



Meeting of the

Tower Hamlets Council

TABLED PAPER

Wednesday, 27 July 2022 at 7.00 p.m.

VENUE

Council Chamber, 1st Floor,
Town Hall, Mulberry Place,
5 Clove Crescent,
London E14 2BG

Further information about this meeting is available in the main agenda.

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London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Council



Supplemental Agenda

Wednesday, 27 July 2022

7.00 p.m.

- | | | |
|------------|--|---------------|
| 8. | OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE- REGARDING
EMERGENCY BUDGET TO TACKLE THE COST OF
LIVING CRISIS | 3 - 6 |
| | Amendment attached | |
| 11. | TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF
THE COUNCIL | 7 - 8 |
| | The questions which have been received from Councillors to be put at this Council meeting are set out in the attached report. A maximum period of 30 minutes is allocated to this agenda item. | |
| 12. | TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF
THE COUNCIL | 9 - 16 |
| | Amendments attached | |
| 13. | URGENT MOTIONS | |
| | Amendment attached | |



Agenda Item 8

Aspire Amendment of the Opposition Motion for Debate – Emergency Budget

Proposed: Councillor Kabir Ahmed

Seconded: Councillor Maium Talukdar

Additions in red and underlined

Deletions in red and struck through

This Council notes:

- The steep increases in the costs of energy and food since the war in Ukraine began in February 2022 and the impact this is already having on Tower Hamlets' poorest residents;
- Councillors agreed a woefully inadequate £200,000 increase in the Residents Support Scheme (Local Welfare Assistance) in the 2022/23 Budget meeting in March specifically to help residents struggling with their energy bills;
- Councillors also agreed an additional £370,000 in the same Full Council meeting for the continuation of the Food Distribution Hub in 2022/23;
- The People of Tower Hamlets were not impressed with the measures and voted for a new approach.
- With this resounding mandate, the Mayor has already agreed a Cost of Living package worth nearly £3 million at Cabinet on 11th July 2022 and agreed to incorporate his Manifesto into Council Policy at this Council Meeting.

This Council believes:

- This cost of living crisis demands an urgent response from both central, regional and local government if we are to prevent even worse levels of poverty and destitution;
- The Chancellor's statement on 26th May only goes a small way is nowhere near sufficient in easing the cost of living crisis, especially for those on the lowest incomes;
- Tower Hamlets Council is now set to receive income significantly higher than originally anticipated in February 2021 and even March 2022 ~~and that while~~. While some of this is due to be allocated, enough remains to ~~give some scope for ringfence~~ further measures funds to be reserved for future investment to support Tower Hamlets' poorest residents over the next two years.

This Council therefore resolves:

- ~~• To call on the Mayor of Tower Hamlets to bring forward a full Emergency Budget, including the following measures specifically designed to ease the financial burden on our poorest residents over the years 2022/23 and 2023/24:~~
- ~~• To increase the “Standard Utilities Allowance” used in the calculation of Homecare charges from £5 a week back to £15 a week as of 1st April 2022 (estimated cost – £250,000);~~
- ~~• To allocate a sum of £500,000 to top-up the Discretionary Housing Payment funding pot to the same level as 2021/22, so LBTH can help more tenants affected by the Tory Government’s “Bedroom Tax”, Benefit Cap and Local Housing Allowance (LHA) “freeze” on their Housing Benefit / Universal Credit entitlement;~~
- ~~• To allocate a £500,000 Council Tax “Hardship Fund” for residents struggling with these bills, including self-employed residents affected by the use of DWP’s Minimum Income Floor in calculating their entitlement to Council Tax Support and disabled residents whose Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is included as “income”;~~
- ~~• Set aside a total sum of £100,000 to award one-off grants to the voluntary food banks operating in Tower Hamlets in 2022/23 so that they are better able to ensure no one goes hungry in the East End this year;~~
- ~~• Add a further one-off top-up of £200,000 to LBTH’s own Residents Support Scheme pot to help those who are unable to afford essential white goods, utility bills or who are in difficulty with priority debts;~~
- ~~• Allocate an additional sum of £150,000 to the School Uniform Grant funding to enable an increase in the £110 allowance per child agreed in 2019/20 and a second payment to be made for each eligible child, for example when starting Primary School;~~
- ~~• Fully utilise the expected £1.75 million allocated from the Department for Education’s Holiday Activity & Food Programme (HAFP) in 2022/23 and aside an additional sum of £250,000 to cover the removal of contingency funding so as to ensure every child in receipt of free school meals has access to a nourishing lunchtime meal throughout the summer holidays;~~
- ~~• Explore options for the immediate extension of Free School Meals from September 2022 onwards to the parents of secondary school children where they are in receipt of Universal Credit, but currently have a household income of more than £7,400.~~

- To congratulate the Mayor on the historic win in the May elections and the clear mandate this gives him to implement his manifesto.

