



Meeting of the

Tower Hamlets Council

Supplemental Agenda

Wednesday, 27 September 2023 at 7.00 p.m.

VENUE

Council Chamber,
Whitechapel Town Hall
160 Whitechapel Road,
London E1 1BJ

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 September 2023

7.00 p.m.

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| 7. | ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE
To debate a Motion submitted by the Administration in accordance with Rules 11 and 13 of the Council's Constitution. The debate will last for a maximum of 30 minutes. | 3 - 6 |
| 8. | OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE
To debate a Motion submitted by the Opposition Group in accordance with Rules 11 and 13 of the Council's Constitution. The debate will last for a maximum of 30 minutes. | 7 - 8 |
| 12. | TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
The motions submitted by Councillors for debate at this meeting are set out in the attached report. | 9 - 14 |



Labour Amendment to Administration Motion

Proposed – Marc Francis

Seconded – Sirajul Islam

ADDITIONS BOLD

DELETIONS STRUCKTHROUGH

This Council notes:

- That overcrowding in the borough has increased ~~from years 2015 to 2022~~ **“over many years”**, with over 14,000 residents now classified as living in acutely overcrowded conditions.
- That the development of new, affordable homes for rent has not kept pace with the rapid population growth and concomitant rise in said overcrowding ~~during the same period~~. **As a result of governments cuts to social housing and homeless grants.**
- ~~That in the same period,~~ **Since 2010** millions of pounds worth of council **assets have been sold including Lutfur Rahman’s decision in 2011 to sell the historic old Poplar Town Hall to a hotelier for just £875k which aroused public controversy and along with the disposal of the Sutton Street Depot and 111-113 Mellish Street was found by the Government commissioned PwC audit in 2014 not to have achieved “best value” for the residents of Tower Hamlets.** ~~were disposed of – assets that could have been developed and prioritised for tackling this growing issue and dearth of affordable housing.~~
- ~~Indeed, for the period 2015-2022, twenty sites owned by the council were disposed of, to the tune of £92.9million, little of which was reinvested into affordable homes for rent.~~
- **This finding was the basis for the former Secretary of State’s specific direction in December 2014 that the independent Commissioners he was sending in to oversee the running of Tower Hamlets Council would have the power to determine whether or not any proposed disposals of council-owned assets went ahead;**
- **In February 2015, Lutfur Rahman authorised the disposal of 12 council-owned sites, including 2 Jubilee Street and the former Tredegar estate boiler house at 329 Morville Street, which were to raise some of the funding towards the costs of the new Town Hall;**
- **When John Biggs was elected as Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets in 2015 he was advised by senior officers that, while Lutfur Rahman had committed to the construction of a new Town Hall in Whitechapel he had failed to identify the source of much of the capital investment needed to progress this project;**
- **Senior officers also advised that they felt the indicative costing of £90 million was very unlikely to be achieved and that the funding shortfall was therefore even greater than estimated at that stage;**

- In the absence of the funding needed, Mayor John Biggs and Labour councillors were left facing a choice whether to end this project or find the funding required through the disposal at market value of land which Tower Hamlets Council was not utilising at that point;
- Mayor John Biggs chose to authorise the development programme for the new Town Hall, funded through capital receipts from additional disposals of council-owned sites over and above the 12 agreed by Lutfur Rahman in 2015;
- Mayor John Biggs and Labour councillors utilised capital receipts from disposals and the Right to Buy to commence the largest programme of new council housing in Tower Hamlets for a generation and buy other properties for use as self-contained temporary accommodation for homeless families, including the 160 who had previously been left in unsuitable Bed and Breakfast accommodation beyond the legal limit.
- That Tower Hamlets possess some of the most valuable parcels of land in the country, due to its proximity to the city and location in the heart of London.
- That despite this fact, one such property, 34 Mount Terrace, E1 2BB in Whitechapel ward, saw the freehold granted to the NHS for £1 – way below the market value **in recognition that this building would be used by QMU/RLH biosciences department. Enriching the scientific and research status of our borough.**
- That the ~~previous administration also overspent on~~ costs **of the construction** of the new Town Hall ~~rose by at least £40million~~ **due to inflation.**

