

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**TUESDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2011**

**MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY  
MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

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

**SUMMARY**

1. Twenty three motions have been submitted by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 13 for debate at the Council meeting on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011.
2. In accordance with the protocol agreed by the Council on 21<sup>st</sup> 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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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 are the motions that have been submitted.

## **12.1 Public transport and unaffordable fares**

**Proposer: Councillor Fozol Miah**

**Secunder: Councillor Harun Miah**

This Council notes:

- The importance of encouraging use of public transport to limit pollution in London and to save on use of fossil fuels which increase global warming
- That people on lower incomes are particularly dependent on public transport to ensure they can gain access for themselves and their families of the benefits of living in London
- That many people have seen or are seeing no rise in their incomes despite the fact inflation is over 5% and this is cutting their living standards
- That Tory Mayor of London Boris Johnson is committed to raising fares on public transport in London year on year by 2% above inflation, despite falling living standards for many, particularly on lower incomes across the capital and in Tower Hamlets in particular
- That Ken Livingstone, the only candidate who realistically can be expected to replace the Tory mayor Boris Johnson in elections in May 2012, has promised to reduce fares by 5% if elected with no increase in fares in 2013

This Council believes:

- The rise in fares proposed by the Tory Mayor Boris Johnson will have a severe effect on the living standards in London particularly of those on lower incomes
- The rise in fares proposed by Tory Mayor Boris Johnson will discourage use of public transport
- A reduction in fares rather than an increase is both affordable and desirable

This Council supports the plans announced by Ken Livingstone to reduce fares if elected next May

## 12.2 The Council's Constitution

**Proposer: Councillor Joshua Peck**

**Seconder: Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman**

This Council notes:

- That the power to amend the Council's Constitution is reserved to Full Council.
- That a number of constitutional issues have arisen since the introduction of the Mayoral Model in Tower Hamlets.

This Council resolves:

- To add the Employment Strategy, Enterprise Strategy, Waste Strategy and Parks Strategy to the list of strategies reserved to Full Council.
- To require the appointment of local authority school governors to be approved by the General Purposes Committee
- To make the consideration of amendments to the Council's constitution a responsibility of the General Purposes Committee
- That engagement of Chief Officers, to permanent positions or interim positions of over three months, will be through the normal recruitment process overseen by the HR Committee
- To rename the Chair of Council, the Speaker of Council and designate the Speaker the Borough's First Citizen.
- To affirm the order of precedence for civic events in the Council's Constitution, with the Borough's First Citizen representing the Council at Civic Ceremonial functions in the Borough including:

Visits of the Royal Family and dignitaries  
Civic receptions, luncheons and dinners  
Funeral or memorial services  
Religious services  
Prize givings

And events outside the Borough including:

Lord Mayor of London's events  
Invitations from other First Citizens to their Borough.  
London Mayor's Association Events

This would not preclude the attendance and involvement of the Mayor and/or other Councillors.

### **12.3 Recording of Council Meetings**

**Proposer: Councillor Tim Archer**

**Seconded: Councillor David Snowdon**

This Council notes:

- it already has the ability to record meetings of the full Council without incurring additional cost
- that it is the decision of full Council as to whether meetings can be recorded; but
- that officers have advised that the quality of video and audio recordings using the existing equipment may be poor.

This Council believes:

- that the recording of full meetings of the Council would act as a strong incentive to ensure proper conduct of members as well as members of the public present
- recordings of full meetings of the Council could be a useful resource to settling disagreements arising from these meetings.

This Council agrees:

- that for a trial period of 3 months all meetings of the full council be audio recorded and stored.
- that at the end of the trial period the quality of the recordings be reviewed and in the light of this a decision be made on whether to record future meetings, and if so whether to publish the recordings on the website.

## **12.4 The lack of local benefit from the Olympic Games 2012**

**Proposer: Councillor Harun Miah**

**Secunder: Councillor Fozol Miah**

This Council notes:

- The reason the former Mayor of London supported London's bid for the Olympic Games was to help with regeneration in East London, including the creation of homes and lasting jobs for the residents of East London
- The plans for the Olympic Games as implemented under the current Tory Mayor have failed to live up to the hopes for regeneration, homes and jobs
- In particular, the number of jobs for people resident in East London as a whole and Tower Hamlets in particular directly generated by the construction of the Olympics site has been pitifully small
- That most of the homes in the Olympic Village will not be given over to social housing after the Olympics, despite the millions of pounds of public money that has been poured into the project
- That residents of East London are now promised an unprecedented security clampdown limiting their freedom of movement
- That security at the Olympics site may involve foreign nationals carrying firearms in East London and the deployment of missile batteries
- That residents in East London also face massive inconvenience as roads are closed and priority is given to luxury limousines ferrying the multiplicity of Olympics officials, hangers on and corporate sponsors

