

7 – Administration Motion for Debate – The Council’s Record – Amendment by the Conservative Group

Proposed by: Cllr Peter Golds

Seconded by: Andrew Wood

This Council Notes:

1. In 2018, the Mayor pledged 2,000 new council homes by 2022, and the Council is on track to hit this target, with 2,046 homes delivered or in delivery. There have also been 6,876 new affordable homes completed across the borough since 2015.

That the 700 new homes promised as part of the wider Town Hall project have never been delivered (see the poster in the entrance to Mulberry Place)

That the Council intends to sell large sites to private developers (Car pound for example) rather than develop themselves and when it has sold those sites to private developers (LEB for example) no new homes have been built years later.

That the Council has displacing existing residents from 422 homes who now have to compete in the housing market meaning more people may need to rely on temporary housing.

That the Council only bought existing old homes from one housing association, Poplar Harca, providing them with a cash injection, that this opportunity was not extended to other housing associations. And again, has displaced existing residents.

That the Council bought 157 existing s106 properties so that they can be presented as new homes when they are not, they would have been bought by another housing association and provided to residents of Tower Hamlets in need. That only 225 homes are genuinely new build plus 23 conversions, but this has in some cases meant the loss of scarce green space.

Only these 225 + 23 homes can be genuinely described as new Council homes.

2. That this Council provides Universal Free School Meals for all primary school children in the borough, one of only a few councils in the country that does this. This costs the council £3m per year, and means that 19,000 children get a meal, equating to an estimated saving for families of £450 per child.
3. Although tackling crime and ASB is a police responsibility, the Council are investing in tackling crime and ASB by funding additional police officers and a council-operated ASB service. It has also set up a borough-wide Public Spaces Protection order to tackle the misuse of laughing gas and the associated ASB.

The Conservative group welcome the adoption of the borough-wide NOX Public Space Protection Order that we suggested several years before its adoption.

We regret that other ideas we have suggested have not been adopted to reduce ASB.

That residents have had to flee their homes after a home invasion following vehicle related ASB.

That we also need Public Spaces Protection Orders to deal with all vehicle related ASB including tunnel runs, vehicle based parties, and noisy cars.

4. The Council is also investing over £3m in an upgrade to the entire public space CCTV network in part to allow the relocation of the CCTV control room from Mulberry Place to the new Town Hall.

That new residential areas in Tower Hamlets including some of the densest places in the UK have no Council CCTV cameras. The network largely reflects residential areas several decades ago.

That the opportunity to use technology like acoustic cameras to monitor noisy drivers is not being taken.

5. The Council has supported over 7,000 people into jobs or training since 2016, including supporting 1,052 young people, and created more than 1,000 apprenticeships.

In part paid for by s106 contributions from developers.

6. The Council's multi-million pound Tackling Poverty Fund has invested £6.6 million since 2017 in innovative programmes to support residents affected by welfare reforms. Last year it also provided over £750,000 in Crisis Grants through our Resident Support Scheme.

7. The current administration's work in turning the council around after the failures of the previous mayor. Tower Hamlets Council has transformed from being directly partially run by Government Commissioners in the wake of the former mayor's removal from office into an award-winning council but which still fails to deliver in a number of areas, for example:

- Failing OFSTED in 2017, being required to write an improvement plan after the most recent SEND inspection.
- That the financial accounts for three years now have not been signed off yet after multiple failings were found by our new auditors.
- Having the lowest recycling rate in London and the 2nd lowest in the country
- Failing to ensure the long-term condition of Tiller Road Leisure Centre, York Hall and St Georges Baths so that they could not re-open last year and that we will lose 1/5 of our swimming provision for 6 years as a result.
- Failing to build the much-delayed new South Quay Bridge.
- Losing access to GLA money for Poplar Riverside.
- That it has lost more than £30 million through inflation in the last 4 years.

8. The Council's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission has set out recommendations for how we make our community fairer and more equal. It is currently delivering on these, and backing this up with over £1.5m of council funding to meet the ambitious targets set forth by the Commission.

That 59% of the Council staff are BAME as at December 2021 but only 30.17% of staff earning more than £60k are BAME, that this has dropped from 32.14% in December 2019. That it still does not understand why or in which department this happened in.

That relative pay of its own BAME staff has got worse.

9. The Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 and the council has committed to become a net zero carbon council by 2025 and a net zero carbon borough by 2045 or sooner. In 2021, Tower Hamlets Council was named the greenest local authority in the country purely on the energy efficiency of housing in the borough, with so many new apartments built since the 1980's inevitably we have more energy efficient homes than other Boroughs with an older housing stock, this was not due to any direct action by the Council.

That in 2020 it bought a whole new fleet of diesel-powered refuse vehicles (after the City of London started trialing electric only refuse vehicles) and installed diesel storage tanks at its transport facility. That only one Council building has any form of renewable energy. That no Council building has any electric vehicle chargers because the Council has no purely electric road vehicles.

10. The Council funds a 100% council tax discount for the poorest in our community, one of the few places in the UK to offer this, meaning the poorest in Tower Hamlets don't have to pay a single penny of council tax. For the financial year 2021/22 the Council has so far awarded £33m in Council Tax Support to nearly 34,000 council taxpayers.

THIS reflects the failure for a generation now by Tower Hamlets Council to get so many of its residents into good jobs that would allow residents to be able to pay Council tax without help.

This Council believes:

1. Despite Council successes in the past four years, there is still more to be done to tackle the future challenges faced by Tower Hamlets residents.

But that its capacity for improvement is inadequate, that the Council is unable to do its day job in some areas, that it gets distracted whenever something goes wrong. That it remains a very small conservative organization, incapable and unwilling to take any risk.

This Council resolves:

1. To continue its good work in tackling poverty and addressing inequalities in the borough, and delivering on residents' priorities.
2. To work diligently with residents, partner agencies and the Mayor of London to ensure Tower Hamlets residents are supported in these uncertain times, and to listen to the concerns put forward by Tower Hamlets residents.
3. To work with other London boroughs to ensure good ideas and strategy can be shared and implemented for the benefit of all Londoners.
4. To focus relentlessly on delivery.
5. TO HAVE a clear plan for delivery
6. To change its culture and be more willing to do new things and to take appropriate risks.
7. To be more transparent in its comms activities ABOUT DELIVERY.