



Meeting of the

TOWER HAMLETS COUNCIL

Wednesday, 20 January 2021 at 7.00 p.m.

TABLED PAPERS

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TABLED PAPERS FOR:

COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2021

7.00 p.m.

- | | | |
|------------|--|----------------|
| 5. | TO RECEIVE PETITIONS
Motions submitted in relation to the petition debate. | 3 – 8 |
| 6. | MAYOR'S REPORT
The Council's Constitution provides for the Elected Mayor to give a report at each Ordinary Council Meeting.

A maximum of six minutes is allowed for the Elected Mayor's report, following which the Speaker of the Council will invite the leader of the opposition group to respond for up to two minutes should he so wish. | 9 – 16 |
| 7. | ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE
Conservative Group Amendment to the Administration Motion for Debate. | 17 – 18 |
| 8. | OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE
Labour Group Amendment to the Opposition Motion for Debate. | 19 – 22 |
| 12. | TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
Amendments to submitted motions. | 23 - 28 |

Labour Group motion regarding the Liveable Streets programme

Proposer: Cllr Dan Tomlinson

Seconder:

This Council notes:

1. Tower Hamlets' status as a busy Inner London borough provides us with immense challenges as well as a great opportunities in terms of transport.
2. We have more vehicles passing through the borough each day than anywhere else in the country, with many drivers from other boroughs cutting through Tower Hamlets, and at the same time we are one of the most well-connected boroughs in London when it comes to public transport.
3. Many local vehicle journeys are essential for the economic life of our borough, business owners and taxi drivers contribute to the local economy and at this time of economic hardship we need to do all we can protect and support businesses.
4. Further, although 1 in 3 local car trips in the borough are for journeys less than 1.2 miles, there are many reasons why local residents may need to make journeys via car.
5. However, it is not sufficient to simply blame our congestion and poor air quality on outsiders. There are too many local vehicle journeys that are short and could be better carried out by other means. The school run sees massive traffic flows at many schools and it is often tempting to get in the car for very short journeys when other choices could be made.
6. We must recognise how significant the health impacts of pollution are – particularly in a borough like Tower Hamlets with such a young population. We know that even though we have one of the lowest rates of car ownership of anywhere in the UK, 77% of the population in Tower Hamlets live in areas that exceed recommended limits for air pollution.
7. The introduction of school and play streets which recognises the needs of our young population and enables us to create areas where children can safely walk or wheel to and from school.

This Council further notes that:

1. The 2018 Tower Hamlets Labour local election manifesto, whose commitments and policies were adopted into our local Strategic Plan, stated:

'Tower Hamlets has many main arterial roads going through it, serving the strategic Transport for London road network. Through-traffic should by and large stick to these main roads but many of our residential neighbourhoods have seen huge increases in rat-running traffic, making them more dangerous, noisy and polluted. We will create low traffic neighbourhoods, keeping through-traffic to main roads, in any residential area where residents want them, with an ambition to have started on at least half of the borough's neighbourhoods by 2022.'

and

'We recognise that many residents need their cars - for work, for family – but we recognise too that levels of congestion and poor air quality mean that something must change. Electric and lower emissions cars will help, although for many those are not easy to afford and Government must help through a scrappage scheme or other measures. We will recognise the many essential reasons residents and businesses have for driving in our borough, including for family and employment reasons, and will respect and facilitate these.'

2. The Liveable Streets programme was introduced in 2018 with the stated aim to:

'improve the look and feel of public spaces in neighbourhoods across the borough and make it easier, safer and more convenient to get around by foot, bike and public transport.'

and

'to reduce people making 'rat runs' and shortcuts through residential streets to encourage more sustainable journeys and to improve air quality and road safety.'

3. The Liveable Streets programme, as with equivalent schemes in other areas, has seen polarised debate with very strong views on different sides.
4. That the implementation of bus gates and road closures in particular have significantly divided views.

This Council believes:

1. There is an urgent need to improve air quality in Tower Hamlets, and we need to do all we can to make residential streets safer for everyone, particularly for children and pedestrians.
2. That a vital part of the Liveable Streets scheme is about making our communities safer for everyone.
3. That we need to reduce 'through traffic' from other boroughs, whilst recognising that many local vehicle journeys are essential for our local residents, but also that for real change to happen local drivers need to use their cars less often too.
4. That our streets and roads are in need of investment, and that Liveable Streets is delivering such investment following detailed and wide consultation.
5. That any large changes we make to the way roads work will be controversial, but that doing nothing and letting the current situation continue is also not an option.
6. That the Mayor and Cabinet Member should review how we engage with residents on Liveable Streets to identify how we could engage more.

This Council resolves:

1. To ensure that we meet our 2018 manifesto commitment.
2. To continue to listen to all residents via detailed and open consultation when making changes to the way our roads work, making sure that views from across our diverse community and heard and considered in full.

Tower Hamlets Council
Council meeting 20th January 2020

Motion Regarding “Stop the structurally discriminating consultation process on Liveable Streets’ programme” based on petition.

