



Meeting of the

Tower Hamlets Council

Supplemental Agenda 1

Wednesday, 20 November 2024 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.

Democratic Services Contact:

Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services
Tel: 020 7364 4651, E-mail: matthew.mannion@towerhamlets.gov.uk



London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Council



Supplemental Agenda

Wednesday, 20 November 2024

7.00 p.m.

- | | | |
|-----|--|--------|
| 5. | TO RECEIVE PETITIONS
A Labour Group motion on the petition for debate. | 3 - 4 |
| 8. | OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE
An Aspire Group amendment to the opposition group motion. | 5 - 8 |
| 12. | TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
An Aspire Group amendment motion 12.3. | 9 - 12 |



LABOUR MOTION ON PETITION

Reject or significantly reduce proposed Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) against dogs

Proposer:

Seconder:

This council notes:

- The petition presented today and the contributions of the present residents.

This council resolves to:

- Request that the lead member meets with responsible dog owners/local dog owner groups to ensure that the council is doing everything it can to ensure that responsible dog owners are not penalised by a decision on a PSPO.
- Instruct the Lead member/Mayor to review and consider the alternative actions detailed in the petition and circulated to members this evening, before making a decision on a PSPO.

This page is intentionally left blank

ASPIRE AMENDMENT TO OPPOSITION MOTION TO ADOPT THE MIGRANT CARE WORKERS' CHARTER

Proposer: Cllr Abu Talha Chowdhury

Seconder: Cllr Sabina Akthar

Additions in red and underlined.

This Council notes:

1. That the **adult social care sector** relies heavily on migrant care workers, who play an essential role in providing compassionate and quality care for residents.
2. That since the introduction of the Health and Care Worker Visa, there has been a marked increase in reports of **modern slavery** and **exploitation** of migrant care workers within the sector, including issues such as excessive recruitment fees, debt bondage, withheld wages, and poor working conditions.
3. That the **Migrant Care Workers' Charter**, developed by UNISON, seeks to address these abuses and protect migrant care workers from exploitation by setting out standards for fair recruitment, accommodation, employment practices, and rights in the workplace.
4. That the current administration has tried to strengthen the rights of care workers through the guarantee that no care worker is obliged to accept a zero hours contract, and that all providers must offer between 16-32 hours contracts to their carers.
5. That **Salford Council** has already signed and adopted this charter as part of its commitment to support the rights and welfare of migrant care workers.

This Council believes:

1. That all care workers, including migrants, deserve to be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness, regardless of their nationality or immigration status.
2. That adopting the Migrant Care Workers' Charter will strengthen Tower Hamlets' commitment to **combat modern slavery** and **labour exploitation** in our local care sector, ensuring ethical practices in recruitment, fair employment conditions, and a safe working environment for all.
3. That this Council has a responsibility to protect migrant care workers from exploitation, enhance oversight of contracted care providers, and lead by example by committing to ethical employment standards in the social care sector.

4. That taking this step will improve the standards of care in Tower Hamlets, protect the wellbeing of care workers, and foster a fairer, more inclusive community.
5. That any individual or provider found to be exploiting migrant workers economically should be reported to the police immediately.

This Council resolves to:

1. **Be the first London Borough to sign the Migrant Care Workers' Charter** and formally adopt its commitments to promote ethical recruitment, safe and fair working conditions, and equal rights for migrant care workers across the borough.
2. **Implement the Charter's Standards** by mandating that all contracted care providers and agencies adhere to the principles outlined in the charter, including ensuring that:
 - Ensure all providers publish an annual **modern slavery statement**.
 - Recruitment fees are borne by employers, not workers, in line with the **'employer pays' principle**.
 - Migrant care workers are given equal access to **employment rights**, fair wages, and necessary workplace protections.
3. **Appoint a Dedicated Oversight Officer** to monitor compliance with the charter and to review all council contracts within the care sector, ensuring providers meet these standards and take proactive steps to prevent exploitation.
4. **Work in Partnership with all the Council's recognised Trade Unions** such as UNISON to support migrant care workers, providing access to union representatives, clear terms and conditions of employment, and information on how to raise concerns safely.
5. **Apply to the Home Office** for a licence to sponsor migrant care workers, enabling the Council to act as a **sponsor of last resort** to protect workers who face sudden job loss or exploitation by unethical employers.
6. **Raise Awareness and Support** by launching an information campaign within the care sector and across the borough to educate both employers and workers on their rights and responsibilities under the charter. This campaign should be visible across the council's assets.
7. By adopting this charter, Tower Hamlets Council will take a stand against exploitation in the care sector and commit to upholding the highest standards of dignity and respect for migrant care workers.
8. Establish a joint taskforce with borough commander to ensure that those found guilty of imposing exploitation and modern slavery will be prosecuted with the swiftest action.

9. To explore the establishment of an anonymous hotline in collaboration with the borough commander to provide residents and carers with the opportunity to report such behaviours.

