


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>Motions submitted by Members of the Council</b>	

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services
<b>Wards affected</b>	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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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 MOTION - EMPOWERING SEND CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

**Proposer:** Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury

**Seconder:** Councillor Saied Ahmed

### **Council notes:**

- That Tower Hamlets had the highest percentage of pupils on an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans in London, with 6.8% of TH pupils having an EHC plan.
- That, when combined with pupils considered to have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who do not currently have an EHC plan (12.4%), a total of 18.2% of TH pupils are considered to have some kind of need.
- The total percentage of children and young people classified as SEND has increased 2.1% since data began in 2015 from 16.3% to 18.4%.
- That in terms of the type of specialist need, as of 2018 Tower Hamlets had a significant over representation of children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), 32.2% of children had a recognised need compared to 28.2% nationally.
- That Tower Hamlets also had a significant over representation of speech language and communication needs, 27.7% compared with 14.6% nationally. English as a second language is certainly a contributory factor.
- That In terms of ethnicity Bangladeshi children were overrepresented in ASD & Speech and Communication needs [57.8% & 68.1%] of EHCP's respectively.
- That this is quite likely down to underdiagnosis of SEMH needs in the Bangladeshi community, and potential over diagnosis of ASD in Bangladeshi children (some [evidence](#) suggests that not having English as a first language or being socially disadvantaged increase rates of ASD diagnosis).
- That children and young people with SEND needs are 6% more likely to face health inequalities, and this is higher in those from a BME background. This is particularly related to those with ASD. Indeed, around 30% of children with ASD were obese compared to 24% as a baseline

### **Council believes:**

- That SEND children and young people, and their families deserve proper support and opportunities to thrive and develop.
- That SEND needs can be an empowering and helpful set of skills, if encouraged and nurtured correctly.
- That the Council can do more to provide health and physical wellbeing opportunities to families with SEND children. A healthy body can strengthen and unlock potential for SEND children and young people.

- That families are lacking in some support to bridge the gap between their SEND child maturing into adulthood, and that the council can do more in providing this bridging service.

### **Council resolves:**

- To seek to fund free swimming – SEND sessions. Building on the Council's recent offer guaranteeing all woman over the age of 16 and all senior men over the age of 55 free swimming sessions, this would see a further roll out to include all SEND children and young adults up to the age of 30 with their carers eligible for the service.
- To look to extend daycare and weekend respite to SEND young adults 18-30 years of age. This would see:
  - Weekend day care service to be introduced for SEND 18-30 adults.
  - Holiday day care service to be introduced for SEND 18-30 adults.
  - Respite care during the weekends and holidays to support parents and carers with SEND 18-30 adults.
  - Should the contract provider be external, they must collect and drop the young adults to and from their homes. Should this be insourced, we must cost this ourselves.
  - For example the Tower Project provide several key daycare services for SEND children up to 18. This policy would extend these daycare services to 30. In addition, there would be weekend and holiday provision, alongside respite services for parents and carers.
  - A note and costed estimation has been requested by the Mayor regarding this service.
- To invest in more SEND and transitional care plans *with* psychologists in the assessment process to ensure that bespoke care packages can be designed for SEND 18-30. There is currently a huge backlog, and the Council wants to invest in procuring more to remove these delays. Identifying how we can increase provision for 18-30 year olds with SEND needs is key.
- To increase investment in SEND *Challenging Behaviour Specialist* and *Speech and Language Therapists*.
- To discuss this investment at the next available cabinet meeting.

## 12.2 MOTION TO REMOVE AND REAPPOINT THE CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES

**Proposer:** Cllr Asma Islam

**Seconder:** Cllr Amy Lee

Following the changes to proportionality on the council and it moving to a state where there is no overall control of the council by a political group, this council finds it reasonable to resolve to:

1. Remove all chairpersons of council committees from post;

*and;*

2. immediately vote to elect new committee chairs to fill the vacant positions.