Proposer: Cllr Rabina Khan
Seconder: Cllr Andrew Wood

This Council notes:

1. The petition presented to the full council by residents, which has gathered over 2,100 signatures stating that they have been discriminated against by the Liveable Streets’ Contractor, PCL Consult.
2. The petition and the residents supporting the petition state that they have been directly and indirectly discriminated against on the basis of their protective characteristics of race, faith, gender, disability, age and socio-economic inequalities.
3. That the petition represents not a single isolated incident, but over 2,500 individual complaints covering all demographics and all geographic areas that make up the diverse community of Tower Hamlets. Representing institutional and systematic discrimination by PCL Consult, the Tower Hamlets Council contractor.
4. That protective characteristics are protected by law under the Equality Act of 2010 and Tower Hamlets Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure that its residents are not discriminated against on the basis of their protective characteristics.
5. The MacPherson principles of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, which states that all complaints about incidents of racism should be recorded and investigated as such when they are perceived by the complainant or someone else as acts of racism.
6. The Equality Act 2010 incorporates the MacPherson Principle to cover all protected characteristics in the Act
7. In 2020, the following related petitions were on the Council’s website:
 - 2,127 signatures so far on the Council website for the petition “Stop the structurally discriminating consultation process on Liveable Streets” programme, which ends on 31st January 2021
 - 1,724 signatures for a “Petition to allow residents’ vehicles and taxis access through the Wapping Bus Gate during operating times”
 - 1,668 signatures for “Stop The Burdett Road Entrapment!”
 - 514 signatures for a petition to “Re-Open Old Ford Road”
 - 2,365 signatures to “Get the local council to stop using the blunt instrument of road closures to stop rat running through Tower Hamlets”
 - That these are the largest petitions on the Council website in 2020 together with petitions regarding Whitechapel Bell Foundry, parking mini-zone change and the Community Language Service

This Council further notes:

1. To date, the Council has spent £1 million on the Liveable Streets' consultation programme. At a time of national crisis with our borough having to make cuts left, right and centre, it is inexcusable for this council to continue to spend one more penny on a flawed and divisive programme, which has only paid lip service to the required consultations.
2. The cost of such a scheme is unreasonable at a time when the Council is having to borrow money to deliver its Town Hall programme.
3. A Judicial Review was granted against Tower Hamlets Council in the High Court for indirect discrimination against Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority community projects in 2019. Judge Roger ter Haar QC stated: "I am particularly concerned about the indirect discrimination in the case."
4. There are clear flaws in the Equality Impact Assessment. The report states that people with the protected characteristics of disability and age, "limiting or reducing car provision could have a negative impact on this group. Naturally, road closures would have this effect.
5. It then states that there would be "no impact".
6. The report states that car users "may be required to take an alternative route" without considering the affect on older and disabled residents. This has not been investigated and no evidence has been provided.
7. The EQIA assessment has deliberately been omitted vital feedback to fit the PCL Consult's agenda.
8. East End Enquirer's investigation identified that only one of the seven Liveable Streets' schemes (in Bow) had an Equality Impact Assessment undertaken. which was carried out by Council officers directly involved in the scheme, or external consultants hired to deliver the scheme.
9. The report titled "Report on Structural Discrimination in the Liveable Streets' Consultations" by Cllr Puru Miah.
10. That the High Court has today 20th January handed down two judgments in R (UTAG & LTDA) v Transport for London & Mayor of London [2021] EWHC 72 (Admin) and R (UTAG & LTDA) v Transport for London & Mayor of London [2021] EWHC 73 (Admin) which quashed the Mayor of London's Streetspace Plan and TfL's Bishopsgate Traffic Management Order, The High Court Judge held that the Mayor and TfL had failed to have regard to the status and unique role of London taxis in formulating the Streetspace Plan and Guidance and on this basis alone she held both to be unlawful. Also mentioned was a lack of an Equality Impact Assessment.

This Council resolves:

1. That Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) are:
 - Always carried out on schemes that change residents' daily lives
 - Carried out by individuals not involved in the delivery of projects and who lack expertise in this specialist area, and not undertaken by those who have a personal/professional or commercial commitment to the projects' delivery.
 - That they be centralised (perhaps within Public Health) into one department that does the EQIA for all Council projects to ensure standardisation, expertise and independence.
 - That the Council makes clear that if a project fails, or partially fails its EIA, it be suspended and rethought.
2. That the Council looks again at how it consults residents and why it does so.
 - That for locally specific consultations, the Council sends – via Royal Mail – consultation documents to those blocks that are difficult to access.
 - That the Council provides consultation information in other languages
 - That where external companies are used in consultations, they do not have a commercial interest in its outcome, and that their commercial interest is to ensure a fair response.
 - That the Council provides a mechanism for returning consultation materials that are not online
 - That the Council makes clear under what circumstances and by whom consultation responses are not taken up
3. To test the use of electronic camera-controlled gates that allow the following vehicle types through:
 - Local residents (based on the postcode of the vehicle registration e.g. E1W)
 - Licensed taxis (hackney carriages) based on the rules that TfL use for their bus lanes
 - Electric vehicles (vehicle types can be confirmed via the DVLA as TfL currently do)
 - Royal Mail (this is an easy visual check)
 - All ambulances
 - All school or special needs buses
 - TfL buses
 - Last mile related delivery vehicles (to be defined)
4. That the £65 penalty charge will more than cover the costs of such a scheme, both the implementation and administration (see Blackwall bus gate).

5. To expand the provision of live air quality monitor sensors across the Borough, as the four sensors we have are not in places where people live, work or study, but either in parks or right next to main roads. The Council's own Love Your Neighbourhood app routinely shows air quality in the borough as being low (low meaning low levels of pollutants). To treat the petition and the signature as a complaint of discrimination of protected characteristics of residents and investigate it as such.
6. To treat the petition and the signature as a complaint of discrimination of protected characteristics of residents and investigate it as such.
7. That Council's safeguarding measures should be implemented, and PCL Consult should be suspended pending investigation to protect members of the public.