- To support all measures needed to implement the will of the People

- To give the Mayor the time and space to implement the Vision he put before the People of Tower Hamlets, outlined in the Aspire Manifesto and confirmed at this Full Council meeting.

- This includes:
 - Freezing Council Tax for four years
 - Investing in the provision of care for vulnerable members of the Borough, both adults and children
 - Providing sufficient remuneration for care workers o ensure they are adequately rewarded for their work and not left to struggle from day to day
 - Protecting tenants from revenge and unfair evictions
 - Establishing a homelessness fund to protect those living rough in the Borough and those in temporary accommodation
 - Establishing a fund to support young people who want to stay in education post 16, ensuring they are not punished for their family's income or background, or prevented from pursuing their ambitions and potential.

- This Council also resolves to adopt and implement with urgency the Strategic Plan designed by the Mayor and Officers to be agreed at the next Cabinet on the 1st of August, to accelerate the implementation of the above-mentioned measures.

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Urgent Question under Procedure Rule 10.4

Question to the Mayor/Lead Member from Councillor Peter Golds

Would the Mayor comment on the police raid of the former Isle of Dogs Police Station during on the evening of Sunday, 24th July, which was being used as a Cannabis factory. Would the Mayor also comment on the police statement that the premises had been sold in February 2022, although land registry records show the ownership of the building to be the Metropolitan Police?

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LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT:

12.1 MOTION REGARDING THE COUNCIL'S FINANCES

Proposer: Cllr James King

Seconder: Cllr Rachel Blake

This Council notes that:

- Labour inherited a deficit from the previous Tower Hamlets First administration (now Aspire) when it won power of the Council in 2015.
- The Council at this time was run by Government Commissioners due to the mismanagement of finances by the Tower Hamlets First administration.
- The Labour administration worked hard under the guidance of the Commissioners to bring the budget under control.
- From 2015 the Government's spending review failed to fund Local Authorities adequately. Councils were told to manage within their means at times of great austerity, leading to a number of Councils filing for a Section 114 notice – essentially filing for bankruptcy. Despite this context, the Labour administration built up the Council's finances and healthy reserves.
- These reserves were built up by Labour to safeguard our residents from future Conservative government austerity, especially given the rhetoric displayed by the two candidates for the Conservative Party leadership.
- ~~the Aspire Manifesto Priorities for 2022 to 2026 point to rebuilding Tower Hamlets and rebuilding our future~~ building on the strong work of the previous Labour administration for the future of our residents.
- the Residents of Tower Hamlets overwhelmingly endorsed that vision.
- that progress on those aspirations can only be achieved in a stable financial environment, ~~which the inherited Council finances do not provide.~~ provided by the previous Labour administration.
- ~~the mishandling and mismanagement of the Council's accounts by the previous administration~~
- administrative issues which occurred outside of the control of the previous Labour administration has led to:
 - o Outstanding Audit Certificates for the years 2016/2017 and 2017/2018, thus rendering the Audits for those years incomplete
 - o The Audits for 2018/2019, 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 remain incomplete - statutory deadlines have been missed.
 - o The Audit for the last financial year (2021/2022) will not be completed by the statutory deadlines due to the unresolved backlog outlined above.
 - o This year's audit (2022/2023) hasn't started due to the delay from previous years
- The external auditor has given draft qualified audit opinions for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 citing:
 - o Insufficient appropriate quality supporting working papers for audit from management
 - o Delays in receiving information and explanations in response to subsequent audit queries
 - o Other technical accounting errors that have required correction

- The Council received an independent expert report from Worth Technical Accounting Solutions which was presented to the Audit Committee in January 2021, and a finance improvement plan was subsequently put in place.
- Progress on the finance improvement plan has been reported to the Audit Committee at every meeting since January 2021, and the update can be found in each agenda's report pack.
- ~~— the scale of the failure in the Council's financial accounts is so big and has been unresolved for so long that a 35 page appendix was required to outline the size of the task in reversing the decline.~~
- ~~— the financial limbo is having a serious impact on the performance of other departments. The overall quality of data is poor and unhelpful for management decisions. There are worrying instances of misplaced data. The finance issue does not sit in isolation but has a knock-on effect on other departments thereby creating an atmosphere of dysfunction and incompetence which requires immediate action.~~