This council believes urgent measures need to be taken to persuade residents of East London that the two week Olympic Games will bring lasting benefit to East London residents in terms of jobs, homes and regeneration

This council has no confidence in the current Tory Mayor and his administration will take the necessary measures to ensure that the potential benefits from the Olympic Games will accrue to the residents of East London

## 12.5 Dow Chemical and the Olympic Park

**Proposer:** Councillor Denise Jones

**Seconder:** Councillor Lesley Pavitt

This Council Notes:

- That on the night of 2/3<sup>rd</sup> December 1984 at the Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) pesticide plant in Bhopal, India a chemical leak exposed thousands of people to toxic gas and other harmful materials.
- That campaign groups estimate that as many as 25,000 people died as a result of the leak and many thousands more were injured.
- That Dow Chemical purchased Union Carbide Corporation (of which UCIL was a subsidiary) in 2001 and there are ongoing unresolved court and civil cases against them over the disaster.
- That international Groups such as Amnesty International have been campaigning for Dow to address the outstanding demands for compensation relating to the disaster and its impact, including contamination of water by chemical waste.
- That this campaign remains ongoing, despite 27 years passing since the events took place.

This Council further notes:

- That, in a £7m deal, Dow Chemical has been given a contract for 'exclusive marketing rights' to the Olympic Stadium for the London 2012 games and will be branding the 'wrap' that surrounds the stadium.
- That this will guarantee Dow Chemical a prominent profile throughout the games period.
- That both Shadow Olympics Minister Tessa Jowell MP and Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee Keith Vaz as well as Amnesty International have expressed their concern over the contract being awarded to Dow whilst there are ongoing human rights and legal cases surrounding the Bhopal disaster.

This Council believes:

- That Dow Chemical does not meet the LOCOG Sustainable Sourcing Code, which states that LOCOG *"will place a high priority on environmental, social and ethical issues when procuring products and services for the Games"*

This Council Resolves:

- To register our opposition to the involvement of Dow Chemical in the London 2012 Olympic Games.

- To join the campaign to call for LOCOG to reverse its decision to award this marketing contract to Dow Chemical by writing to London 2012 Chairman, Lord Coe, Secretary of State for Culture, Jeremy Hunt MP and LOCOG Chief Executive Officer, Paul Deighton.
- To work with cross party politicians, campaign groups and others to assist the campaign.

## **12.6 Parliamentary Boundary Review**

**Proposer: Councillor Craig Aston**

**Seconder: Councillor Peter Golds**

This Council welcomes the decision of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission to leave the boundaries of the existing parliamentary constituencies in Tower Hamlets untouched, resulting in the borough being served, as at present, by two members of parliament whose constituencies are wholly contained within the borough.

## **12.7 Supporting the Trade Unions in their campaign to defend the Local Government Pension Scheme**

**Proposer: Councillor Joshua Peck**

**Seconder: Councillor Bill Turner**

The Council notes:

- That all unions involved in the LGPS have agreed to ballot for industrial action as part of an unprecedented alliance of Public Sector Unions that could see 3 million workers striking together in November to defend the LGPS.

The Council further notes:

- That local branches of the Trade Unions are actively campaigning together for the purpose of:
  - returning a 'yes vote' in their respective ballots;
  - publicising the negative and unfair impact of what this government is proposing in relation to public sector pensions;
  - challenging misinformation disseminated by this government about the unaffordability of the LGPS.

This Council resolves to:

- Pledge our support to the Trade Unions in their campaign to defend the LGPS and we agree to join demonstrations and picket lines in Tower Hamlets in support of industrial action.
- Make a public statement of support in relation to this.

## **12.8 Questions to the Mayor at Council meetings**

**Proposer: Councillor Peter Golds**

**Seconder: Councillor Tim Archer**

This Council notes that the Mayor has reserved all decision making to himself and that no Council member has any delegated authority.

This includes Councillors who are designated Cabinet Members but, as has been confirmed by officers, have no authority to make any decision.

Therefore it follows that questions by Councillors regarding Council policy and decisions taken by Mayor should be answered by the Mayor himself.

The Council therefore resolves to amend Standing Order 12.2 to achieve this end and to read:

**12.2 Questions on Notice at Full Council.** Subject to rule 12.3, at an Ordinary or Extraordinary meeting of the Council a Member may ask the Chair, the Mayor or the Chair of any Committee or Sub Committee a question about any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the borough. Questions at an Extraordinary Council meeting must relate to a matter on that agenda.

Questions relating to Executive functions and decisions taken by the Mayor will be put to and answered by the Mayor or the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services) only.

