

Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 27 th July 2022	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and 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. 5 motions have been submitted by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 11 for debate at the Council meeting on Wednesday 27th July 2022
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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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.

12.1 Motion regarding the Council's Finances

Proposer: Councillor Saied Ahmed

Seconder: Councillor Jahed Choudhury

This Council notes that:

- the Aspire Manifesto Priorities for 2022 to 2026 point to rebuilding Tower Hamlets and rebuilding our future.
- the Residents of Tower Hamlets overwhelmingly endorsed that vision.
- that progress on those aspirations can only be achieved in a stable financial environment, which the inherited Council finances do not provide.
- the mishandling and mismanagement of the Council's accounts by the previous administration has led to:
 - Outstanding Audit Certificates for the years 2016/2017 and 2017/2018, thus rendering the Audits for those years incomplete
 - The Audits for 2018/2019, 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 remain incomplete - statutory deadlines have been missed.
 - The Audit for the last financial year (2021/2022) will not be completed by the statutory deadlines due to the unresolved backlog outlined above.
 - This year's audit (2022/2023) hasn't started due to the delay from previous years
- The external auditor has given draft qualified audit opinions for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 citing:
 - Insufficient appropriate quality supporting working papers for audit from management
 - Delays in receiving information and explanations in response to subsequent audit queries
 - Other technical accounting errors that have required correction
- the scale of the failure in the Council's financial accounts is so big and has been unresolved for so long that a 35 page appendix was required to outline the size of the task in reversing the decline.
- the financial limbo is having a serious impact on the performance of other departments. The overall quality of data is poor and unhelpful for management decisions. There are worrying instances of misplaced data. The finance issue does not sit in isolation but has a knock-on effect on other departments thereby creating an atmosphere of dysfunction and incompetence which requires immediate action.

This Council believes that:

- that the state of affairs with the Council's accounts may point to past ineffective

political management and leadership.

- this unprecedented financial situation warrants critical and immediate attention, and that the Council cannot be seen as financially prudent or responsible if we allow it to persist any longer.
- to ensure nothing like this happens again in future, it is vital to understand the root cause and extent of the problem so we can rectify matters identify where governance and management issues may need to be addressed.
- current senior finance officers are working with the auditors to address their findings so the accounts can be signed off, and Council wishes to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our current Finance Officers. However, Council remains concerned that the process of rectifying the situation is far from complete.
- the residents of Tower Hamlets, as well as the employees and businesses, deserve a speedy resolution of the issues and improvements in financial management processes to restore confidence and secure our future.

This Council resolves to:

- Appoint an Independent Diagnostic Consultant able to assist this Council in understanding what went wrong and how to avoid it ever happening again. The Independent Consultant will
 - build on previous work to give us reasons for the current situation especially, the unsigned accounts from 2016 to 2022.
 - undertake a council-wide audit to ensure that there are no similar problems on the horizon
 - give us the tools to implement a robust system which strengthens data quality issues and information management in the Council.
 - will carry out an all systems review to help us develop a healthy organisation able to react quickly to the external environment, insulate itself from any negative consequences and deliver for the people of this borough
 - Note – implementation of these proposals to be discussed at the next available Cabinet meeting.
- Ring fence measures that tackle the Cost of Living Crisis and ensure that support for our most vulnerable residents, people and families struggling the most are not affected by Council actions to address concerns about the finances.
- work with Community Organisations and businesses large and small to safeguard stakeholders' interests throughout the independent investigation.
- work with our unions to safeguard local jobs

12.2 Motion regarding Local Electricity Bills

Proposed by: Cllr Rachel Blake

Seconded by: Cllr Sirajul Islam

This Council notes:

1. The efforts that this council has made under the previous administration to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy, including:
 - i. Declaring a climate emergency in March 2019;
 - ii. Launched the Net Zero Carbon (NZC) Partnership Action Plan in November 2021 to become a net zero carbon council by 2025 and a net zero carbon borough by 2045 or sooner;
 - iii. Planted hundreds of street trees;
 - iv. Approved 400 new electric vehicle charging points across the borough;
 - v. In 2021, Tower Hamlets Council was named the greenest local authority in the country.
2. That very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so.
3. That making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would enable and empower new local businesses, or councils, to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local customers.
4. That revenues received by new local renewable electricity providers could be used to help improve the local economy, local services and facilities and to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions.

