

Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL Wednesday 18 November 2020	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Motions submitted by Members of the Council	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services
Wards affected	All wards

SUMMARY

1. Four motions have been submitted by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 11 for debate at the Council meeting on Wednesday 18th November 2020
2. The motions submitted are listed overleaf. In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules, the motions alternate between the administration and the other Political Groups, with the Opposition Group motions starting with the largest Political Group not to have that meeting's Opposition Motion Debate slot.
3. Motions must be about matters for which the Council has a responsibility or which affect the Borough. A motion may not be moved which is substantially the same as a motion which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.
4. There is no specific duration set for this agenda item and consideration of the attached motions may continue until the time limit for the meeting is reached. The guillotine procedure at Council Procedure Rule 9.2 does not apply to motions on notice and any of the attached motions which have not been put to the vote when the time limit for the meeting is reached will be deemed to have fallen. A motion which is not put to the vote at the current meeting may be resubmitted for the next meeting but is not automatically carried forward.

MOTIONS

Set out overleaf is the motions that have been submitted.

12.1 Motion regarding the Union Learning Fund

Proposer: Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman

Seconder: Councillor Mufeedah Bustin

This council notes:

1. On Tuesday 6 October, the TUC received a letter from the Department for Education saying that ministers have decided to end the Union Learning Fund from March 2021.
2. The Union Learning Fund (ULF) was set up in 1998 to support trade unions to widen access to learning and training in workplaces for both union members and non-members. The fund supports workplace projects across England, and is coordinated by the TUC.
3. Each year around 200,000 workers are supported into learning or training with union support through the ULF and the TUC. These learners undertake all sorts of job-relevant learning and training, including basic literacy and numeracy, ICT skills, apprenticeships and traineeships, vocational training, continuing professional development and many other informal and formal courses.
4. In 2019–20, the ULF was worth £12m. If upheld this decision will effectively end union-brokered skills training, and will undermine key government skills and retraining priorities at a crucial moment for our economy and especially for our local economy in Tower Hamlets.
5. That the Covid-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the local economy in Tower Hamlets, and that the Government should not be withdrawing important support schemes such as the ULF.
6. The Union Learning Fund provides good quality learning and training which complements the employment and training support offered by Tower Hamlets Council through workpath.

This council understands that:

1. Union learning reaches people that other DfE programmes do not reach.
2. There is an independent evaluation of the Union Learning Fund every two years. It was most recently evaluated by the University of Exeter in 2018. They spoke to 2,459 learners, and found:
 - Over two-thirds (68 per cent) of learners with no previous qualifications got a qualification.
 - 47 per cent of those with entry level or level 1 qualifications got a qualification at a higher level.
 - Four in five (80 per cent) said they had developed skills that they could transfer to a new job.
 - Two in three (62 per cent) said their new skills made them more effective in their current job.
 - One in five (19 per cent) said they had been promoted or given increased responsibility and one in 10 (11 per cent) got a pay rise.

3. The 2018 independent evaluation found that union learning provided excellent value for money:
 - For every £1 spent on the Union Learning Fund, there is a return of £12.30: £7.60 to the worker, £4.70 to the employer.
 - The Union Learning Fund delivers an estimated net contribution to the economy of more than £1.4bn as a result of a boost to jobs, wages and productivity.
 - The return to the exchequer (through reduced spending on welfare benefits and other factors resulting from the boost to jobs and wages) is £3.57 for each £1 spent on the Union Learning Fund.
 - The £12m government funding levered in an additional £54m from employers, unions and training providers in 2019–20.
4. The government has said it will put reskilling workers at the heart of its economic recovery plans after the pandemic. In September 2020, the government announced a new fully funded entitlement to achieve a first level 3 qualification, delivered through the National Skills Fund. Union learning is ideally placed to support this aspiration, in three ways:
 - directly, through delivering relevant level 3 courses to workplace learners, which is already a core function of the Union Learning Fund and was assessed as highly effective by the 2018 independent evaluation
 - directly, through enabling those with basic skills to learn and develop, putting them in a position to progress to level 3 skills
5. Successive governments of all parties have valued this role – and have supported the Union Learning Fund. As government funding, it is paid as a contract and is subject to stringent monitoring requirements. Union Learning Fund money can only be spent on the direct costs of getting working people into learning and skills training, and the associated costs of delivering this programme.
6. ULF projects adapted quickly to delivering online learning and training for workers during the pandemic and have actually surpassed the number of outcomes expected by government since the beginning of April.

