

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL****HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 15 MARCH 2023****COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL****AGENDA ORDER**

During the meeting the Council agreed to vary the order of business by taking Agenda Item 12.1 (Motion Reaffirming Fair Trade in Tower Hamlets) before Agenda Item 6 (Mayor's Report) and taking Urgent Motion 15.1 (Rogue Landlord Motion) after Agenda Item 6 (Mayor's Report). For clarity, the decisions are presented in the order the items appeared on the agenda. Adjournment.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillor Mufeedah Bustin
- Councillor Kamrul Hussain.
- Councillor Amy Lee

It was noted that Councillors Ayas Miah and Abdul Mannan were joining online but would therefore not be able to vote on any matters on the agenda.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

The following Member for transparency declared a potential interest in relation to:

- **In relation to item 7.1** - Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury due to him being a Locum Social Worker for Pertemps Professional Recruitment.
- **In relation to item - 12.1** Councillor Ayas Miah due him being a private landlord.
- **In relation to item - 12.1** Councillor Abdul Mannan due him being a private landlord.
- **In relation to item – 15.1** Councillors Asma Islam, Ayas Miah and Kabir Ahmed declared Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as they were landlords with HMO/additional licenses properties. They left the room for the duration of that item.
- **In relation to item – 15.1** Councillors Shafi Ahmed, Maium Talukdar, Abdul Mannan, Harun Miah, Abu Chowdhury, Ana Miah, Bellal Uddin, Suluk Ahmed and Ohid Ahmed declared non-pecuniary interests as landlords of properties in the borough.

3. MINUTES**DECISION**

1. Agreed that the unrestricted minutes of the Council meetings held on 18th January 2023 and 1 March 2023 be approved as a correct record of the proceedings and the Speaker was authorised to sign them accordingly.

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

Announcements from the Speaker and the Chief Executive.

See the minutes.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS**5.1 Petition regarding Recognise Cockney as a community language.**

Saif Osmani presented a petition asking the Council to ensure that the Cockney language, identity, and its unique cultural heritage related to the East End of London be recognised as a community language and be celebrated annually on 21st February on International Mother Language Day, and for Cockney to be included in any community language provisions by the Council. Councillor Maium Talukdar, Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning, responded to the matters raised in the petition.

DECISION

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director of Children and Culture for a written response within 28 days.

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

5.2 Petition regarding Road Safety Measures Urgently Needed on Bow Roundabout connecting the A12, Bow Road and Stratford High Street.

Martha Sedgwick and Abdi Mohamed presented a petition asking the Council to engage with Transport for London to urgently implement road safety measures to Bow Roundabout. Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency 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 Redevelopment of Chrisp Street Market and Surrounding area

Terry McGreenera presented a petition to ask why Poplar HARCA and Tower Hamlets Council have failed to keep shopkeepers and market traders informed of what has happened since plans were approved for the redevelopment/gentrification of Chrisp Street Market and surrounding area. 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)

5.4 Petition regarding Fairtrade

Owen Beith and Marie Larvin presented a petition asking the Council to reaffirm and step up its support for Fairtrade in order to address the imbalance of power between the Global North and Global South. Councillor Saied Ahmed for Resources and the Cost of Living 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

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

7.1 ADMINISTRATION MOTION REGARDING MOTION ON DELIVERING SOCIAL CARE FOR ALL

Council considered a motion as printed in the agenda on the delivering of Social Care for all that had been **moved** by Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury and **seconded** by Councillor Maium Miah Talukdar.

Following debate, the motion as moved by Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury was put to the vote and was **agreed** that:

This Council notes:

- ❖ That social care has always been a key priority to Mayor Lutfur Rahman,
- ❖ throughout his time in public office.
- ❖ That understanding the complexities of need, cultural sensitivity and patient priority has been central to all previous policy and legislation historically pursued by the Mayor during his previous administrations.
- ❖ That in his last Market Position Statement on Care, published in 2013, the Mayor pledged to pursue the following key criteria to guarantee and safeguard decency, sensitivity and optimal performance for patients and carers:
 - “All services must be culturally sensitive.
 - “We wish to limit use of block contracts, moving to more flexible contracting arrangements.
 - “We will seek to work with our providers to achieve a balance of value for money and risk that is sustainable for the provider as well as the Council.
 - “We will seek to use our purchasing power to stimulate the local economy and maximise employment opportunities for local people. It is the borough’s highest priority to promote the employment of local residents.
 - “We intend to increase the range of services available, encouraging local, smaller providers.
 - “We would always ask that unless there are good market reasons not to do so, all contractors should pay the London Living Wage. Unless an exception is made contracts will be let with this stipulation.

