place in 2019
- Significant changes proposed were made to Band 3

- The consultation did not consider the discrepancy Band 2 applicants have in the way offers are made i.e. overcrowded applicants receiving 3 offers and homeless applicants receiving one offer only
- There are elected members who have had to raise enquiries on behalf of homeless applicants who after viewing properties did not think it would be suitable for them.

The Council Resolves:

The council consults on changes for Band 2 applicants which include homeless and overcrowded applicants to have access to the same number of offers or at least two offers.