This Council believes:

- That there could have been instances **over many years** where disposals of council-owned assets have been disposed of ~~way~~ below their market value.
- ~~That many of these disposals may not have represented best value for the council.~~
- **The disposal of old Poplar Town Hall, Sutton Street Depot and 111-113 Mellish Street at less than “best value” was one of the basis upon which the Government sent Commissioners into Tower Hamlets;**
- ~~That the proceeds of these disposal were not properly mostly reinvested into frontline services and the reprovisioning and development of affordable homes for rent.~~
- That the residents in this borough have suffered due to the ~~poor financial and political decisions of the~~ **coalition and conservative governments** ~~last Labour administration in their~~ decision **to cut local government funding and impose austerity on the country.**

This Council resolves:

- To call on the Chief Executive to launch an investigation into all disposals of Council-owned assets made during the period ~~2015~~ **2010** -2022, with an evaluation on whether best value was achieved for each disposal.
- That this should include all freeholds granted after the disposal of leasehold interests – for example, 34 Mount Terrace saw its freehold sold for £1 *after* the initial leasehold disposal.
- That where this best value was not achieved, that an explanation be provided as to why.
- To identify what the lands were used for once the disposal had taken place.
- To call on the CEO to prepare a report on the Town Hall overspend, focusing on specific areas that saw costs increase the most.
- That Council proposes the Mayor is provided with a report to the next available meeting of the Council's cabinet and – if deemed necessary – to be brought to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the next full meeting of the Council for discussion.
- **To call on Mayor Lutfur Rahman to issue a public apology for the disposal of old Poplar Town Hall, the Sutton Street Depot and 111-113 Mellish Street which then led to independent Commissioners being sent in to run Tower Hamlets;**
- **To call on Mayor Lutfur Rahman to invite PwC to undertake an independent investigation into whether the disposal of council-owned assets between 2010 and 2022 met the legal requirements to achieve “best value”;**
- **To call on Mayor Lutfur Rahman to invite John Biggs and London Mayor Sadiq Khan to the official opening of all the new council homes being let to homeless and overcrowded families.**

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Aspire Amendment to Opposition Motion

Proposed by: Cllr Kabir Ahmed

Seconded by: Cllr Abdul Mannan

ADDITIONS BOLD

DELETIONS STRUCKTHROUGH

This Council notes:

- THCH was founded by stock transfers from LBTH and for many years delivered high-quality housing management as well as the regeneration of estates and community development;
- THCH was recently downgraded to a G3 and V3-rating by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) for both governance and financial viability;
- The RSH has encouraged THCH to be taken over by another housing association and THCH has subsequently begun a consultation on a merger with Poplar HARCA;
- The RSH has a very poor track record in enforcing mergers between housing associations in Tower Hamlets and doesn't proactively take any account of residents' views.
- **That the Mayor has twice met with THCH residents to hear and discuss their concerns, and has instructed Officers to monitor the merger and any adverse impacts on them.**
- **That the Mayor and Officers are reviewing RSL performance more broadly and are preparing a new policy on strengthening governance.**
- **That in October the Social Housing Ombudsman is coming to the Town Hall for an event to be chaired by the Mayor to address all RSL residents concerns.**

This Council believes:

- THCH tenants and leaseholders deserve a much better service than they have been getting from their landlord for several years;
- LBTH has an ongoing obligation to residents living on those estates transferred to ensure the promises made by are delivered consistently;
- Enforced mergers of local stock transfer housing associations have sometimes resulted in residents receiving an even worse service from the social landlord they join;
- The views of tenants and leaseholders in the future of their housing association should be paramount in any decision by the Board of THCH and the RSH.