Mayor's Report to Council

20th January 2021

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Key Events/Announcements

Covid-19: The national lockdown continues, and in addition to the normal testing sites in the borough we now also have rapid tests (Lateral Flow Tests) for people who don't have symptoms of Covid-19 but would still like to get tested, based at the Ecology Pavilion and at the Burcham Street Centre. These are available for key workers, those who can't work from home, and those with others in their household who still go out for work.

It is a perilous time for our community, and the NHS is under greater pressure than it has ever been before. The economic harm is of course massive too and will unfold more clearly over the coming months.

The rollout of vaccines is continuing, and the Government's aim is to vaccinate people in the first four priority groups by mid-February. The vaccination programme is managed centrally (by the NHS), and residents will be contacted directly about appointments. We are however looking at ways we can help the programme work better through local control/partnership, and we are lobbying for locally vulnerable groups and key workers to be better prioritised for vaccination.

With so many children now learning remotely, the impact of the 'digital divide' has grown even more. A Tower Hamlets Council survey of local headteachers has found that an estimated 10,000 additional devices are required in the borough to ensure that every child has the IT equipment they require to access schooling from home.

I've written to the Education Secretary to raise the impact that the lack of proper IT equipment and broadband is having on education, and to highlight the difficulties faced by children living in overcrowded accommodation where more than one child has to access learning at the same time.

Council budget: Our budget proposals were published before the Christmas break, and formally proposed at the Cabinet meeting on the 6th of this month.

The numbers are stark: Tower Hamlets Council has had to save £200m since 2010, and will have to save a further £30m by 2024.

It is a difficult budget – I believe it has been the hardest set of choices I've faced in my time in local government – as the impact of a decade of budget cuts, increasing demand, and Covid-19 have combined in a 'perfect storm'.

Despite the enormity of financial challenge we face, I'm very proud that we've been able to protect our Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which protects the poorest families from having to pay any council tax at all, and our universal Free School Meal (FSM) scheme which means that every single primary school child in Tower Hamlets is eligible for a FSM, not just some of them.

Royal Mail delays: A large number of residents have reported delays in receiving post from the Royal Mail, due to staff shortages. This is obviously a big concern and I have contacted the Chief Executive of Royal Mail to express my concerns.

Bangladesh at 50: 2021 is the 50th anniversary of the founding of Bangladesh. As part of our budget proposals we are proposing to allocate £50k of funding to mark the anniversary, and we are currently looking at ways that we can celebrate the occasion during 2021, although naturally the format of any celebrations will be shaped by whatever Covid-19 regulations are in place.

Liveable Streets: There is a petition debate on the agenda for this meeting, with a significant number of signatures. Debate on this issue, as with many traffic/parking discussions, can be very polarised but we clearly need a thoughtful discussion at our full council meeting about how we balance differing points of view as well as how we tackle dangerously poor air quality, invest in our neighbourhoods, and meet our 2018 manifesto commitment.

Public Spaces Protection Order – nitrous oxide: We are consulting on proposals to introduce a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in the borough, to tackle the recreational use of nitrous oxide and the resulting ASB. This is something that is raised frequently by residents, and people can take part in the consultation online.

Domestic abuse support service: Solace, the domestic and sexual violence charity, has now been appointed to provide support to those affected by domestic abuse in the borough. The new service, TH SASS (Solace Advocacy and Support Service) launched on the 4th of this month with a team of independent DV advocates. Residents can access the service via phone/email. This is a vital service, particularly given the alarming increase in DV during the pandemic.

John Biggs
Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Individual Mayoral Decisions taken since last meeting

- 1st December 2020: Christmas provision for free school meals eligible children:
<https://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=434&MId=11973&Ver=4>

Mayor's engagements and meetings

Below is a summary of the Mayor's main engagements and meetings from 18th November 2020 to 20th January 2021. Please note that most of these meetings were held digitally as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

20 November 2020

- Cllr. Rachel Blake

21 November 2020

- Cllr. Mufeedah Bustin and Resident

23 November 2020

- Head of Mayor's Office
- Pre-Meet Dido Harding
- Dido Harding re: Test and Trace

- NEL ICS Leaders Follow-up meeting
- Tower Hamlets Partnership Executive Group
- TFL Development of Poplar DLR Station
- Finance Presentation
- Proposed Scheme Stifford Centre
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee

24 November 2020

- Whitechapel Crossrail and TFL Meeting
- UNISON
- Mayor's casework surgery
- Meeting with Resident
- Ashington House Development and Bangladeshi Elders Group
- Strategic Forward Planning Meeting
- London Councils Introduction Meeting With Strategic Lead for Enterprise
- Children and Schools Portfolio Meeting
- Civil Contingencies & Emergency Planning Portfolio Meeting
- Ask the Mayor

25 November 2020

- Cabinet Pre-meet
- Planning and Social Inclusion Portfolio Meeting
- MAB
- Cabinet

26 November 2020

- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Apsana Begum MP
- Strategy and Equalities Portfolio Meeting
- London Covid-19 Local Tiering Arrangements
- Aberfeldy New Master Plan
- Canary Wharf College Club Media Interview
- Channel S Interview
- Grants Determination Sub-Committee
- New Providence Wharf Leaseholders & Residents Association

27 November 2020

- Cllr. Rachel Blake
- London Councils Labour Group Meeting
- NE London Covid 19
- MTFS Changes and Labour Group

