

Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 16 th March 2022	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Motion for debate submitted by an Opposition Group	

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

SUMMARY

1. Council Procedure Rule 11 allows for time at each Ordinary Council meeting for the discussion of one Motion submitted by an Opposition Group. The debate will follow the rules of debate at Council Procedure Rule 13 and will last no more than 30 minutes.
2. The motion submitted is listed overleaf. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, submission of the Opposition Motion for Debate will alternate in sequence between the opposition groups. This Opposition Motion is submitted by the Aspire Group.
3. Motions must be about matters for which the Council or its partners has a direct responsibility. 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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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. Notice of any proposed amendments to the Motions must be given to the Monitoring Officer by Noon the day before the meeting.

MOTION

Set out overleaf is the motion that has been submitted.

8 – Opposition Motion for Debate - regarding Whitechapel Market

Proposer: Councillor Kabir Ahmed
Seconder: Councillor Harun Miah

This Council notes:

The Whitechapel Market was established nearly 120 years ago in 1904. In 1909, the Council bought the strip from Vallance Road to Mile End Gate.

Leading up to that, in the 1850s there were stalls and costermongers' barrows along the north side of Whitechapel Road from St Mary (Davenant) Street to Charrington's Brewery in Mile End Old Town. Some sections of the waste were given over to the setting- out of furniture and, street junctions aside, paved cart roads separated the ground at several points.

In 1904 Stepney Council sought to take control of the market on the waste in both Whitechapel and Mile End to regulate nuisance traders. Terms were agreed with the Manor in 1909 and the Council acquired strips on both north and south sides from Vallance Road east into Mile End where gardens were laid out in 1909–10. Thus regulated, trading west of Mile End Gate came to be called Whitechapel Market.

It was noted in the 1970s for clothing, jewellery, flowers, second-hand records and hi-fi equipment.

By the 1980s, when there were 124 pitches between Vallance Road and Cambridge Heath Road, the market was being transformed by a transition to the latest edition of East Enders, Bangladeshi stallholders. They remain the predominant community trading in the Whitechapel Market with a wide range of items for all in the community including idiosyncratic products including clothing as well delicious food and delicacies hard to come by elsewhere.

In 1997 the Whitechapel conservation area was established and later renewed in 2008. It has seen various communities pass through including the French Huguenots, the Irish, the Jews and currently the Bangladeshis. It is a market that exemplifies market street trade. By the 1980s the Market was established from Vallance road to Cambridge Heath Road. In 2008 the Whitechapel Market became the market in the UK to recycle its waste.

The Market's street furniture was renewed as part of the High Street 2012 project. Alan Baxter & Associates and East Architecture Landscape Urban Design oversaw standardisation of demountable market stalls, and the additions of perforated metal screens to face the road and catenary lighting along the pavement on a row of standards, as well as new bollards and seating.

This Council believes:

That this culturally rich and historic Whitechapel Market now faces the challenges of gentrification and rising property prices, while stall owners are struggling to make a decent income. Furthermore, the current pandemic crisis with Covid has left many traders on the verge of collapse.

In addition to this, the Tower Hamlets Council is looking to increase the rent for stalls by 40p per day Monday to Friday and £1.00 on Saturdays, which in turn equates to £3.00 a week and £156 per year (11.4%). At times of crisis and where support is needed it seems unethical, inappropriate and cruel that the Council should increase rents now for stakeholders already under serious financial pressure. As this is the case for all market stalls in Tower Hamlets, the Council should freeze rents for all market stalls and consider further support for these unique and local market traders or else this increase by the Council cause them to disappear forever and simply be replaced by gentrified standard pop-up shops that have no real local connection or heritage.

This Council Resolves:

1. To freeze all increases to rent for market stalls in Tower Hamlet for this tax year and undertake a review in the next financial year.
2. To protect the market stallholders from being priced out due to gentrification thereby supporting local history and heritage.
3. Not restrict or set quotas on what can legally be sold.
4. To engage with the stallholders in any changes to the dynamics and processes relating to Whitechapel Market.