

LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT TO THE OPPOSITION MOTION FOR DEBATE ON TACKLING POVERTY PROGRAMME

Proposed by: Cllr Asma Islam

Seconded by: Cllr Amy Lee

Additions in red and underlined.

This council notes:

- The United Kingdom is the sixth largest economy in the world and London is the fifth wealthiest city in the world. The Borough of Tower Hamlets has faced disproportionately high levels of child poverty and deprivation for decades.
- Currently 56% of children in our borough live in poverty, the highest percentage in the UK.
- Tower Hamlets unemployment rate is at 6.3% and has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in London disproportionately affecting the BAME population.
- There have been several, high quality, pieces of research conducted on poverty in the Borough such as the LBTH 2021 Poverty Review and the Toynbee Hall Poverty Review.
- The 2021 Tower Hamlets Poverty Review found that the primary causes of poverty in our borough are:
 - Joblessness
 - Insecure, low paid work
 - Rising living costs
 - Housing costs, insecurity and undersupply
 - Inadequate and arbitrary social security system
- Pensioner Poverty has risen dramatically since 2014 especially those who live in private rental accommodation.
- It's estimated that residents of Tower Hamlets could have more than £110 million in unclaimed benefits and support.
- The 2023 O&S Review of Food Insecurity in our borough found that in 2023 there had been a rise of £643 to the annual average food shop.
- In work poverty has been on the rise since 2010 with more than 75% of children in poverty in 2023 living in a household where someone is in work.
- Over 60% of families in receipt of tax credits were in work and just under 50% of those in receipt of housing benefit were also in work.
- That 'Tackling the Cost-of-Living Crisis' is a key component of the Tower Hamlets Strategic Plan as well as other anti-poverty measures such as Universal Free School Meals and 100% Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

- The socio-economic duty, section 1 of the Equality Act (2010) requires public bodies to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in occupation, education, place of residence or social class.

This council believes:

- That combatting child poverty/ poverty and deprivation should be its most important objective.
- Child poverty is linked to household income – Tower hamlets has the highest income earners (second highest in London) as well as the lowest earners or in unemployment.
- The austerity programme started under the previous government, weakened the social safety net and public services resulting in lower living standards and life expectancy for our residents.
- Brexit, Covid and the cost-of-living crisis added further economic shocks to the national economy and public services.
- Under successive governments there was significant reform of the welfare system with the introduction of Universal Credit, the ‘Under-Occupancy Charge’ (also known as the bedroom tax), the two-child benefit cap and other measures which have had a detrimental effect on the standard of living for families and individuals in our borough.
- That with political will and co-operation we can end the scourge of child poverty which is ultimately linked to tackling poverty for families in our borough.
- That this can only be achieved through long term planning and consensus building.
- That eradicating poverty is not only morally just, but also a logical way we can deliver best value for our residents.
- That this council should build on the work of successive political administrations and draw together existing work to form a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy with measurable targets and goals.
- That any comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy needs to bring together all of the council’s directorates, partner orgs (Met Police, Health and Care Partnership, Tower Hamlets Together, Faith Groups etc.) and VSCOs.
- That any strategy must centre the needs and voices of those who have experienced or currently experience poverty.
- That a comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy is complemented by the LBTH Partnership Plan and Strategic Plan.

This council resolves to:

- Adopt a 15-year tackling poverty strategy, with 3 phases for each 5-year milestone.
- Request that the Executive Mayor and Chief executive of Tower Hamlets explore the option for the council to begin a tackling poverty commission to produce the anti-poverty strategy.
- Request that the LBTH Overview and Scrutiny Committee, form a special 'Ending Child Poverty' Task and Finish Group that will draw membership from each scrutiny subcommittee to ensure that it's work is a collegiate and cross-party effort. T&F Group will be responsible for producing a comprehensive report and recommended strategy document to present to the Mayor and Cabinet upon completion. This will support the work of the commission as well as the overall strategy.
- Ensure the strategy is adopted at full council as an overarching policy for the entire council and our partners which should make the strategy a key priority for all council departments.
- Request that the Executive Mayor instructs the commission to identify causes and indicators, collect data and ask officers to track new changes from government so that future pressures and demands can be prepared for. Council should collect data and follow journey on how current and new initiatives are having impacts on our tackling poverty strategy.
- Ensure that the commission is asked to look at key indicators such as welfare, unemployment, debt management, council data on rent arrears, housing benefit, household money management education, mental health, substance misuse, in work poverty and education for adults and children.
- Empower council officers through education and training to look at ways to support the priority of rooting out poverty in the borough and be innovative and explore best practises from other councils and partners.
- Ensure that Tower Hamlets council will seek to work with public health, VCS, schools, residents and council to co-produce and influence tackle poverty strategy.