28 November 2020

- Watts Grove Residents

30 November 2020

- Chief Executive of Lambeth Council
- Head of Mayor's Office

- Filming World Aids Day Video
- Mayor Update Investors In People
- Chief Executive THH Susmita Sen
- Marcus Barnett Met Police
- Housing Portfolio Meeting
- Labour Group Budget Meeting

01 December 2020

- Investors In People Assessment Interview
- Pre-Meet for Poplar HARCA
- Quarterly Meeting with Poplar HARCA
- Group Budget feedback and Planning
- Regeneration Portfolio Meeting
- Covid 19-NE London Leaders and Mayors Meetings
- Community Safety and Youth Portfolio Meeting

02 December 2020

- Resources Portfolio Meeting
- Mayors Political Cabinet
- MAB
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley

03 December 2020

- Mayor's casework surgery
- Ann Lucas, Chair of Tower Hamlets Homes
- Apasen's International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- Raines House
- Leaside Partnership Board

04 December 2020

- Cllr Rachel Blake
- Budget Paper Review

07 December 2020

- Executive Committee
- Labour Group Budget Meeting 2

08 December 2020

- Mayor's casework surgery
- London Councils Labour Group
- London Councils Leaders Committee
- Head of Mayor's Office
- Covid 19 Data briefing by Secretary of State for Health
- Culture, Arts & Brexit Portfolio Meeting
- Covid 19 Local Engagement Board

09 December 2020

- Work & Economic Development Portfolio Meeting
- Cllr. Sirajul Islam
- Pre-Meet Billingsgate
- Catherine McGuinness Billingsgate Update
- Environment & Public Realm Portfolio Meeting
- Executive MSc in Cities - 'Borders and Boundaries' Session
- MAB

10 December 2020

- Adults Health & Well-Being Portfolio Meeting
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Covid 19-NE Leaders and Mayors Meeting
- Corporate Director of PLACE Ann Sutcliffe
- NEL shadow ICS Board Workshop
- Liveable Streets Barnet Grove

11 December 2020

- TFL Briefing London Labour
- ELBA Toy Appeal Photoshoot
- Cllr. Rachel Blake
- The Hubs Video Message Recording

13 December 2020

- Labour Group Meeting

14 December 2020

- Head of Mayor's Office
- Corporate Induction
- London Councils Leaders Meeting
- Wapping Bus Gate Exemption
- Pre-Meet RSE Meeting
- Covid 19-NE London Leaders and Mayors Meeting
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15 December 2020

- Cllr Asma Begum
- Mayor's casework surgery
- Clarion Meeting
- Rushanara Ali MP
- Menorah lighting at Mulberry Place
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Labour Group Budget Meeting 3

16 December 2020

- Cllr John Pierce
- Planning Meeting
- Mayor's Political Cabinet
- MAB

- Cabinet
- 50th Victory Day of Bangladesh Channel S online event

17 December 2020

- Apsana Begum MP

18 December 2020

- CLF Director Interview
- MTFS Update with Corporate Director Kevin Bartle

21 December 2020

- Head of Mayor's Office
- Place Campaign
- CLF Director Interview
- Communications Portfolio Meeting
- Covid 19 Update Meeting
- Weekly Briefing for Leaders and Chief Executives on Covid 19

22 December 2020

- East London Mosque & Ashadaabi Centre
- Cllr Rachel Blake
- Mayor's casework surgery
- Cllr Sirajul Islam
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley

23 December 2020

- Faith leaders conference call
- John Denham Building, St Clements Hospital

05 January 2021

- Head of Mayor's Office
- MHCLG Ministerial briefing
- Covid 19 Political Leadership

06 January 2021

- Resources Portfolio Meeting
- Partnership Executive Group Agenda Discussion
- Whitechapel Bell Foundry
- Cabinet Pre-meet
- Assets/Property Portfolio Meeting
- MAB
- Cabinet

07 January 2021

- Covid 19 NE London Leaders and Mayors Meeting
- Rushanara Ali MP
- VCS Organisations
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Ballymore Group with Lord Stephen Greenhalgh
- Queen Mary University and London Citizens
- Budget Venue Charges

08 January 2021

- Covid 19 NE London Leaders and Mayors Meeting
- Cllr Rachel Blake
- London Councils Labour Group Meeting

11 January 2021

- Head of Mayor's Office
- TH Partnership Executive Group Meeting
- Chief Executive THH Susmita Sen
- Faith Conference
- Overview & Scrutiny Committee

12 January 2021

- Video Recording for Holocaust Memorial Day
- Liveable Streets Bow Pre-Meet
- Idea Stores Consultation update
- Future For London
- Head of External Communications introduction chat
- Cllr Kevin Brady
- Ask the Mayor-Liveable Streets Bow

13 January 2021

- Environment & Public Realm Portfolio Meeting
- Transforming Homelessness Services Workshop
- Political Cabinet
- MAB
- MHCLG Ministerial Update
- UNISON Pre-Meet

14 January 2021

- Covid 19 NE London Leaders and Mayors Meeting
- Mayor's casework surgery
- Capital Strategy Board
- Chief Executive Will Tuckley
- Culture, Arts & Brexit Portfolio Meeting
- Covid 19 Local Engagement Board

15 January 2021

- Cllr Rachel Blake
- LGA Commercial Mindset Zoom Masterclass

- Grants Meeting, Cllr. Motin Uz Zaman

18 January 2021

- Head of Mayor's Office
- Mayor's casework surgery
- UNISON Meeting
- Regeneration Board Pre-Meet
- Executive Committee
- Labour Group

19 January 2021

- Head of Mayor's Office
- Cllr Asma Begum
- Mayor's Regeneration Board
- Borough Commander Marcus Barnett, Met Police
- Liveable Streets Brick Lane

20 January 2021

- Work and Economic Growth Portfolio Meeting
- Planning Meeting
- Planning & Social Inclusion Portfolio Meeting
- Pre-Council Labour Group
- Council Meeting

7 – Administration Motion for Debate - The Government must protect businesses and livelihoods in Tower Hamlets – Conservative Group Amendment

Proposer: Councillor Andrew Wood

Seconder: Councillor Peter Golds

Additions in Bold and Underlined.

