

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2021

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Sufia Alam (maternity leave)
- Councillor Rabina Khan
- Councillor James King
- Councillor Puru Miah
- Councillor Krysten Perry and
- Councillor Bex White

Apologies for lateness were received on behalf of Councillor Denise Jones.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

The Monitoring Officer report that under paragraph 32, of the Code of Conduct for Members, she had granted a dispensation to all Councillors in relation to Agenda item 12.3 (Motion on Local Government pay to council).

As a result of this, Councillors with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in this item did not need to declare this and would be able to stay in the meeting room, participate in the discussion and vote on the item. (This motion was not considered)

Councillor Ayas Miah declared a Non - Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 11.16, Member Question regarding the COVID restart grants. This was on the basis that he and other family Members owned businesses in the Borough, but they had not applied for a Covid restart grant.

Councillor David Edgar declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 12.2, Motion regarding One Housing Group Takeover by Riverside Housing Association. This was on the basis that a family member had a leasehold property with the One Housing Group. He indicated that he would leave the meeting for the consideration of this item.

Councillor Candida Ronald declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda item 12.2 , Motion regarding One Housing Group Takeover by Riverside Housing Association. This was on the basis that Councillor Ronald was a tenant of the One Housing Group. She indicated that she would leave the meeting for the consideration of this item.

3. MINUTES**DECISION:**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 21st July 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

4. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE SPEAKER OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

See minutes

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS**5.1 Petition regarding Antisocial behaviour on Bishops way**

Carole Boletti addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Sirajul Islam, Cabinet Member for Community Safety then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

DECISION

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community for a written response within 28 days.

(Action by: Denise Radley, Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community)

5.2 Petition regarding the pedestrianisation of Brick Lane and Liveable Streets

Matthew Hewitt addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. Mayor John Biggs then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

DECISION

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

(Action by: Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director, Place)

6. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor presented his report to the Council.

The Opposition Group Leader's then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

- Councillor Peter Golds, Leader of the Conservative Group,
- Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Leader of the Aspire Group.

The Mayor provided concluding remarks.

7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE - REGARDING CLOSURE OF POPLAR JOBCENTRE PLUS

Councillor Mufeedah Bustin **moved** and Councillor Motin Uz – Zaman **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Andrew Wood **moved** and Councillor Peter Golds **seconded** the following amendment to the motion as set out in the supplementary agenda:

Amendments underlined.

This council notes:

1. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) intends to close the JobCentre Plus branch based at Dod Street, Poplar.
2. That the reasons for the closure are due to the landlord not renewing the lease due to the intended redevelopment of the site for much needed new housing.
3. The submission in late 2019 of planning application PA/20/00123/A1 for 13-15 Dod Street to build an 8-storey residential building with 84 homes where the single storey job centre is now (plus the 3-storey office building behind it)
4. The Applicant engaged in four meetings with the Council's planning team. The pre-application meetings were held on 12th July 2019, 27th September 2019, and 22nd November 2019.
5. That on the 5th November 2020 the Development Committee voted unanimously to approve the application to re-develop the site. That in the Committee Report it said "The current occupiers are due to vacate the site and relocate their services to Mansell Street, E1"
6. That on the 1st November 2019 the Council approved an earlier permitted development application for 35 homes on this site.
7. That in the DWP Estates Proposals 26.01.2017 v1.0 it was proposed to retain Dod Street as well as Mansell Street job centres in Tower Hamlets plus centres in Hackney, Stratford, and Canning Town.
8. That the 29th August 2019 update on job centre closures in 2018 by the DWP did not include any closures in London but did mention co-location with local authorities as a way of finding new premises.
9. That in 2021 the DWP set up temporary jobcentres to deal with increased demand including at 100 Leman Street, this is to provide more space for safe meetings

