

Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 21 st July 2021	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Interim 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 21st July 2021
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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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.

11.1 Motion regarding Memorial to the Matchwomen and Matchgirls

Proposer: Councillor Sabina Akhtar

Seconder: Councillor Rachel Blake

This Council believes:

1. We have a proud modern history in Tower Hamlets of championing diversity and standing up to discrimination, but there is more we can do
2. That historically under-represented groups should be remembered in the public realm
3. That the women and girls who took part in the Match Factory Strike of 1888 were pioneers of the Labour Movement

This Council notes:

1. The Council has pro-actively undertaken a review of race and equality in the public realm.
2. The purpose of the review was to share thoughts about under-representation in public spaces – not only in terms of race, but also on issues across the equalities landscape including but not limited to civil rights, workers', women's and LGBTQ+ rights and more.
3. The review asked the community identify and nominate other names, particularly of under-represented groups, who have done something memorable and who we should celebrate.

This Council resolves:

1. To welcome ideas for remembering the Matchwomen and Matchgirls who fought for their employment rights
2. To work with the Matchgirls Memorial Trust to remember the struggle of the Matchwomen and Matchgirls

11.2 Motion regarding the State of Borough as of July 2021

Proposed by: Councillor Peter Golds

Seconded by: Councillor Andrew Wood

That the true state of the Borough is listed below. These are all issues which still affect the Borough, and to which have been added risks to services that can be mitigated. They are also a record of the failures of the last six years.

Education

- Raines Foundation secondary school – second OFSTED failure despite LBTH staff on the governing body and eventual closure despite building a new secondary school in Wapping proving there is demand for secondary schools
- Loss of world class new secondary code free school on Commercial Road due to opposition from LBTH despite the Department of Education buying the site.
- Failure to ensure delivery of new secondary school on the Isle of Dogs for an established school but building a new secondary school for a school that does not yet exist in Wapping
- Unlike many other Boroughs LBTH has failed to commission a new school in over eleven years now despite being the fastest growing Borough in the country for more than ten years now – it has solely relied on others to provide new schools with the Wood Wharf primary school being the first to be provided by LBTH (may open in 2022)

Parking

- Difficulty in getting disabled parking bays for residents
- Not protecting disabled residents parking access to private underground car parks in s106 legal agreements
- 210 blue badges thefts from cars because LBTH won't consider providing disabled people with virtual permits for at least one vehicle used by disabled people. Forcing disabled people to pay extra to repair damaged cars or insurance premiums in order to protect LBTH from some additional parking fraud.
- Car free properties include many people with cars, but LBTH has no strategy for them
- Granting permit transfer schemes for developments with little or no nearby street parking
- Introduce 3-hour mini zones initially without consultation and then changing some zone boundaries to mitigate the impact
- Failures on parking enforcement resulting in the largest unpaid individual parking fine in the country

Children's Services

- Failed OFSTED in 2017
- No serious case reviews ever carried out for the girls from Tower Hamlets who died in Syria

New Town Hall

- No detail has ever been provided to explain the increase in the budget since this Council first approved the decision. Was it inflation, larger building, asbestos?

Council house building programme

- Not actually building 2,000 new homes as advertised – many were built by others and are not ‘new’
- Unwilling to build tall buildings on Council owned land in areas with fantastic transport connections and access to facilities proving that there is no actual housing crisis i.e., Mile End Veolia depot/Stroudely Walk – new development is lower than old nearby development or lower than nearby sites in Newham
- Buying expensive old stock in poor repair from one housing association and then making it difficult to find out how much spent on that stock even though clear more spent than originally planned
- Spending scarce funds on a large number of small projects resulting in high overheads and poor economies of scale rather than as a previous administration did using compulsory purchase powers to assemble large sites where large volumes of new affordable homes can be built more efficiently
- A lack of clarity (like Croydon) over what was bought, where and for how much? All we see is a dip in reserves.