In the absence of the Mayor the Deputy Mayor will answer questions directed to the Mayor.

## **12.9 Former Jewish Maternity Hospital**

**Proposer: Councillor Judith Gardiner**

**Seconder: Councillor Helal Uddin**

This Council notes:

- That the former Jewish Maternity Hospital, known affectionately as ‘Mother Levy’s’, was the only Jewish Maternity hospital in England and located in four separate buildings in Underwood Road.
- That the buildings form part of the few remaining examples of the built evidence of the Jewish East End and as such are of important historical significance.
- That Peabody Housing Trust are legally entitled to apply to demolish the site and have applied for a ‘prior notice of demolition’ on the site, with the view to applying for permission to build a five storey block of 33 flats rent, shared ownership and sale on the open market.
- That Peabody has a duty to optimise the amount of housing they provide but also to protect the Borough’s heritage.

This Council further notes:

- An online petition which has been signed by over 400 people including local councillors opposing the demolition.
- That several notable individuals such as the Director of Jewish Heritage UK, Chairs of the East London History Society and Jewish East End Celebration Society and local Councillors have written to the Chief Executive of Peabody asking him to at least spare the cottages and convert them to family homes.

This Council resolves:

- To call on the Mayor to urgently negotiate with Peabody Homes to prevent the demolition.
- To call on Peabody to reconsider their designs to spare the cottages or part of the façade to preserve the heritage of the buildings.

## **12.10 East End Homes**

**Proposer: Councillor Dr Emma Jones**

**Seconder: Councillor Tim Archer**

This Council notes that

1 A Council-organised meeting was held between East End Homes residents, councillors and representatives of East End Homes on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2011. A representative of EEH was also in attendance.

2. The minutes of this meeting clearly show that each estate felt that improvements in resident involvement and representation on EEH's board were needed urgently.

3. The St George's estate has currently undergoing extensive construction work and it is important during this time that the estate is democratically represented.

4. Currently the EEH management board does not have a representative elected by St George's estate residents.

This Council believes that:-

1. RSLs have a responsibility to ensure democratically elected representation for tenants, leaseholders and freeholders on estate management boards.

2. The election of residents to the boards would be a relatively easy process to carry out in comparison to the enormous benefit it would provide to residents of EEH and other RSLs in Tower Hamlets.

This Council resolves to:

Request that EEH hold elections for resident representatives to the estate management boards as soon as possible

## **12.11 Thames Water and King Edward Memorial Park**

**Proposer: Councillor Shiria Khatun**

**Secunder: Councillor Denise Jones**

This Council notes:

- That Thames Water have revised their Thames Tunnel proposals after completing phase one of the consultation process.
- That the revised proposals maintain the use of the Foreshore at King Edward Memorial Park (KEMP) as Thames Water's preferred site.
- That the revised proposals include temporary access from Glamis Road, the removal of trees from the park (with new ones replanted) and propose work to be done in three phases over 7 months, 13 months and 21 months with up to 22 lorry movements throughout the day.
- That Thames Water has also redesigned the proposed finished site on the Foreshore as well as the proposed twin extractor tunnels.

This Council also notes:

- That Thames Water have considered the alternatives to the Foreshore as part of the first consultation phase
- That Thames Water have listed reasons for not preferring the alternative Heckford site, including proximity to local properties, increased traffic because of no access to river barge use, the scale of the works, impact on local roads and need to tunnel under more properties.
- That Thames Water has stated that the two other site options, Limehouse Basin and Shadwell Basin are less preferred than Heckford due to the technically challenging nature of the work and poor access.
- That no final decision has been made and the next phase of consultation is due to finish on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

This Council further notes:

- The Save KEMP campaign which is opposed to the use of the river foreshore and sewer ventilation system, instead preferring Thames Water to use brown field land and has received the backing of cross party Councillors, MP's and GLA members.
- That the Mayor commissioned Nigel Legge Associates to conduct an assessment of the KEMP Foreshore and alternative Heckford option for the building of the Thames Tideway Tunnel. The conclusion of that report, published on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November is:

*'From an engineering perspective it is concluded that both options are technically feasible, and according to Thames Water estimates the cost of both is similar. Due to the reduced construction requirements in KEMP of the Heckford option, this will result in significantly less impact on the park compared with the Foreshore Option.'*

This Council resolves:

- To respond to phase two of the consultation working with the Save KEMP campaign, local residents and politicians to ensure the best option for the future of KEMP.