10. The failure since 2019 to identify and then offer an alternative location to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in one of the many planning applications to go through LBTH
11. That the possibility of offering the DWP space in the new Town Hall at centre of Whitechapel has never been raised with Town Hall Steering Group
12. That Tower Hamlets for the 2nd year running has missed the housing delivery targets set by the Mayor of London as a result of which there is now greater pressures on us to deliver new housing.
13. The ~~closure~~ transfer of this branch will result in longer travel times for some residents needing ~~of~~ a critical layer of support for our residents in Tower Hamlets, at a time when Universal Credit uplift ends, the furlough scheme closes, and the government imposes an increase in National Insurance.
14. The central position of the Dod Street branch is located close to some of the areas of highest deprivation in our borough: the ~~closure~~ transfer ~~will~~ may result in increased deprivation through residents not claiming the benefit support that they are entitled to.
15. That while Dod Street has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 4 (where 6B is best and 1 worst) due to its bus connections on Burdett Road it is not that well connected to the DLR or Underground network. We should aim for it to be relocated to an area with a higher PTAL and which is more prominently located and visible.
16. That access to welfare support is becoming increasingly digitised and those in most need of support ~~are~~ maybe less likely to have the digital capability to access that support.
17. That LBTH has itself closed many opportunities for face-to-face support or over the phone and moved services online

This council believes:

1. The DWP's JobCentre Plus branches provide vital face-to-face support to residents who are unemployed and/or are claiming benefit support.
2. Within Tower Hamlets, there are just 3 JobCentre Plus branches, ~~both~~ all three in Poplar & Limehouse constituency, which provide vital support for many Tower Hamlets residents.
3. The recently published "Poverty Review" highlighted that residents were not always aware of the benefit support available to them, and that there is high correlation between illiteracy, digital exclusion and poverty. Face to face advice is often vital for many residents to understand and access the support they need.
4. That provision of employment and welfare support can be conducted in a variety of buildings and places that are accessible and welcoming to residents, and closer working between the DWP, council frontline

services, and the borough's advice centres, can only benefit our residents.

This council resolves:

1. To ask the Mayor and Lead Member to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Thérèse Coffey MP and the Minister for Employment Mims Davies MP to:
 1. To welcome the redevelopment of the centre for housing and
 2. ~~express concern at the closure of Dod Street JobCentre Plus,~~
and
 3. offer support in finding alternative suitable accommodation perhaps including at the new Town Hall
2. To call on our local MPs to raise our concerns with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions about the failure since early 2019 of LBTH and the DWP to find an alternative location.

Following debate, the amendment moved by Councillor Andrew Wood was put to a vote and was **defeated**.

The substantive motion was put to a vote and was **agreed**.

DECISION:

This council notes:

1. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) intends to close the JobCentre Plus branch based at Dod Street, Poplar.
2. That the reasons for the closure are due to the landlord not renewing the lease.
3. The closure of this branch will result in the removal of a critical layer of support for our residents in Tower Hamlets, at a time when Universal Credit uplift ends, the furlough scheme closes, and the government imposes an increase in National Insurance.
4. The central position of the Dod Street branch is located close to some of the areas of highest deprivation in our borough: the closure will result in increased deprivation through residents not claiming the benefit support that they are entitled to.
5. That access to welfare support is becoming increasingly digitised and those in most need of support are less likely to have the digital capability to access that support.

This council believes:

1. The DWP's JobCentre Plus branches provide vital face-to-face support to residents who are unemployed and/or are claiming benefit support.

2. Within Tower Hamlets, there are just 2 JobCentre Plus branches, both in Poplar & Limehouse constituency, which provide vital support for many Tower Hamlets residents.
3. The recently published "Poverty Review" highlighted that residents were not always aware of the benefit support available to them, and that there is high correlation between illiteracy, digital exclusion and poverty. Face to face advice is often vital for many residents to understand and access the support they need.
4. That provision of employment and welfare support can be conducted in a variety of buildings and places that are accessible and welcoming to residents, and closer working between the DWP, council frontline services, and the borough's advice centres, can only benefit our residents.

This council resolves:

1. To ask the Mayor and Lead Member to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Thérèse Coffey MP and the Minister for Employment Mims Davies MP to:
 - a. express concern at the closure of Dod Street JobCentre Plus, and
 - b. offer support in finding alternative suitable accommodation
2. To call on our local MPs to raise our concerns with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

(Action by: Mayor's Office)

8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE

Councillor Andrew Wood **moved** and Councillor Peter Golds **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

The motion was put to a vote and was **defeated**.

9. REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

There were none

10. OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Re-appointment of Standards Advisory Committee Co-Opted Members

The Council considered the report of the Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer regarding the appointment of Independent Co-Opted Members of the Standards Advisory Committee

DECISION:

1. Agree the re-appointment of the following Independent Co-Opted Members of the Standards Advisory Committee for a new four-year

term ending on 30 September 2025:

- Nafisa Adam
- Fiona Browne
- Mike Houston
- John Pulford MBE

(**Action by** Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

10.2 Appointment of the Chair of the Strategic Development Committee

The Council considered the report.

Councillor Tarik Khan **moved** and Mayor John Biggs **seconded** the following:

- A nomination for the position of the Chair of the Strategic Development Committee.
- An additional recommendation to the report regarding the appointment of a Mayoral Advisor and a nomination to that position.

DECISION:

1. That Councillor Kevin Brady be appointed as Chair of the Strategic Development Committee for the remainder of the 2021-22 municipal year
2. That Councillor Eve McQuillan be appointed to act as a Mayoral Advisor until the point that Councillor Sufia Alam returns from maternity leave on 31st January 2022.

(**Action by** Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

10.3 Proportionality and Allocation of Places on Committees of the Council

The Council considered the report of the Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer regarding the Proportionality and Allocation of Places on Committees of the Council

The Council also noted the tabled allocations for opposition Members, published on the Council's website in the supplementary agenda.

DECISION:

1. To note the review of proportionality as at Section 3 of the report and the allocation of seats on Committees and Sub-Committees for the Municipal Year 2021/22 as set out at paragraph 3.6 of the report.
2. To note the Committees set out for the municipal year 2021/22 listed in paragraph 3.6 as agreed at the Annual Council meeting held on Wednesday 19 May 2021.

3. Agree the changes to the memberships as set out in the tabled allocations for opposition Members, and published in the supplementary agenda.
4. Agree that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to approve the appointment of Councillors required to fill positions that fall vacant during the municipal year in line with the proportionality arrangements set out in this report.
5. Agree that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to approve the appointment of ungrouped Councillors to any committee places not allocated by the Council to a political group, after consultation with those Councillors and the Speaker of the Council.
6. Agree that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and General Purposes Committee should now consider any necessary proportionality changes to their sub-committees following this report.

(Action by Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

10.4 Appointment of Political Advisors

The Council considered the report of the Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer regarding the appointment of political advisors.

Councillor Tarik Khan **moved** and Mayor John Biggs **seconded** a proposal that the existing second political advisor post should be retained by the Conservative Group.

DECISION:

1. That the existing second political advisor post should be retained by the Conservative Group.

(Action by Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

11. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following questions and in each case supplementary questions were put (except where indicated) and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member.

- 11.1 Question from Councillor Tarik Khan requesting an update on the Liveable Streets programme. No supplementary question was asked.
- 11.2 Question from Councillor Kabir Ahmed regarding spending on the Liveable Street programme.
- 11.3 Question from Councillor Leema Qureshi about use of the Mayor's Covid Recovery Fund. No supplementary question was asked.

- 11.4 Question from Councillor Peter Golds about the Mayor's plans to mitigate antisocial behaviour at St Andrews Wharf, Masthouse Terrace and the Basketball Area of Millwall Park.
- 11.5 Question from Councillor Eve McQuillan regarding the Council's response to the recent announcement on social care and its spending on this.
- 11.6 Question from Councillor Harun Miah regarding responsibility for creating a cleaner, and safer and a fair Tower Hamlets. No supplementary question was asked.
- 11.7 Question from Councillor David Edgar regarding progress with reducing the waste and CO2 emissions from construction work and reuse.
- 11.8 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood requesting an update on the discussions with the London Fire Brigade regarding the use of Community Infrastructure Levy monies to fund additional fire safety equipment.
- 11.9 Question from Councillor Amina Ali requesting an update on the Council's Building Safety Pledge and how it is supporting residents in Tower Hamlets. No supplementary question was asked.
- 11.10 Question from Councillor Shah Ameen regarding the council's plans to mark the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence. No supplementary question was asked.
- 11.12 Question from Councillor Marc Francis regarding the Council's performance in processing applications for LBTH temporary accommodation.
- 11.13. Question from Councillor Val Whitehead regarding the impact in Tower Hamlets of the Government's plans to cut Universal Credit by £20 per week. No supplementary question was asked.
- 11.14 Question from Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE asking about the future of the Liveable Streets programme in the Weavers ward.
- 11.15 Question from Councillor Victoria Obaze regarding the number of families that have recently been rehoused as part of project 120.