Construction management

- Two residents died in construction related accidents outside the boundaries of the construction site
- There has been no management of this issue leading to pain and disruption caused to residents, working from home has materially increased the number of affected residents – has health implications
- Still no data about air quality issues caused by building sites available to public
- Continuous digging up of key roads like Marsh Wall because there is still no long-term plan
- Danger to residents of living in incomplete buildings like Amory Tower

Planning

- Failing to challenge housing targets set by the Mayor of London which we are now failing to achieve making it harder to resist new development
- Setting targets that put 57% of all new housing into a relatively small part of Tower Hamlets, the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar and then creating Supplementary Planning Documents for the largest part of Tower Hamlets to make large developments more difficult there, mean it will be even harder to meet targets overall putting more pressure on small parts of Tower Hamlets
- Failing to learn the lessons of previous failures i.e., Blackwall is the worst planned place in the UK (playgrounds!) when it comes to new development areas like along the river Lea
- Failing for the 2nd time to decide the West ferry Printworks planning application on time, on both occasions allowing others to make the decisions instead
- Routinely losing planning appeals because LBTH has not designed a process to ensure that if Councillors reject a scheme recommended by Officers that Councillor decisions are supported with the strongest possible planning reasons for a rejection
- Failure to report alleged corruption around planning issues to the Police until told to do so
- Failure to so far use new technology in the planning process until years after its introduction, Vu.City 3D model for example
- No effective meanwhile use strategy for the many large sites demolished and then left empty i.e., JP Morgan site or Helix/McDonalds site or the imminent loss of the Pepper Street site.

- No response to the poor door controversy – Councillors complain at planning committee but there is no formal policy response to the issues raised by the segregation of tenures

Investment strategy

- There is no strategy despite talking about it for years
- Substantial and continuing losses from reserves through inflation approximately £2.4 million a year, in 2018 to 2020 the Council finance team estimate was that we lost £22.3 over 3 years – this loss is not reported in the accounts nor commentary
- LBTH holds substantial reserves but there is a lack of clarity over what they are for

Youth Service

- Services that actually support children in the Borough: Scouts, Sea Scouts, Police Cadets, Brownies, Guides etc get no support from LBTH only impediments (have to pay business rates for example)
- Continuous restructuring of the youth service
- Unwillingness to consider different funding models bringing in external funds and resources i.e., Youth Zone
- Moving a Council investigator into the team he was investigating to work alongside the people he was investigating.
- Closure of youth centres like St Andrews Wharf in previous years due to inability to recruit staff.

Infrastructure

- Failure to deliver the infrastructure required as set out by the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Development Infrastructure Funding Study
- Delays to the 4th attempt to build a new pedestrian bridge across South Quay & to make it compatible for cyclists
- Lea river bridge by Poplar gas works – allowing new development to occupy land required to allow construction of a new bridge that had planning permission (but was not built)
- Loss of GLA funding for the Poplar River zone
- DLR only 3 carriages long – should have been built 4 or 5 carriages
- No growth of public services to match population growth despite that being what New Homes Bonus is for. 2nd library for Whitechapel but libraries on the Isle of Dogs at risk of closure despite 57% of all new housing in Tower Hamlets allocated there.
- Lack of clarity over future of some major local assets – St Georges baths, Tiller Road leisure centre, Isle of Dogs Police station, Cubitt Town Library (if ASDA redeveloped)

Crime & Anti-Social

- Worst ASB rates in the UK
- Has been the top or 2nd highest concern of residents for years in the Residents Survey
- Little investment in ASB, the CCTV investment programme is mainly driven by the need to digitise the CCTV network to allow the move to the new Town Hall
- Most CCTV cameras are placed where the main population centres were a generation ago not where they are now i.e., Millharbour, densest place in the UK has no Council CCTV cameras
- Introduction of new PSPO to deal with NOX, six years after first introduced in London
- Still a lack of clarity over how to report ASB and to whom

Enforcement

- On a range of issues related to planning and rubbish little evidence of LBTH using its enforcement powers
- Other Boroughs are noticeably keener to enforce and take people to court

Financial

- Pension's failure – having to declare our failure to the Pension Regulator
- Two years accounts still not signed off by auditors with material issues found by auditors requiring major changes in the reserves position
- Still using Microsoft Excel to track key data
- Every year failing to spend our capex budget
- Threat of business rate reductions to our future income if properties revalued – what are we doing to attract new or retain existing businesses and encourage the full occupation of our shops, offices, and restaurants?