## **12.12 November 30 day of action to protect public pensions**

**Proposer: Councillor Alibor Choudhury**

**Seconder: Councillor Shahed Ali**

This meeting notes:

- Public sector pensions are under attack. The government wants to make people pay more and work longer for a lot less.
- Most public sector workers are modestly paid. Their pay has been frozen while the price of basics is shooting up. Now they are expected to pay an extra £3 billion a year for much worse pensions, by a government that cancelled the banker's bonus tax that raised almost the same.
- The average pension for a director in a FTSE 100 Company is £220,000 per year, 23 times higher than the average occupational pension
- It's wrong to make public sector workers pay an unfair contribution to reducing a deficit they did nothing to cause.
- The government needs to engage in meaningful negotiations with the trade unions to agree a fair deal on public pensions.

This meeting resolves:

- To work with the unions to ensure provision of life and limb services on November 30 and to deliver the strongest message of opposition to this Tory-led assault on public pensions.

## **12.13 Social Care**

**Proposer: Councillor Rachael Saunders**

**Seconded: Councillor Lesley Pavitt**

This Council notes:

1. That we are in a time of significant change in how social care is provided in Tower Hamlets, with reablement and personalisation changing how people relate to services.
2. That the Independent Mayor chose to take a significant proportion of the Tory led government's cuts from domiciliary care - £2,731,000 through reducing demand for domiciliary care through reablement and cutting the in house domiciliary care service and £1,390,000 through re-commissioning.

This Council believes:

1. That whilst there are steps that can be taken to make legitimate savings – block contracts rather than expensive spot purchasing, and increasing the independence of some service users through intensive early support, there are significant concerns.
2. The move to reablement must be driven by what is best for vulnerable people, not cost cutting.
3. That the in house service was widely recognised as an excellent service and that any contracted care that replaces it must be commissioned on the basis of the same high standards.
4. That the Independent Mayor, having put forward his savings proposals, had a responsibility to keep them on track – delays in making savings mean further unplanned cuts to vital services.
5. That the people of Tower Hamlets deserve an explanation for why the domiciliary care contracts were delayed. This cost circa £800,000 – money that will now have to be cut from elsewhere.
6. That since October 2009 all new long term packages of home care support have been commissioned from external suppliers.
7. That, as a part of the budget process, the Independent Mayor rowed back on his original proposal to end all in house provision of domiciliary care other than reablement.
8. That some long term service users of in house domiciliary care packages are now being moved on to contracted out care providers at their annual reviews, and some are not, and are being permitted to stay in house.

This Council resolves:

1. To call on the Independent Mayor for transparency on how decisions are made on which long term service users retain in house provision, and which move to contracted provision.
2. To call on the Independent Mayor for a halt on moving people away from in house provision until councillors and the public have had full public transparency and debate.
3. To continue to speak up for those local people who receiving less than the best quality of care.
4. To call on the Independent Mayor for answers on the £800,000 of unnecessary cuts.

## **12.14 Gas and Electricity Co-ops**

**Proposer: Councillor Ohid Ahmed**

**Secunder: Councillor Rania Khan**

This Council notes:

- That fuel prices have risen on average by 21% in the past year and are expected to continue to rise.
- That in 2009 (latest available figures) the number of households in Fuel Poverty (needing to spend more than 10% of their income on maintaining adequate warmth) was 40m, an increase from 3.3m in 2008. This is predicted to be even higher in 2011.
- The Tower Hamlets' 2010 LDF document states that in 2010 330 people died in Tower Hamlets from the effects of living in a cold home.
- Gas and energy cooperatives operate by collecting households and businesses together to negotiate a lower energy price from energy companies.
- A similar project in the Netherlands saw an average bill reduction of 20%.

This Council believes:

- The Conservative led coalition cuts to benefits and poor economic strategy are increasing the level of poverty across the country and in Tower Hamlets.
- Fuel poverty impacts on residents' health, the ability of older residents to live independently; and
- The Cooperative model has much to offer residents and the council to help meet the challenges posed by central government cuts.

This Council Resolves:

- To ask the Mayor to investigate ways the council can lead on creating a Gas and Electricity co-op to involve residents, businesses and other public sector organisations to lower their fuel bills.

## 12.15 Warm & dry flats

**Proposer:** Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman

**Secunder:** Councillor Joshua Peck

This Council notes:

1. Climate change, caused by anthropogenic CO2 emissions, is an urgent problem for the whole world, killing 300,000 per year at the moment according to the Kofi Annan Foundation.
2. Bangladesh is one of the countries most affected by the effects of climate change, so our borough's links with the country give us particular impetus to act.
3. Cold housing is unpleasant and dangerous for vulnerable people. Well insulated homes are warmer and safer, and reduce fuel poverty.
4. This branch welcomes the mayor's announcement that Decent Homes works will be accelerated in the borough. Although this is sometimes ignored, one Decent Homes standard is that properties offer a reasonable standard of insulation.
5. Under Ed Miliband's stewardship, the DECC instigated various funding streams to insulate and so save CO2 emissions from homes. These include the Community Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) and the Community Energy Savings Programme (CESP). These are funded from levies on energy companies and targeted at deprived communities, e.g. Tower Hamlets.
6. Works to insulate homes can be done during Decent Homes projects to minimise disruption and cost. These funding streams can top up Decent Homes funding to ensure the housing ends up healthy, warm, and with the lowest CO2 emissions reasonably possible.
7. Poplar HARCA are already undertaking a CESP-funded insulation project.