Questions 11.16- 11.19 were not put due to lack of time. Question 11.11 was not put due to the absence of the questioner. A written response would be provided to these questions. (Note the written responses will follow)

(Action by:—Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services to arrange written responses)

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Amina Ali **moved** and Councillor Rachel Blake **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda

The motion was put the vote and was agreed

DECISION**This council notes:**

1. The Tesco supermarket chain has embarked on a process of converting a number of Tesco Metro stores to Tesco Express.
2. Tesco Express pricing excludes the supermarket price-match offers, increasing the pricing of regular shopping for residents.
3. Many loose items (such as fruit and vegetables) sold in Tesco Express are charged per item rather than by weight, increasing the cost of healthy, staple food items for residents.
4. That some residents have reported price increases of specific items up to 33 per cent higher than those items listed on the Tesco website and available within Tesco Extra stores.
5. In Tower Hamlets, 44 per cent of our older residents live in low-income households, the highest proportion in England and more than double the national average.
6. That Tower Hamlets has one of the highest levels of child poverty in the country, with, once housing costs are taken in to consideration, 56% of children living below the poverty line.
7. Since 2017, this administration has invested £6.6 million in a Tackling Poverty programme to support: residents moving onto Universal Credit; financial inclusion; grassroots community and voluntary sector programmes; and, several 'test and learn' initiatives
8. Tesco's group sales rose by 8.8% to £53.4bn during the 52 weeks to 27 February 2021, while its UK sales increased by 7%.
9. The Mayor, Lead Member, and councillors across London have written to the CEO of Tesco, Ken Murphy, asking he reverse the covert price increases caused by the store conversion.

This council believes:

10. It is families and residents living in poverty who have been disproportionately affected by these price increases as many simply do not have an option to travel further afield to access larger stores.
11. This position has become more common and acute during the pandemic, with residents restricted and discouraged from travel to protect public health.
12. At the same time, travel costs may now be prohibitively expensive for those who have been pushing into unemployment.
13. That many residents are feeling the triple whammy of the end of Universal Credit uplift, furlough scheme ending, and a looming increase in National Insurance contributions.

14. Supermarkets have performed relatively well during the pandemic, compared to other retail businesses who have struggled through enforced closures.

This council resolves:

1. To write to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee asking that they review the decision by Tesco to convert its Metro stores to Express, and the impact this has on residents.
2. To ask the boroughs MPs to raise this issue in the House of Commons, raising national awareness of Tesco's pricing strategy.
3. To campaign to secure decent affordable food locally.
4. To continue to invest in innovative anti-poverty programme

(Action by:– Mayor's Office)

12.2 Motion regarding One Housing Group Takeover by Riverside Housing Association

Councillor Peter Golds **moved** and Councillor Andrew Wood **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda

Councillor Danny Hassell **moved** and Councillor Mufeedah Bustin **seconded** the following amendment to the motion as set out in the supplementary agenda:

Amendments underlined.

The Council notes that in July the troubled One Housing Group, which manages 17,312 homes announced that it was to be taken over by the Riverside Housing Association based in Liverpool which currently manages 58,671 homes.

The Council further notes that:

This followed the revelation that One Housing had recorded a loss of £25.5 million in the last financial year and that the Regulator of Social Housing has downgraded the status of One Housing, which is a serious reputational loss to One Housing as an organisation.

There is a significant impact on the finances of One Housing in relation to building and fire safety works.

At the time of the stock transfer the four estates of the Isle of Dogs; the Barkantine, Kingsbridge, St John's and Samuda, were all managed by Toynbee Island Homes. In 2007 Toynbee Island Homes merged with the Community Housing Association to form One Housing. One Housing also own other homes across the borough.

