

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2015

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

NOTE - AGENDA ORDER

During the meeting the Council agreed to vary the order of business. To aid clarity, the Decision Sheet is presented in the order that the items originally appeared on the agenda. Urgent Motions, moved with the agreement of the Council without notice, are listed at Item 13.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Abdul Asad
- Councillor Oliur Rahman

(Action by: John S. Williams, Service Head Democratic Services)

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Marc Francis declared a non Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the Motion regarding Circle Housing Group & Old Ford Housing Association, moved with the agreement of the Council without notice under item 13. This was on the basis that the Councillor was a Board Member of Old Ford Housing Association. The Councillor left the meeting for the consideration of this motion.

3. MINUTES

DECISION

That the unrestricted minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 November 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly.

(Action by: John S. Williams, Service Head, Democratic Services)

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

Please see the minutes.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS**5.1 Petition regarding licensing in Poplar High Street, E14 .**

Mr Dulal Uddin addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, presenting the revised petition as set out in the supplementary agenda and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

DECISION

That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Communities, Localities and Culture, for a written response on any outstanding matters within 28 days.

(Action by: Stephen Halsey, Corporate Director, Communities, Localities and Culture)

5.2 Petition entitled 'stop G4S bidding contracts in Tower Hamlets'

Ms Tahsin Ahmed addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Alibor Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Resources, then responded to the matters raised in the petition.

DECISION

That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Resources, for a written response on any outstanding matters within 28 days.

(Action by: Chris Holme Corporate Director, Resources)

5.3 Petition entitled 'Count Tower Hamlets' votes in Tower Hamlets!'

The petition was not presented to the meeting due to the absence of the petitioners.

6. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The following questions and in each case a supplementary question were put and were responded to by the relevant Executive Member:-

- 6.1 Question from Mrs Margaret Bradley regarding the quality of leaseholder services provided by Tower Hamlets Homes.
- 6.2 Question from Mr P.B. Prasad regarding East End Homes and its plans to demolish houses on the Holland Estate.
- 6.4 Question from Mr Mark Taylor about the standard of homes in the private rental market and the Council's plans to address such issues.
- 6.5 Question from Mr Azizur Rahman about the impact of funding cuts in the Borough since 2010 (No supplementary question was asked).
- 6.6 Question from Ms Eileen Short about the March for Homes and whether the Council would support the march through the Borough.

Question 6.3 was not put due to the absence of the questioner. Questions 6.7 to 6.9 were not put due to lack of time. Written responses would be provided to these questions.

(Action by: John S. Williams, Service Head, Democratic Services – to arrange written responses)

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

Please see minutes.

8. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following questions and in each case a supplementary question were put and were responded to by the relevant Executive Member:-

- 8.1 Question from Councillor Asma Begum regarding the Mayor's attendance of the Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 8.2 Question from Councillor Abjol Miah regarding the Mayor's initiatives to support residents in view of Government cuts.
- 8.3 Question from Councillor Craig Aston on the costs incurred by the Council on judicial reviews and legal cases in 2014.
- 8.4 Question from Councillor John Pierce about the Mayor's visits to the Rich Mix Arts Centre in the previous year.
- 8.5 Question from Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim about the local Labour and Conservative Parties' opposition to the Mayor's initiatives (No supplementary question was asked).

- 8.6 Question from Councillor Julia Dockerill regarding discussions with Transport for London to improve highway safety at the junction of Dock Street and the Highway.
- 8.7 Question from Councillor Ayas Miah about the operation of the parking permit scheme in car free zones.
- 8.8 Question from Councillor Mohammed Maium Miah about measures to improve the educational attainment of White British Free School Meals pupils (No supplementary question was asked).
- 8.9 Question from Councillor Chris Chapman about the impact of development of the Isle of Dogs area on the water system.
- 8.10 Question from Councillor Helal Uddin about plans to further improve community cohesion in the Borough.
- 8.11 Question from Councillor Gulam Kibriya Choudhury about plans to tackle the government cuts (No supplementary question was asked).
- 8.12 Question from Councillor Andrew Wood about the decline in the percentage of primary school pupils attending rated by OFSTED as outstanding in the Borough.

Questions 8.13 to 8.22 were not put due to lack of time. Written responses would be provided to the questions.

(Action by: John S. Williams, Service Head, Democratic Services – to arrange written responses)

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

9.1 Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on matters referred by the Council

Councillor Joshua Peck, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, moved the report. In doing so however, he stated that he had not seen the report prior to publication and did not believe that it was fully accurate in conveying the findings of the Committee on the matter.

DECISION

That the report, and the observations of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee thereon, be noted.

10. TO RECEIVE REPORTS AND QUESTIONS ON JOINT ARRANGEMENTS/EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS (IF ANY)

There was no business to transact under this agenda item.

11. OTHER BUSINESS (IF ANY)

There was no business to transact under this agenda item.