This Council further notes:

1. Damp and the mould it causes, is a serious issue causing severe respiratory problems and makes asthma very much worse.
2. Most damp is caused by condensation: moisture from breathing, cooking and washing condensing on cold surfaces. Overcrowded families suffer more from condensation, with more people in the flat creating moisture.
3. When flats have double-glazing installed, but no other insulation undertaken, the coldest places will be the external walls and top-floor ceiling, so condensation and mould will form there. This could be seen clearly in the recent BBC documentary Poor Kids. This has happened in some Decent Homes projects in Tower Hamlets, increasing the health risks from mould to residents.

4. If walls and roofs are properly insulated, they will generally not be cold enough for condensation to form, so the flats will be free of mould. Cavity wall insulation is inexpensive, and Tower Hamlets have pioneered innovative installation methods, like abseiling down tower blocks squirting it in as they go. Insulation for solid walls is more expensive, costing about the same as double-glazing a flat, however because walls are bigger than windows, typically more energy is saved.
5. Proper ventilation is also necessary to banish mould. As noted by Lewisham council, humidistat controlled extraction for kitchens and bathrooms, and heat-recovery ventilation (where the outgoing warmth is transferred from the old wet air to the fresh dry air) are the best, most economical solutions.
6. Independent specialists who are not being contracted to undertake the work will be able to offer advice without profiting from the measures they recommend.

This Council Resolves

1. To ensure Decent Homes client organisations get the maximum benefit from CERT and CESP schemes.
2. To ensure that Decent Homes works do not put residents at greater risk of mould-related illnesses. The order of precedence of works should be such that condensation within the home is not increased.
3. To encourage Decent Homes client organisations to consider taking independent technical advice about the issue when appropriate.

## 12.16 Housing

**Proposer:** Councillor Rabina Khan

**Seconder:** Councillor Maium Miah

This meeting notes:

- Levels of house-building is at its lowest since the 1920s. Last year only 105,000 homes were built nationally. The IPPR estimate that England is facing a shortfall of 750,000 homes by 2025.
- Government housing policy is failing. Lack of supply and unaffordable house prices and rents is creating a growing housing crisis. Tower Hamlets are bucking this trend with a commitment to build 4,000 affordable homes in the next three years. However, to meet its housing need the borough needs greater resources from central government.
- Rising house prices, contraction in bank credit and steep deposits are combining to make it more difficult for young people to enter the housing market.
- Increasing numbers of people are being forced into the private rented sector. It is estimated that by 2016 one in five households will be renting from private landlords, compared with 15% today and 7.5% in the late 1980s.
- This increase in demand and shortage of supply is driving up rents. In Greater London the average rent is now £1,194 a month. Private market rents are above the average in Tower Hamlets. Across London rents are predicated to rise by 20% in the next 5 years.
- High private rents have contributed to an average annual increase in government expenditure on Housing Benefit of £1bn in the last decade.
- Housing charity Shelter report an increase in complaints about private landlords by over a fifth in two years, from 70,813 recorded in 2008/09 to 86,628 in 2010/11.
- Shelter have called for local authorities to adopt a 'zero tolerance' to 'rogue landlords'.

This meeting agrees:

- The government is failing to deliver affordable housing, holding back the aspirations of people up and down the country and failing those in need of social housing.
- Greater action is needed to protect private sector tenants from rouge landlords and exorbitant rents.

This meeting resolves:

- To support Shelter's initiative by explore the possibility of licensing private rented properties in the borough in order to ensure that landlords, managing agents, tenants and owners operate legally and professionally.
- To campaign for a 'living rent' and the regulation of rents in the private rented sector.