Based in Camden Town, One Housing has frequently appeared remote to residents of this borough. This remoteness caused irreparable damage to the reputation of One Housing when, despite repeated denials, it was revealed that the organisation was secretly planning to replace the 2,000 homes on the four estates of the Isle of Dogs with 8,000 new properties. This resulted in the

Regulator of Social Housing reporting in 2013 that, “the board (of One Housing) needs to enhance its oversight and scrutiny of the group’s activities to maintain compliance with regulatory requirements”

The Council further notes that:

The original announcement of the takeover of One Housing by Riverside was reported to Councillors and covered in a press release, ~~tenants were not notified by One Housing until later. Tenants of the four estates were initially notified by the proposer of this motion by way of leaflets delivered by volunteers to their addresses.~~

There appear to have been no other options explored apart from this takeover, by Riverside, an organisation which itself has faced criticism for “taking away tenant’s voices.”

Tower Hamlets tenants and leaseholders of One Housing have expressed concerns regarding:

- The lack of meaningful consultation
- Inability to produce impact data for lessees
- Poor estate management
- Misleading brochures and information, which lack information on exactly how services to residents can or will be improved as part of the merger.
- Failing to share financial data with residents.

Despite the failure of Project Stone, One Housing have continued to propose redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Estate and before the takeover became known terminated a resident led steering group, whilst continuing to promote a ballot on a proposed redevelopment.

Following a letter to the Chief Executive of the Regulator of Social Housing by the proposer of this motion, to delay the takeover and cancel the ballot on the Kingsbridge development, the regulator has responded to say:

“The matters you raise about One Housing Group have now been assessed by our Consumer Regulation Panel in accordance with our Serious Detriment procedures. The panel was unable to conclude whether there has been a breach of the Consumer Regulations standards which has or could lead to serious harm to tenants.”

“As such, further consideration is required and your complaint has been passed to our Investigation & Enforcement team, who will be contacting One Housing Group for further information. Once our Investigation & Enforcement team has investigated your concerns, they will contact you again within a further 20 working days from the date of this email with a reply or revised deadline.”

During this period and despite increasing concerns, residents have received a brochure urging them to support the takeover with a promise of financial investment, after the takeover.

The Mayor, the Cabinet Member for Housing and local councillors have written to One Housing highlighting their concerns and those of residents.

This Council believes:

Residents should be applauded for their hard work over many years to scrutinise One Housing and to hold them to account for their performance as a landlord and the delivery of their services.

Residents deserve to have access to information which enables them to make an informed decision on any mergers.

Consultation on issues such as mergers should be comprehensive and seek to engage residents in many ways with a dialogue about the issues involved.

One Housing and Riverside have not clearly set out the improvements that will be delivered to residents from the proposed merger.

The Council therefore agrees:

To call on the Regulator of Social Housing to delay the takeover until they are satisfied that this takeover is in the best interest of tenants and residents.

To ask the government that for future such mergers that tenants and leaseholders are given real and meaningful choices ~~including a referendum vote. That residents be offered three options~~. The range of options could include:

- ~~1. The~~ A recommended merger partner, who then has an incentive to make commitments about their future performance in order to win the vote
- Joining another local housing association or local housing provider where one is willing to accept them (and for the government to make necessary funding available to enable this).
- Use of referendum ballots on the decision.

~~2. To join any Council run housing provider (if one exists) which for many estates may well be a choice to reverse the decision they made in the stock transfer process~~

~~3. To join a locally based housing association willing to take them~~

That if the government truly believe in consumer choice and giving homeowners and tenants greater involvement in the management of their homes (as we see in the moves towards Commonhold) that logically this should apply to all residents of homes regardless of tenure.

To call on the Regulator and the Minister to ensure that in these discussions tenants and residents come first and are consulted properly and independently as to the future management of their homes.

Councillor Peter Golds indicated that he accepted the amendment

The motion as amended was **agreed**.

DECISION:

The Council notes that in July the troubled One Housing Group, which manages 17,312 homes announced that it was to be taken over by the Riverside Housing Association based in Liverpool which currently manages 58,671 homes.

