

Council

**Wednesday, 15 November 2023 at 7.00 p.m.
Council Chamber - Town Hall, Whitechapel**

Supplemental Agenda

8. **OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE (PAGES 3 - 4)**

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.

Contact for further enquiries:

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<http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/committee>



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AMENDMENT TO THE OPPOSITION MOTION FOR DEBATE – MORE SUPPORT FOR THE INFORMATION AND ADVICE SECTOR

Proposer: Cllr Saied Ahmed

Seconder: Cllr Kabir Ahmed

ADDITIONS BOLD

DELETIONS STRUCKTHROUGH

This council notes:

- 1. That the administration is committed to helping our vulnerable and disadvantaged residents, especially those affected by the current cost of living crisis.**
2. The voluntary sector in Tower Hamlets provides critical support to our residents, particularly in times of crisis.
3. The council's support of the information and advice sector is unique: many council's have reduced grants for this vital service.
4. Despite government funding reducing by over £200M in 10 years, the previous administration continued to invest in the information and advice sector, providing £900,000pa per year to the advice consortium from 2018-2023.
- 5. The current funding strategy has ensured a good spread of resources, better access to services for all that need them and value for money.**
6. The 2021 LBTH Poverty Review identified the impact of multiple factors effecting residents' livelihoods, including the pandemic, a reduced welfare state and Brexit.
7. The Cost of Living crisis, high inflation and increasing interest rates, as well as the increasing cost of rents, is having a detrimental impact on the livelihoods of Tower Hamlets residents.
8. The Poverty Review also identified the important of local intervention in creating a safety net, in particular:
"To make the biggest practical difference to residents, we recommend that the council works in partnership with other organisations and the community to achieve a step change....." through "early financial intervention - taking a whole systems approach to increasing incomes, reducing costs, and averting financial crisis and homelessness"
- ~~9. That the 2023 Mayor's Community Fund has not increased the budgetary allocation for information and advice. Inflation means this is in effect a budgetary reduction, meaning reduced support for our residents.~~
- 10. Despite budgetary challenges, administration has prioritised support for local information and advice services.**
- 11. That the administration should be commended for maintaining current levels of funding to support the sector and service users.**

This council further believes:

12. That the information and advice sector is experiencing an increased demand on its services as more and more people are seeking support and advice on a range of matters.
13. That this demand will increase significantly once the rollout of Universal Credit is fully implemented in the next 12 months.
14. That cross-organisation initiatives such as Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN) provides efficiencies of scale, training and up to date welfare information, as well as resource sharing across the sector.
15. THCAN also maintains the digital referral system which allows organisations and individuals to refer cases to advisors which reduces waiting times and ensure urgent issues can be dealt with, preventing residents from experiencing crises and destitution.
- ~~16. This is not the time to be reducing support to the information and advice sector, and the council should, instead be increasing support.~~
- 17. That resources have been protected by this administration to deliver critical information and advice provision across the borough.**

This council resolves:

- ~~18. To call on Mayor Lutfur Rahman and the Lead Member to review the allocation of funding to the information and advice sector and THCAN with a view to increasing it and ensuring ongoing support.~~
- 19. To work with the Mayor Lutfur Rahman and Lead Member to explore support arrangements for THCAN and the wider sector in future.**