Homes of Multiple Occupation (HMO)

- Watering down limitations introduced by other Labour controlled councils to regulate the growth of HMOs.
- No strategy to provide a wider range of home tenures than just private for sale apartments, shared ownership, and social rent.
- Loss of family sized accommodation in existing larger houses as private developers meet demand instead by converting family homes which results in financial losses for the Council as well as the loss of affordable homes which might have been gained by developers building new buildings to meet this demand instead

Quality of Life

- Allowing parts of Tower Hamlets to look like a shambles due to the neo-liberal attitude of LBTH
- London rates poorly for quality of life in a number of international surveys – LBTH contributes to that
- Suffers high turnover as a result and skewed demographics (vaccine uptake might suggest we have youngest population in the country)
- Facilities for teenagers are poor to non-existent in large parts of Tower Hamlets or noticeably poorer than elsewhere i.e., skateboard parks in Lewisham superior to those in Tower Hamlets
- Playgrounds in or near to new developments are too small, badly located, or inadequate – LBTH has not provided new playgrounds to compensate for this.

Staffing Issues

- Only 32% of staff earning more than £60k are BAME but BAME staff comprise 57% of all staff
- Staff sickness rates – this leads to additional pressures on other staff
- Proportion of senior staff promoted from within the organisation is extremely low – high quality organisation would promote a % of management from within – this leads to higher recruitment costs, loss of knowledge, and low staff morale as can see little hope of advancement.

Rubbish & recycling

- Second worst recycling record in London after Newham
- % Recycled has declined over time – is getting worse

- Blackwall Reach URS bins routinely not emptied on time or full – within sight of the sales office trying to sell apartments at Blackwall Reach. LBTH is the developer!
- Issues with collections being missed on a regular basis or not being picked up for other reasons that are not made clear to residents i.e., Castalia Square

Climate change

- Council fleet of vehicles still fossil fuel powered with only a couple of hybrids – bought new fleet of diesel refuse vehicles after City of London some time before proved that electric refuse vehicles worked
- No electric vehicle chargers in any Council facility
- Only one Council building has solar panels on roof
- No other form of sustainable electricity generation in any Council building
- Bought electricity from renewable sources ten years at least after this was possible
- No emergency response to the emergency declared in 2020

Fire safety

- Most affected Borough in the country by a factor of two, 293 buildings asked for Building Safety Funds versus Manchester 144
- Almost every week new buildings are being added to the list of building with issues requiring a walking watch – perhaps ½ to 1/3 of all tall buildings affected in some way?
- LBTH does not know how many buildings affected by wider fire safety issues as mainly focussed on ACM clad buildings at the request of MHCLG
- Fire risk reports old and out of date for THH buildings
- No tall ladders placed in LBTH by the London Fire Brigade – does LBTH have a view on this?
- No evidence that LBTH has committed any of its own financial resources to this issue (extra staff employed funded by MHCLG) despite earning approaching half a billion in funds from development (s106, CIL, NHB) now at risk
- Not commissioning (yet) a fire safety report following the NPW fire to help learn all of the lessons from the fire.
- How will LBTH help affected residents? Will it support a reduction in Council tax based on a decline in property values?

