

## ASPIRE AMENDMENT TO MOTION 12.3 - MOTION ON CONCERNS OVER POSSIBLE THCH AND HYDE HOUSING GROUP MERGER

**Proposer: TBC**

**Seconder: TBC**

Deletions are ~~struck through~~

Additions are underlined

**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, and the Mayor has met with the THCH board; affected residents; and stakeholders on several occasions, and remains willing to do so.

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.~~

Request the Lead Member or Mayor to provide an update on the meetings they have had with THCH or Hyde.