


Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 2 nd October 2024	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Linda Walker, Interim 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. The following motions have been submitted by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 11 for debate at the Council meeting.
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.
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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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 CROSS PARTY MOTION – ETHNIC PAY GAP

Proposer: Cllr Abdi Mohamed

Seconder: Cllr Kabir Ahmed

Research from across civil society, including the GMB union shows that there is an Ethnicity Pay Gap, between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic worker and non-Black Asian and Minority Ethnic workers who are otherwise equal in educational attainment. This is not only reflected in the pay of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers, but this disparity is also apparent in the promotion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers in the workplace.

This council notes that:

- One in six Bangladeshi residents across England and Wales live in Tower Hamlets. Locally, the Bangladeshi population remains by far the largest in the country in both proportionate (34.6%) and numerical (107,333) terms.
- Other significant ethnic groups include White British (22.9%), White Other (14.6%), Black African (5%), Chinese (3.3%) and Somali or Somalilander (2%)
- GMB Race, the union's self-organised groups in London, sent out a survey to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic London workers to collect information about their Pay, Terms and Conditions. GMB Race's survey results, while disappointing, unsurprisingly show the fact that only half of respondents thought they received equal treatment and access to bonuses, overtime, pension, and other plus payments compared to non-BAME staff.
- The TUC's own research shows that the Ethnicity Pay Gap for minority workers has shown that students who entered the workplace after GCSE are paid 11% less than their white counterparts. Whilst those who attained degrees, the pay gap more than doubled to 23%. The race pay gap impacts the standard of living of those affected and also worsens for people who have aspired and succeeded in further education.
- The Resolution Foundation has shown that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers lose out on £3.2bn a year in wages compared to white workers. It found Pakistani and Bangladeshi male graduates earned an average £2.67 an hour (12%) less, while among female graduates, black women faced the biggest pay penalty, of £1.62 an hour (9%).
- Within Tower Hamlets only 33.1% of the borough's top 5% of earners are BAME.
- The general reporting of the pay gap is poor and recent figures show so far only 3% of employers with over 250 employees are voluntarily reporting their ethnicity pay gap.
- The Government has acknowledged this weakness and that Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting should be mandatory. However, this has not happened.
- The Women's and Equalities Committee's (WESC) report Ethnicity Pay Gap in February 2022 recommended that the Government should introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting by April 2023. This should be for all organisations that currently report for gender and that legislation should include the requirement for employers to publish a supporting narrative and action plan.

- This call has been echoed by the TUC.

This council believes that:

- All those that live and work within Tower Hamlets should be equally able to flourish in their place of employment. Therefore, there should be no glass ceiling because of the colour of someone's skin. Pay, promotions, career development and progression and bonuses in all sectors should be underpinned by ability and fairness. This is vital in eradicating systemic racism and division in wider society and a cause acutely relevant to the diverse community in this borough.
- With a cost-of-living crisis hitting households hard, the diminishing earnings of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers will disproportionately push many of such workers further into work poverty.
- This disproportionately affects local authorities, like Tower Hamlets, who are proud of their diverse and multicultural communities.
- All public bodies within the borough should be committed to being open and transparent about publishing its data on employees, whilst running fair, open and inclusive promotion strategies within its public sector duties. Such public data is the first step in creating awareness of the ethnicity pay gap with a view to drive change.
- Other employers across all sectors should do the same and that there should be mandatory reporting of the Ethnicity Pay Gap for all employers with 250 or more staff members.

This council resolves to:

- Adopt GMB Race's campaign for an Ethnicity Pay Gap, including:
- Agree to annually report on the Ethnicity Pay Gap within its own organisation;
- Endeavour to regularly analyse strengths and weakness based on its own reporting, devising and implementing annual plans to proactively put in place measures to ensure there are no bars to recruitment, training, salary levels or promotion, including local schemes to give opportunities for ethnic staff to achieve promotion and occupy more senior positions within the Council;
- Work with the three recognised Councils unions locally and adopt GMB Race campaigns Ethnicity Pay Gap Charter;
- Work with council suppliers, contractors and partners to seek to do the same encouraging best practice through procurement rules as relevant, including in the contracting of any new services; and
- Call upon the Government to introduce mandatory pay gap reporting.

12.2 MOTION ON THE WINTER FUEL PAYMENT

Proposed by: Cllr Marc Francis

Seconded by: Cllr XX

This Council notes:

- The last Labour Government introduced the Winter Fuel Payment in 1999 in recognition that many older people were struggling with the costs of their gas and electric bills;
- By 2005, the sum paid was set at £300 for over-80s and £200 for those pensioners under-80 and that this figure has not increased for nearly 20 years;
- The new Labour Government has inherited a dire economic situation, which will require it to make difficult decisions;
- The Chancellor has announced that the Winter Fuel Payment will be stopped for older people who are not in receipt of Pension Credit;
- This will impact upon nearly 9,000 of the 15,913 Tower Hamlets residents who are in receipt of the Basic State Pension;
- Ministers have instructed the Department for Work & Pensions to undertake a 'take-up' publicity campaign to persuade those who are eligible but not in receipt of Pension Credit to apply, so they also get the Winter Fuel Payment too.

