



Meeting of the

# Tower Hamlets Council

## Supplemental Agenda

**Wednesday, 22 January 2025 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](mailto:matthew.mannion@towerhamlets.gov.uk)



# London Borough of Tower Hamlets

## Council



### Supplemental Agenda

Wednesday, 22 January 2025

7.00 p.m.

- |     |  |         |
|-----|--|---------|
| 7.  | <b>ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE</b><br>Amendment to the motion.                          | 3 - 6   |
| 8.  | <b>OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE</b><br>Amendment to the motion..                             | 7 - 10  |
| 12. | <b>TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</b><br>Amendments to motions. | 11 - 12 |



## LABOUR AMENDMENT TO THE ADMINISTRATION MOTION FOR DEBATE ON DIVESTMENT FROM THE PENSION FUND

**Proposer:** TBC

**Secunder:** TBC

Additions underlined

Deletions struckthrough

### This Council notes:

1. That in Local Authorities across the country, millions of pounds from local government pension funds are being used to fund the unethical purchase of products, including arms.
2. ~~That the use of these arms is often used in serious conflicts across the globe –including the ongoing conflict in Gaza (which the UN Human Rights Office found consistent with genocide).~~  
That the use of these arms is often deployed in serious conflicts across the globe, including the ongoing conflict in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as conflicts in Sudan, Congo, and Ukraine, all of which are the subject of current and pending international legal cases concerning violations of human rights, war crimes and/or the crime of genocide (for example at the International Court of Justice).
3. That in August of 2024, Waltham Forest council took the decision to divest £773,000 of its £1.1 billion pension fund, that appeared to be invested in companies engaged in the dealing of weapons, and other councils such as Islington have likewise made concrete divestment commitments, demonstrating that divestment is both possible and financially prudent.
4. ~~That in Palestine (specifically Gaza) and other conflicts weapons are being funded by Local Government Pension funds.~~  
That Local Government Pension funds risk funding weapons in multiple conflicts around the globe (including Gaza, Sudan, Congo, and Ukraine) if steps toward ethical divestment are not taken.
5. That daily, civilians are killed by drone and aerial attacks across the globe.
6. That these weapons – including deadly drones and missiles – are often part-paid for by funds drawn from local government pension pots.
7. That at the September 30th meeting, the Pensions Committee requested legal advice in relation to divestment of any funds associated with arms dealing or any activities that facilitate death and destruction in other countries.
8. That an update was provided by London CIV at the November meeting of the committee, where it was acknowledged that the council can divest its funds following due process and a declaration of intent to do so.
9. That this was unanimously supported by all members of the committee.

10. That the ongoing international legal cases regarding the occupation of Palestine and war between the State of Israel and Hamas, the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the ever-growing climate emergency have highlighted the ethical implications of current investment practices.
  11. That across the UK, campaigns led by trade unions and human rights organisations, are pressing councils to divest millions of pounds from companies that are complicit in or profit from military occupation and violation of human rights; invest in weaponry and surveillance technology; and/or are involved in fossil fuel exploration and processing.
  12. That fossil-fuel-related investments pose a serious threat to the climate, contribute to toxic air pollution, and risk the financial stability of pension funds.
  13. That the Tower Hamlets Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) holds millions of pounds of assets, contributed by council staff and admitted employers, and is managed with oversight from the Pensions Committee (who act as Trustees) and the London Common Investment Vehicle (CIV).
- 

**This Council believes:**

1. That ~~public pension funds should not be used to facilitate the mass murder of thousands of innocent men, women, children and infants.~~ Public pension funds must not be used—directly or indirectly—to facilitate the mass harm of civilians or to enable violations of international law.
2. That Tower Hamlets council has a proud history of internationalism, and standing up in whatever way it can to global tyranny and acts of atrocity.
3. That ~~the people of Palestine, and all those living in war-torn countries, should not face death; injury; or displacement from weapons funded from public money in Tower Hamlets.~~ That people living in Palestine (including Gaza) and all others affected by war—such as in Sudan, Congo, and Ukraine—should not be harmed by weapons funded by public money in Tower Hamlets.
4. That council staff have a right to know where their money is being spent.
5. That retirement funds should not undermine a safe climate or human rights; instead, our LGPS should be invested ethically to ensure both financial stability and respect for international law.
6. That properly planned ethical investment (including divestment from fossil fuels, arms companies complicit in human rights abuses, and other unethical industries) will keep the Fund healthy and meet its financial obligations.