## 12.17 Free Schools

**Proposer:** Councillor Amy Whitelock

**Seconder:** Councillor Bill Turner

This Council notes:

- The first 24 state-funded but independent ‘free schools’ opened in September this year, including Canary Wharf College in Tower Hamlets, a faith-based primary school.
- In October, the Secretary of State approved a further two free schools to open in Tower Hamlets:
  - Wapping High – approved to provide 405 secondary places
  - Constable Education Trust (CET) Tower Hamlets – approved to provide 350 primary places

This Council further notes:

- This year, GCSE results in Tower Hamlets beat the national average for the first time ever, with 60.4% of our pupils achieving at least 5 A\* to C passes including English and Maths, compared to 58.3% nationally.
- The 8.6% increase on last year’s results continues the steady improvement in educational attainment started under previous Labour administrations and now under the Independent Mayor.
- These huge successes have been achieved through the family of local authority schools working closely with the council, before the arrival of any academies or free schools in Tower Hamlets.
- However, the population of Tower Hamlets continues to rise and parents in parts of the borough have a legitimate demand for additional school places – particularly in mixed sex, non-religious schools – which to date have not been met by new council-provided schools.

This Council believes:

- All children in Tower Hamlets should have the right to access high quality, free, comprehensive and non-selective education, regardless of their family background, income, faith, gender or ability.
- The diverse nature of Tower Hamlets requires schools to work together in the interests of all children, to realise this aim.
- What matters above all is continuing to improve educational outcomes for all our children, particularly those from deprived backgrounds, and ensuring there are sufficient school places across the borough to meet the continuing rise in demand.
- That is best achieved through the universal provision of excellent comprehensive education.
- Any free schools must therefore demonstrate that they benefit all local children, regardless of income, background or ability, and have a positive impact on the wider local community.
- However, free schools also carry a risk of creating a two tier system of education, particularly if free schools are able to make a profit, as in the USA and Sweden.

This Council resolves:

- To continue to work with parents, teachers and other non-profit groups to ensure any Secretary of State approved free schools in Tower Hamlets are part of the family of schools, promote non-selective, comprehensive and high quality education for all children, and abide by the local authority admissions code.
- To work with parents to address concerns about lack of school places and ensure that the Department for Children, Schools and Families conducts an urgent review of the situation, with a view to bringing forward plans for new local authority-run schools.
- To require any new proposed free schools to ensure they benefit all local children and parents, and have a positive impact on the wider local community.
- To oppose any future moves to permit tax-payer funded free schools to operate for profit.

## **12.18 Loan Sharks**

**Proposer: Councillor Rania Khan**

**Seconder: Councillor Shafiqul Haque**

This meeting notes:

- The UK's poorest borrowers pay the highest price for credit in Europe.
- Around 3 million people use the very high cost door to door or home credit lending market. This high cost market charges £82 in interest and collection charges for every £100 lent.
- Other forms of high cost lending, such as Payday loans, which charge up to £35 per £100 lent, and recover monies directly from bank accounts, are expanding rapidly.
- Research shows that far from borrowing money to pay for luxury or non-essential goods, people on low incomes need credit just to get by. They know they are paying well over the odds for credit but have no choice but to pay the high prices charged.
- High cost lending and debt affects women, single mothers, people on benefits and ethnic minorities disproportionately.
- The campaigning work done by local MP Jim Fitzpatrick to highlight this issue.
- Lending money without a license is illegal.
- Islington Council is exploring the possibility of passing a by-law to prevent payday loan companies from operating in the borough.

This meeting resolves:

- That the Mayor should investigate all measures to minimize the scourge of loan sharks in Tower Hamlets.

## 12.19 The Social Fund – Coalition Reforms

**Proposer:** Councillor Anwar Khan

**Secunder:** Councillor Carlo Gibbs

This Council notes

- The Social Fund was set up in 1988 to provide financial assistance predominantly to people on low incomes;
- It includes a regulated element, comprising Winter Fuel Payments, Cold Weather Payments, Funeral Payments and Sure Start Maternity Grants.
- The conditions for receiving these payments and grants are set down in regulations.
- It also includes a discretionary element, comprising Community Care Grants, Crisis Loans and Budgeting Loans, where awards are made at the discretion of Job Centre Plus;
- Social Fund Community Care Grants (CCGs) are available to homeless people, care leavers, ex-offenders leaving custody and others with an institutionalised background to help them with the costs of setting up home;
- Funding for CCGs was increased by around £10 million a year between 2002/03 and 2006/07, but has remained at a total of £141 million since then;
- The Coalition Government's proposal to reform to Social Fund, including the replacement of the CCG and Crisis Loans with locally-based provision;
- Ministers have refused to commit to ring-fence funding for this local provision or issue guidance to those authorities to ensure vulnerable people are helped;
- While there were many problems with the discretionary Social Fund, particularly as a result of its cash-limited nature, no organisation has called for it to be abolished;
- The de-ring fencing of Supporting People funding for vulnerable homeless people and others requiring housing support has resulted in cutbacks to those services in many authorities.

