**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**DECISIONS OF THE TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 13 APRIL 2011**

**THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

## 1. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

### 12.1 Motion proposed by Councillor Joshua Peck regarding Mr John Onslow

Councillor Joshua Peck moved and Councillor Anwar Khan seconded the motion as printed in the agenda.

*This Council notes*

- *The long-standing service to the Council, its employees and the residents of this borough of GMB steward, John Onslow, who died in 2008.*

*This Council resolves*

- *To mark John's commitment to Tower Hamlets by renaming Gladstone Place 'John Onslow Place'*

### 12.2 Motion proposed by Councillor Peter Golds regarding character references

Councillor Peter Golds moved and Councillor Tim Archer seconded the motion as printed in the agenda.

*This Council notes that:*

- *Council staff have produced at least 120 character references on behalf of the Executive Mayor and Councillors since the May 2010 elections.*
- *The recent case of an unlicensed cab driver, jailed for sexual assault, who was reported to have provided character references from the Executive Mayor and 'several' Councillors prior to his being sent to jail.*

*This Council believes that:*

- *it is appropriate for councillors, on occasion, to provide character references and testimonials for outside bodies; but*
- *that members of the Council should be entirely responsible for references and testimonials that they provide to residents; and*
- *that Council staff time should not be expended in the production of these.*

*Therefore, this Council resolves:*

- *to instruct the Standards Committee to revise the existing guidance to state that:*
  *a) Council staff should not be involved in the production of character references, as long as members of the Council have access to Council stationery to produce references as they see fit; and*

  *b) All copies of character references and testimonials used for judicial and governmental agencies produced on Council stationery must be logged with the Monitoring Officer, who should keep a record of the number and type of such references and testimonials.*

**12.3 Motion proposed by Councillor Rania Khan regarding fair trade**

Councillor Rania Khan moved and Councillor Alibor Choudhury seconded the motion as printed in the agenda.

*This Council notes:*

- *That fairly traded products guarantee stable, living wage prices to producers in poor countries around the world and fund community development projects including safe drinking water schemes, basic medical facilities and education.*
- *That Tower Hamlets was the first London borough to introduce the living wage when Mayor Lutfur Rahman was Leader of the Council.*

*This Council believes:*

- *That strengthening our commitment to Fairtrade entails exploring all opportunities for the Council to procure fairly traded products including giving clear guidelines to our procurement officers.*
- *That the Council should promote a culture of using and sourcing fairly traded products.*

*This Council resolves:*

- *To promote fairly traded products in Council's catering services to schools, social services, Ideas Stores and Council offices with vending machines.*
- *To include fairly traded products as part of the tender specifications of future catering contracts.*

- *To ask existing contractors to source fairly traded products at no extra cost.*
- *To promote our commitment to fairly traded products to local statutory, voluntary and faith organisations.*
- *To encourage our residents to use fairly traded products by occasional Council publicity.*

**12.4 Motion proposed by Councillor Fozol Miah regarding the living wage and private contractors**

Councillor Fozol Miah moved and Councillor Harun Miah seconded the motion as printed in the agenda.

*This Council notes that:*

*1) this Council has a policy of paying at least a "living wage" to its employees*

*2) the decision to become a "living wage" council, following the campaign by Telco and others, was a great step forward for the low paid in this borough*

*3) a number of companies which the council contracts to supply services in this borough do not pay a living wage to their low paid employees*

*This Council urges the Mayor:*

*1) To carry out an investigation of all companies which the council currently has contracts with to determine whether they pay at least the living wage to their employees*

*2) To investigate the legal means to force companies to pay the living wage where they are not doing so under threat of losing their contracts if they fail to do so*

*3) To investigate ensuring that the awarding of future contracts is confined to companies that have a "living wage" policy*

*4) To lobby the Government to change the law where necessary to allow the council to make contractors comply with the "living wage" policy of this Council.*

**12.5 Motion proposed by Councillor Joshua Peck regarding defending the Local Government Pension Scheme**

Councillor Joshua Peck moved and Councillor Helal Uddin Abbas seconded the motion as printed in the agenda.

*This Council Notes:*

- *The LGPS is a sustainable, good quality pension scheme that benefits from being funded and locally managed. It is valuable to employers and employees alike.*
- *Successive governments have failed to recognise the distinctiveness of the LGPS in setting policy, most notably in the proposal announced by the Chancellor in the last CSR to impose an extra 3.2% contribution tax on scheme members, increasing scheme average member contributions from 6.6% to 9.8%.*
- *This tax does not benefit the scheme or scheme members or employers.*
- *This proposal is in addition to pension reductions caused by being indexed against CPI instead of RPI and is in advance of recommendations now published by the Hutton Review.*

*This Council further notes:*

- *That an increase in member contributions as proposed will lead to mass opt outs from the LGPS and that would be undesirable and damaging. The views expressed by the LGA in its letter to the Chancellor dated 16 February 2011 on this subject are also the views of this Council.*

*This Council Resolves:*

- *To write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Secretary of State for Local Government within the next month stating this Council's support for LGA's position and calling for government to rethink its proposed increases to LGPS member contributions.*
- *To work with Trade Unions to ensure employees are made aware of the proposals for the LGPS and to encourage them to support the Council's representations to defend their pension scheme.*

**12.6 Motion proposed by Councillor Rabina Khan regarding Housing Benefit changes**

Councillor Rabina Khan moved and Councillor Alibor Choudhury seconded the motion as printed in the agenda.