This Council resolves:

- To call on the Mayor to make representations to the RSH calling for the views of residents of THCH to be fully taken into account prior to a decision on any merger;
- ~~To call on the Mayor to instruct council officers to urgently undertake a feasibility on the financial and practical implications of requesting a return of THCH stock to LBTH;~~
- ~~To call on the Mayor to arrange a public meeting with residents of THCH to hear to listen directly to their experience of its services and thoughts what should happen.~~
- **To continue supporting those residents affected by the merger and to ensure good channels of communication are maintained for those residents' concerns;**
- **To support the Social Housing Ombudsman event taking place in October and encourage concerned THCH residents to attend.**
- **To support the Mayor in his efforts to strengthen RSL governance and resident engagement, and ensure that the services they provide improve.**

ASPIRE AMENDMENT TO MOTION 12.2 – MOTION ON WASTE

Amended by: Cllr Kabir Hussain

Seconded by: Cllr Wahid Ali

ADDITIONS BOLD

DELETIONS STRUCKTHROUGH

This Council notes:

1. That our residents have raised **regular** concerns about missed waste collections, impacting the cleanliness and environment of our borough.
2. **That the service inherited by the present administration compelled the Mayor to declare a *Waste Emergency* in the November meeting of this full council.**
3. **That the previous administration failed to streamline and improve the service upon its returning to the care of the Council in 2020.**
4. **That it has taken this administration to begin implementing the necessary improvements.**
5. **That the new Corporate Director for Communities and the Divisional Director for Public Realm have presented the Mayor with a *Waste and Street Cleansing Service Improvement Action Plan - 2023/2024* – which has been commissioned by the current Mayor.**
6. **That this *Strategy* will improve the performance of the waste and street cleansing service.**
7. That – **while** some residents have gone weeks without a bin collection – **there is/was an ongoing national strike that is/was beyond the control of the Council.**
8. **That in spite of this, the Mayor and Officers are working/worked around the clock to resolve the Tower Hamlets workers' issues and get them back on the streets and collecting waste.**
9. **The current administration and the Mayor is working with the Trade unions to improve working relationships.**
10. That **while** Tower Hamlets is one of the worst performing boroughs for recycling rates, **at the last Cabinet meeting the Mayor adopted a new *Recycling Reduction Plan* (RRP), and levels of recycling are steadily improving.**
11. That this administration has already invested nearly £10million in the borough's Waste service, including:
 - **£5million invested in the greening and electrification of our waste vehicles**
 - **Nearly £200,000 invested in low carbon fuel supply for these vehicles.**
 - **£2.1million invested in the improvement of recycling on our housing estates.**
 - **Nearly £200,000 invested in local businesses encouraging energy efficiency and recycling.**

- The launch of the *Cleaner, Greener Future for Tower Hamlets* policy package, including the creation of four boards, including a *Waste Management Taskforce*.

This council believes:

12. That reliable waste collection services are essential for the well-being of our community.
13. That the waste service is **slowly improving, following the Mayor's declaration of a *Waste Emergency***.
14. Urgent action is required to clear the backlog of missed collections and make our borough cleaner, **and that this is reflected in the Divisional Director's *Waste and Street Cleansing Service Improvement Action Plan - 2023/2024***.

This council resolves:

15. Acknowledge the concerns raised by residents regarding missed general waste, food waste and garden waste collections, and apologise for the inconvenience it causes to our community.
16. **Adopt the *Waste and Street Cleansing Service Improvement Action Plan - 2023/2024*, and ask the Divisional Director to present it at the next available Cabinet meeting.**
17. Publish weekly updates and promote transparency in reporting on waste collection performance, and will include data on missed collections, reasons for delays, and the steps taken to address them.

ASPIRE AMENDMENT TO MOTION 12.3 – MOTION ON THE PUBLIC BODY PAY GAP

Amended (friendly) by: Cllr Kabir Ahmed

Seconded by?

ADDITIONS BOLD

DELETIONS STRUCKTHROUGH

Research from across civil society, including the GMB union shows that there is an Ethnicity Pay Gap, between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic worker and non-Black Asian and Minority Ethnic workers who are otherwise equal in educational attainment. This is not only reflected in the pay of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers, but this disparity is also apparent in the promotion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers in the workplace.

This council notes that:

- One in six Bangladeshi residents across England and Wales live in Tower Hamlets. Locally, the Bangladeshi population remains by far the largest in the country in both proportionate (34.6%) and numerical (107,333) terms.
- Other significant ethnic groups include White British (22.9%), White Other (14.6%), Black African (5%), Chinese (3.3%) and Somali or Somalilander (2%)
- GMB Race, the union's self-organised groups in London, sent out a survey to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic London workers to collect information about their Pay, Terms and Conditions. GMB Race's survey results, while disappointing, unsurprisingly show the fact that only half of respondents thought they received equal treatment and access to bonuses, overtime, pension, and other plus payments compared to non-BAME staff.
- The TUC's own research shows that the Ethnicity Pay Gap for minority workers has shown that students who entered the workplace after GCSE are paid 11% less than their white counterparts. Whilst those who attained degrees, the pay gap more than doubled to 23%. The race pay gap impacts the standard of living of those affected and also worsens for people who have aspired and succeeded in further education.
- The Resolution Foundation has shown that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers lose out on £3.2bn a year in wages compared to white workers. It found Pakistani and Bangladeshi male graduates earned an average £2.67 an hour (12%) less, while among female graduates, black women faced the biggest pay penalty, of £1.62 an hour (9%).
- Within Tower Hamlets only 33.1% of the borough's top 5% of earners are BAME.

- The general reporting of the pay gap is poor and recent figures show so far only 3% of employers with over 250 employees are voluntarily reporting their ethnicity pay gap.
- The Government has acknowledged this weakness and that Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting should be mandatory. However, this has not happened.
- The Women's and Equalities Committee's (WESC) report Ethnicity Pay Gap in February 2022 recommended that the Government should introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting by April 2023. This should be for all organisations that currently report for gender and that legislation should include the requirement for employers to publish a supporting narrative and action plan.
- This call has been echoed by the TUC.

This council believes that:

- All those that live and work within Tower Hamlets should be equally able to flourish in their place of employment. Therefore, there should be no glass ceiling because of the colour of someone's skin. Pay, promotions, career development and progression and bonuses in all sectors should be underpinned by ability and fairness. This is vital in eradicating systemic racism and division in wider society and a cause acutely relevant to the diverse community in this borough.
- With a cost-of-living crisis hitting households hard, the diminishing earnings of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers will disproportionately push many of such workers further into work poverty.
- This disproportionately affects local authorities, like Tower Hamlets, who are proud of their diverse and multicultural communities.
- All public bodies within the borough should be committed to being open and transparent about publishing its data on employees, whilst running fair, open and inclusive promotion strategies within its public sector duties. Such public data is the first step in creating awareness of the ethnicity pay gap with a view to drive change.
- Other employers across all sectors should do the same and that there should be mandatory reporting of the Ethnicity Pay Gap for all employers with 250 or more staff members.

This council resolves to:

- Adopt GMB Race's campaign for an Ethnicity Pay Gap, including:
- Agree to annually report on the Ethnicity Pay Gap within its own organisation;

- Endeavour to regularly analyse strengths and weakness based on its own reporting, devising and implementing annual plans to proactively put in place **measures** to ensure there are no bars to recruitment, training, salary levels or promotion, **including local schemes to give opportunities for BAME staff to achieve promotion and occupy more senior positions within the Council;**
- Work with **the three recognised Councils unions** locally and to adopt GMB Race campaigns Ethnicity Pay Gap Charter;
- Work with council suppliers, contractors and partners to seek to do the same encouraging best practice through procurement rules as relevant, **including in the contracting of any new services;** and
- Call upon the Government to introduce mandatory pay gap reporting

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