This Council resolves to:

1. To support the Local Electricity Bill, supported by 306 MPs which, if made law, would establish a Right to Local Supply which would promote local renewable electricity supply companies and co-operatives by making the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate to the size of the supply operation.
2. Inform the local media of this decision.
3. Request the Mayor to write to the borough's Members of Parliament local MPs, asking them to support the Bill.
4. Request the Mayor to write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NW1 7NN) expressing its support.

12.3 Motion regarding D3 and D7 Bus Routes

Proposer: Councillor Maium Miah Talukdar

Secunder: Councillor Bellal Ahmed

This Council notes

- with great concern, the short-sighted approach to bus services, in particular the proposed cut to the D3 and D7 bus services.
- that buses help improve Community Health by encouraging walking to bus stops.
- the likely impact on Air Pollution. Research suggests that leaving a car at home can reduce carbon dioxide emissions significantly and buses connect parts of the borough in practical ways.
- that a good bus network helps to reduce road congestion, provides equitable transportation & improves Community Mobility.

This Council further notes that:

- bus routes are often used by our borough's poorest residents, who cannot afford the luxury of a car or regular use of the train system - buses are significantly cheaper to use.
- the removal of these routes will financially punish the poorest and most economically vulnerable communities at the height of a cost of living crisis, following the havoc caused by the Pandemic.
- the Deputy Mayor wrote to the Mayor of London on the 2nd of June 2022 raising the point that the D7 is critical for connectivity in the local economy.
- children rely on the service to get to and from school
- elderly residents use it to make essential trips to the shops - trips that would otherwise go unmade
- vulnerable residents see the D7 route literally as a matter of life and death as they rely on the service to take them to GP and other appointments . The D3 is similarly essential to residents.
- the loss of the bus routes means removing a vital transport lifeline and represents an unacceptable attack on the poor and vulnerable at a time when they need support.

This Council believes that:

- residents will suffer a loss of quality of life if the proposal is implemented.
- the thinking behind the proposals fails to put people before profit.
- the economic benefit of Public Transport has not been taken into account,

especially the research that indicates for every £1 invested, there is a £4 return.

- Public Transport improves Commuter Productivity by enabling use of travel time to catch up on social correspondence, read, relax, or even sleep - enabling workers to arrive in a positive state of mind.
- This Council further believes that the Green Agenda will be impacted negatively, especially those aspects built on the use public transport and the reduction of air pollution.

This Council resolves that:

- a. a letter supporting the Deputy Mayor's letter of 2nd June 2022 should be sent to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, in order to amplify the request that the decision to axe the bus routes should be reconsidered.
- b. a response should be sent to Transport for London's Consultation, highlighting the reasons why the proposal to remove the D3 and D7 services should be dropped.
- c. a letter should be sent to our GLA Representative, seeking support for retaining the bus service.
- d. the Community should be encouraged to support the Council's efforts to save the bus services.

12.4 Motion regarding construction of the Silvertown Tunnel

Proposer: Cllr Nathalie Bienfait

We call on the Mayor of Tower Hamlets to notify the Mayor of London of this decision and to ask him to cancel the project.