The Council further notes that:

This followed the revelation that One Housing had recorded a loss of £25.5 million in the last financial year and that the Regulator of Social Housing has downgraded the status of One Housing, which is a serious reputational loss to One Housing as an organisation.

There is a significant impact on the finances of One Housing in relation to building and fire safety works.

At the time of the stock transfer the four estates of the Isle of Dogs; the Barkantine, Kingsbridge, St John's and Samuda, were all managed by Toynbee Island Homes. In 2007 Toynbee Island Homes merged with the Community Housing Association to form One Housing. One Housing also own other homes across the borough.

Based in Camden Town, One Housing has frequently appeared remote to residents of this borough. This remoteness caused irreparable damage to the reputation of One Housing when, despite repeated denials, it was revealed that the organisation was secretly planning to replace the 2,000 homes on the four estates of the Isle of Dogs with 8,000 new properties. This resulted in the Regulator of Social Housing reporting in 2013 that, "the board (of One Housing) needs to enhance its oversight and scrutiny of the group's activities to maintain compliance with regulatory requirements"

The Council further notes that:

The original announcement of the takeover of One Housing by Riverside was reported to Councillors and covered in a press release,

There appear to have been no other options explored apart from this takeover, by Riverside, an organisation which itself has faced criticism for "taking away tenant's voices."

Tower Hamlets tenants and leaseholders of One Housing have expressed concerns regarding:

- The lack of meaningful consultation
- Inability to produce impact data for lessees
- Poor estate management
- Misleading brochures and information, which lack information on exactly how services to residents can or will be improved as part of the merger.
- Failing to share financial data with residents.

Despite the failure of Project Stone, One Housing have continued to propose redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Estate and before the takeover became

known terminated a resident led steering group, whilst continuing to promote a ballot on a proposed redevelopment.

Following a letter to the Chief Executive of the Regulator of Social Housing by the proposer of this motion, to delay the takeover and cancel the ballot on the Kingsbridge development, the regulator has responded to say:

“The matters you raise about One Housing Group have now been assessed by our Consumer Regulation Panel in accordance with our Serious Detriment procedures. The panel was unable to conclude whether there has been a breach of the Consumer Regulations standards which has or could lead to serious harm to tenants.”

“As such, further consideration is required and your complaint has been passed to our Investigation & Enforcement team, who will be contacting One Housing Group for further information. Once our Investigation & Enforcement team has investigated your concerns, they will contact you again within a further 20 working days from the date of this email with a reply or revised deadline.”

During this period and despite increasing concerns, residents have received a brochure urging them to support the takeover with a promise of financial investment, after the takeover.

The Mayor, the Cabinet Member for Housing and local councillors have written to One Housing highlighting their concerns and those of residents.

This Council believes:

Residents should be applauded for their hard work over many years to scrutinise One Housing and to hold them to account for their performance as a landlord and the delivery of their services.

Residents deserve to have access to information which enables them to make an informed decision on any mergers.

Consultation on issues such as mergers should be comprehensive and seek to engage residents in many ways with a dialogue about the issues involved.

One Housing and Riverside have not clearly set out the improvements that will be delivered to residents from the proposed merger.

The Council therefore agrees:

To call on the Regulator of Social Housing to delay the takeover until they are satisfied that this takeover is in the best interest of tenants and residents.

To ask the government that for future such mergers that tenants and leaseholders are given real and meaningful choices. The range of options could include:

- A recommended merger partner, who then has an incentive to make commitments about their future performance in order to win the vote
- Joining another local housing association or local housing provider where one is willing to accept them (and for the government to make necessary funding available to enable this).
- Use of referendum ballots on the decision.

That if the government truly believe in consumer choice and giving homeowners and tenants greater involvement in the management of their homes (as we see in the moves towards Commonhold) that logically this should apply to all residents of homes regardless of tenure.

To call on the Regulator and the Minister to ensure that in these discussions tenants and residents come first and are consulted properly and independently as to the future management of their homes.

(Action by: Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director, Place)

(Motions 12.3- 12.5 were not considered due to lack of time).

The meeting ended at 10.06 p.m.