12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**12.2 Motion regarding Docklands Sailing Centre**

Prior to the debate on this motion, the Interim Monitoring Officer advised the Council. He stated that members of the Strategic Development Committee would be aware that they had a duty to consider any planning application that came before the Committee on its merits and on the basis of all the information presented to the Committee. Those Members should therefore not make any contribution to the current debate that could indicate that they were predetermined in relation to any potential planning application. The Interim Monitoring Officer also advised the meeting that the Council could not bind the Strategic Development Committee in its consideration of a planning matter and therefore in the event that the second proposed resolution was agreed, this would not have effect.

Councillor Dave Chesterton **moved**, and Councillor Andrew Wood **seconded**, the motion as set out in the agenda.

Following debate the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

DECISION

This Council Notes:

1. The developers of the Westferry Printers site are currently going through pre-application public consultations.
2. The Sailing Centre is concerned about the potential effect development alongside the Millwall Dock may have on the wind and the detrimental impact this may have on sailing and other watersports.
3. The Sailing Centre has made a number of representations to the developers; so far the Sailing Centre's concerns have been largely ignored.
4. The Sailing Centre is the borough's premier watersports centre and among the largest public open space in Tower Hamlets. Pressures on public infrastructure as a result of population increases arising from new developments are well understood. The Council must protect its public open spaces for use by current and future generations.

This Council Believes:

1. Pressures on public infrastructure as a result of population increases arising from new developments are well understood.
2. The Council must protect its public open spaces for use by current and future generations.
3. Council should continue to recognise the importance of the Docklands Sailing Centre in enabling use of one of the largest areas of open space in Tower Hamlets by the whole community for sport and recreation, with unique opportunities for education and employment.

This Council resolves:

1. To protect the Docklands Sailing Centre from the consequences of property development which may prevent the continued use of the Millwall Docks for those uses and the charitable purposes of the Docklands Sailing Centre Trust.
2. To exercise its powers as local planning authority, to ensure any development on the West Ferry Printers site does not cause any detriment to sailing and use of the Millwall Docks from Docklands Sailing Centre.

(Action by: Aman Dalvi, Corporate Director, Development and Renewal)

[Note: Members of the Strategic Development Committee wished it recorded that they abstained from voting on the above motion.]

12.3 Motion regarding solidarity with French citizens

Prior to the debate on this motion, the Speaker of the Council had referred to the terrible events that took place in Paris two weeks earlier, when twelve people lost their lives as a result of terrorist actions. He invited the Council to stand and observe a minute's silence in memory of those who died and in solidarity with the people of Paris.

Councillor Chris Chapman **moved**, and Councillor Julia Dockerill **seconded**, the motion as set out in the agenda.

Councillor Shiria Khatun **moved**, and Councillor Rachael Saunders **seconded**, an amendment to insert 'and citizens at the Jewish supermarket' under the third paragraph.

Following debate the amendment was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The motion as amended was then put to the vote and was **agreed** unanimously.

DECISION

This Council Notes:

- In this year of Magna Carta, original copies of which were circulated throughout the Country in Anglo Norman French, The Council of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets reaffirms the principles of freedom of speech, which have been hard won over successive centuries and condemns the atrocities in France this month.
- That London is the sixth largest French City in the world and that we support the loss shared by our French neighbours in this Borough, City and those just twenty one miles across the Channel.
- The wickedness of those who brutally murdered journalists, police officers and citizens at the Jewish supermarket will not divide the people of Europe, who have fought for the basic freedoms of speech and assembly, regardless of our different nationalities.

This Council resolves that the Speaker of Tower Hamlets writes to Her Excellency Madame Sylvie Bermann, Ambassador of the Republic of France to show our solidarity with our French fellow citizens over this tragedy.

(Action by: John S. Williams, Service Head, Democratic Services)

Motions 12.1 and 12.4 –12.13 were not debated due to lack of time.

13. URGENT MOTIONS

The Council agreed to suspend Procedure Rule 13.1 to enable the following urgent motions to be debated without notice:

13.1 Motion regarding Waste Management Strategy

Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs **moved**, and Councillor John Pierce **seconded**, a tabled motion on the above matter.

Following debate the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

DECISION

This council notes:

- that the Cabinet Paper making significant proposals about the future of waste management in Tower Hamlets was withdrawn on 7th January without any public discussion
- that the proposals have concerning implications for the cost, scrutiny and efficiency of rubbish and recycling collection in the borough, including multiple contracts with variable prices and no local depot which could lead to delays in collection and fewer local jobs

- that the proposals fail to investigate all options, such as whether costs could be reduced and scrutiny of services improved by bringing waste management services in-house

This council further notes:

- that there are already problems with waste management in the borough, with local residents regularly raising concerns about dirty streets, missed rubbish collections and flytipping hotspots
- that this has been exacerbated by the Mayor bringing in charges for bulk rubbish collection back in June 2012
- that residents rightly expect the council to deliver on basic services and ensure our streets are kept clean
- that despite improvements in recycling rates, many residents still struggle to recycle as much as they could, due to inadequate purple bin capacity and lack of facilities to recycle food waste in many blocks
- that the Budget includes worrying cuts to monitoring of street cleaning

This council believes:

- that there is an urgent need to get a grip on clean streets and recycling rates
- that the waste management strategy must be used as an opportunity to tackle these problems while ensuring value for money for local taxpayers
- that all options for waste management must be thoroughly considered and openly discussed in public

This council resolves:

- to call on Mayor Lutfur Rahman to protect local waste services including a local depot
- to call on the executive to thoroughly investigate the option of bringing waste services in house
- to instruct officers to explicitly identify how the new waste management proposals will improve street cleaning, flytipping collection and recycling rates, including more options for recycling for those living in blocks

(Action by: Stephen Halsey, Corporate Director, Communities, Localities and Culture)

13.2 Motion regarding Wasted Public Money

Councillor Rachael Saunders **moved**, and Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed **seconded**, a tabled motion on the above matter.