This Council believes that:

- that the state of affairs with the Council's accounts may point to past ineffective political management and leadership which was resolved by the previous Labour administration and placed us in a healthy financial position. This resulted in the Local Government Association stating in 2021 that Tower Hamlets Council had made good progress on its improvement journey.
- this ~~unprecedented~~ financial situation warrants received immediate critical and immediate attention when this issue was first raised with the previous administration which is why an independent audit expert investigated this in 2021 and advised on a finance improvement plan, and that the Council cannot be seen as financially prudent or responsible if we allow it to persist any longer.
- to ensure nothing like this happens again in future, it is vital to understand the root cause and extent of the problem so we can rectify matters identify where governance and management issues may need to be addressed.
- current senior finance officers are working with the auditors to address their findings so the accounts can be signed off, and Council wishes to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our ~~current Finance Officers Team~~ who have worked incredibly hard over the past six years to assist the previous administration in achieving a balanced budget every year in these difficult economic times. However, Council remains concerned that the process of rectifying the situation is far from complete.
- the residents of Tower Hamlets, as well as the employees and businesses, deserve a speedy resolution of the issues and improvements in financial management processes to ~~restore~~ continue its confidence and secure our future.

This Council resolves to:

- Take note of the independent expert report from Worth in January 2021 and continue its work in following the finance improvement plan to ensure the Council's finances remain strong and do not go back into a deficit like it was prior to 2015.
- ~~— Appoint an Independent Diagnostic Consultant able to assist this Council in understanding what went wrong and how to avoid it ever happening again. The Independent Consultant will:~~
 - ~~o build on previous work to give us reasons for the current situation especially, the unsigned accounts from 2016 to 2022.~~

~~o undertake a council wide audit to ensure that there are no similar problems on the horizon~~
~~o give us the tools to implement a robust system which strengthens data quality issues and information management in the Council.~~
~~o will carry out an all systems review to help us develop a healthy organisation able to react quickly to the external environment, insulate itself from any negative consequences and deliver for the people of this borough~~

- Ring fence measures that tackle the Cost of Living Crisis and ensure that support for our most vulnerable residents, people and families struggling the most are protected and not neglected by the current administration ~~affected by Council actions to address concerns about the finances.~~
- work with Community Organisations and businesses large and small to safeguard stakeholders' interests throughout the independent investigation.
- work with our unions to safeguard local jobs

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Aspire Amendment to Motion 12.2 Regarding Local Electricity Bills

Proposed: Councillor Kabir Hussain

Seconder: Councillor Kabir Ahmed

Additions in red and underlined

Deletions in red and struck through

This Council notes:

1. The efforts that this ~~council~~Council has made under the previous administration to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy, including:

- ~~i.~~ i. ~~—~~ Declaring a climate emergency in March 2019~~;~~;
- ~~ii.~~ ii. ~~—~~ Launched the Net Zero Carbon (NZC) Partnership Action Plan in November 2021 to become a net zero carbon council by 2025 and a net zero carbon borough by 2045 or sooner~~;~~;
- ~~iii.~~ iii. ~~—~~ Planted hundreds of street trees~~;~~;
- ~~iv.~~ iv. ~~—~~ Approved 400 new electric vehicle charging points across the borough~~;~~;
- ~~v.~~ v. ~~—~~ In 2021, Tower Hamlets Council was named the greenest local authority in the country.

2. That ~~very large financial setup~~the New Administration is committed to a clean and running costs involvedgreen future including:

- i. Establishing a Mayor's Advisory Board on Climate Change to guide the work of making the Council carbon neutral
- ii. Increasing the number of charging points for electric vehicles in ~~selling locally generated renewable~~ the borough
- iii. Installing green heating systems on our estates, including the use of solar panels, wind turbines, heat and power schemes
- iv. Expanding tree planting throughout the borough and lining our streets and estates with trees
- v. Looking after our parks and other open spaces, ensuring they are accessible for the whole community

That changing the Law through the cross-party Local Electricity Bill offers the best chance for local electricity ~~to local customers result in it being impossible for~~ generation.

That Communities would benefit from selling local renewable ~~electricity generators to~~ ~~de so~~energy as significant value would remain within local economies, meaning more investment in things like local services and more efficient homes.