Deletions struckthrough

This Council notes:

1. A further national lockdown requires additional economic support across all sectors.
2. The Office for Budget Responsibility does not expect GDP to recover to pre-pandemic levels until late 2022.
3. Universal Credit – a lifeline to ~~around 43,000~~ **26,788 people not in employment and 14,380 in employment for a total of 41,170 Tower Hamlets residents as at October 2020** people in the borough – ~~is due to be cut by £20 in April.~~ **That the £20 per week increase in Universal Credit which started in March 2020 has not yet been confirmed beyond April 2021 with government Ministers apparently in dispute over whether to end or extend it.**
4. As a Council we've stepped up to support our businesses and distributed ~~over a~~ **£194.3** million pounds to businesses **from the government.**
5. **The Council has received £62.5 million in additional grants from government in 2020/21 to help combat COVID. That the latest report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (calculated just before the 3rd national lockdown started) that money received by the Council exceeds the cost of COVID by £3.6 million.**
6. **That the unemployment rate for Tower Hamlets residents was 8.9% in November 2020 versus 3.4% in November 2019.**

This Council believes:

- That there is a potential catastrophic growth in unemployment and poverty for which we cannot prepare without adequate support from Government. To support families and individuals the Government must:
 1. avoid cliff edges and last-minute announcements and consider extending the furlough scheme beyond the end of April, further extending the bans on evictions and repossessions, and mortgage holidays
 2. maintain the £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit ~~which is currently due to be cut in April~~ **whose extension beyond April 2021 has not yet been confirmed** and which is a real lifeline to those that receive it and the local businesses where it is spent.
 3. set out additional support for the self-employed and working parents impacted by the closure of schools.
 4. give councils the resources to properly cover discretionary payments for the £500 isolation scheme, as boroughs like Tower Hamlets have seen a high uptake.
- As well as the impact on families and individuals, the continuing impact on our economy and businesses is deeply concerning. London's economy will continue to be severely impacted and is at risk from a ~~triple~~ **quadruple** whammy' of the pandemic, **working from home**, Brexit and the Government's so-called 'levelling up' **agenda to shift resources to the more deprived working class areas of the north of England.**
- Small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy in Tower Hamlets.
- Inner London faces specific challenges of reduced footfall and areas like the City Fringe and Canary Wharf will have to adapt and require specific support.
- The Government must take further action to support businesses, including:
 1. extending the current VAT relief scheme for the whole of 2021 and

- extending the business rates relief scheme.
2. expanding the grants programme delivered by local authorities and adjust it so it is based on the number of businesses within a borough rather than the number of residents.
 3. providing targeted support to night-time economy businesses.

This Council resolves:

1. To call on the government to set out a comprehensive plan to protect jobs and support our economy.
2. **To set out a comprehensive plan for how Tower Hamlets Council will use its capacity and resources to protect jobs and support the Tower Hamlets economy.**
3. For the Mayor and lead Cabinet member to write to the Chancellor making the case for the interventions listed above.
4. **For the Mayor and lead Cabinet member to communicate to residents how they intend to support businesses and jobs in the Borough.**
5. **To investigate whether the population of Tower Hamlets has declined due to the return home of many workers hard hit by the pandemic and whether that change is permanent or not?**
6. To continue to lobby the Government for adequate economic support and work with our business community.
7. **To set up a Commission (modelled on the Brexit and BAME Commission) to examine the threat of working from home to existing businesses, the changes to the economy post-Brexit and post-COVID and how we can adapt to both. How can we make Tower Hamlets the best place in the UK to open new businesses?**
8. **A clear focus on making the growth areas in Tower Hamlets more attractive places for businesses, workers and residents, to retain those we have and to attract new ones. That like other Boroughs we will need to be more pro-active in creating great places that are not “soulless” but which rather offer the best combination of business, leisure and sports opportunities.**
9. To lobby for adequate support for individuals and families affected by the economic impact of Covid-19.
10. **To have a clear focus on making Tower Hamlets the best place to live and work in London.**

LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT TO THE OPPOSITION MOTION REGARDING HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO)

Proposer: Cllr Sirajul Islam

Seconder: Cllr Eve McQuillan

Added text underlined

Deleted text scored out

This council notes that for several decades a house or flat occupied by three or more unrelated persons who do not form a single household and share common amenities is defined as a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO), most recently under Sections 254, 257 and 258 of the Housing Act 2004. With five or more residents sharing common amenities, there is a requirement for the property to be licensed by the local authority.

The council further notes that there are approximately 9,000 such properties in Tower Hamlets with just half of these licensed as HMOs, with two licensing schemes known as Mandatory and Additional Licensing.

