


Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 22 nd January 2025	 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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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 MOTION - EMPOWERING SEND CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

Proposer: Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury

Seconder: Councillor Abdul Wahid

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 ON POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING

Proposer: Cllr Shubo Hussain

Seconder:

This Council Notes:

1. That in last year's UK General Election campaign, parliamentary candidates reported an increase in abuse, intimidation, and harassment.
2. In more recent weeks a rise of far-right rhetoric and movements in UK politics has fuelled hate, division, and the normalisation of abusive behaviour towards political figures and marginalised communities.
3. That interventions by influential individuals, including Elon Musk, can potentially amplify misinformation and harassment on social media platforms, further endangering politicians and undermining democratic debate.
4. That Article 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998 guarantees everyone the right to freedom of expression.
5. That those targeted in our borough were disproportionately women of colour, including the Member of Parliament for Poplar and Limehouse Apsana Begum and the Liberal Democrat candidate for Bethnal Green & Stepney Rabina Khan, who received intimidation, harassment, and abuse while campaigning.
6. That MP for Bethnal Green and Stepney Rushanara Ali received death threats, intimidation, and harassment during the campaign, necessitating police protection while in public in her constituency.
7. That the 2024 Best Value Inspection of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets found that during the 2024 election campaign, inspectors were made aware of *"...a significant number of social media posts and materials which were very concerning and, in our view, intimidatory in nature. (9.46).*
8. The report concluded that *"...the level of negative abuse of candidates was in our view unacceptable. The safeguarding of democratic processes is of the utmost importance. It is our judgement that the concerns raised with us are a concern and are sufficiently worrying for the government, Electoral Commission and police to consider what action might be necessary and appropriate in the context of the forthcoming local elections in May 2026 and any other forthcoming elections."* (1.16)
9. That in the past eight years, two MPs—Jo Cox and Sir David Amess—have been tragically murdered in the United Kingdom.
10. That political violence continues to rise, with politicians facing increasing levels of violence, harassment, and abuse.
11. That research from Amnesty International found that women in politics are 27 times more likely to face online abuse compared to their male counterparts.

12. That on Tuesday, 9th July 2024, the LBTH Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the safety of women during election campaigns under item 9: 'Women's Safety Action Plan Response Progress.'
13. That the Chair and members of the LBTH Overview and Scrutiny Committee condemned the intimidation of women during the general election campaign.

This Council Believes:

14. That the intimidation, harassment, and threats against candidates in last UK General Election must be unequivocally condemned.
15. That while we may disagree with individuals' political beliefs and stances, political violence of any kind should not be tolerated or excused.
16. That the ability to freely debate and challenge each other's political views and opinions is a cornerstone of democracy.
17. That abuse, harassment, and intimidation can act as precursors to physical violence, lead to disenfranchisement, and are therefore fundamentally anti-democratic.
18. That Black, Asian, and ethnically minority women in politics face a disproportionate level of online and public abuse.
19. That violence against women in politics discourages many women from entering or continuing in the political arena.
20. That as local leaders, council members have a responsibility to lead by example in their own behaviour and to call out all forms of abuse and intimidation.
21. That social media companies must do more to curb the online abuse and harassment of political figures on their platforms.
22. That the rise of far-right movements and the amplification of harmful content by influential individuals pose a threat to democracy and must be actively challenged.

This Council Resolves:

23. To provide bystander training for members and officers to strengthen their ability to recognise and challenge abusive behaviour.
24. To sign up to the LGA's **Debate Not Hate** campaign and adopt the toolkit to create a culture of safety and respect.
25. To examine whether the Council and its partners have sufficiently robust processes to protect women from violence, intimidation, and harassment during election campaigns.
26. To publicly condemn the rise of extreme rhetoric in UK politics and commit to challenging hate and division wherever it arises.

27. To urge social media companies to improve their platforms' response to abuse and misinformation and to highlight the negative impact of interventions by influential individuals who have enabled the spread of hate and harassment online.