Liveable Streets

- A process that started with broad public support – to stop vehicles rat running through Wapping has created division and conflict by being rushed through in a pandemic and by ignoring consultation responses
- Has created revenue generating assets (bus gates) from using money meant to support new infrastructure in other parts of Tower Hamlets
- Danger to life and property from emergency vehicle delays by using planters rather than ANPR cameras as requested by the London Fire Brigade
- Opportunity for liveable streets to be self-funding through use of ANPR camera-controlled gates rather than using scarce infrastructure funds

Air Quality

- LBTH still acting as if air quality is getting worse when its own sensors show the opposite, that air pollution levels have been dropping for years in part it is assuming due to new EURO standard engines.
- LBTH buying an all-new fleet of diesel refuse vehicles in 2020 (using latest EURO engines) shows that it actually believes this is also the case.

- As a result, it is not focussing its efforts on those areas with poor air quality nor other sources of air pollution (construction sites)

Consultation process

- Evidence that LBTH will ignore consultation responses if they do not fit what LBTH has already decided to do i.e., Bethnal Green ward name change not supported by residents of the ward, Wapping residents wanted Wapping residents to be able to drive through Wapping
- Consultation hub does not alert you to new consultations, have to manually visit the website to see what is being consulted on
- Many consultations are not advertised by the Council via its social media or are only done once

Deprivation

- High levels of deprivation remain – suggesting a generational failure by LBTH
- Lack of a strategy to welcome new immigrant groups, how many people from HK will move here, what will we do if they do come in large numbers?
- Too many people still cannot speak English well which has a detrimental impact on their ability to access a range of services (health especially) and jobs

The Council resolves to:

- To do better
- To actually listen to all of its residents
- To respond to residents' concerns based on their priorities as set out in the resident's survey
- To make decisions based on evidence not pre-conceptions
- To change the culture & structures of the Council to be more responsive and less silo like
- To be ambitious for residents and Tower Hamlets
- Not to accept mediocre outcomes

11.3 Motion regarding Local Government pay to council: a fully funded, proper pay rise for council and school workers

Proposed by: Councillor Rachel Blake

Seconded by: Councillor Asma Islam

This Council notes:

1. Local government has endured central government funding cuts of more than 50% since 2010.
2. Between 2010 and 2020, councils lost 60p out of every £1 they have received from central government.
3. Over the last year, councils have led the way in efforts against the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a huge range of services and support for our communities. Local government has shown more than ever how indispensable it is. But the pandemic has led to a massive increase in expenditure and loss of income, and the Government has failed to provide the full amount of promised support.
4. Local government workers have kept our communities safe through the pandemic, often putting themselves at considerable risk as they work to protect public health, provide quality housing, ensure our children continue to be educated, and look after older and vulnerable people.
5. Since 2010, the local government workforce has endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing at least 23 per cent of their value since 2009/10.
6. At the same time, workers have experienced ever-increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity. Across the UK, 900,000 jobs have been lost in local government since June 2010 – a reduction of more than 30 per cent. Local government has arguably been hit by more severe job losses than any other part of the public sector. The funding gap caused by Covid-19 will make local government employment even more precarious.
7. There has been a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than three-quarters of the local government workforce.
8. Recent research shows that if the Government were to fully fund the unions' 2021 pay claim, around half of the money would be recouped thanks to increased tax revenue, reduced expenditure on benefits, and increased consumer spending in the local economy.

This Council believes:

1. Our workers are public service super-heroes. They keep our communities clean and safe, look after those in need and keep our towns and cities running.
2. Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services our residents rely on would not be deliverable.
3. Local government workers deserve a proper real-terms pay increase. The Government needs to take responsibility and fully fund this increase; it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding been cut to the bone and who have not been offered adequate support through the Covid-19 pandemic.

This Council resolves to:

1. Support the pay claim submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite on behalf of council and school workers, for a substantial increase with a minimum 10 per cent uplift in April 2021.

2. Call on the Local Government Association to make urgent representations to central government to fund the NJC pay claim
3. Write to the Chancellor and Secretary of State to call for a pay increase for local government workers to be funded with new money from central government.
4. Meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and consider practical ways in which the council can support the campaign
5. Encourage all local government workers to join a union.