HMOs, where of good quality, make an important contribution to the private rented sector (PRS) by catering for different housing needs, including for some key workers, and by contributing to the overall provision of affordable or private rented stock. Meeting these housing needs are essential, not least as vital services including schools and hospitals are clear that the high housing costs in London make recruitment difficult.

While nationally many HMO tenants are students, in areas with high rents such as Tower Hamlets tenants are often young working people living in flatshares in order to meet high rent costs.

The council notes that from 1st January 2021 any person seeking an HMO licence in the borough will need to seek planning permission for this purpose, under what is known as an Article 4 Direction. This change was driven by a number of local authorities led by Newcastle upon Tyne City Council to protect the housing mix in particular areas of the City.

An Article 4 Direction allows local authorities to ~~remove~~ withdraw specified permitted development rights across a defined area. in some circumstances The use of an Article 4 Direction is that any proposed development that is within the scope of the Direction cannot be carried out under permitted development and will require a planning application to be submitted to the Council. This will enable the Council to consider the proposal in terms of its acceptability in planning terms. Article 4 Directions ~~and~~ must be accompanied by a plan that clearly shows the area that is subject to the direction, and the extent of the area needs to be based upon evidence.

~~Elsewhere councils are aiming to manage HMOs better by improving residents' standard of living and maintaining mixed communities. This is due to studies that show that a concentration of HMOs can be associated with the following issues:~~

- ~~• poor standards of accommodation~~

- ~~loss of local character~~
- ~~reduction in environmental quality~~
- ~~increased noise complaints~~
- ~~increased anti-social behaviour~~
- ~~loss of single family dwelling houses~~
- ~~increased levels of crime~~
- ~~increased pressures on car parking~~
- ~~increased pressure upon local services~~
- ~~changes to local retail provision~~

Despite restrictions on what actions can be taken, the council can take over the management of individual HMOs to prevent ASB and introduce a “selective licensing scheme” if residents of several houses in an area are behaving anti-socially. The result of this would require all landlords of properties in a specific area to have licenses showing that they meet “minimum standards.”

The Council operates three private sector licencing schemes: selective licensing for any private rented property in Weavers/Whitechapel/Weavers wards, mandatory HMO licensing for larger HMOS (5 renters or more) and an additional licensing scheme for smaller HMOs (3 renters or more) across the Borough apart from the selective area.

~~The Council notes that this change can also be traced to other concerns relating to a proliferation of HMOs. In December 2018 a rogue landlord in north west London was jointly prosecuted by the Boroughs of Brent and Harrow for operating sub-standard HMOs and received a record fine of £1.5million by the Courts. Other London boroughs including Lewisham have been extremely pro-active in their regulation of HMOs.~~

The Council notes that parts of the Isle of Dogs are seeing increasing numbers of family homes turned into HMOs and dramatically changing the area. In one case in a small square of town houses, all but one house in the development has been taken over and converted to HMO use by a single developer. Family houses have been extended outwards, upwards and further upwards with dormer windows and the rooms rented to students. A student hostel of 80 -100 rooms would require planning permission with conditions, payment of CIL and a Section 106 agreement. This change of use has avoided all of these elements. The effect has been to achieve an extended student facility by stealth, in a small square to the detriment of neighbours in the adjoining streets. Residents have noted that the gardens of the once individual properties have been combined and believe that this development should be considered commercial as opposed to single properties.

As a result locally we also face problems with;

- Council tax is per property and does not reflect the number of adults now residing in each property
- Loss of affordable homes in the planning process
- Loss of S106, CIL, New Homes Bonus as new properties are not being built to meet this demand
- School place planning becomes problematic as we lose family size homes with no replacement

- Water pressure – numerous adults in a family sized property consume more resources than single families
- Rubbish removal is increased
- Transport provision is affected

The council is using its licencing and planning powers to seek to ensure HMO's meet certain standards and to manage the impacts of HMOs on local areas. The HMO Article 4 Direction, now in force, requires new HMOs to apply for planning permission. Through the planning process, matters such as the cumulative impacts (number of HMOs in the area), the suitability of the proposed location (accessibility levels), housing design (quality) and management (addressing ASB and crime) can be explored in assessing the suitability of the proposed use.

The council notes that many of ~~these~~ the past conversions are by the same developer and that London Renters have protested as to the management of these properties as well as nearby residents who are affected by them.

The Council further notes that that the Newcastle upon Tyne Article 4 Direction was to protect housing mix in a defined area.

The Council legally has to consult interested parties when issuing licensing but can only refuse a licence in very specific circumstances.

Once a property is licenced a copy of that licence remains in the premises and under its conditions requires the landlord to provide minimum standards of conditions, management, amenities and tenancy behaviour.

The Council resolves to:

- Continue to stand up for renters in HMOs.
- Lobby the Government to allow us to extend licensing schemes more broadly, and to lobby for a mandatory licensing scheme to be introduced for short term lets including Airbnb.
- Support the Mayor of London's campaign to introduce rent controls.
- Request that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers what further measures the council could take to support renters and minimise any potential negative impacts from HMOs.
- Update Note that the register of licensed properties used as HMOs is updated monthly and ensure that all 9,000 are correctly registered.
- Ensure Note that the register is accessible to enquirers by listing all properties by alphabetical address in an initial section and a second section listing details of each owner with a list of their properties as it is published in an Excel format.
- Ensure that HMRC are aware of this list of landlords with HMO's.
- Ensures the planning process reflects and protects the housing mix of each area of the borough.
- Note that following the introduction of the Article 4 direction, any new small scale HMOs require planning permission, but this does not necessarily mean that there will be any physical changes to a dwelling and homes may be HMOs for a short period and then revert to family homes.
- Note that decent quality homes for sharers are an important part of the borough's

housing mix.