“We will fund independent support for providers in complex procurements.”

- ❖ That these commitments represented a shift away from the hegemony of three or four large contractors and allowed a democratisation of the market, enabling care services to be tailored to the diverse needs of patients.
- ❖ That – according to the 2021 Census – Tower Hamlets has 17,471 of residents over 65, and 22,526 residents classified as disabled under the Disabilities Act. Many of these residents will be require varying levels of care.
- ❖ That Officers have warned that demographic pressures in social care represent nationally ‘a growing concern for local authorities,’ with over 55,000 residents expected to be over 65, suffering from physical and learning disabilities by 2025.

This Council believes:

- ❖ That to address these pressures, a reimagining of and shift in how the Council delivers its care services is required.

- ❖ That this will require a refreshed approach to procurement; how care is administered by providers; new capital projects to meet these pressures; and a return to a democratised market where smaller care providers have the opportunity to deliver bespoke care services to the residents of Tower Hamlets.
- ❖ That smaller providers should be given the opportunity to deliver services to residents, breaking the monopoly of four or five organisations and enhancing the Council's ability to guarantee tailored, and where necessary, culturally sensitive care to residents.
- ❖ That social value must be a priority in the procurement weighting considered before contracts are awarded and services delivered, ensuring that care is considerate and dignified, as well as cost-effective and efficient.
- ❖ That – building on the Mayor's previous commitment to guarantee carers the London Living Wage (LLW) – all carers should be now be guaranteed minimum. hours, enhancing their ability to provide the best services to their patients and protecting them against the instability and uncertainty of zero-hour contracts.
- ❖ That carers should be recognised as trustworthy and invaluable key workers who provide the most important services to our residents.

This Council resolves:

- ❖ To support the Mayor and Lead member's plans to invest in accessible high1quality social care provision in the borough.
- ❖ To support the Mayor and Lead Member's pledge to develop two bespoke care facilities for adults and children, helping to alleviate the demographic pressures warned against by Officers.
- ❖ To support the Mayor and Lead Member's plans to guarantee hours for all carers, providing them security and stability while they deliver invaluable services to residents.
- ❖ To support the Mayor and Lead Member's pledge to request the prioritisation of 10% social value weighting to all contracts procured through the Council's tendering processes, ensuring that the needs of residents and communities are given fair consideration in the procurement process.
- ❖ To support the Mayor and Lead Member in guaranteeing smaller organisations a chance to provide care to the residents of the Borough.

8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE

(The Opposition Motion was not considered due to lack of time).

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

Nil items

10. OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Members' Allowances Scheme 2023-24

The Council considered the report of the Executive setting out the Members' Allowances Scheme 2023-24. The proposed recommendations were put to the vote and it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. **Adopt** the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Members' Allowances Scheme 2023/24 as set out at Appendix 1 to this report.
2. **Agree** that the Members Allowances Budget be adjusted as necessary to cover the costs following the uprating of the local government pay award as set out at 3.6 of the report.
3. **Agree** that the General Purposes Committee lead on any required engagement with any London Independent Remuneration Panel, reporting back to Council as required for decision.

10.2 Committee Calendar 2023-24

The Council considered a report proposes a calendar of Council, Committee, and other meetings for the forthcoming municipal year 2023/24.

RESOLVED to:

1. **Approve** the proposed calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2023/24 as set out in **Appendix 1** of the report.
2. **Delegate** to the Monitoring Officer the authority to agree meeting dates for any new Committees or Panels that are set up subsequent to this report being presented to Council, subject to appropriate consultation with Members.

10.3 Agree Exit Payments

The Council considered a report of the Interim Corporate Director, Resources, listing potential exit payments were the overall package is likely to exceed £99,999.