This council resolves to:

1. Express its public support for the continuation of the Union Learning Fund
2. Raise this issue with our local MPs and encourage them to call on the government to reverse its decision

12.2 Motion regarding Working from Home threat to the finances of Tower Hamlets Council and its residents

Proposed by: Councillor Peter Golds
Seconded by: Councillor Andrew Wood

The Council notes:

- That in the MTFs for 2021 39% of the Councils income, £134 million is due to come from Retained Business Rates;
- The permanent closure of a range of retailers and restaurants in the Canary Wharf estate;
- Reports that in the future businesses may dramatically reduce the number of people visiting offices each day and that some may change their model to work from home;
- When properties are left empty they can only claim a three-month business rates exemption but must otherwise be paid but that when there is no demand for a property, the property will command no annual rent and it may be removed from the rating list or subject to a reduced rateable value;
- That demand for new build property in Aldgate, Whitechapel and E14 is predicated in large part on their closeness to the employment centres of the City of London and Canary Wharf;
- That new build property contributes substantially to the Councils affording housing targets and the delivery of substantial sums of money in the form of CIL, New Homes Bonus and new Council tax;
- The decision by developers like Ballymore to delay opening their sales office for Millharbour Village;
- The large number of Tower Hamlets residents employed (formally or informally) in the services sector dependent on workers as well as tourists visiting Tower Hamlets.

This council further notes:

That a Financial Times article on the 16th September 2020 was titled;

“Canary Wharf has a flood of new homes but only a trickle of returning workers Prices and sales have fallen in the London financial district and bankers and lawyers are staying away”

It went on to say

“Though the area is rapidly changing, Canary Wharf and the surrounding Docklands are often criticised for being a little soulless: an employment district with flats attached.... When finished, these apartments will arrive into an area awash with newly built homes. Tower Hamlets, in which Canary Wharf sits, has more unsold homes under construction than any other London borough, according to Moliar. By the end of June, the number was just under 4,000 — around a third of the total in inner London”

And another Financial Times article titled *“How Covid-19 is altering Canary Wharf’s purpose London’s Docklands is used to being reinvented — it just wasn’t expecting to be so again quite yet”*

Which said

“More pertinently, will we yearn to live in them? To find ways of inhabiting this now-endangered archetype, the tall office tower, which once looked like the future and now looks suspiciously like the past?”

“Now, walking around a bleak, almost empty Canary Wharf on a rainy day in what not so long ago would have been rush hour, I could not help thinking whether the same might happen to the area’s office blocks...It was the question that struck me as I wandered between the towers and beside the waterways, and noticed that the only real activity was construction. Just as the towers are emptying out, new ones are being built, most intensively at Wood Wharf, to house exactly the workers who are no longer working in the other towers”

This Council believes:

That working from home maybe a greater threat to the economy of Tower Hamlets than Brexit (which also remains an issue) if it reduces the desire for office space and new build apartments in Tower Hamlets.

That employment led growth in Canary Wharf and the City of London has led growth in Tower Hamlets for a generation now.

That all of that maybe at risk now, making the Councils ambitions ever harder to achieve.

We need to re-invent the Tower Hamlets model that we can no longer rely on growth arriving and copy our neighbouring Boroughs to the east who have had to be more pro-active in attracting new businesses like Dagenham recently attracting a £300 million investment in a film and TV studio.

This Council therefore recommends:

A clear focus on making the growth areas in Tower Hamlets more attractive places for businesses, workers and residents, to retain those we have and to attract new ones.

That like other Boroughs we will need to be more pro-active in creating great places that are not “soulless” but which rather offer the best combination of business, leisure and sports opportunities.

