


Non-Executive Report of the:  <b>COUNCIL</b>  20 <sup>th</sup> November 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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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 ON PENSIONER HEALTH THROUGH EATING AND MEETING**

**Proposer:** Councillor Maium Talukdar

**Seconder:** Councillor Kabir Ahmed

### **This Council notes**

- That pensioners are some of the most vulnerable and isolated residents, not only in Tower Hamlets, but across London and the UK more broadly.
- That according to a recent Age UK study, over 1.4million elderly residents said they were isolated, and lacking in key support and social networks.
- More than 2million people over the age of 75 live alone in the UK.
- That while many elderly residents in Tower Hamlets have excellent, loving support networks, many fall into this 2million category.
- That pensioner poverty in Tower Hamlets remains a critical issue with many older residents struggling to afford basic needs like heating, food supplies and other essentials, particularly during winter.
- That this compounds isolation and contributes to health inequalities, as well as placing additional pressures on the NHS.
- That according to data from June 2024, 12% of low-income pensioner households in Tower Hamlets are living below the poverty line.
- That according to a University of Manchester study, on average 16% of pensioners across the UK are in Low Food Security, meaning that the household in question “reduces the quality, variety, and nutritional value of their diets”.
- That Tower Hamlets is one of the most deprived areas in the country, with 69% of its neighbourhoods falling into the 10% most deprived in England for income deprivation affecting older adults
- That at the last Cabinet meeting, the council pledged to support up to 9,000 poor pensioners with their fuel bills, offering a £175 payment to all those not on pension credit and no longer in receipt of a Winter Fuel Payment.

### **This Council believes**

- That while this scheme will help vulnerable pensioners with their heating bills, many will continue to struggle to eat a hot, square meal each day.
- This could be due to financial, physical, or psychological impediments that mean they may go without a nutritious meal.
- That the existing meals on wheels policy – introduced in 1994 and cut during the previous administration – provided hundreds of vulnerable pensioners with a daily hot, nutritious meals and a warm conversation.

- That at its peak in 2015, the scheme serviced over 350 elderly residents with a daily meal and dessert.
- That this boosted the wellbeing, health and morale of pensioners across the borough.
- That the service was neglected under the previous administration, seeing the number of elderly residents receiving the support drop by more than half to 160 in 2019.
- That the cutting of the service in 2020 further isolated many needy elderly residents, depriving them of a key lifeline.
- That this also represented another cut to key frontline council jobs.
- That this cut further contributed to the reduction in key frontline services across the borough, and plunged more vulnerable residents further into poverty.
- That luncheon clubs – another invaluable lifeline for many pensioners to socialise and eat a healthy meal – were also cut by the previous administration.
- That every pensioner has the right to healthy eating, as well as good heating.

### **This Council resolves**

- To instruct Officers to model the financial and logistical cost of reintroducing the *Meals on Wheels* scheme, to understand its resource viability and deliverability.
- To continue to promote access to the council's Winter Fuel Payment scheme in the meantime, to ensure that affected elderly residents have access to support with their heating.
- Further to this, instruct officers to model the financial and logistical cost of reintroducing elderly luncheon clubs via quality assured 3 sector providers.
- To have a report presented at the next Cabinet meeting outlining options should such these schemes be feasible.
- To launch a borough wide campaign to promote healthy eating and social inclusion for pensioners and vulnerable residents in Tower Hamlets.