This Council believes

- These reforms undermine the principles of the Welfare State and leave vulnerable people at the mercy of a postcode lottery of local authority provision;
- The Labour Government's previously published plans to modernise the Social Fund within the same basic structure as exists at present would provide for a much stronger safety-net for vulnerable people.

This Council resolves

- To support Labour's Shadow Cabinet in its opposition to the abolition of the Social Fund and call-on the Shadow Work & Pensions Secretary to make a commitment to reverse this if abolition is implemented;
- To call on the Mayor of Tower Hamlets to voice opposition to these changes and give a commitment to ring-fence any funding received for the purposes of replacing CCGs with locally administered grants/loans for those same purposes.

## 12.20 Plan B for economic growth

**Proposer:** Councillor Kabir Ahmed

**Seconded:** Councillor Aminur Khan

This Council notes:

- That all predictions for UK economic growth have been drastically reduced. The CBI's November revised prediction that UK economic growth is expected to be 0.9% this year and 1.2% in 2012, below its previous predictions of 1.3% and 2.2%.
- Unemployment is the highest it has been in 17 years. The number of young people under 25 unemployed has reached 1 million.
  - The progressive think tank Compass have written a report with 100 leading economists calling for a new economic plan to increase growth and job creation in the economy.
  - The main suggestions of the report are:
    - An immediate halt to central government cuts.
    - A new round of quantitative easing to finance a "Green New Deal" to create thousands of new jobs in designing green technology.
    - Benefit increases to put money into the pockets of those on lower incomes and boost to spending.
    - A Tobin/Robin Hood tax to raise funds from the City to pay for investment in transport, energy and house building.
    - A move to measuring economic success in broader terms than GDP growth, including work-life balance and social stability.

This Council believes:

- The Conservative led coalition Government's short sighted and ideological cuts to government spending are causing a reduction in growth, rising unemployment and, for the first time since the Second World War, a reduction in the standard of living.
- That the best way to end a recession is through growth, stimulating the economy through 'New Deal' government spending and putting people back into work.
- George Osborne's 'Plan A' strangles growth and will lead us deeper into recession.
- The Compass report 'Plan B: a good economy for a good society', outlined above, provides a better alternative model for kick starting the economy through investment and growth.

This Council resolves:

- To lobby in favour of Compasses' Plan B
- To ask the Mayor to write to the Chancellor to state public support for the call for the implementation for Plan B.

## 12.21 Affordable Rent

**Proposer:** Councillor Helal Uddin

**Seconded:** Councillor Judith Gardiner

This Council notes:

1. According to its own Housing Strategy, Tower Hamlets faces an “immense” set of housing challenges including almost 10,000 overcrowded households living in its social rented housing. The chronic shortage of affordable housing in Tower Hamlets is a crisis for the health, economic prospects and wellbeing of its citizens.
2. Under Labour control, the Council responded to this crisis by consistently building more affordable homes than any other London borough.
3. The Tory-led coalition government has made huge cuts to the affordable housing budget. To make up the shortfall, most new state subsidised homes will be significantly more expensive and less secure than traditional social rented homes - up to 80% of market rents and with tenancies as short as two years. This new tenure is called “Affordable Rent”.
4. As well as most new homes being “Affordable Rent”, the government has also given its approval for housing associations to “convert” existing social-rented homes to the new Affordable Rent level when they become vacant, further reducing the number of genuinely affordable homes for those who need them.

This Council believes:

1. “Affordable Rent” is yet another example of the Tory party’s obsession with decimating our stock of social housing - this time by racking up rents to make sure that the people who need social housing most are the ones who miss out.
2. Tower Hamlets Council’s number one housing priority must be to build more homes that its residents can afford and want to live in. It must do this in the context of an economic recession that has stifled the housebuilding industry, and a government and a Mayor that are strongly opposed to the ideals of the welfare state.
3. There are opportunities to tweak “Affordable Rent” to make it more workable for a particular area. For example, family-sized properties could be charged at 50% of market rents if a housing association can charge higher rents on smaller properties. Alternatively, the Council could contribute some land in return for lower rents once the homes are built.
4. There are other ways to build social housing, e.g. through section 106 agreements. However, these are unlikely to deliver the volume of new homes that we need.