That we aspire to having the best of everything, spending the S106, CIL and New Homes Bonus for example on (but not limited to) to help deliver;

- Rebuild leisure centres like St George’s and Tiller road to offer the best combination of physical exercise in large purpose-built attractive buildings;
- Attract new industries to Tower Hamlets by doing everything we can to encourage health research or information technology in Tower Hamlets;
- Develop attractive walking & cycle routes along the river Lea with bridges to Newham;
- Sailing in the Thames from the DSWC and by the Sea Scouts;
- Swimming in the docks for those working at Canary Wharf as well as local kids;
- The best playgrounds in Europe so that residents from other Boroughs travel here rather than go to Greenwich;
- Support great organisations like Mudchute Farm with CIL money so that they have nice toilets, and CCTV to keep the animals safe;

To have a clear focus on making Tower Hamlets the best place to live and work in London.

12.3 Motion regarding Care Full Pay

Proposer: Councillor Rachel Blake

Seconder: Councillor Val Whitehead

This council notes:

1. The GMB union has launched its Care Full Pay campaign calling for full occupational sick pay for residential social care staff with the aim of persuading care providers and Government that full sick pay is one of the most effective forms of infection prevention in care homes. The main objectives being
 - a. Full occupational sick pay for those working in residential social care.
 - b. Covid-19 full sick pay as a step to full sick pay.
 - c. Promote full sick pay as an infection control measure
2. The UK has one of the lowest levels of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) in Europe. Over time, the value of the payment has been eroded, and it now equates to around a fifth of median earnings. The April 2020 SSP rate is £95.85 per week.
3. According to the 2020 Vivaldi study, 77 per cent of care home workers received SSP-only (and a further 7 per cent did not receive any sick pay coverage).
4. The Government set up the Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund with the primary purpose of this fund to support adult social care providers to reduce the rate of COVID-19 transmission in and between care and support wider workforce resilience.
5. The Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund was initially set up with £600 million in funding and was paid out in two tranches. The first has been paid to local authorities on 22 May 2020. The second tranche paid in July 2020.
6. The Government have now agreed to extend the Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund for social care until March 2021, with an additional £546 million for infection control in care in September 2020.
7. Dealing with our post Covid-19 future we will need more rigid infection control measures in our care system.
8. That social care workers provide a vital service in Tower Hamlets and across the country, and are greatly valued.

This council understands that:

1. A strong body of emerging evidence links inadequate sickness pay to higher infection rates, and a reluctance to return to work including:
 - a. The initial findings of the Vivaldi study include tentative evidence that 'in care homes where staff receive sick pay, there are lower levels of infection in residents.
 - b. A recent survey of furloughed and non-furloughed workers found that 'workers without employer-provided sick pay have a significantly lower willingness to pay to return to work,' and also that 'workers without additional sick pay are significantly more likely to continue to work even with mild coronavirus symptoms.'
 - c. In Spain, a reduction in the generosity of sick pay arrangements was associated with 'huge increases in both the proportion of relapses and working accidents rates.'
2. A GMB survey of nearly 1000 social care workers found that:
 - a. 77 per cent of care workers said they would be inclined to return to work before they were ready if they were on SSP.

- b. 80 per cent of respondents said they would be forced to borrow off family or friends to make ends meet if they were put on SSP.

This council resolves to:

1. Express its public support for GMB union's Care Full Pay campaign.
2. To call on the government to fund local authorities sufficiently so that they can commission care home providers and domiciliary care agencies to pay full occupational sick pay to the social care workforce
3. To recommend to providers receiving allocated funds from the Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund to pay full occupational sick pay as a priority, noting that guidance does give other uses for the ICF that minimise staff movement and reduce the risk of transmission.
4. To report how the Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund granted to the council in May and July 2020 was spent by care providers, to inform future ICF.
5. To call on the government to ensure guidance for all future Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund strongly stipulate full sick pay as a priority.

