

## **Labour Group Amendment to the Opposition Motion for Debate - regarding Whitechapel Market**

**Proposer:** Cllr Motin Uz-Zaman

**Seconder:** Mayor John Biggs

### **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.

In 2021, Tower Hamlets Council launched an extensive survey with traders, business owners, residents and visitors of Whitechapel Market. All were asked what changes they would like to see, and the responses then went out to public consultation and have been included in the Action Plan 2022-25.

One of the things that traders were strongly in favour of was new stalls to be provided. This is a current project funded by a Levelling Up Grant and part of the Whitechapel Road Improvement Program (WRIP).

The Council has conducted face to face consultation with traders on the design of the stalls. The next one planned for mid-March. This will inform the stall pilot scheme where a number of stalls will be installed to test the design, with feedback from traders informing the final design for the stalls.

There was an increase in pitch fees in Summer 2021, however no further increases are planned for 2021/22.

With regard to 2022/23 Markets are partway through a trader and public consultation on fees, these are broadly in line with inflation.

### **This Council believes:**

That this culturally rich and historic Whitechapel Market is an important part of Tower Hamlets. We understand the concerns that many have about ~~now faces the challenges of~~ gentrification and rising property prices, as well concerns about the cost of living crisis ~~while stall owners are struggling to make a decent income.~~ Furthermore, the current ~~and the continuing~~ economic impact of the pandemic crisis with Covid has left many traders on the verge of collapse which has had such a profound effect on both our national and local economy.

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. To continue working with the traders and business owners in Whitechapel Market see how the Council can assist in these uncertain economic times.~~
- ~~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. To continue to work with traders at Whitechapel Market and engage with customers to ensure the goods offered are diverse and it offers a wide range of good, so that traders can also apply to change what they are licenced for through a variation each quarter.~~
4. To continue to engage with the stallholders in any changes to the dynamics and processes relating to Whitechapel Market.