This Council Resolves:

1. To call on the Mayor to publish a clear and transparent policy covering the following:
  - a. maximum permitted rent levels for each size of property in each ward of Tower Hamlets
  - b. how the Council will evaluate each proposal for “Affordable Rent” homes in Tower Hamlets
  - c. to oppose housing associations “converting” existing social rented homes to Affordable Rent, and in what circumstances
2. To call on the Mayor to make a commitment only to support bids for HCA funding that deliver homes those on our Housing Waiting List can afford to rent and which keep the number of re-lets at these higher rent levels to an absolute minimum;
3. To call on the Mayor to remove from Tower Hamlets Council’s list of Preferred Partners for future development, any housing association submitting a bid for HCA funding which would result in either new homes or re-lets costing 70 per cent or more of a market rents;
4. To call on the Mayor to instruct officers not to agree to any amendment to the legal Transfer Agreement between the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and a stock transfer RSL enabling the later to let former council homes at non-social rent levels;
5. To call on the Mayor to report back to Full Council on the outcome of this year’s bidding round for HCA funding, within three months of any decisions being announced.

## **12.22 EMA**

**Proposer: Councillor Oliur Rahman**

**Seconded: Councillor Rania Khan**

This Council notes:

- That in the October 2010 Coalition Government spending review the funding for Education Maintenance Allowance was cut.
- The announcement of the Mayor's Education Award which will give young people, who previously received £30 EMA, £400 a year to help them stay on at school post 16.
- The MEA will reach around 78% of young people in the borough.
- This scheme has been endorsed by the journalist Polly Toynbee, Jonathan Portes from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, and Tony Dolphin from the institute of public policy research.
- Dave Hill's article in The Guardian Newspaper on 16.11.11, suggesting that Ken Livingstone may introduce a replacement EMA scheme across London.

This Council Believes:

- EMA was a vital resource in helping young people from deprived backgrounds stay on in school post 16.
- Tower Hamlets has seen fantastic improvements in GCSE results and we should be helping to maintain this progress into A-Level.

This Council Resolves:

- To encourage all eligible young people to apply for MEA and stay on in education post 16.
- To encourage councils across the country to emulate the Mayor's Education Award and offer support to their young people to stay on in post 16 education.
- To encourage the Mayor of London to introduce a replacement EMA scheme across the capital.

## 12.23 Remploy

**Proposer:** Councillor Marc Francis

**Seconder:** Councillor David Edgar

This Council notes:

1. Remploy was established in 1946 to provide supported employment, rehabilitation and training for disabled ex-servicemen in local factories after the Second World War;
2. Its aim was to give disabled people the skills and confidence to secure mainstream employment, but it always accepted that some of its workers, especially those with severe learning disabilities, would struggle to compete against other employees and might remain in work in Remploy factories/workshops;
3. Over the past 65 years, tens of thousands of disabled people have worked in Remploy factories, making everything from cardboard boxes to RNLI survival suits;
4. These workshops generally had a successful track record until an EU Directive in the 1990s made it difficult for public authorities to provide them with work. The EU Rules have been changed since then to enable public bodies to favour procurement from Remploy and similar companies, but very few public bodies have chosen to do so;
5. In recent years, Remploy has established an employment services arm to help disabled people into mainstream employment;
6. In 2007, the Labour Government agreed a £550 million modernisation plan over the next five years, to bring the average public subsidy down to around £9,000 per disabled person each year, which involved the closure of 29 of the remaining 83 Remploy factories, including those in Brixton and Woolwich;
7. While Ministers promised there would be no compulsory redundancies, many of the disabled employees who left have been unable to sustain mainstream employment or even secure it in the first place;
8. The Remploy workshops currently employ around 2,800 disabled people in 54 factories across England, Scotland and Wales, at a cost of approximately £63 million a year;
9. In December 2010, the Coalition Government established a review into specialist disability employment programmes under the chairship of Liz Sayce, the Chief Executive of the disability charity, Radar;
10. Unsurprisingly, the Sayce Review concluded that the Remploy factories are not the right model for disabled people in the 21st Century and that public money should instead be invested in employment advice and brokerage services to help disabled people into a wider range of mainstream employment opportunities. It also

recommends that Remploy Employment Services be “moved out of public ownership” i.e. privatised;

11. If implemented, this plan would result in the closure of most of the remaining 54 Remploy factories, including those in Barking and Enfield;

12. The Government consultation on these proposals ends on 17th October and it will probably make a decision before the end of the year.

This Council Believes

1. The Government should continue to provide some public subsidy for schemes that provide employment for disabled people as well as schemes to help them into mainstream employment;
2. Employment schemes for disabled people should offer an opportunity for meaningful and fulfilling work
3. A decision on the future of the Remploy factories should be based on evidence, not the ideological prejudices of Conservative Ministers or the vested interests of voluntary sector organisations;
4. Tower Hamlets Council should consider whether it is possible to procure any goods or services from Remploy.

This Council Resolves:

1. To oppose the closure of the Remploy factories, including those in Enfield and Barking, unless the Government can provide alternative employment opportunities for their disabled employees, in addition to advice services;
2. To explore opportunities for the Council to procure goods and services from Remploy factories.