Following debate the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

DECISION

This council notes:

- The £38,735 of taxpayers' money spent by the Mayor on judicial review of the government's decision to send in PwC inspectors.
- The £81,924.70 of taxpayers' money spent by the Mayor to employ the law firm Taylor Wessing in response to the Panorama program.
- The £41,144 of taxpayers' money spent by the Mayor to employ the communication consultancy company Champollion in response to the Panorama program.

This council further notes:

- The Mayor's intention to begin judicial review of directions from the Department of Communities and Local Government.

This council believes:

- that public money has been wasted.
- that any further legal action should be funded by the Mayor personally, rather than from public funds.

This council resolves:

- to call on Mayor Lutfur Rahman to stop wasting public money.
- to call on the Mayor to personally fund any further legal action.

13.3 Motion regarding Circle Housing Group & Old Ford Housing Association

Councillor Amina Ali **moved**, and Councillor Joshua Peck **seconded**, a tabled motion on the above matter.

Following debate the motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

DECISION

This Council notes that:

- Old Ford Housing Association was established in 1998 as the successor body to the Tower Hamlets Housing Action Trust, which had been responsible for the redevelopment of the Tredegar, Monteith and Lefevre estates in Bow;
- OFHA was a subsidiary of Circle 33 Housing Trust for financing purposes, but was accountable to its own Board of tenants, leaseholders and independent members;
- OFHA completed this redevelopment programme to a good standard and generally enjoyed high levels of satisfaction from residents;
- In 2005, Circle 33 merged with Anglia Housing to form Circle Anglia. Other housing associations have been merged into the group since then to form Circle Housing Group;

- In 2007, LBTH transferred the “Parkside” estates – Lanfranc, Locton, Ranwell and McCullum – to OFHA under the Housing Choice programme to bring them up to the Decent Homes Standard within five years;
- OFHA fitted all tenants’ homes with new kitchens and bathrooms by 2012, but other promises within the “Offer Document” have not been kept, including external works to at least a dozen blocks, environmental works on other parts of the estates and the Overcrowding Reduction Initiative;
- In 2013, Circle Housing Group required Old Ford to terminate its Repairs & Maintenance contract with Mears and Major Works contract with Apollo to sign up to a new group-wide contract with Kier. The performance of this contractor has been exceptionally poor in the 15 months since then, with appointments repeatedly missed, phone calls going unanswered and repairs not being carried out to a satisfactory standard, leading to hundreds of complaints;
- Circle Housing Group is now taking forward a restructuring programme, which involves the closure of Old Ford’s offices in Bow and Stratford. When questioned on this by staff, a member of Circle Housing Group’s Senior Management Team is reported to have said that Old Ford could use a stall in Roman Road market;
- Despite repeated promises by Circle Housing Group that an action plan was in place, the Repairs & Maintenance service remains inadequate and most of the major works committed to by Circle are now more than two years overdue;
- The Homes & Communities Agency regulator is now investigating these failings.

This Council believes that:

- By terminating the contract with Mears, Circle Housing Group has undermined Old Ford’s ability to provide an adequate Repairs & Maintenance service, resulting in “Serious Detriment” to its residents;
- By terminating the contract with Apollo, Circle Housing Group has significantly delayed Old Ford’s major works programme of external works to the Parkside estates, leaving it in breach of the promises made to tenants and leaseholders in the 2005 “Offer Document” and listed as “Qualifying Works” in Schedule 17 of the Transfer Agreement;
- The proposed closure of Old Ford’s offices is also a breach of the specific promises made to tenants and leaseholders on the Parkside estates in the 2005 “Offer Document”.

This Council resolves:

- To write to the Homes & Communities Agency, calling for the regulator to investigate whether residents have suffered serious

detriment as a result of the failings of the Repairs & Maintenance contract;

- To support Old Ford residents in preparing their own submission to the Homes and Communities Agency
- To call on the Mayor to suspend Circle Housing Group as a Preferred Development Partner in Tower Hamlets with immediate effect;
- To call on the Mayor to instruct officers to explore options for legal proceedings against Circle Housing Group for breach of Schedule 17 of the Transfer Agreement and to report back to Full Council on the possibility of such proceedings by 15th April.

(Action by: Aman Dalvi, Corporate Director, Development and Renewal)

The meeting ended at 10.44 p.m.