

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2022

**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 Suluk Ahmed.

Apologies for lateness were received by Councillor Rachel Blake.

It was noted that due to exceptional circumstances Councillor James King was joining the meeting remotely.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

Following the receipt of a written request from a significant number of Members, the Monitoring Officer had agreed, in line with the Member Code of Conduct, to grant a general dispensation to all Councillors on Agenda Item 8 'Opposition Motion for Debate on Support for Small Businesses in the Face of the Energy Bill Crisis' as without the dispensation a large number of Members would have to declare a Pecuniary Interest and leave the room for the debate and this would impede the 'transaction of the business' as well as 'impact the representation of the different political groups on the body conducting the business so as to alter the outcome of any vote on the matter'.

Councillor Shubo Hussain declared a non-disclosable non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 10.1 'Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan' as he had a coffee shop on the boundary of the respective area.

3. MINUTES

DECISION

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Council meeting held on Wednesday 27 July 2022 be approved and signed by the Speaker as a correct record of proceedings.

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

See the minutes.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition regarding CCTV on Gill Street

Lucilia Branco, Denise Otto and Shabul Zaman addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities responded to the matters raised in the petition.

DECISION

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

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

5.2 Petition regarding Barleymow Estate

Derrick Cutler and Aftab Uddin addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding 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)

5.3 Petition regarding Antisocial Behaviour in and around Cambridge Heath Station

Ana Monzon, Anna Bosley and Chris Aria Tree addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities responded to the matters raised in the petition.

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

5.4 Petition regarding Save our Safer Streets

Simon Ramsay, Jane Harris and Shaheena Parvin, addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Emergency responded to the matters raised in the petition.

Following presentation of the petition Members held a debate on the issue. Two motions were tabled for consideration.

The First motion was Proposed by Councillor Asma Islam and Seconded by Councillor Sirajul Islam

This Council notes that:

- Tower Hamlets has one of the highest levels of motor vehicle traffic in the country so there is a need to reduce vehicle use, as the Mayor said in his 28 September 2022 announcement. This is largely due to vehicles travelling through the borough, because Tower Hamlets has the lowest levels of car ownership in London with approximately only one third of households having access to a car. With the average lung capacity of a child in Tower Hamlets five per cent less than the national average, the Council's aim to tackle low air quality in the borough is important. With transport making up a significant portion of the borough's pollution, the trend towards an increase in vehicle miles in Tower Hamlets must be reversed.
- The implementation of the Liveable Streets was started by the previous Labour administration to reduce traffic and pollution in residential areas in Tower Hamlets, to create safer and more people-friendly and connected neighbourhoods. The target outcome was for all of our residents to enjoy a better environment with cleaner air and less noise and to find it easier and safer to walk and cycle locally.
- While the Liveable Streets schemes that were adopted were targeted at some of the more deprived residential areas in the borough, where there was the most need for capital improvements and had been developed following a thorough consultation with local residents, all areas across the borough should not have been treated the same and should have been directed by community support.
- School Streets, which was developed alongside the Liveable Streets programme, had the aim of identifying improvements such as removing areas where idling cars congregate and reducing traffic levels near schools significantly, making local children both healthier and safer. This policy was a big success and led to a 30% reduction in pollution near schools.

This Council further notes that:

- 3,094 local people signed the "Save Our Safer Streets in Tower Hamlets" petition, which is the second-highest number of people to complete a petition on the council's website ever, and the most with regard to any road scheme. There is clearly a significant number of local people who feel strongly that the Liveable Streets schemes are working enough that they are campaigning extensively for their retention.

- A climate emergency has been declared by the council in 2019. The Mayor has an ambition for Tower Hamlets to be the greenest borough in London, including being a “net zero borough as soon as possible”. Actions to support a transition away from private car use and towards sustainable travel options including public transport, walking and cycling have to be part of that process.
- Transport for London has written to the Mayor of Tower Hamlets expressing concern about the complete closure of Liveable Streets, which could be detrimental to the local environment.
- Healthcare professionals, including the Leaders of Bart’s NHS Trust, have also written to the Mayor in response to his proposals, to express their concerns about the lack of evidence for his proposals, set against the established public health evidence that schemes which promote walking and cycling are “necessary measures in our response to both climate change and health inequalities.”
- Schools across the borough have also opposed the Mayor’s complete opening of the roads amid concerns that it will increase air pollution in the area.