- ~~Ensures that reports to the planning committee identify applications as potential HMOs. This will enable officers and members to consider the housing mix as opposed to approving what appears to be a simple extension.~~
- Note that those that are extending homes with a view to occupation as an HMO will need to apply for planning permission for that use. It would be unlawful for the planning committees to speculate on the future use of a property if that is not the subject of the application and requires permission in its own right.
- Explore whether available resources allow us to ~~That the Council~~ write directly (ideally via personally addressed mail (if registered on the electoral register) to each HMO tenant occupant making them aware of the rules that apply to their landlords and how and where to complain if the landlord is not following the rules. ~~This should be done every few years given the turnover in such properties.~~
- Note that when a licence is issued a copy of the licence should be displayed within the property detailing the conditions that the licence holder must comply with.
- ~~Encourage via the planning process the provision of dedicated accommodation e.g. for students to meet this demand rather than rely on private individuals changing the demographic mix of Tower Hamlets by buying up scarce family homes.~~
- Note that the demand for housing in Tower Hamlets is high and available properties are relatively scarce.
- ~~Change the parking rules so that HMO's have access to only one parking permit per property.~~
- Finally note that the council should ~~seek~~ continue to work with residents and councillors to protect the interests of residents and future tenants in the licensing and approving of HMOs.

Labour Group amendment to the motion 'Working from Home threat to the finances of Tower Hamlets'

Proposer: Cllr Motin Uz-zaman

Seconder: Cllr Candida Ronald

Added text underlined

Deleted text scored out

The Council notes:

- That in the MTFS for 2021 39% of the Councils income, £134 million is due to come from Retained Business Rates;
- The permanent closure of a range of retailers and restaurants in the Canary Wharf estate;
- Reports that in the future businesses may dramatically reduce the number of people visiting offices each day and that some may change their model to work from home;
- That the national shift to recommend working from home wherever possible continues to be a vital part of efforts to tackle Covid-19;
- When properties are left empty they can only claim a three-month business rates exemption but must otherwise be paid but that when there is no demand for a property, the property will command no annual rent and it may be removed from the rating list or subject to a reduced rateable value;
- That demand for new build property in Aldgate, Whitechapel and E14 is predicated in large part on their closeness to the employment centres of the City of London and Canary Wharf;
- That new build property contributes substantially to the Councils affording housing targets and the delivery of substantial sums of money in the form of CIL, New Homes Bonus and new Council tax;
- The decision by developers like Ballymore to delay opening their sales office for Millharbour Village;
- The large number of Tower Hamlets residents employed (formally or informally) in the services sector dependent on workers as well as tourists visiting Tower Hamlets.

This council further notes:

The GLA is currently undertaking research into the future of Central London, including Canary Wharf, looking particularly at the long term – what new challenges and opportunities will be created by the more lasting cultural and economic changes arising from or exacerbated by the pandemic. This, and other research from a range of organisations will help inform thinking about what the pandemic, lockdown and the aftermath means for the area in the medium to longer term.

That a Financial Times article on the 16th September 2020 was titled;

“Canary Wharf has a flood of new homes but only a trickle of returning workers
Prices and sales have fallen in the London financial district and bankers and lawyers are staying away”

It went on to say

“Though the area is rapidly changing, Canary Wharf and the surrounding Docklands are often criticised for being a little soulless: an employment district with flats attached.

~~When finished, these apartments will arrive into an area awash with newly built homes. Tower Hamlets, in which Canary Wharf sits, has more unsold homes under construction than any other London borough, according to Molior. By the end of June, the number was just under 4,000 — around a third of the total in inner London”~~

~~And another Financial Times article titled “How Covid-19 is altering Canary Wharf’s purpose~~

~~London’s Docklands is used to being reinvented — it just wasn’t expecting to be so again quite yet”~~

~~Which said~~

~~“More pertinently, will we yearn to live in them? To find ways of inhabiting this now-endangered archetype, the tall office tower, which once looked like the future and now looks suspiciously like the past?”~~

~~“Now, walking around a bleak, almost empty Canary Wharf on a rainy day in what not so long ago would have been rush hour, I could not help thinking whether the same might happen to the area’s~~

~~office blocks...It was the question that struck me as I wandered between the towers and beside the waterways, and noticed that the only real activity was construction. Just as the towers are emptying out, new ones are being built, most intensively at Wood Wharf, to house exactly the workers who are no longer working in the other towers”~~

This Council believes:

That working from home maybe a ~~greater~~ significant threat to the economy of Tower Hamlets, particularly in the context of the economic fallout of the Brexit (which is also an issue), the pandemic and Government austerity cuts to local authority funding. if it reduces the desire for office space and new build apartments in Tower Hamlets. However we clearly recognise the importance of the ‘work from home’ instruction in the national efforts to tackle Covid-19.

That employment led growth in Canary Wharf and the City of London has led growth in Tower Hamlets for a generation now.

That all of that maybe at risk now, making the Councils ambitions ever harder to achieve.

~~We need to re-invent the Tower Hamlets model that we can no longer rely on growth arriving and~~ copy look closely at what our neighbouring Boroughs to the east are doing who have had to be more pro-active in attracting new businesses like barking and Dagenham recently attracting a £300 million investment in a film and TV studio.