It was noted that this unrestricted report relates to an exempt/confidential report at agenda **item 14.1**. Following debate, the proposed recommendations were put to the vote and it was **RESOLVED** to:

- A. **Note** and **approve** the exit payments, including redundancy and the cost of the early payment of pension benefits, resulting from the deletion of the posts following the restructure of the service; and
- B. **Note** that the redundancy payment is part of the individuals' contractual terms and conditions of employment and that the early payment of pension benefits is linked to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

11. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(No Questions were considered due to lack of time).

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**12.1 MOTION RE: REAFFIRMING FAIRTRADE IN TOWER HAMLETS**

A motion was considered on reaffirming Fairtrade in Tower Hamlets was **moved** by Councillor Abdul Wahid and **seconded** by Councillor Nathalie Bienfait. Following debate, the motion as moved by Councillor Abdul Wahid was put to the vote and was **agreed** that:

This Council notes:

- Next year will be the 30th anniversary of the U.K. launch of the Fairtrade Mark, a labelling scheme administered by the Fairtrade Foundation that identifies products grown and processed to Fairtrade Standards, including sustainable social, economic, and environmental criteria. Many of the organisations involved are cooperatives of small-scale farmers and workers.
- Tower Hamlets Council passed a unanimous resolution on the 1st of March 2006 to actively support and promote Fairtrade. Council acknowledges in particular, the work of the Teams which have supported Tower Hamlets in its Fairtrade journey: Sustainability, Procurement, Contracts and Communication.
- A Tower Hamlets Fairtrade Borough Steering Group was set up, and on 11th January 2007, it was successful in applying for Fairtrade Borough Status, having satisfied Fairtrade criteria including Council support, Council use of Fairtrade products, availability of Fairtrade products in local shops, catering establishments, workplaces, and community organisations, and popular support for Fairtrade campaigning.
- Since 2007, the Council has maintained its support for Fairtrade-related activities, notably through the integration of its support for Fairtrade with its sustainable and ethical procurement policy. Making it a requirement for the supply of bananas and juices to be Fairtrade in the Schools Canteen Contract contributed to Tower Hamlets being awarded the Soil Association Gold Food for Life Award.
- The Tower Hamlets Fairtrade Steering Group has worked with local stores, cinemas, bookshops, cafes and other establishments in Fairtrade-related events and activities. Local residents and workers have contributed to and supported Fairtrade campaigns. This has enabled Tower Hamlets to retain its Fairtrade Borough status since 2007.
- There are now over 600 Fairtrade Communities in the UK and more than 2,000 globally. London is the biggest Fairtrade City in the world and Tower Hamlets contributes to that positive story.

- Tower Hamlets is home to a diversity of communities with many having family, cultural ties, and roots in farming communities in a multitude of countries worldwide. Many have their own experiences to inform their personal support for Fairtrade.
- Efforts to combat injustice and deprivation, fight climate change and improve social and economic conditions in the borough have established a tradition of community support. for social justice, economic reform and global solidarity which aligns with the Fairtrade. movement.
- The U.K. Fairtrade market is now one of the world's largest. Globally, Fairtrade sales have generated hundreds of millions of pounds in Fairtrade Premiums which have enabled. farmers in 73 countries to invest in health, education, and social welfare measures, as well. as attempt to mitigate the devastating impact of climate change, increase sustainable production, and bolster global food security.
- Despite this positive news, exploitation remains rampant in global supply chains. More than 40 million people are trapped in modern slavery and 152 million young people. in child labour. Hundreds of millions are earning less than a living income or wage. Fairtrade and its supporters in Tower Hamlets have the capacity to influence change in global supply chains, including in the textile industry and garment trade and the cocoa and chocolate sector, as well as in the general areas of child labour and modern slavery.

This Council resolves that:

- Fairtrade and the wider Fair Trade movement has a significant contribution to make towards ending exploitation, mitigating the impact of Climate Change, and achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- The recently agreed International Fair Trade Charter should be welcomed, with its vision of transforming trade to work for people and planet.
- The Fairtrade principles of paying minimum prices to protect producers from market volatility, and a 'premium' that is wholly managed by farmers and workers themselves are. crucial to systemic change.
- Public bodies, including local authorities, should support ethical procurement policies, using their purchasing power to implement Fairtrade principles and standards and ensure that their supply chains, at home and abroad, are sustainable and free of exploitation, including modern slavery.
- Council suppliers operating through global supply chains should be encouraged to operate sustainably and responsibly. They should ensure that their trading practices uphold. human rights and Fairtrade principles such as the payment of living wages and the achievement of living incomes for all.