This page is intentionally left blank

ASPIRE AMENDMENT TO MOTION 12.3 - MOTION ON CONCERNS OVER POSSIBLE THCH AND HYDE HOUSING GROUP MERGER

Proposer: TBC

Seconder: TBC

Deletions are ~~struck through~~

Additions are underlined

The Council notes that residents have expressed significant concerns on this merger, including suggesting that:

1. The proposed merger between Tower Hamlets Community Housing (THCH) and Hyde Housing Group has caused widespread anxiety among THCH residents ~~due to the absence of meaningful consultation with residents, tenants, and key stakeholders.~~ Decisions of such significance should not proceed without engaging those most affected, ensuring their concerns are heard and addressed, and the Mayor has met with the THCH board; affected residents; and stakeholders on several occasions, and remains willing to do so.
2. THCH was established as a stock transfer housing association, tasked with managing council homes and protecting a community ethos. Over time, this connection has weakened. The proposed merger with Hyde, which has no historical or organic ties to Tower Hamlets, raises concerns about whether THCH is honouring the founding mission its residents voted for.
3. The community is worried that the merger will dilute the local focus central to THCH's identity. Hyde, managing homes across numerous boroughs, may have little or no focus on Tower Hamlets residents. Hyde's geographical separation from the community could impact its ability to understand and meet the unique needs of Tower Hamlets residents. Reassurances are needed from the CEO negotiating with Hyde about the future of residents' homes.
4. While Hyde Housing may offer operational scale, its track record is concerning. The Housing Ombudsman has previously highlighted cases of maladministration within Hyde, including unresolved complaints, damp, mould, and poor handling of tenant issues. These failures have rightly raised alarms among THCH residents, who fear a decline in service standards post-merger.

There is also concern this situation mirrors other problematic housing mergers, such as the 2018 merger between Genesis Housing Association and Notting Hill Housing Trust, Similarly, the 2016 merger between Circle Housing Group and Affinity Sutton to form Clarion Housing Group resulted in widespread complaints about maintenance delays, rising service charges, and unresolved issues, prompting Ombudsman investigations.

5. These cases illustrate consistent and systemic failures within Hyde Housing Association, including; delays in addressing repair and maintenance issues, inadequate communication, poor handling of tenant complaints

The Council further notes residents' views that:

1. Whether THCH's may have a significant deficit, along with an estimated £50 million required to bring homes to a decent standard, which would raise concerns about the financial viability of the merger and whether Hyde would be able to absorb this impact without the burden being passed on through higher rents or charges..
2. Both THCH and Hyde have high levels of tenant dissatisfaction, with ongoing issues related to disrepair, safety, and unresolved complaints. Immediate action is required to address these conditions, regardless of the merger. Residents fear that the merger will exacerbate existing issues, including delayed repairs, poor communication, and inadequate responses to complaints, unless immediate and effective solutions are implemented.
3. Residents have proposed alternative solutions, such as self-management or government intervention, to address the financial instability. These alternatives must be considered before committing to a merger that may not resolve current problems. It is unclear why these resident-centered solutions have not been pursued or fully explored before the merger decision.

The Council Resolves to engage with the housing associations on the following actions proposed by residents:

1. To call on THCH to immediately halt the merger process until further significant consultation with residents, tenants, and key stakeholders is conducted. These consultations must include face-to-face engagement for vulnerable groups, non-English speakers, and those without access to digital platforms, and be extended to a twelve-week period in line with best practices.
2. To demand a thorough explanation from THCH as to why Hyde is considered a suitable partner given its record of maladministration. THCH must provide specific guarantees for improved management and housing conditions post-merger, ensuring that service standards will not further decline.
3. : To request a report that Hyde has the financial capacity to absorb THCH and invest in the necessary repairs without transferring the financial burden onto tenants through increased rents or service charges. Detailed financial due diligence must be shared with residents to allow for an informed decision.
4. To urge both THCH and Hyde to outline immediate actions to address existing disrepair, safety issues, and tenant dissatisfaction, setting clear targets for improvement prior to any merger. These targets must be met and transparently reported to the community.
5. To ensure that THCH explores and evaluates alternative solutions, including government support or a self-management model, before proceeding with any merger decision. These options must be presented to residents with transparency, providing clear reasoning for why they were or were not pursued.
6. The THCH CEO should be called in for scrutiny at the Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee.
7. ~~Finally can the Mayor Mayor or Cllr Kabir Ahmed confirm whether they have met with THCH CEO Anita Khan, or the CEO of Hyde Housing? If such meetings have occurred, there needs to be a full and transparent report on the discussions and outcomes. Additionally, has THCH partnered with Tower Hamlets Council to fund projects~~

~~or provide grants to local initiatives in recent months? Transparency on these collaborations is essential.~~

Request the Lead Member or Mayor to provide an update on the meetings they have had with THCH or Hyde.

This page is intentionally left blank