This Council resolves:

- To remove Liveable Streets from the October cabinet agenda, to allow the council and the Mayor sufficient time to explore each scheme against consultation results, evidence and consultation views, including local health services and TfL.
- To ask the Mayor to seriously take into consideration the use of ANPR cameras to enable selective closure, allowing vulnerable residents and emergency service access, while discouraging through-traffic..
- To publish the results from the public consultations which finished on 7 August 2022 for transparency, as there has already been more than enough time to analyse the results fully. And to publish any evidence to support the council’s claims about the impacts of the Liveable Streets schemes to date.
- To create a working task force for each of the Liveable Streets schemes, with residents, ward councillors, local businesses, key stakeholders and officers, in order to find out what is working in the scheme and to develop bespoke solutions to issues in each area, where these are needed. The list of areas should include areas where implementations have already been removed and where the original plans were never implemented fully.
- To engage in a meaningful dialogue with TfL and GLA to discuss wider issues such as traffic calming, public transport and pedestrian and cyclist safety, which will support the council’s 2019 Transport Strategy commitment to achieve 90% of journeys in the borough to be made by walking, cycling and public transport by 2041.
- To ask the Mayor to consider carefully the financial implications attached to removing the Liveable Streets schemes and what other urgent priorities could be funded instead.
- To implement any changes to Liveable Streets schemes on a case-by-case basis and ensure each scheme is guided by each area’s diverse

communities and stakeholders, along with thorough research and engagement mentioned above.

The second motion was Proposed by Cllr Kabir Ahmed and Seconded by Abu Choudhury:

Council notes:

- That In May, the people of Tower Hamlets demonstrated their desire for change, by voting overwhelmingly for Lutfur Rahman as Mayor and the Aspire Party as the largest Party on the Council.
- That the people of Tower Hamlets put their trust in a transformative Manifesto that offered real hope and a real vision for how we could rebuild our Borough.
- That this Manifesto listened to the people of Tower Hamlets, and put their needs and wishes first.
- That one of the central pledges of this Manifesto was to get Tower Hamlets moving by removing the road closures implemented across the Borough by the previous administration.
- That these closures have impacted thousands of working people in Tower Hamlets – from delivery drivers, to taxis and small businesses, carers – registered or otherwise – and people with commitments across the Borough, during a cost of living crisis.
- That the Mayor is committed to ensuring that Tower Hamlets becomes a net-zero Borough as soon as possible, and has already initiated work on delivering the central pledges of his and his Administration's climate and energy offer.

Council believes:

- That it is right to consult residents and stakeholders – including the emergency services and businesses – on any decision to remove these road closures.
- That such a public opinion survey has recently come to a conclusion, receiving thousands of responses from across the Borough.
- That any decision to remove or retain these closures, before considering the results of these public opinion surveys, would pre-empt the right of such residents and stakeholders to have their voices fairly heard.

- That need to understand why people use their cars, what the barriers to public transport are for some, and how we can support them to move away from car usage.
- That this Mayor wants to represent all residents of this Borough and engage with them on this issue in an inclusive way.

Council resolves:

- To wait for all evidence gathered during these public opinion surveys to be analysed and considered with due diligence and process before any decision on the removal of these closures takes place.

Following debate the Motion **moved** by Councillor Asma Islam was put to a vote and was **defeated**.

The Motion **moved** Councillor Kabir Ahmed was put to a vote and was **agreed**.

DECISION**Council notes:**

- That In May, the people of Tower Hamlets demonstrated their desire for change, by voting overwhelmingly for Lutfur Rahman as Mayor and the Aspire Party as the largest Party on the Council.
- That the people of Tower Hamlets put their trust in a transformative Manifesto that offered real hope and a real vision for how we could rebuild our Borough.
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- That this Mayor wants to represent all residents of this Borough and engage with them on this issue in an inclusive way.

