

ASPIRE AMENDMENT TO OPPOSITION MOTION FOR DEBATE Scrap the Revised Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy

Proposed by: Cllr XXX

Seconded by: Cllr XXX

Additions in Red and Underline

Deletions in Red and Struckthrough

This council notes:

- In July, the Mayor and Cabinet adopted a revised 'Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy.'
- The revised policy removed the 90-minute journey time limit, allowing the council to place families and individuals experiencing homelessness in temporary accommodation beyond the Home Counties.
- For the record, following feedback from residents – through the Mayor's surgeries; member enquiries; and face to face meetings – at the 11th September Cabinet meeting, the Mayor clearly stated that the decision was not being implemented until there had been a further review and this has the effect of retaining the 90 minute cap for the present time.
- This decision contradicted the 90-minute journey time limit established by the Supreme Court in the Westminster test case, which determined that families should not be placed in accommodation further than 90 minutes from their home. This policy was not implemented following the Council's Cabinet meeting on 11th September.
- Under the policy, those in their final year of GCSEs or A-Levels are to be placed in temporary accommodation within the borough.
- Children in other school year groups can be placed anywhere within London.
- Families with very young children, who are not yet of school age, may be placed in temporary accommodation anywhere in the Home Counties. This policy was not implemented at the Council's Cabinet meeting on 11th September. It should be noted that within the paused policy there was a detailed set of criteria that made placement in Zones C and D a last resort, meaning that this group would have been protected. In any event, no family will be placed more than 90 minutes outside of Tower Hamlets, as the Council has not implemented the decision to remove the 90 minute cap at the last Cabinet meeting on 11th September.
- People with health needs, including mental health concerns, should be rehoused in temporary accommodation (TA) either within or close to the borough, to ensure they can access necessary support services.
- There has been a rise in Section 21 (no-fault) evictions over the past two years, leading to an increased number of residents declaring themselves homeless to the council.
- Placing working residents in temporary accommodation in distant areas, such as Zones C and D, risks forcing them to leave their jobs, further contributing to poverty among affected families. However, this proposed amendment to the existing policy was not implemented at the Council's Cabinet meeting on the

11th September, meaning no working resident is being placed more than 90 minutes outside of the borough.

- The Greater London Authority (GLA) has announced £40 million in new funding aimed at procuring homes for overcrowded and homeless families.
- Of this, £8.3 million from the Government has been allocated specifically to Tower Hamlets Council, with a mandate to purchase 32 homes for use as temporary accommodation. The Council has also begun a process of buybacks; increasing of temporary accommodation funding from it's HRA account; and an accelerated fast track planning process to complement this allocation of funding, as well as an ambitious newbuild housing programme.
- It is acknowledged that high rents in Tower Hamlets make it unaffordable for residents affected by the benefit cap to continue living here, putting additional strain on homeless families.

The Council believes:

- Relocating families away from their support networks can have a detrimental impact on the wellbeing and education of children. That is why the proposed change to the existing policy were not implemented at the September 11th Cabinet meeting, meaning no resident will move more than 90 minutes outside of the borough.
- The best outcomes for families experiencing homelessness are achieved when they are placed in a locality where they can easily access support services and maintain existing social ties.
- The Council was right to retain the 90-minute journey time limit ~~should be reinstated, and the~~ by not implementing the revised 'Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy' ~~should be reversed~~ at the September 11th Cabinet meeting.
- Introducing a ban on no-fault evictions would relieve pressure on homelessness and help stabilise rental prices.
- The Council should explore homes purchased by the Council using GLA and Government funds should have rents capped at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, ensuring affordability for benefit-capped households.
- The Mayor and Lead Member have already commissioned work to understand what work and potential additional investment is required to bolster the Council's efforts in this area and More should be done to explore procuring properties within the existing boundaries.

This council resolves to:

- Recommend to the Mayor that a new report is presented at the next Cabinet meeting, confirming the reversing of the 'Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy' adopted in July and paused at the September 11th Cabinet meeting.
- Explore ways to use GLA and Government funding to purchase properties where rents ~~can~~ could be capped at LHA rates, ensuring more affordable housing for homeless and overcrowded families.