**This Council resolves:**

1. To call for a complete audit of how all pension funds are used, and where any funds are invested.
2. To ~~publicly declare its intent to divest all funds away from companies who deal in arms.~~  
publicly declare its intent to divest all funds away from companies involved in arms dealing, violations of human rights, international/humanitarian law, or fossil fuel exploration and processing.
3. To request a formal report be brought to the next available Pensions committee and Cabinet on how this divestment process will be accelerated.
4. To support and commend any local community campaigns that call on the council to disclose its LGPS fund investments publicly and to develop a clear roadmap for ethical investment.
5. To ensure that the Pensions Committee (and any relevant subcommittees) consider both human rights and climate impacts in all future investment decisions, working with the London CIV to facilitate divestment where appropriate.

This page is intentionally left blank

## ASPIRE AMENDMENT TO THE LABOUR MOTION FOR DEBATE ON BEST VALUE

**Proposer:** TBC  
**Seconder:** TBC

Additions underlined  
Deletions struckthrough

### **This Council Notes:**

1. The Best Value Inspection Report, commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, identified areas where the Council has not met its Best Value Duty ~~under the current administration led by Mayor Lutfur Rahman and Aspire.~~
2. The report raises concerns about the Council's culture, noting:
  - “The lack of trust between councillors, officers, and partners is extremely worrying and is not conducive to good governance and decision-making.” (Section 3.4). This is a culture that has been exacerbated over the previous seven years, with several key failings identified by the report under the purview of the previous administration.
3. Leadership and accountability are highlighted as areas for improvement, with the report stating:
  - “The perception of many interviewees was that many good managers had exited the organisation as a result of ‘speaking truth to power.’” (Section 4.50). However, as per section 4.10, the council was praised for permanently appointing a Chief Executive Officer; Section 151 officer and several other key director positions. This has since been supplemented by the permanent appointment of all statutory officers, and all Corporate Directors. This was never realised under the previous administration.
  - That several historical failings, including a failure to sign off historic accounts; unpaid VAT receipts; the overpayment of social care contracts to the tune of over £60million; and failure to submit five years of annual governance statements, have contributed to this perception of a lack of accountability and leadership.
  - “Inspectors found the council’s scrutiny culture to be ‘weak and confused,’ with ‘The level of challenge or in-depth scrutiny offered, or exhibited has in our view been inadequate.’” (Sections 10.17 and 5.120) The Council is already in the process of implementing a scrutiny improvement plan. This improvement is also confirmed by Minister in the draft directions provided to the council.
4. A staff survey conducted by the inspection team revealed that 48% of respondents expressed discomfort in raising concerns, and only 27% believed their concerns would be appropriately dealt with. ~~The report also notes:~~

- ~~“We have seen evidence that staff are also concerned by some appointments and consider them inappropriate. In our staff survey we heard about a ‘friends and family culture,’ ‘cronyism’ and that some staff are concerned that existing relationships between councillors and officers changes the way work is done in the Council.” (Section 4.4)~~
  - It should also be noted that of a staff cohort of over 5,000, only 300 members of staff were interviewed.
5. The report expresses concerns about the Council’s capacity to improve without external oversight:
- “They found insufficient evidence that the organisation is open and transparent, and values the constructive criticism required to drive improvement. The Inspectors therefore express concern that the Authority will not make sufficient progress to deliver and embed these changes without external accountability.”  
*(Letter from SoS to CEX 12/11/24)*
  - However, the government believes that the tools are there – through existing building blocks such as the Transformation Advisory Board – to work collaboratively to achieve the improvements required.
  - Similarly, the council has earmarked £6million in funding for a continuous improvement fund to support the continuing of this improvement journey.