Council resolves:

- To wait for all evidence gathered during these public opinion surveys to be analysed and considered with due diligence and process before any decision on the removal of these closures takes place.

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

6. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Lutfur Rahman presented his verbal report to Council.

The Opposition Group Leader, Councillor Sirajul Islam then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

Mayor Rahman provided concluding remarks.

7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE

Under Procedure Rule 12.1 (g), Councillor Kabir Ahmed gave notice that he was withdrawing his original motion for debate.

Under Procedure Rule 12.1 (n) he requested that Procedure Rule 11.2 be waived to allow the submission of an urgent motion to take its place. This

request was seconded by Councillor Harun Miah. The Speaker accepted the reasons for urgency and put the proposal to the vote and it was **agreed**.

Councillor Kabir Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Abu Choudhury **seconded** the urgent motion as printed in the tabled papers supplement.

This Council notes:

- The worrying developments in the UK's economy and its impact on the housing market, and the threat this poses to freeholders, leaseholders and private and social renters alike.
- That several independent think-tanks and commentators have pointed to the potential 'tipping point' for those looking to both buy and sell on the property ladder, with others speculating that the market could be heading for 'disaster'.
- That this is having a knock on effect for businesses – many of them Small and Medium Enterprises – who rely on a healthy and equitable market, including construction and utilities firms.
- That should the current downward and precarious trajectory of the market continue, a 'perfect storm' of a surge in borrowing costs and a concurrent slowdown in economic growth could trigger a complete market collapse, plunging millions into economic precarity during a heightening cost of living crisis.

This Council believes:

- That all levels of government – from national to local – should do everything in their power to proactively tackle this slump through innovation, investment and support for residents of all stripes.
- That now, more than ever, there needs to be an increase in the building of social housing to alleviate the pressures on the private rented sector, freehold and leasehold markets.
- That local authorities, where possible, should aim to maximise their social housebuilding programme, and protect as many as possible from the threats currently being witnessed.
- That in times of crisis, fiscal and developmental bravery, boldness and courage is required to ensure that residents are not sucked into the 'perfect storm' threatening the UK's Housing Market.

This Council resolves:

- To continue to proactively seek opportunities to maximise social and affordable house building, to help ease the pressures of the housing market on those with low and medium incomes.

- To begin this process by producing and implementing a developmental *Masterplan* for the Spitalfields and Banglatown area, wherein the maximisation of social and affordable housing will be a priority.
- To follow this model to ensure that local communities around Tower Hamlets are included in these developments, and are able to remain in their areas, regardless of any external pressures resultant from housing crises, prospective or realised.
- That Officers should begin the development of a *Masterplan* for the Spitalfields and Banglatown area in cooperation and conjunction with the Council's Executive.
- That an update on the progress of this development should be given at the next meeting of the Council's Cabinet.

Councillor Asma Islam **moved** and Councillor Marc Francis **seconded** a proposed amendment to the urgent motion as printed in the tabled papers supplement.

Additions underlined

Deletions struck through

This Council notes:

- The worrying developments in the UK's economy and its impact on the housing market, and the threat this poses to freeholders, leaseholders and private and social renters alike.
- That several independent think-tanks and commentators have pointed to the potential 'tipping point' for those looking to both buy and sell on the property ladder, with others speculating that the market could be heading for 'disaster'.
- That this is having a knock on effect for businesses – many of them Small and Medium Enterprises – who rely on a healthy and equitable market, including construction and utilities firms.
- That should the current downward and precarious trajectory of the market continue, a 'perfect storm' of a surge in borrowing costs and a concurrent slowdown in economic growth could trigger a complete market collapse, plunging millions into economic precarity during a heightening cost of living crisis.

This Council further notes:

- The previous Labour administration's work in building Council homes, which saw over 1,000 additional homes delivered during that time. However, more needs to be done to combat Government inaction.