- ~~3. That making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would enable and empower new local businesses, or councils, to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local customers.~~
- ~~4. That revenues received by new local renewable electricity providers could be used to help improve the local economy, local services and facilities and to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions.~~

That Communities would have a viable business model to build new renewable energy schemes, meaning they could help ensure that the UK meets its climate change targets

3. That there would be greater acceptance of the transition to 100% renewable energy, local economies would be more resilient, local skilled jobs would be created and our energy supply would be more secure due to less imports of fossil fuels.

This Council resolves to:

1. ~~1.~~ To supportSupport the poorest residents in the Borough with measures such as the comprehensive cost of living package agreed by the Mayor at the last Cabinet meeting to protect those struggling most with their energy and electricity bills.
2. Support the Local Electricity Bill, supported by ~~306~~ 309 MPs which, if made law, would establish a Right to Local Supply which would promote local renewable electricity supply companies and co-operatives by making the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate to the size of the supply operation.
3. ~~2.~~ Write to Government suggesting that support for the Local Electricity Bill would go some way to addressing their inadequate net zero strategy and that including the Local Electricity Bill in the refreshed plan could help satisfy the scrutiny of the Climate Change Committee.
4. Inform the local media of this decision.
5. ~~3.~~ Request that the Mayor ~~to~~ write to the borough's Members of Parliament local MPs, asking them to support the Bill.
4. Request that the Mayor ~~to~~ write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NW1 7NN) expressing its support.

LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT:

12.3 MOTION REGARDING D3 AND D7 BUS ROUTES

Proposer: Cllr Amy Lee

Secunder: Cllr Mufeedah Bustin

Added text is underlined.

Deleted text is scored out.

This Council notes

- with great concern, the short-sighted approach by the Conservative Government in its refusal to provide a fair funding deal to Transport for London causing a devastating impact to local bus services, in particular the proposed cut to the D3 and D7 bus services.
- that buses help improve Community Health by encouraging walking to bus stops.
- the likely impact on Air Pollution. Research suggests that leaving a car at home can reduce carbon dioxide emissions significantly and buses connect parts of the borough in practical ways.
- that a good bus network helps to reduce road congestion, provides equitable transportation & improves Community Mobility.

This Council further notes that:

- bus routes are often used by our borough's poorest residents, who cannot afford the luxury of a car or regular use of the train system - buses are significantly cheaper to use.
- the removal of these routes will financially punish the poorest and most economically vulnerable communities at the height of a cost of living crisis, following the havoc caused by the Pandemic.
- the Deputy Mayor wrote to the Mayor of London on the 2nd of June 2022 raising the point that the D7 is critical for connectivity in the local economy.
- Cllr Sirajul Islam, the Leader of the Tower Hamlets Labour Group and Unmesh Desai AM, Labour London Assembly Member for the City and East wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport on 8th June 2022 to express their concerns about the proposed cuts to bus routes across Tower Hamlets and to request the Government work with the Mayor of London to protect public transport in London.
- children rely on the service to get to and from school
- elderly residents use it to make essential trips to the shops - trips that would otherwise go unmade
- vulnerable residents see the D7 route literally as a matter of life and death as they rely on the service to take them to GP and other appointments . The D3 is similarly essential to residents.
- the loss of the bus routes means removing a vital transport lifeline and represents an unacceptable attack on the poor and vulnerable at a time when they need support.

This Council believes that:

- residents will suffer a loss of quality of life if the proposal is implemented.
- the thinking behind the proposals fails to put people before profit.
- the economic benefit of Public Transport has not been taken into account, especially the research that indicates for every £1 invested, there is a £4 return.

- Public Transport improves Commuter Productivity by enabling use of travel time to catch up on social correspondence, read, relax, or even sleep - enabling workers to arrive in a positive state of mind.

This Council further believes that:

- the Green Agenda will be impacted negatively, especially those aspects built on the use public transport and the reduction of air pollution.

This Council resolves that:

a. ~~a letter supporting the Deputy Mayor's letter of 2nd June 2022 should be sent to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, The Mayor write a letter to the Secretary of State for Transport in order to amplify the request that the decision to axe the bus routes should be reconsidered and to support the Labour Group's push for the Government to provide a fair funding deal to Transport for London to ensure local bus services are protected.~~

b. a response should be sent to Transport for London's Consultation, highlighting the reasons why the proposal to remove the D3 and D7 services should be dropped.

c. ~~a letter should be sent to our GLA Representative, seeking support for retaining the bus service.~~ Further to the letter sent to the Secretary of State for Transport from Tower Hamlets Labour Group which was co-signed by our GLA representative, Unmesh Desai AM, that the Assembly Member be kept updated with the Council's actions going forward to ensure he can support Tower Hamlets residents against these local bus cuts in any way he can.

d. the Community should be encouraged to support the Council's efforts to save the bus services.