## **12.3 MOTION ON CONCERNS OVER POSSIBLE THCH AND HYDE HOUSING GROUP MERGER**

**Proposer: Cllr Kabir Hussain**

**The Council notes** that residents have expressed significant concerns on this merger, including suggesting that:

1. The proposed merger between Tower Hamlets Community Housing (THCH) and Hyde Housing Group has caused widespread anxiety among THCH residents due to the absence of meaningful consultation with residents, tenants, and key stakeholders. Decisions of such significance should not proceed without engaging those most affected, ensuring their concerns are heard and addressed.
2. THCH was established as a stock transfer housing association, tasked with managing council homes and protecting a community ethos. Over time, this connection has weakened. The proposed merger with Hyde, which has no historical or organic ties to Tower Hamlets, raises concerns about whether THCH is honouring the founding mission its residents voted for.
3. The community is worried that the merger will dilute the local focus central to THCH's identity. Hyde, managing homes across numerous boroughs, may have little or no focus on Tower Hamlets residents. Hyde's geographical separation from the community could impact its ability to understand and meet the unique needs of Tower Hamlets residents. Reassurances are needed from the CEO negotiating with Hyde about the future of residents' homes.
4. While Hyde Housing may offer operational scale, its track record is concerning. The Housing Ombudsman has previously highlighted cases of maladministration within Hyde, including unresolved complaints, damp, mould, and poor handling of tenant issues. These failures have rightly raised alarms among THCH residents, who fear a decline in service standards post-merger.

There is also concern this situation mirrors other problematic housing mergers, such as the 2018 merger between Genesis Housing Association and Notting Hill Housing Trust, Similarly, the 2016 merger between Circle Housing Group and Affinity Sutton to form Clarion Housing Group resulted in widespread complaints about maintenance delays, rising service charges, and unresolved issues, prompting Ombudsman investigations.

5. These cases illustrate consistent and systemic failures within Hyde Housing Association, including; delays in addressing repair and maintenance issues, inadequate communication, poor handling of tenant complaints

**The Council further notes** residents' views that:

1. Whether THCH's may have a significant deficit, along with an estimated £50 million required to bring homes to a decent standard, which would raise concerns about the financial viability of the merger and whether Hyde would be able to absorb this impact without the burden being passed on through higher rents or charges..

2. Both THCH and Hyde have high levels of tenant dissatisfaction, with ongoing issues related to disrepair, safety, and unresolved complaints. Immediate action is required to address these conditions, regardless of the merger. Residents fear that the merger will exacerbate existing issues, including delayed repairs, poor communication, and inadequate responses to complaints, unless immediate and effective solutions are implemented.

3. Residents have proposed alternative solutions, such as self-management or government intervention, to address the financial instability. These alternatives must be considered before committing to a merger that may not resolve current problems. It is unclear why these resident-centered solutions have not been pursued or fully explored before the merger decision.

**The Council Resolves** to engage with the housing associations on the following actions proposed by residents:

1. To call on THCH to immediately halt the merger process until further significant consultation with residents, tenants, and key stakeholders is conducted. These consultations must include face-to-face engagement for vulnerable groups, non-English speakers, and those without access to digital platforms, and be extended to a twelve-week period in line with best practices.

2. To demand a thorough explanation from THCH as to why Hyde is considered a suitable partner given its record of maladministration. THCH must provide specific guarantees for improved management and housing conditions post-merger, ensuring that service standards will not further decline.

3. : To request a report that Hyde has the financial capacity to absorb THCH and invest in the necessary repairs without transferring the financial burden onto tenants through increased rents or service charges. Detailed financial due diligence must be shared with residents to allow for an informed decision.

4. To urge both THCH and Hyde to outline immediate actions to address existing disrepair, safety issues, and tenant dissatisfaction, setting clear targets for improvement prior to any merger. These targets must be met and transparently reported to the community.

5. To ensure that THCH explores and evaluates alternative solutions, including government support or a self-management model, before proceeding with any merger decision. These options must be presented to residents with transparency, providing clear reasoning for why they were or were not pursued.

6. The THCH CEO should be called in for scrutiny at the Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee.

7. Finally can the Mayor Mayor or Cllr Kabir Ahmed confirm whether they have met with THCH CEO Anita Khan, or the CEO of Hyde Housing? If such meetings have occurred, there needs to be a full and transparent report on the discussions and outcomes. Additionally, has THCH partnered with Tower Hamlets Council to fund projects or provide grants to local initiatives in recent months? Transparency on these collaborations is essential.