This Council believes:

- That all levels of government – from national to local – should do everything in their power to proactively tackle this slump through innovation, investment and support for residents of all stripes.
- That local authorities across the UK urgently needs a Labour Government in power to prioritise and support the rebuilding of our social housing stock and bring homes back into the ownership of local councils and communities, with home ownership opened up to millions more.
- That the current social housing stock needs to be reviewed and improvements considered alongside a program of housebuilding to ensure that the right to live in a home fit for human habitation is non-negotiable.
- That now, more than ever, there needs to be an increase in the building of social housing to alleviate the pressures on the private rented sector, freehold and leasehold markets.
- That local authorities, where possible, should aim to maximise their social housebuilding programme, and protect as many as possible from the threats currently being witnessed.
- That in these times of crisis, fiscal and developmental bravery economic turmoil, boldness and courage is required to ensure that residents are protected from the threats to are not sucked into the 'perfect storm' threatening the UK's Housing Market.

This Council resolves:

- To continue to proactively seek opportunities to maximise social and affordable house building, to help ease the pressures of the housing market on those with low and medium incomes.
- To urgently look at the current social housing stock in the borough and immediately improve the quality of the housing, including providing better insulation to address fuel poverty in these difficult times.
- To do a review of the Spitalfields and Banglatown area in conjunction with the local communities and local businesses regarding its current state and to assess the negative impacts that could come from private developments related to anti-social behaviour, waste collection and the night economy.

- To begin this process by producing and implementing a developmental *Masterplan* for the Spitalfields and Banglatown area, wherein the maximisation of social and affordable housing will be a priority.
- To follow this model to ensure that local communities around Tower Hamlets are included in these developments, and are able to remain in their areas, regardless of any external pressures resultant from housing crises, prospective or realised.
- That Officers should begin the development of a *Masterplan* for the Spitalfields and Banglatown area in cooperation and conjunction with the Council's Executive.
- That an update on the progress of this development should be given at the next meeting of the Council's Cabinet.
- To set up a cross-party working group to look at developing Masterplans to all areas of Tower Hamlets, working with communities, businesses and the local Councillors.

Following debate, the amendment **moved** by Councillor Asma Islam was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

The motion as **moved** by Councillor Kabir Ahmed was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

DECISION

This Council notes:

- The worrying developments in the UK's economy and its impact on the housing market, and the threat this poses to freeholders, leaseholders and private and social renters alike.
- That several independent think-tanks and commentators have pointed to the potential 'tipping point' for those looking to both buy and sell on the property ladder, with others speculating that the market could be heading for 'disaster'.
- That this is having a knock on effect for businesses – many of them Small and Medium Enterprises – who rely on a healthy and equitable market, including construction and utilities firms.
- That should the current downward and precarious trajectory of the market continue, a 'perfect storm' of a surge in borrowing costs and a concurrent slowdown in economic growth could trigger a complete market collapse, plunging millions into economic precarity during a heightening cost of living crisis.

This Council believes:

- That all levels of government – from national to local – should do everything in their power to proactively tackle this slump through innovation, investment and support for residents of all stripes.
- That now, more than ever, there needs to be an increase in the building of social housing to alleviate the pressures on the private rented sector, freehold and leasehold markets.
- That local authorities, where possible, should aim to maximise their social housebuilding programme, and protect as many as possible from the threats currently being witnessed.
- That in times of crisis, fiscal and developmental bravery, boldness and courage is required to ensure that residents are not sucked into the 'perfect storm' threatening the UK's Housing Market.

This Council resolves:

- To continue to proactively seek opportunities to maximise social and affordable house building, to help ease the pressures of the housing market on those with low and medium incomes.
- To begin this process by producing and implementing a developmental *Masterplan* for the Spitalfields and Banglatown area, wherein the maximisation of social and affordable housing will be a priority.
- To follow this model to ensure that local communities around Tower Hamlets are included in these developments, and are able to remain in their areas, regardless of any external pressures resultant from housing crises, prospective or realised.
- That Officers should begin the development of a *Masterplan* for the Spitalfields and Banglatown area in cooperation and conjunction with the Council's Executive.
- That an update on the progress of this development should be given at the next meeting of the Council's Cabinet.