12.4 Motion regarding the treatment of Uyghur Muslims in China and the situation in Hong Kong

Proposer: Councillor Rabina Khan

Secunder: Councillor Peter Golds

This Council notes:

1. The purchase of the Royal Mint site in Tower Hamlets for the new People's Republic of China London embassy building.
2. The number of residents living in Tower Hamlets from the People's Republic of China including Hong Kong residents. In addition the number of businesses from that country active and investing in Tower Hamlets.
3. The long history dating back to before the 1880's of the Chinese community in Tower Hamlets and that many people from the region are now citizens of the United Kingdom.
4. The historic ties between China, Hong Kong and Tower Hamlets due to the trade between these two countries, whether tea shipped into the docks or from the trading desks of the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation (now HSBC) whose global headquarters are in Tower Hamlets.

This Council is concerned that:

5. In Xinjiang, there is compelling evidence including from the Chinese authorities' own documents of systematic human rights violations.
6. The reports of arbitrary detention, widespread surveillance and restrictions, particularly targeting Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang have been widely shared in Tower Hamlets.
7. That the culture and religion of minorities have been severely restricted, and that the UK government has seen credible reports of forced labour and forced birth control.
8. That up to 1.8 million people have been detained without trial.
9. These deep concerns have been reinforced by additional information now in the public domain.
10. In Hong Kong, Beijing's imposition of the National Security Law is a serious breach of the legally binding Sino-British Joint Declaration.
11. It violates Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and directly threatens rights and freedoms.
12. The National Security Law is being implemented with the apparent intention to eliminate dissent. It allows prosecution of certain cases in mainland China, a jurisdiction where defendants are often held for long periods without charge or access to legal counsel, and where we have concerns about judicial independence, due process, and reports of torture.
13. The Joint Declaration, a legally binding treaty, registered with the United Nations, sets out that Hong Kong is guaranteed a high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms, including those of the person, of the press, of assembly, and of association and that the ICCPR and ICESCR shall remain in force. These rights are also guaranteed in the basic law for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.
14. Making such a law without the direct participation of Hong Kong's people, legislature or judiciary of Hong Kong undermines 'One Country, Two Systems'.

This Council Believes:

15. That when the Embassy does move to Tower Hamlets that the embassy staff will be able to see how people with different nationalities, backgrounds, religions and ethnicities can work closely together in harmony and that a person's religion is not a threat to be removed by violating their human rights and trying to suppress their identity as we fear the Chinese government is trying to do now in Xinjiang.
16. That as a democratically elected body in a rules-based society we fundamentally believe that governments need to respect all of their citizens, that people need to be treated equally, that suppressing dissent through force is counter-productive and that international treaties should be respected.
17. That both of these stands are in the long-term interests of all of the citizens of China. Britain has made mistakes in the past in how it has dealt with other countries and peoples, we hope that the People's Republic of China won't repeat some of those same mistakes in the 21st century.

This Council Resolves:

18. To write to the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China based in the United Kingdom to welcome the Embassy and its staff moving to Tower Hamlets. But that as new neighbours and friends we have to make clear where our own standards and principles apply. We believe that it is in the People's Republic of China's own interest to:
 - a. Cease its human rights' abuses against the Uyghur Muslims and all other detainees, and to urge China to implement the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's recommendations in Xinjiang, and allow the United Nations to monitor its implementation.
 - b. We urge the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments to reconsider the imposition of National Security Law legislation and to engage Hong Kong's people, institutions and judiciary to prevent further erosion of the rights and freedoms that the people of Hong Kong have enjoyed for many years.
19. That we in Tower Hamlets, welcome residents of Hong Kong who wish to take advantage of their now increased ability to move to the United Kingdom (even if more could be done). That the Borough has a long and proud history of being the first home in the UK for many people fleeing persecution in their original countries. And that those earlier arrivals are now British citizens.
20. To write to the UK Foreign Secretary, The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, to ask him to raise the situation of prisoners in China in all his interactions with his Chinese counterparts, and urge China to uphold its international human rights' obligations in Xinjiang in the face of credible evidence of ongoing human rights' violations against Uyghur Muslims.