This Council resolves to:

- Renew its commitment to maintaining 'Fairtrade Borough' status, including serving Fairtrade certified tea and coffee in meetings and ensuring that Fairtrade Mark - certified. food and drink options are widely available internally in its canteens and vending machines, including at the new Town Hall in Whitechapel.
- Review its procurement policy, including its catering offer, to ensure that Fairtrade produce is chosen wherever possible, and that Fair Trade considerations are included as a preference in any contracts going out to tender.
- Be recognised by the residents and business community of Tower Hamlets, suppliers, employees, and other local authorities as a borough that actively supports and promotes Fairtrade.
- Continue to work with the Fairtrade Borough Steering Group, by identifying a lead member to support the work going forward, including increasing awareness and availability. of Fairtrade products within Tower Hamlets' cafes, shops, schools, universities, faith groups, workplaces, and organisations.

(Motions 12.2 and 12.3 were not considered due to lack of time.)

13. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

A Motion to exclude the press and public was not considered at this meeting.

14. EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

14.1 Agree Exit Payments

The minute for this item is presented under Agenda Item 10.3 above.

15. URGENT MOTION FOR DEBATE

15.1 ROGUE LANDLORD MOTION

Council considered the following urgent motion for debate tabled at the meeting **moved** by Councillor Saied Ahmed and **seconded** by Councillor Maium Talukdar.

Councillor Marc Francis **moved** and Councillor Rebaka Sultana **seconded** the following proposed amendment that an additional recommendation be added as follows:

- This Council should urgently determine whether the level of resources available to inspect HMOs and other properties in the private rented sector are adequate and to bring back a report on this to Housing Scrutiny and Full Council.

Following debate, the amendment moved by Councillor Marc Francis was put to the vote and was **defeated**. The motion as moved by Councillor Saied Ahmed was then put to the vote and it was and was **agreed** that:

This Council notes:

- The tragic death of Mizanur Rahman in a housefire at 18 Maddocks House, Tarling West Estate, Shadwell, and the serious injuries sustained by several others.
- That the property was licensed as an ‘additional House in Multiple Occupation’ (HMO) with a declared occupancy of 3 individuals from two households, managed by Tower Hamlets Homes (THH), the Council’s Arms-Length Management Organisation (ALMO).
- That at least 16 people were living in the house, with several bunkbeds in one room, representing a serious breach of the license agreement.
- That many of those in living in the house were low-paid workers.
- That resident complaints had been received as early as September 2021.
- That emergency hotel accommodation has been provided to 17 people along with a weekly allowance and welfare support and housing advice, and that at the request of Mayor Lutfur Rahman, this accommodation will be extended to cover the entire period of Ramadan.
- That while the flat leasehold is owned by a private landlord, the freehold is owned by the council with Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) managing the communal area.
- That in his *Manifesto*, Mayor Lutfur Rahman called for a ‘fix [to] the landlord registration scheme to ensure it delivers on its purpose of driving up standards in the private sector, including landlord rent disclosure.’
- That this is also reflected in the Council’s *Strategic Action Plan*, which states that the Council will ‘work with social and private landlords to encourage them to improve the conditions of the homes they let and the service they provide to their tenants.’
- That the Mayor’s Office and Officers have already begun work on how the Council can strengthen Registered Social Landlord (RSL) accountability and the Council’s ability to respond to complaints from residents concerning issues regarding over-occupation and license breaches.
- That in October, the Mayor commissioned a consultation to strengthen licensing and regulation of private landlords to safeguard tenants’ rights.

That this Council believes:

- This tragedy represents an abuse of the most socially and economically vulnerable residents and workers by a greedy, vulturous, and predatory class of landlord.
- That an investigation should be called to establish the reasons for this incident, and to identify any failures that contributed to it.
- That a full investigation should also be launched.
- That the urgent work already underway concerning the enhanced monitoring and targeting of rogue landlords and the needs of vulnerable residents needs to be accelerated to prevent such tragedies from recurring.

That this Council resolves:

- That all members should support the Mayor's call for an investigation into this incident.
- That the Council should identify where possible any potential failings that contributed to this tragedy.
- That the Council should be fully cooperative with any potential criminal investigation.

The meeting ended at 10.45 p.m.