This council notes that:

- High air pollution causes a number of serious human health issues, especially for children.
- Air pollution in areas of Tower Hamlets is consistently higher than the WHO recommended level. Children in TH have 10% average lower lung capacity than elsewhere, due to exposure to high levels of air pollution. Asthma rates in Tower Hamlets among all ages are higher than the rest of the country.
- Air pollution is predominantly caused by road vehicle transport, and is generated by emissions from internal combustion engines and particulate matter generated by rubber tyres from all vehicles, including electric vehicles.
- There is a significant body of evidence which proves 'induced traffic demand' - that building more road infrastructure results in more traffic overall rather than eases congestion.
- The Silvertown Tunnel plans to charge users to use it and argues that the imposition of a charge disproportionately affects lower-income users.
- Research from the Tyndall Centre which shows that London's transport policy is currently incompatible with the rapid decarbonisation required to reach targets aligned with the Paris agreement; the tunnel would only make matters worse, and is incompatible with the GLA Net Zero target of 2030. By allowing this tunnel to go ahead, it would require significant work to be done in other areas to offset these emissions (allowing for limits on the use of carbon offsets) - with emissions from both the construction of the project, as well as from increased road traffic, when electric vehicles still only account for only a low proportion of overall road users
- There are a number of alternative plans for a Thames Crossing that do not have the severe consequences that are stated above.

This council believes that:

- Everyone living, working and studying in Tower Hamlets has the right to enjoy clean air and good health.
- Air pollution disproportionately impacts lower-income and BAME communities across the country and Tower Hamlets is no exception.
- The Mayor of London Sadiq Khan's plans to build the Silvertown Tunnel under the River Thames between Newham and Greenwich will result in significantly higher air pollution for the people of east London.
- Given the logic of induced traffic demand, this council agrees that the completion of the project will only see an increase in air pollution across east London and no long-term impact on congestion in Tower Hamlets.
- That the Silvertown Tunnel plan does nothing to address the public health crisis caused by air pollution in the whole of east London.
- There is a real and pressing need for crossings across the River Thames east of Tower Bridge, and agrees that this tunnel is an inequitable solution to this issue.
- The Silvertown Tunnel will increase our dependence on cars which will further increase greenhouse gas emissions at a time when we need to rapidly decrease them.

We therefore resolve that:

- As a society, we must work to reduce air pollution everywhere because of the

terrible public health impacts it causes, effects which are disproportionately felt by those of lower-income backgrounds and in BAME communities.

- We stand in solidarity with residents who will be adversely affected by the Silvertown Tunnel and add our voices to the calls against the plan.
- This council urges the Mayor of London to explore public transport, walking and cycling options to cross the River Thames as alternatives to this plan.
- We call on the Mayor of Tower Hamlets to notify the Mayor of London of this decision and to ask him to cancel the project.

12.5 Motion regarding Use of funding from covid relief and household support funds to support residents from ASB on the Isle of Dogs

Proposed by Councillor Peter Golds

This council notes that in March 2022 the council had £8.3million of unused government provided covid relief funding, which has now increased and £2.96 million of household support funding which must be spent by the 30th September.

The council further notes that:

In response to an answer at the July cabinet meeting, officers identified how the household resource funding would be utilised before the 30th September.

That residents on the Isle of Dogs who have worked from home and those employed in essential jobs and worked unsocial hours have played their part in these difficult times.

That residents in Manchester Grove, Stebondale Street and Eastferry Road have all suffered from the misuse of the basketball pitch in Mudchute Park for illicit games overnight. These have been advertised on Facebook as an all night facility and many residents have found their personal and social lives and employment affected by this problem, with loud music and the noise from games being played overnight. They have continuously expressed concern that the council, up until now, has taken no action.

That residents are aware that it would take a small sum from the funds noted above to secure the basketball court and enable residents to have the rest to which they are surely entitled.

That elsewhere on the Island is the St Andrews Youth Centre. At night this is unsecured and becomes a hub for noise and anti social behaviour affecting residents on Masthouse Terrace, Westferry Road and nearby. The cost to secure the gates overnight, is minimal and possibly equal to the regular clear up of the detritus of fast food, alcohol, nox canisters and the frequent paraphernalia of drugs which litter the site before the centre can be used for its legitimate purpose, to which residents do not object.

Therefore the council calls upon the administration to resolve these problems by using funds from either covid relief or the household support fund to enable residents to enjoy the basic quality of life to which they are entitled.