This Council therefore recommends:

We maintain our A-clear focus on making the growth areas in Tower Hamlets more attractive places for businesses, workers and residents, to retain those we have and to attract new ones, for example through our Local Plan and our regeneration framework.

Our current capital delivery program seeks to deliver a number of improvements across the borough.

That like other Boroughs we will need to be more pro-active in creating great places that are not “soulless” but which rather offer the best combination of business, leisure and sports opportunities.

That we aspire to having the best of everything, spending the S106, CIL and New Homes Bonus ~~for example on (but not limited to)~~ to help deliver projects and improvements that will benefit the residents of Tower Hamlets, for example in leisure, attracting new industries and businesses, developing walking/cycling routes, playground equipment and parks, other public facilities, and more.

- ~~• Rebuild leisure centres like St George's and Tiller road to offer the best combination of physical exercise in large purpose-built attractive buildings;~~
- ~~• Attract new industries to Tower Hamlets by doing everything we can to encourage health research or information technology in Tower Hamlets;~~
- ~~• Develop attractive walking & cycle routes along the river Lea with bridges to Newham;~~
- ~~• Sailing in the Thames from the DSWC and by the Sea Scouts;~~
- ~~• Swimming in the docks for those working at Canary Wharf as well as local kids;~~
- ~~• The best playgrounds in Europe so that residents from other Boroughs travel here rather than go to Greenwich;~~
- ~~• Support great organisations like Mudchute Farm with CIL money so that they have nice toilets, and CCTV to keep the animals safe;~~

To continue to have a clear focus on making Tower Hamlets the best place to live and work in London.

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Labour Group amendment to the motion ‘oppose the Chinese Communist Party’s human rights violations, agree to raise the Tibetan Flag and rename roads near the Royal Mint site as Tiananmen Square, Uyghur Court and Hong Kong Road.’

Proposer: Mayor John Biggs

Seconder: Cllr Asma Begum

Added text underlined

Deleted text scored out

This Council notes:

1. The purchase of the Royal Mint site in Tower Hamlets for the new People’s Republic of China London embassy building.
2. The number of residents living in Tower Hamlets from the People’s Republic of China including Hong Kong residents. In addition the number of businesses from that country active and investing in Tower Hamlets.
3. The long history dating back to before the 1880’s of the Chinese community in Tower Hamlets and that many people from the region are now citizens of the United Kingdom.
4. The historic ties between China, Hong Kong and Tower Hamlets due to the trade between these two countries, whether tea shipped into the docks or from the trading desks of the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation (now HSBC) whose global headquarters are in Tower Hamlets.
5. We are very proud of the fact that Tower Hamlets is such an open and tolerant borough where we truly value our diversity and understand the strength that it brings, and where we also understand and appreciate the need to be good partners and to foster good relationships.
6. We remain deeply concerned about China’s human rights record on a number of issues, in particular the appalling treatment of the largely Muslim Uighurs, and the situations in Hong Kong and Tibet.

This Council further notes:

1. Cllr Peter Golds has written to English Heritage regarding the heritage of the Royal Mint Street site the plague pits at the Royal Mint Street site (New Chinese Embassy plans plagued by Black Death burial pits <https://bit.ly/3r9nB3h>)
2. That the Tibetan Community in Tower Hamlets wrote to the Mayor, Cllrs Khan, Wood and Golds requesting to raise the Tibetan Flag on the 10th March 2021.
3. 10 March is Tibet’s National Uprising Day, and the Tibetan flag is currently raised annually by Waltham Forest, Northampton, Woolwich and others.
4. Cllrs Khan, Wood and Golds responded that they welcomed in raising the Tibetan Flag on the 10th March 2021.
5. Mayor Biggs responded to the request with a letter stating that such matters were

~~the responsibility of~~ passed the request to raise the Tibetan flag to the council's Chief Executive who has responsibility for such matters.

This Council Resolves:

1. To invite the Chief Executive to consider under the council's flag protocol the request to raise the Tibetan Flag on the 10th March 2021 outside the Town Hall at Mulberry Place, noting that such decisions under the protocol need to be framed in a thought-through context explaining his decision to Councillors and the Mayor.
2. That Tower Hamlets Council investigates whether roads or possibly new buildings near the location of the proposed Chinese Embassy ~~to~~ could be renamed appropriately as acts of solidarity with historic symbols or place names of Chinese significance (for example ~~as follows as~~ Tiananmen Square, Uyghur Court, Hong Kong Road and/or "Xiaobo Road" (in memory of Xiaobo Liu)), and to investigate what other actions the council could take to show solidarity.
3. Welcomes the relocation of the Chinese Embassy and its staff moving to Tower Hamlets. But that as new neighbours and friends we must continue to make clear where our own standards and principles apply. We believe that it is in the People's Republic of China's own interest to:
 - a. Cease its human rights' abuses against the Uyghur Muslims and all other detainees, and to urge China to implement the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's recommendations in Xinjiang, and allow the United Nations to monitor its implementation.
 - b. We urge the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments to reconsider the imposition of National Security Law legislation and to engage Hong Kong's people, institutions and judiciary to prevent further erosion of the rights and freedoms that the people of Hong Kong have enjoyed for many years.
4. That we in Tower Hamlets, welcome residents of Hong Kong who wish to take advantage of their now increased ability to move to the United Kingdom (even if more could be done). The Borough has a long and proud history of being the first home in the UK for many people fleeing persecution in their original countries. And that those earlier arrivals are now British citizens.