


Non-Executive Report of the:  <b>COUNCIL</b>  17 <sup>th</sup> July 2024	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Linda Walker, Interim Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
<b>Motion for debate submitted by the Administration</b>	

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

## SUMMARY

1. Council Procedure Rule 11 allows for time at each Ordinary Council meeting for the discussion of one specific Motion submitted by the Administration. 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. The Administration 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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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.

## **ADMINISTRATION MOTION FOR DEBATE – MOTION ON BANGLADESHI DIASPORA IN TOWER HAMLETS**

**Proposed by:** Cllr Musthak Ahmed

**Seconded by:** Cllr Abu Talha Chowdhury

### **This Council notes:**

- That Tower Hamlets has always been a place known for its tolerance and welcoming of communities from around the world.
- That one of the largest of these communities to make Tower Hamlets its home is the Bangladeshi community. Comprising over 1/3 of the borough's population, this community has made its home in Tower Hamlets for over 100 years.
- That they have continued the rich tradition of immigration to Tower Hamlets. Starting with the French Huguenots; and continuing through the Jewish; Irish; and the African Caribbean communities, the Bangladeshi population – alongside the more recent arrival of a thriving Somali community – has enriched the borough and left a lasting and positive legacy in the borough.
- The first Bangladeshis to come to Tower Hamlets were Lascars, seamen from the Indian subcontinent who served aboard European vessels. 896 of these Lascars were killed during the Great War, demonstrating the Bangladeshi community's pride in coming to Britain.
- That one of the oldest institutions of the Bangladeshi community was founded by one of these lascars, Shah Jalal Coffee House, which was established in 1920 at 76 Commercial Street. This set the precedent for the vibrant and ubiquitous presence of Bangladeshis in the catering business – not only in Tower Hamlets, but across the UK.
- That the majority of the borough's Bangladeshi population came to London in the 1950s and 1960s, seeking better lives for themselves and their families following the partition of India. They worked in textile factories; car plants; and the rag trade, as well the now world-renowned curry-houses across the Country, and particularly in Tower Hamlets. They came to help rebuild Britain after the war.
- That this community stood against the violent racism espoused by the National Front in the 1970s that led to the tragic and callous murder of Altab Ali and continued violence and attacks against Bangladeshis. They stood alongside black; Jewish; and LGTBQ residents of Tower Hamlets to drive them out.

- That this continued against the BNP in the 1990s; and the EDL in the 2000s and 2010s.
- That this community has worked tirelessly through the voluntary and community sectors to support people – regardless of their background – to tackle poverty; inequality; and strengthen community cohesion.
- That by the 1980s and 1990s, Bangladeshis represented a key component of the cultural; social; political; and economic fabric of Tower Hamlets, with a booming business sector and representatives in Local and National government.
- That these local activists who went on to be elected representatives in Local Government in Tower Hamlets Council, contributed to the development and improvement of the social; economic; and cultural fabric of Tower Hamlets. They were and are trailblazers and provided leadership.
- That this community – just like all other immigrants who have made this borough their home alongside the working class Eastenders who accepted and coexisted alongside them – have together made a massive contribution to the cultural; social; and economic fabric – not only of Tower Hamlets and London – but the UK more broadly. They all represent what is best about Britain, and the benefits of diversity; multiculturalism; and bringing the best out each other.

**This Council believes:**

- That Tower Hamlets is the Capital of not only British Bangladeshis, with over 35% residents of Bangladeshi heritage – but of the Bangladeshi diaspora globally.
- It is also a community of firsts. The first British Bangladeshi member of the House of Lords was from Tower Hamlets. The first British Bangladeshi MP was from Tower Hamlets. And the first Executive Mayor from a non-white background in the whole of Europe was from Tower Hamlets and is of Bangladeshi heritage.
- That the innovation; entrepreneurial drive; and community spirit of the Bangladeshi people has contributed to making Tower Hamlets a ‘go-to’ borough – a place where visitors can enjoy the best food; sights; and cultural attractions that London has to offer.
- That this is embodied by the Brick Lane, Spitalfields and Banglatown area – the hub and heart of Bangladeshi industry and culture outside of Bangladesh in the world.

- This is reflected in the over £3billion that Bangladeshi businesses contributed to the borough's economy last year.
- That the community benefits brought by Bangladeshis to Tower Hamlets – their willingness to share; to be neighbourly; to offer support to young and old; and to work with other groups – demonstrates the best of our borough, and embodies the 'go-to' spirit that makes Tower Hamlets such a special place to live.
- That without the industry; culture; and spirit of the Bangladeshi community, Tower Hamlets – and Britain – would be much worse off.
- That we should celebrate and promote the history and contributions of the Bangladeshi community, and ensure that this promoted across Tower Hamlets; London; and the UK as a whole.
- Tower Hamlets – and all of the residents within it regardless of ethnic or religious background – are a microcosm of the best of Britain.

**This Councils resolves:**

- To host an exhibition in the Town Hall chronicling the history of Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets, and celebrating the cultural capital they have brought to our borough.
- To thank them for their contributions to Tower Hamlets, and the social; community; and economic benefits they have brought and continue to bring.
- To continue to develop and strengthen the close community ties between all groups in the borough.
- To continue to oppose negative depictions of this and all other groups, as it has always done, and will always continue to do