Aspire Emergency Motion – Youth Offending Services report

This Council notes:

- The shocking findings of the *HM Inspection of Probation report: Inspection of youth offending services in Tower Hamlets and the City of London*, published yesterday 26th July 2022.
- That this *report* represents a serious failure in the Council's handling of crime and youth services over the past seven years.
- That the *report* outlines and highlights failings at all levels of the delivery process of the services offered by the Council.
- That the Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell has stated that: "It is clear to us that Tower Hamlets...Youth Justice Service is not performing to the standards we expect – many areas of their work were separately rated as 'Inadequate'."
- That the *report* states that: 'The service does not have the stable workforce in critical roles and senior leadership has not been effective.'

This Council believes that:

- This *report* is but the latest in a series of instances highlighting the functional, structural and bureaucratic failings of Council infrastructure.
- These failings are preventing the Council from delivering an adequate service to the service users and are undermining its ability to provide them with the care and support they are entitled to expect.
- This *report* particularly outlines with great clarity the failings of the Council's Youth Justice Service in preventing their young service users from falling into criminal activity and protecting residents from crime and anti-social behaviour.
- If residents are to be protected against such problematic behaviour, these young people must be deterred from engaging in criminal activity.
- **Serious improvements** must be made in the service.

This Council resolves that:

- This *report* strengthens the Mayor's call for an independent Council-wide diagnostic, performance review and investigation, to ascertain the root causes of these failures and ensure that these improvements can be made swiftly and comprehensively.
- The Council's Youth Justice Service and Senior Management must present a full account of the measures, procedures and performative indicators in place during the period covered in the report, to aid this above-mentioned investigation.
- Support must be given to staff on the frontline so they can deliver the quality service the borough needs.

LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT

EMERGENCY MOTION – YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICES REPORT

Proposed by Cllr Asma Begum

Seconded by Cllr Mufeedah Bustin

Added text is underlined

Deleted text is scored out

This Council notes:

- The ~~shocking~~ findings of the HM Inspection of Probation report: Inspection of youth offending services in Tower Hamlets and the City of London, published yesterday 26th July 2022.
- That this report represents a ~~serious failure~~ concerns in the Council's handling of crime and youth services over the past seven years.
- That the report outlines and highlights ~~failings~~ rooms for improvement at ~~all~~ some levels of the delivery process of the services offered by the Council.
- That the Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell has stated that: "It is clear to us that Tower Hamlets and City of London Youth Justice Service is not performing to the standards we expect – many areas of their work were separately rated as 'Inadequate'."
- That the report states that: 'The service does not have the stable workforce in critical roles and senior leadership has not been effective.'

This Council believes that:

- ~~This report is but the latest in a series of instances highlighting the functional, structural and bureaucratic failings of Council infrastructure.~~
- ~~These failings are preventing the Council from delivering an adequate service to the service users and are undermining its ability to provide them with the care and support they are entitled to expect.~~
- This report particularly outlines with great clarity the failings of improvement needed in the Council's Youth Justice Service in preventing their young service users from falling into criminal activity and protecting residents from crime and anti-social behaviour.
- If residents are to be protected against such problematic behaviour, these young people must be deterred from engaging in criminal activity.
- Serious improvements must be made in the service.

This Council resolves that:

- ~~This report strengthens the Mayor's call for an independent Council wide diagnostic, performance review and investigation, to ascertain the root causes of these failures and ensure that these improvements can be made swiftly and comprehensively.~~
- ~~The Council's Youth Justice Service and Senior Management must present a full account of the measures, procedures and performative indicators in place during the period covered in the report, to aid this above-mentioned investigation.~~

- The Mayor and the Lead Member to read the report carefully and work with the previous Cabinet Leads, as the current Lead member requested, on an action plan going forward to resolve the concerns raised by the Inspector.
- Create a bipartisan Improvement Board to report on the progress.
- Work on relationships with our statutory partners and stakeholders.
- Support must be given to staff on the frontline so they can deliver the quality service the borough needs.