


<p style="text-align: center;">Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Council</p> <p style="text-align: center;">21 September 2016</p>	
<p>Report of: Graham White, Interim Service Head, Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Petition Debate - Cuts to community language services</p>	

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council's Petition Scheme, adopted in July 2010, provides that where a petition includes the names, addresses and signatures of at least 2,000 persons who live, work or study in the borough, the petitioners may request that a debate be held about the petition at the full Council meeting. This is additional to and distinct from the long-standing provision in the Council's Constitution that a petition with at least 30 signatures may be presented to (but not debated by) the Council.
- 1.2 The full relevant extract from the Petition Scheme is attached at Appendix A.
- 1.3 A petition containing over 2,000 signatures has been received on the subject of Cuts to community language services. The petitioners have requested that the petition be debated by the Council. The text of the petition is as follows:-

"We the undersigned residents and parents of Tower Hamlets are urging you to discuss the changes of Community Language Service including the fund cut in the Council meeting on 21 September 2016. With parents and residents of Tower Hamlets, signing this petition and urging mayor to stop cutting fund of Community Language Service. We believe this cut will have a significant negative impact on the young people as the provision of learning Bengali, Urdu, Chinese, Somalia, Lithuanian, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Arabic languages will be eliminated. We are aware that officers have made the decision to cut the following services:

- (1) Reduce hours and weeks from Community Language Classes;
- (2) Cut Early GCSE (Bengali, Urdu, Arabic and Chinese) and no early GCSE classes from September 2016.

We are appealing to the Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets to take necessary actions to stop the cut and provide excellent service to the children of Tower Hamlets.”

1.4 The Council is invited to debate this matter. The following guidance is provided on the format of the debate, as agreed by the Council on the occasion of the first such debate in July 2012:-

- As set out in the Petition Scheme, the maximum total time for this agenda item is 18 minutes.
- At the start of the agenda item, the Speaker will invite the petitioners to present their petition for a maximum of three minutes. There is no provision for any further public speaking on the matter.
- The Speaker will then open the debate and ask if any Member wishes to speak on the matter. All speeches are limited to a maximum of three minutes and any Member may speak only once during the debate.
- During his or her speech any Member may move a motion for the Council’s consideration relevant to matters in the petition.
- In relation to executive functions, the Council does not have powers to override any executive decision of the Mayor or substitute its own decision. The Council may however pass a motion expressing a view on the matter or referring the matter to the Mayor, calling on him to take some action, or consider or reconsider a decision, with recommendations to inform that consideration. Officers will advise on the constitutional validity of any motion that may be moved
- The Speaker will invite the Mayor or (at the Mayor’s discretion) a Cabinet Member to respond to the matters raised during the debate, before a vote is taken on any motion that may be moved.
- If no motion is moved during the debate, the petition will stand referred to the relevant Corporate Director for a written response.

2. APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix A – Extract from the Council’s Petition Scheme.

APPENDIX A – EXTRACT FROM THE COUNCIL’S PETITION SCHEME:

5. PRESENTATION OF A PETITION TO ELECTED COUNCILLORS

Subject to your petition containing sufficient signatures as set out below, you may request to present the petition to a meeting of elected councillors. There are a number of ways in which this can be done.

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(b) Debate at a Council Meeting

If your petition includes the names, addresses and signatures of at least 2,000 persons who live, work or study in the borough you may request that a debate be held about the petition at the full Council meeting. The Council will endeavour to consider your petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting. We will tell you the date of the meeting at which the debate will take place once this is confirmed.

At the meeting, the petition organiser or another signatory to the petition will be given three minutes to present the petition. The person who presents the petition must live, work or study within the borough. The petition will then be debated by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes. Following the debate, the Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. They may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee.

Where the issue is one on which the Council’s Executive (Cabinet) are required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. As the petition organiser, you will receive written confirmation of this decision, which will also be published on our website.

In the event that two or more petitions which are substantially the same are received from different petition organisers, the Chief Executive may aggregate the number of valid signatures in each petition for the purpose of determining whether the threshold to trigger a Council debate of the matters raised has been reached if that is the wish of the petition organisers.