This Council believes:

- Tower Hamlets has many older people with small occupational pensions who are slightly above the £13,000 a year income threshold for Pension Credit and that these residents cannot be described as "wealthy";
- Against a backdrop of the dramatic increase in energy prices since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, many older people who are not in receipt of the Pension Credit will struggle with the costs of keeping their home warm without the Winter Fuel Payment;
- Tower Hamlets Council has sufficient financial resources to be able to enable it to cover the £1.5 million cost of a one-off payment to pensioners who are losing their Winter Fuel Payment.

This Council resolves:

- To call on the Executive Mayor to instruct officers to establish a local 'Tower Hamlets Winter Fuel Payment' scheme offering sums of £300 to those over-80 and £200 to those under-80, who are not in receipt of Pension Credit and write to local pensioners inviting them to apply;
- To back the public campaign by Age UK and other charities and the trade union movement to try to persuade the Labour Government to reinstate the Winter Fuel Payment.

12.3 Motion to Full Council on Violence, Abuse and Intimidation in Political Campaigning

Proposer: Cllr Mufeedah Bustin

Seconded: Cllr Amina Ali

This council notes:

1. That in the recent UK General Election campaign, parliamentary candidates reported an increase in abuse, intimidation, and harassment.
2. In Article 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998 that everyone has the right to freedom of expression.
3. Those targeted in our borough were disproportionately women of colour, with Member of Parliament for Poplar and Limehouse Apsana Begum and Liberal Democrat candidate in Bethnal Green & Stepney Rabina Khan, receiving intimidation, harassment and abuse whilst campaigning.
4. MP for Bethnal Green and Stepney Rushanara Ali received death threats, intimidation and harassment during the campaign which resulted in her needing police protection when in public in her constituency.
5. In the last eight years, two MPs have been murdered in the United Kingdom, Jo Cox and Sir David Amess.
6. That political violence continues to rise with all politicians facing increasing levels of violence, harassment and abuse.
7. Research from Amnesty International found that women in politics are 27 times more likely to face online abuse compared to male counterparts.
8. On Tuesday 9th July 2023, LBTH Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the safety of Women during election campaigns during item 9: 'Women's Safety Action Plan Response Progress'.
9. The Chair and members of LBTH Overview and Scrutiny Committee condemned the intimidation of Women during the general election campaign.

This council believes:

10. That the intimidation, harassment and threats against candidates in the recent UK General Election must be condemned.
11. That whilst we may disagree with individuals' political beliefs and stances, political violence of all types should not be tolerated or excused.
12. That the ability to freely debate and challenge each other's political views and opinions is a cornerstone of democracy.
13. That abuse, harassment and intimidation can act as a precursor to physical violence and leads to disenfranchisement and is therefore anti-democratic.
14. That Black, Asian and ethnically minority women in politics receive a disproportionate amount of online and public abuse.
15. Violence against women in politics discourages many women from entering the political arena.
16. As local leaders, council members have a responsibility to lead by example in our own behaviour as well as call out all forms of abuse and intimidation.
17. That social media companies should be doing more to curb the online abuse and harassment of political figures on their platforms.

This council resolves:

18. To provide bystander training to members and officers to strengthen their ability to call out abusive behaviour.
19. To sign up to the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign and adopt the toolkit to create a culture of safety and respect.
20. To examine whether the council and its partners have robust enough processes to protect women from violence, intimidation and harassment during election campaigns.

12.4 Motion on Support the campaign to move the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) to an ethical investment model.

Proposer: Councillor Shubo Hussain

Seconder: Councillor Rebaka Sultana

This Council notes:

- The ongoing international legal cases regarding the occupation of Palestine and war between the State of Israel and Hamas, the illegal Russian Invasion of Ukraine and the ever-growing climate emergency has thrown a spotlight on how local authorities invest their pensions funds.
- Across the UK campaigns are building to press councils to divest millions of pounds from companies that are complicit in/profit from military occupation and the violation of human rights; invest in weaponry and surveillance technology and/or are involved in the exploration/processing of fossil fuels. Some councils, such as Waltham Forest and Islington, have already made concrete divestment commitments - demonstrating that where there is the will, there is a way.
- The threat posed by fossil fuelled climate change is real and urgent. Investments in fossil fuels are not only harmful to the environment but put the sustainable future of pensions at risk. Investing local government pension funds in fossil fuels is fuelling climate change and toxic air pollution, entrenching failing energy systems, fuelling repressive regimes, and contradicting political commitments to tackle climate change.
- The Tower Hamlets LGPS has millions of pounds of assets in a variety of investments. Council staff and those working for admitted employers providing local public services pay into the LGPS over the lifetime of their employment. Employers also pay in contributions. This pot of money is invested by the council with oversight from the Pensions Committee who act as Trustees. On retirement workers draw their pension from the Fund.
- Most of the Fund is handed over to the London Common Investment Vehicle (CIV) who act as investment managers for the 32 London boroughs.

This Council believes:

- It is time for our council to disclose and divest its Pension Fund and ensure that the assets are ethically invested.
- That we all want to have a comfortable retirement at the end of a long working life – but retirement funds should not be being used to create a more unstable and damaged planet.
- That the TH LGPS fund (which is made up of public money and the deferred wages of public sector workers) should not be used to fund, prop up or profit from human rights violations, occupation, death and destruction.
- Properly planned ethical investment over time can ensure that the scheme is healthy and that its financial obligations are met.

This council resolves:

1. To support and commend the local community campaign that has recently formed to press the council to disclose its LGPS fund investments and for the Pensions Committee to bring forward a concrete roadmap to ensure that LGPS funds are being invested in an ethical investment scheme.