*This Council notes that:*

- *On 1 April 2011 several of the Government's measures to reduce Housing Benefit came into effect.*
- *The first of these measures will increase the level of deductions made to housing benefit to households which are shared by non-dependant adults, such as adult children.*
- *The second of these measures will remove the increased rate of housing benefit for a 5 bedroom house, capping the maximum rate of housing benefit applicable for a 4 bedroom house.*

- *This Council has one of the worst overcrowding problems in London – there are 9,387 houses that are overcrowded*
- *The Council has a good track record of projects to reduce overcrowding in the borough*

*This Council believes that:*

- *These measures are a deliberate attempt at social engineering*
- *These measures will have an adverse and disproportionate effect on residents*
- *These measures will increases overcrowding in the borough*
- *Overcrowding is the cause of severe health problems and impacts negatively on the educational attainment of children.*

*This Council resolves:*

- *To lobby against the coalition government's policies which clearly have a discriminatory affect on residents*
- *To condemn these policies as discriminatory*
- *To offer support and guidance to families are adversely affected due to these changes*

**12.7 Motion proposed by Councillor Harun Miah regarding prejudice and Car Free Zones**

Councillor Harun Miah moved and Councillor Fozol Miah seconded the motion as printed in the agenda.

*This Council notes that:*

*1) Many homes, including large family homes, built in recent years have been built in "car free zones".*

*2) Large and poorer families in particular need large family cars for cheap and secure transport and to transport foodstuffs in bulk.*

*3) "Car free" homes therefore discriminate against larger and poorer families.*

*This Council urges the Mayor:*

*1) To lobby central government to repeal legislation and to seek changes to strategic planning which has imposed these "car free" homes on Tower Hamlets residents*

*2) To seek any loopholes that may exist to reduce the number of "car free" homes that currently exist or will be built in the future.*

*3) to seek to enable residents in "car free" homes access to at least one residents parking permit if needed.*

**12.8 Motion proposed by Councillor Marc Francis regarding helping overcrowded families**

Councillor Marc Francis moved and Councillor Kabir Ahmed seconded the motion as printed in the agenda.

*This Council notes that:*

- *Tower Hamlets has amongst the highest levels of overcrowding in the country and thousands more on the Housing Waiting List;*
- *Overcrowded housing impacts severely on the health, education and life chances of young children;*
- *Tower Hamlets has long been at the forefront of innovative schemes to help overcrowded families;*
- *Tower Hamlets has seen the most social housing built of any local authority in London for several years, but that the Coalition Government has cut funding and will be refocusing what remains on Intermediate products and "affordable" rented homes;*
- *In 2009/10, Labour Group authorised a £20 million scheme to buy back former council homes sold under the Right to Buy so they could be re-let to overcrowded households using funding from Capital Reserves;*
- *This policy resulted in the purchase of eighty three and four-bedroom properties and helped over 200 families;*
- *The previous Labour Government introduced powers enabling local authorities to use Prudential Borrowing to fund capital projects, including the construction of new council housing;*
- *The previous Labour Government consulted on proposals to free the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) from Whitehall control and retain capital receipts, and that this is due to be implemented from April 2012.*

*This Council believes that:*

- *Tackling overcrowding should be one of Tower Hamlets Council's over-riding political priorities and that additional measures need to be taken locally to offset the likely shortfall in social housing while the Coalition Government is in power;*
- *The pilot Buy Back scheme delivered real benefits, but is too capital intensive to be sustained over the longer-term;*
- *The model of 50 per cent capital funding and 50 per cent Prudential Borrowing provides a more sustainable approach, for example a capital outlay of £2.5 million would fund the purchase of between 20-25 ex-council flats and help rehouse around 50 overcrowded families.*

*This Council resolves:*

- *To call on the Mayor to instruct council officers to work up a second pilot scheme to Buy Back former council flats using a combination of the new freedoms for the HRA and powers of Prudential Borrowing;*
- *To call on the Mayor to also instruct Council officers to work up alternative options to Buy Backs to establish which option (including Buy Backs) provides the most scope for reducing overcrowding for equivalent amounts of money whilst maintaining social housing rent levels and achieving comparable timescales for delivery;*
- *To report back to councillors on their potential in advance of next year's Budget setting process.*

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified