

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 18 JANUARY 2023

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for lateness were received on behalf of:

Councillor Marc Francis and Councillor Rachel Blake.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

Following a request from 17 Members of the Council the Monitoring Officer agreed, in line with the Member Code of Conduct, to grant a general dispensation to all Councillors on Agenda Item 8 - Motion on Tower Hamlets Homes 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'. Members were therefore able to participate in the debate and vote accordingly.

3. MINUTES

That the unrestricted minutes of the Ordinary Council meeting held on Wednesday 16th November 2022 be approved and signed by the Speaker as a correct record of proceedings, subject to the following amendment:

- Councillor Peter Golds referred to page 13 of the agenda (page 3 of the minutes) Item 3 and stated he had requested that his name be recorded as not voting for this motion in the minutes. Hence Council noted the amendment in relation to item 8 'Opposition Motion for Debate - Support of small businesses in the face of the energy bill crisis' that Councillor Golds did not vote in favour of the motion at the Council meeting of 5th October 2022.

Councillor Nathalie Bienfait stated that Appendix A needed to make clear what the question and response was. She said the Democratic Services team had been notified of this administrative error and would going forth ensure this was clearly shown. Councillor Bienfait continued stating the response to her question at 11.24 had not been fully answered. The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Shafi Ahmed requested Councillor Bienfait to put her query in writing to the relevant Cabinet Member.

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

Announcements from the Chief Executive

See the minutes.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

5.1 Petition regarding Road Closures

Mr Sadek Ali on behalf of the petitioners addressed the meeting and stated the road closures were seriously impacting the lives and livelihoods of local residents. He asked Members of the Council to re-open the roads. The petitioner responded to questions from Members. Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency responded to the matters raised in the petition.

DECISION

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

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

5.2 Petition regarding Saving Chisenhale School Streets

Daniella Baker, Ruth Herbert and Tamara Barklem together with their children addressed the meeting and asked for the Chisenhale School Street to be reinstated. The Petitioners stated they were asking for a time-limited closure at drop off and pick up times, to improve safety as well as air pollution. The petitioners responded to questions from Members. Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency responded to the matters raised in the petition.

DECISION

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

Mayor Lutfur Rahman presented his report to the 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

Councillor Ohid Ahmed moved and Councillor Bodrul Choudhury seconded the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Amina Ali moved and Councillor Rebaka Sultana seconded the following proposed amendment as set out in the supplementary agenda.

Additions underlined Deletions struck through.

This Council notes:

- ~~• The rising levels of crime in Tower Hamlets since 2015. That Community Safety remains a vital issue for residents across Tower Hamlets borough.~~
- That Tower Hamlets is ranked in the top ten of London's most dangerous Boroughs, ranking third out of a possible thirty-two.
- That, according to 2022 data, serious crimes are on the rise and are much higher than the London average, including Anti-Social Behaviour, Drugs, Robberies and Burglaries and violent crime, including periodic explosions in knife crime and murder.
- According to the latest reported statistics from the Metropolitan Police, homophobic hate crime in Tower Hamlets has increased by 39% in the last 8 months. At the Hate Crime Awareness event run in October 2022 by the Council-funded LGBTQI + forum, residents shared their concerns over safety in Tower Hamlets. This fear within the LGBTQI+ community in Tower Hamlets has increased since the horrific and tragic murder of Roy Kankanamalage last year, and further violence against our LGBTQI+ community in Mile End in July, continues to create fear and terror amongst our residents.
- That it is no coincidence that this rise in crime has coincided with the cuts to police and other key public services in London due to the decimation of neighbourhood policing by 13 years of Conservative government austerity where PCSOs have been halved since 2010, destroying the vital community link between residents and the police and the previous administration's indifference and unwillingness to invest in community safety.
- Despite Government inaction, the previous Labour administration did a lot of work with its partners in the Metropolitan Police Service and other local agencies to ensure that residents were protected from the worst effects of Conservative austerity on community safety.
- That the previous Labour administration invested in council-funded police officers, known as the Partnership Task Force (PTF), and since April 2021 the PTF undertook more than 9,000 hours of uniformed

patrols, issued nearly 200 anti-social behaviour warnings, conducted 376 stop and searches and made 53 detections for possession of drugs or possession with intent to supply.

- The Council's award-winning Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), funded by the previous Labour administration, offers vital support for victims of domestic abuse and looked to improve women's safety, offering training sessions to encourage male allyship and reporting of abuse, a new contract with Solace Women's Aid to support victims of domestic abuse, and continued to deliver the sanctuary scheme which allowed domestic abuse victims to stay in their own homes.
- That the previous Labour administration also invested in the Council's CCTV Transformation Programme, a £3.1million investment to upgrade the whole CCTV network to new digital technology, which will increase visibility and allow the Council to better support the police and tackle crime.
- That huge volumes of complaints and concerns have been received by the Mayor at his surgeries and to his office from residents concerned by this increase in crime.
- That crime disproportionately impacts members of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, ~~and~~ those on the lowest incomes- and members of the LGBTIQI community.

This Council believes:

- That the residents of Tower Hamlets should be able to walk their streets and live in their homes in the knowledge that they are safe, secure and protected.
- That the fear of crime alone has a corrosive impact on people's day-to-day quality of life.
- That to achieve this sense of security, continued serious investment is required in the Borough's Community Safety services – from Police Officers to Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOS) – to ensure that these numbers can be driven down.
- That investment in key services, such as Youth Services, Community Services and third sector groups formulates an equally important part of any preventative strategy to reduce crime rates in the Borough.
- That the Mayor of London has a strong record in tackling crime across London and should the Council is grateful in his continued assistance ~~assist this Council~~ in providing the resources to recruit additional Police Officers.

This Council resolves:

- To support the Mayor and his administration to build on the strong record of the previous Labour administration in investing in Community Safety and procuring additional resources to drive down crime rates in the Borough.
- To continue the work of the previous Labour administration which developed a partnership Violence Reduction Plan, and request task Officers with the formulation of a Crime Reduction Plan that pulls together the relevant agencies and combines prevention, intervention and inter-agency cooperation, subject to due process. build on this plan and continue to work in partnership with the police, the voluntary community sector, probation, schools and other community safety partners.
- To continue to work and partner with the Metropolitan Police in the sharing of information and joint-tasking in tackling crime.
- To continue the strong record on tackling crime from the previous Labour administration and support this Administration to invest £2.9million in the recruitment of 40 Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs), £1.6million of investment in recruiting 33 new Police Officers over the next three years and £200,000 in CCTV investment.
- To further invest in the Council's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Team, to ensure that action is taken by the administration on this important issue, and look at the expansion of the previous Labour administration's Young Person and VAWG focussed enforcement officers.
- To support the LBTH LGBTQI+ forum to conduct a review of safety concerns for the community in Tower Hamlets, and to resolve to end violence against the LGBTQI+ community in Tower Hamlets to truly become a No Place for Hate borough.
- To support an additional £8.5million of investment on top of the existing £3.4million in youth services through the new Young Tower Hamlets programme, a continued significant investment in Drug Treatment Services and a redesigned and rejuvenated Community Grants programme to help strengthen community cohesion in the Borough, which will be open to all and subject to a fair and transparent allocation system, in turn reducing crime and improving standards of living.
- To work with all housing providers in the Borough to improve the safety of housing and estates in Tower Hamlets, through the assessment of existing planning design and the designing out of crime hotspots and blind spots.

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

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

DECISION

This Council notes:

- The rising levels of crime in Tower Hamlets since 2015.
- That Tower Hamlets is ranked in the top ten of London's most dangerous Boroughs, ranking third out of a possible thirty-two.
- That, according to 2022 data, serious crimes are on the rise and are much higher than the London average, including Anti-Social Behaviour, Drugs, Robberies and Burglaries and violent crime, including periodic explosions in knife crime and murder.
- That it is no coincidence that this rise in crime has coincided with the cuts to police and other key public services in London and the previous administration's indifference and unwillingness to invest in community safety.
- That huge volumes of complaints and concerns have been received by the Mayor at his surgeries and to his office from residents concerned by this increase in crime.
- That crime disproportionately impacts members of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and those on the lowest incomes.

This Council believes:

- That the residents of Tower Hamlets should be able to walk their streets and live in their homes in the knowledge that they are safe, secure and protected.
- That the fear of crime alone has a corrosive impact on people's day-to-day quality of life.
- That to achieve this sense of security, serious investment is required in the Borough's Community Safety services – from Police Officers to Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOS) – to ensure that these numbers can be driven down.
- That investment in key services, such as Youth Services, Community Services and third sector groups formulates an equally important part of any preventative strategy to reduce crime rates in the Borough.
- That the Mayor of London should assist this Council in providing the resources to recruit additional Police Officers.

This Council resolves:

- To support the Mayor and his administration in investing in Community Safety and procuring additional resources to drive down crime rates in the Borough.
- To task Officers with the formulation of a Crime Reduction Plan that pulls together the relevant agencies and combines prevention, intervention and inter-agency cooperation, subject to due process.
- To work and partner with the Metropolitan Police in the sharing of information and joint-tasking in tackling crime.
- To support this Administration to invest £2.9million in the recruitment of 40 Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs), £1.6million of investment in recruiting 33 new Police Officers over the next three years and £200,000 in CCTV investment.
- To support an additional £8.5million of investment on top of the existing £3.4million in youth services through the new *Young Tower Hamlets* programme, a significant investment in Drug Treatment Services and a redesigned and rejuvenated Community Grants programme to help strengthen community cohesion in the Borough, in turn reducing crime and improving standards of living.
- To work with all housing providers in the Borough to improve the safety of housing and estates in Tower Hamlets, through the assessment of existing planning design and the designing out of crime hotspots and blind spots.

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

8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE

Councillor Marc Francis moved and Councillor Amina Ali seconded the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Kabir Ahmed moved and Councillor Harun Miah seconded a proposed amendment to the motion as printed in the tabled papers supplement.

Additions underlined Deletions struck through.

This Council believes:

- ~~Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) has on balance led to a significant improvement in the quality of housing management than was achieved when council housing was last a direct in-house service.~~
- ~~Simply bringing THH back in-house will not deliver the improvements in repairs services and value for money tenants and leaseholders consistently say they want to see.~~

- ~~• Stronger direct accountability to council tenants and leaseholders and to elected councillors is an essential component of the alternative governance arrangements.~~
- ~~• The current arrangements for the democratic oversight of THH's performance are already inadequate and will be even more so if the service is brought back in-house and councillors no longer serve on its Board.~~
- Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) was established as an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) in 2008 to assist with elevating all Tower Hamlets homes to compliance with the *Decent Homes Standard*.
- That the ALMO model has served its purpose, with Tower Hamlets comprising one of only four London Boroughs who still adhere to the ALMO model.
- That another of these Labour-run Boroughs with the ALMO model (Lewisham) have just voted to conclude their ALMO services and bring housing back in-house.
- That the building of new homes and the tackling of the overcrowding crisis in Tower Hamlets, and the maintenance and improvement of existing stock, was and remains the central pledge of Mayor Lutfur Rahman's transformative *Manifesto*.
- That this is reflected in both the Council's *Strategic* and *Delivery* plans.
- The insourcing of the ALMO would enable the council to deliver services to residents living in social and council housing that meet their needs, and assist in the delivery of this Administration's central pledges around housing.
- That this Administration is confident that the insourcing of Tower Hamlets Homes has overwhelming support from residents.
- That Officers have already begun the necessary processes to instigate a review of housing management functions, that will strengthen accountability and resident and stakeholder engagement with the service if it were to come in-house.

This Council therefore resolves:

- ~~• To call on the Executive Mayor to commit to instruct THH/LBTH to proactively organise a minimum of four Tenants & Residents Association meetings on each estate/neighbourhood.~~

- ~~• To call on the Executive Mayor to instruct officers to begin an open and transparent consultation with stakeholders on the level of performance an in-house service would be expected to achieve over the next three years.~~
- ~~• To call on the Executive Mayor to establish and resource either a new Housing Committee of elected councillors to oversee the performance of THH increase the number of meetings of the existing Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-committee to ten each year, with an expanded membership.~~
- To support officers in the process of insourcing Tower Hamlets Homes, should residents vote to return to the Council.
- To regularly update residents and all related stakeholders on the progress of this process.
- To provide reassurances and updates to all Tower Hamlets Homes staff, to ensure that they are aware that their jobs are safe if the service comes in-house.
- To call on the Executive Mayor to re-establish the Borough wide Tenants Federation with resources.

Following debate, the amendment moved by Councillor Kabir Ahmed was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

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

DECISION

This Council notes that:

- Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) was established as an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) in 2008 to assist with elevating all Tower Hamlets homes to compliance with the *Decent Homes Standard*.
- That the ALMO model has served its purpose, with Tower Hamlets comprising one of only four London Boroughs who still adhere to the ALMO model.
- That another of these Labour-run Boroughs with the ALMO model (Lewisham) have just voted to conclude their ALMO services and bring housing back in-house.
- That the building of new homes and the tackling of the overcrowding crisis in Tower Hamlets, and the maintenance and improvement of existing stock, was and remains the central pledge of Mayor Lutfur Rahman's transformative *Manifesto*.

- That this is reflected in both the Council's *Strategic* and *Delivery* plans.
- The insourcing of the ALMO would enable the council to deliver services to residents living in social and council housing that meet their needs, and assist in the delivery of this Administration's central pledges around housing.
- That this Administration is confident that the insourcing of Tower Hamlets Homes has overwhelming support from residents.
- That Officers have already begun the necessary processes to instigate a review of housing management functions, that will strengthen accountability and resident and stakeholder engagement with the service if it were to come in-house.

This Council therefore resolves:

- To support officers in the process of insourcing Tower Hamlets Homes, should residents vote to return to the Council.
- To regularly update residents and all related stakeholders on the progress of this process.
- To provide reassurances and updates to all Tower Hamlets Homes staff, to ensure that they are aware that their jobs are safe if the service comes in-house.
- To call on the Executive Mayor to re-establish the Borough wide Tenants Federation with resources.

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

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

9.1 Report of the Executive: Youth Justice Board Annual Report

The Council considered the report of the Executive setting out the annual report and plan of the Youth Justice Board.

DECISION

1. To agree the Youth Justice Plan set out in appendix 1 to the Youth Justice Board report attached to the cover sheet.

(Action by: James Thomas, Corporate Director, Children and Culture)

10. OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Members' Allowances Scheme - 2022-23 Uplift

The Council to review and note the options set out in the report in relation to the members' allowance scheme. Councillor Maium Talukdar proposed a recommendation, seconded by Councillor Saied Ahmed, that no uplift be provided to the Members Allowances Scheme for 2022-23 and that the Mayor be asked to explore adding a sum equivalent to that saved to the Council's Cost of Living Support Funds.

Following debate, the proposed recommendation was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

DECISION

1. To agree that no uplift be added to the Member Allowances Scheme for 2022-23 and that the Mayor be asked to explore adding a sum equivalent to that saved to the Council's Cost of Living Support Funds.

(**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 Amin Rahman about the Council's accounts.

11.2 Question from Councillor Shubo Hussain about Small Businesses. Councillor Sabina Akhtar asked the question on behalf of Councillor Shubo Hussain.

Due to the lack of time, no further questions from members were considered. A written response to be provided to the questions asked.

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

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The Speaker of the Council agreed a request to bring forward Agenda Item 12.4 'Motion on Greenwich Foot Tunnel'

12.1 Motion Regarding Greenwich Foot Tunnel

Councillor Peter Golds **moved** the motion as printed on the agenda. Councillor Maium Talukdar **seconded** the motion. Councillors agreed to hear this motion.

DECISION

This Council notes that the Royal Borough of Greenwich voted to approve changes to the Bye Laws relating to the Greenwich and Woolwich Foot Tunnels which it has administered since 1986. However these have never been implemented as no agreement was reached between the council's of Newham, Tower Hamlets and the Secretary of State.

The Council further notes:

Much of the controversy has arisen because of an attempt to permit cycling in the tunnel, despite being prohibited for over eighty years.

The report to Greenwich council stated

“No consultation on the proposals has been undertaken, or considered necessary.

The Friends of Greenwich and Woolwich Tunnels are aware of the proposals.”

It continued,

That with regard to Community Safety there are no significant implications arising from this Report.” and:-

“That with regard to Health and Safety there are no significant implications arising from this report.” Concluding:-

“That with regard to Health and Wellbeing there are no significant implications arising from this Report.”

However, the Department of Transport guidance on shared facilities states:

“Converting a footway or footpath to allow use by cyclists should only be done after a rigorous assessment has been carried out. It is vital to ascertain whether it is the best option or not. This can only be done after all on-road solutions have been fully considered and rejected as unsuitable. If so, the conversion must be carefully designed to meet the needs, as far as is practicable, of all its intended users.”

That it is obvious that no assessment, let alone a rigorous assessment, has been undertaken by the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

That the tunnel is designated as a foot tunnel.

That residents of Tower Hamlets are concerned about the safety implications of cyclists riding through the tunnel, which is extremely narrow in places and

completely unsuited to joint usage by cyclists and pedestrians.

Over the rent holiday period pedestrians were assaulted by a cyclist speeding in the tunnel, oblivious to families and children.

The Council under this administration, resolves to undertake a rigorous and impartial assessment as to Health and Safety before approving any changes to the byelaws relating to cycling in the foot tunnel.

The meeting ended at 10.03 p.m.