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

8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE

Councillor Sirajul Islam **moved** and Councillor Sabina Akhtar **seconded** the motion as set out on the agenda.

Councillor Abu Choudhury **moved** and Councillor Bodrul Choudhury **seconded** a proposed amendment to the motion as set out in the tabled papers supplement:

Additions underlined
Deletions struckthrough

This Council notes:

- The devastating impact the huge energy bills increase has had on small businesses across the borough, where many are now concerned that they will have to close due to the unreasonable cost.
- Small businesses are only recently recovering from the long term effects of the lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The loss of small businesses across our borough will have a very negative affect on the local economy and residents who are already struggling in the face of the Cost of Living Crisis.

This Council believes:

- It is vital that innovative measures are immediately adopted – both at a Government level and at a Local Authority level - to support local businesses in the face of the Cost of Living Crisis, so local businesses, local jobs and local high streets are protected to benefit local residents.
- That schemes such as the Mayor's Energy Fund and Cost of Living package, that will benefit 7,000 households for the former and 27,000 residents for the latter, should be supported by all members of this Council and topped up as and when required.

This Council resolves to:

- Request the Mayor
 - To explore ~~Immediately set up a Small Business Hardship Fund to help small businesses in the borough in these times of economic crisis~~ a Business Rates rebate for small businesses with Central Government to help offset the huge increase in cost of energy bills.
 - ~~Provide Business Rates relief to small businesses to help offset the huge increase in the cost of energy bills.~~
 - To continue providing support for small and medium enterprises, including the recently announced £28million dividend for Tower Hamlets' SMEs in the Mayor's Covid Additional Relief Fund, benefiting 850 businesses across the Borough.
 - Work with the local Chambers of Commerce, community groups and business networks to establish a plan going forward on how to protect local businesses.

Following debate, the amendment **moved** by Councillor Abu Choudhury was put to a vote and was **agreed**.

The motion as amended by Councillor Abu Choudhury was put to a vote and was **agreed**.

DECISION

This Council notes:

- The devastating impact the huge energy bills increase has had on small businesses across the borough, where many are now concerned that they will have to close due to the unreasonable cost.
- Small businesses are only recently recovering from the long term effects of the lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The loss of small businesses across our borough will have a very negative affect on the local economy and residents who are already struggling in the face of the Cost of Living Crisis.

This Council believes:

- It is vital that innovative measures are immediately adopted – both at a Government level and at a Local Authority level - to support local businesses in the face of the Cost of Living Crisis, so local businesses, local jobs and local high streets are protected to benefit local residents.
- That schemes such as the Mayor's Energy Fund and Cost of Living package, that will benefit 7,000 households for the former and 27,000 residents for the latter, should be supported by all members of this Council and topped up as and when required.

This Council resolves to:

- Request the Mayor
 - o To explore a Business Rates rebate for small businesses with Central Government to help offset the huge increase in cost of energy bills.
 - o To continue providing support for small and medium enterprises, including the recently announced £28million dividend for Tower Hamlets' SMEs in the Mayor's Covid Additional Relief Fund, benefiting 850 businesses across the Borough.
 - o Work with the local Chambers of Commerce, community groups and business networks to establish a plan going forward on how to protect local businesses.

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

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

Nil items.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan – Post-Referendum Adoption

DECISION

1. To note the results of the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan referendums.
2. To agree not to adopt the neighbourhood plan as part of the development plan for the area.
3. To agree to set out the reasons for the above Recommendation 2 in a decision statement.

(**Action:** Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director, Place and Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

11. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following question and supplementary question was put and responded to by the relevant Cabinet Member.

11.1 Question from Councillor Bodrul Choudhury on the progress of an Independent Council-wide Investigation.

Questions 11.2 to 11.27 were not put due to lack of time.

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

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No motions were considered due to lack of time.

The meeting ended at 10.03 p.m.