11.4 Motion regarding The Purchase of a 64-Metre or Taller Turntable Ladder for Tower Hamlets Residents

Proposed by: Councillor Rabina Khan

The Council Notes:

- June 14th marked the day four years ago when a fire broke out at Grenfell Tower killing 72 and leaving many more injured, traumatised, and homeless.
- As we saw with the New Providence Wharf incident of May 7th, fires in tower blocks can start at any time.
- As more high-rise schemes are built which individually house many occupiers, the need to locate a Turntable Ladder of at least 64m or taller where the supertall residential buildings are, i.e. Isle of Dogs and Tower Hamlets, is urgent.
- 292 high-rise privately-owned blocks in Tower Hamlets are in need of fire safety remedial work, having applied to the government's Building Safety Fund, the highest number of any Local Authority in England.
- Residents living in social housing across the borough also in high rise towers.
- Tower Hamlets councillors had a meeting with the Tower Hamlets London Fire Brigade Commander on the 30th of June 2021 regarding fire safety infrastructure in the Borough and lessons learnt from the New Providence Wharf incident of May 7th.
- This motion puts on record the bravery of our firefighters and recognises the especially important work that they do.
- London Fire Brigade are working within a time of budget restraints with the LFB having to find £10 million of savings in 2020/21 and £15 million in 2021/22 in a way that does not affect the frontline services they provide to Londoners.
- Tower Hamlets does not have a tall Turntable Ladder that could minimise risk and support our firefighters during a live fire event.

The Council Further Notes:

- The borough hosts several high-rise socially owned or ex-social properties.
- Irrespective of whether these properties have cladding issues or fire safety defects, their occupiers need protection in the event of a fire and suitable equipment that could be at the site almost immediately.
- A tall ladder will benefit all in the high-rise community of Tower Hamlets, whether leaseholder, shared owner, renter, right-to-buy lessee or social tenant.
- This is a safety issue, not a tenure issue.
- LFB has 15 32m tall ladders in London (11 active, 4 reserve) and these are set to be joined by three new tall ladders to be based in Dagenham, Old Kent Road and Wimbledon fire stations.
- Unfortunately, none of these ladders will be housed in Tower Hamlets, an area of intense redevelopment and whose comparatively unique high-rise terrain (in the UK context), especially in the Isle of Dogs and surrounding area, demands that sort of fire safety infrastructure to be hosted locally.
- In any case, a fire in a tall building now automatically triggers the dispatching of a ladder to the affected site, it can take some time for these to arrive, especially in traffic.

The Council Resolves:

- The Council to investigate with statutory partners, housing associations and the

private sector options for the purchase of a tall aerial fire and rescue platform of at least 64m or taller to be based in Tower Hamlets.

- The council uses its existing and considerable s106 and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funds, most of which have been generated by intense redevelopment of the Isle of Dogs and surrounding area, but also seek to secure donations from developers and other private sector stakeholders.
- Once the funds are raised for the Tall Ladder the Council works with LFB to identify the appropriate aerial equipment for the borough. LFB will have the expertise to work related to operation of aerial equipment needed to tackle a fire in high rise towers.
- That the Council works with LFB to identify the designated location of the aerial equipment in the borough whether it is at Millwall or Poplar fire stations which are ideally placed, on top of the heavily built-up Isle of Dogs dominated by multi-occupancy apartments buildings, many of which compete to be amongst the tallest in Europe. Or a relevant location identified by LFB.
- The council seeks to investigate that life-saving infrastructure is located closer to the area with the biggest concentration of high-rise and high-density residential developments in the entire United Kingdom.
- Since Tower Hamlets regularly clinches the top spot for number of new homes built in the country, it is essential that this housebuilding achievement is matched by world-class fire safety infrastructure, including adequate water pressure and a Turntable Ladder of at least 64m or taller.