#### **This Council Believes:**

1. The findings in the Best Value Inspection Report highlight serious challenges for the Council's governance and leadership, ~~with potential implications for the effective delivery of essential services to residents.~~ However, section 3.6 and other parts of the report commend service delivery and staff pride in their work. Indeed, this was confirmed by the recent Ofsted inspection of Children’s service, that found the council was ‘outstanding’.
2. Addressing concerns about the Council’s culture, accountability, and scrutiny processes is vital to rebuilding trust and ensuring high standards of governance. There is a responsibility on all members, on both sides of the chamber, to contribute to this rebuilding.
3. Staff, officers, and residents deserve a Council that operates with transparency, respect, and accountability, prioritising professionalism and inclusivity.
4. External oversight can play a constructive role in supporting the Council to address systemic issues and implement meaningful reform.

#### **This Council Resolves To:**



1. Acknowledge the ~~findings of the Best Value Inspection Report~~ directions emerging from the Best Value Inspection Report and commit to taking sincere action to address the challenges it highlights.
2. Collaborate fully with the appointed government envoy and statutory support team, welcoming their expertise and input in driving improvements. The Council will work constructively with external leads on governance, leadership, and culture to restore confidence in its operations.
3. Ensure work is taken to include all political groups in the improvement process and include opposition members on the transformation board.
4. Prioritise creating an open and collaborative culture within the Council, ensuring staff and residents feel their voices are heard and valued in the decision-making process.

This page is intentionally left blank

## **Amendment to MOTION 12.2 ON VIOLENCE, ABUSE, AND INTIMIDATION IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING**

**Proposer:** TBC

**Secunder:** TBC

Additions underlined

Deletions struckthrough

### **This council notes:**

1. That in the recent UK General Election campaign, parliamentary candidates reported an increase in abuse, intimidation, and harassment.
2. In Article 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998 that everyone has the right to freedom of expression.
3. Those targeted in our borough were disproportionately women of colour, with Member of Parliament for Poplar and Limehouse Apsana Begum and Liberal Democrat candidate in Bethnal Green & Stepney Rabina Khan, receiving intimidation, harassment and abuse whilst campaigning.
4. MP for Bethnal Green and Stepney Rushanara Ali received death threats, intimidation and harassment during the campaign which resulted in her needing police protection when in public in her constituency.
5. In the last eight years, two MPs have been murdered in the United Kingdom, Jo Cox and Sir David Amess.
6. That political violence continues to rise with all politicians facing increasing levels of violence, harassment and abuse.
7. Research from Amnesty International<sup>al</sup> found that women in politics are 27 times more likely to face online abuse compared to male counterparts.
8. On Tuesday 9th July 2023, LBTH Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the safety of Women during election campaigns during item 9: 'Women's Safety Action Plan Response Progress'.
9. The Chair and members of LBTH Overview and Scrutiny Committee condemned the intimidation of Women during the general election campaign.

### **This council believes:**

10. That the intimidation, harassment and threats against candidates in the recent UK General Election must be condemned.
11. That whilst we may disagree with individuals' political beliefs and stances, political violence of all types should not be tolerated or excused.
12. That the ability to freely debate and challenge each other's political views and opinions is a cornerstone of democracy.
13. That abuse, harassment and intimidation can act as a precursor to physical violence and leads to disenfranchisement and is therefore anti-democratic.
14. That Black, Asian and ethnically minority women in politics receive a disproportionate amount of online and public abuse.
15. Violence against women in politics discourages many women from entering the political arena.
16. As local leaders, council members have a responsibility to lead by example in our own behaviour as well as call out all forms of abuse and intimidation.
17. That social media companies should be doing more to curb the online abuse and harassment of political figures on their platforms.

**This council resolves:**

18. To provide bystander training to members and officers to strengthen their ability to call out abusive behaviour.
19. To sign up to the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign and adopt the toolkit to create a culture of safety and respect.
20. To continue to support the ongoing work and measures being taken by the Council's *Women's Commission* to promote and protect women's voices in the political arena.
21. To continue to work closely with the Metropolitan Police; its Tension Monitoring Group; and to deploy the additional Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers [THEOs] to protect and promote women in politics.
22. To examine whether the council and its partners ~~have robust enough processes~~ can strengthen its processes to protect women from violence, intimidation and harassment during election campaigns.