

Labour Group amendment to the motion ‘regarding the proposed new Chinese Embassy in Tower Hamlets and a proposal to investigate naming of roads or new buildings – Tiananmen Square, Uyghur Court, Hong Kong Road and Tibet Hill and establish that any collaboration between the Chinese Embassy and local schools reflects the borough’s heritage of standing up for each other.’

Proposer: Mayor John Biggs

Seconder: Cllr Asma Begum

Added text underlined

Deleted text scored out

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 there that are active and investing in Tower Hamlets. There is also a Tibetan community in the borough and Tibet has also been subjected to human rights’ violations by the CCP.
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.
5. Discussions on the potential to raise the Tibetan Flag and rename roads near the Royal Mint site as Tiananmen Square, Uyghur Court and Hong Kong Road.’
6. We are very proud of the fact that Tower Hamlets is such an open and tolerant borough where we truly value our diversity and understand the strength that it brings, and where we also understand and appreciate the need to be good partners and to foster good relationships.
7. We remain deeply concerned about China’s human rights’ record on a number of issues, in particular the appalling treatment of the largely Muslim Uyghurs, and the situations in Hong Kong and Tibet.
8. The BBC coverage of the allegations of systematic rape of Uyghur women in China.
9. That the Chinese Embassy in the UK has written to a [number of local schools](#) as part of its consultation to explore opportunities for future collaboration.

This Council further notes:

1. That Mayor Biggs wrote to the Chinese Ambassador on behalf of the Council to express deep concerns about China’s human rights record.
2. Cllr Peter Golds has written to English Heritage regarding the heritage of the Royal Mint Street site; the plague pits at the Royal Mint Street site (New Chinese Embassy plans plagued by Black Death burial pits

<https://bit.ly/3r9nB3h>).

3. That the Tibetan Community in Tower Hamlets wrote to the Mayor, Cllrs Khan, Wood and Golds requesting to raise the Tibetan Flag on 10th March 2021.
4. 10th March is Tibet's National Uprising Day, and the Tibetan flag is currently raised annually by Waltham Forest, Northampton, Woolwich and others.
5. Cllrs Khan, Wood and Golds responded that they welcomed raising the Tibetan Flag on 10th March 2021.
6. Mayor Biggs met with a representative of the Chinese Embassy last year to convey the council's concerns about China's actions and passed the request to raise the Tibetan flag to the Council's Chief Executive who has responsibility for such matters.
7. The Council's Chief Executive rejected the call for the Tibetan flag to be raised, citing protocols, even though other councils are raising the flag, as mentioned above.

This Council Resolves:

1. That Tower Hamlets Council investigates whether roads or possibly new buildings near the location of the proposed Chinese Embassy could be renamed appropriately as acts of solidarity with historic symbols or place names of Chinese significance; for example: Tiananmen Square, Uyghur Court, Hong Kong Road and/or "Xiaobo Road" (in memory of Xiaobo Liu) – noting also the Council's review of the borough's public realm which included a resident consultation to identify monuments, plaques, buildings, roads which celebrated legacies which are not in keeping with the borough's values of diversity – and to investigate what other actions the council could take to show solidarity.
2. That there is no financial cost associated with naming roads and buildings to residents, businesses and schools or any other stakeholder.
3. Welcomes the relocation of the Chinese Embassy and its staff moving to Tower Hamlets. But that as new neighbours and friends we must continue to make clear where our own standards and principles apply, and we will not refrain from expressing the views of the Council, on behalf of our community, or asserting our support for the freedom and diversity of our borough.
4. 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). 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.
5. To establish what kind of collaboration the Chinese Embassy in the UK is seeking with local schools and whether it will reflect the Borough's Strategic Plan, which states clearly: "We have a proud history of standing up for each other as one community and celebrating our differences." <https://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=130890>