

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY 11<sup>th</sup> JULY 2012**

**PETITIONS**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE HEAD,  
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**SUMMARY**

1. The Council's constitution as amended provides that a maximum of three petitions are received at any meeting. These are taken in order of receipt. This report sets out the valid petitions submitted for presentation at the Council meeting on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2012.
2. The deadline for receipt of petitions for this meeting is noon on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July. However, at the time of agenda despatch three petitions had already been received as set out overleaf which is the maximum number to be heard.
3. In each case the petitioners may address the meeting for no more than three minutes. Members may then question the petitioners for a further four minutes. Finally, the relevant Cabinet Member or Chair of Committee may respond to the petition for up to three minutes.
4. Any outstanding issues will be referred to the relevant Corporate Director for attention who will respond to those outstanding issues in writing within 28 days.
5. Members should confine their contributions to questions and answers and not make statements or attempt to debate.

**5.1 Petition from Nahida Rashid, Mrs H Ali, Tajul Islam and Shamsul Hoque and signed by 89 persons regarding ‘Attack on Bengali as a mother tongue teaching-learning at Langdon Park Secondary School’:**

“We would like to draw your attention to our serious concern on the issue of our children’s Bengali language learning at Langdon Park Secondary School. With regret we find that the school administration has been trying to marginalise Bengali learning by discouraging the children to choose Bengali as an MFL subject of learning. The time-table of the school has been one of the factors for children to opt-out for subjects other than Bengali. The permanent Bengali teacher has been marginalised and put in a situation so that she goes for early retirement. The entire scenario has become one that can be considered as an institutional attack on Bengali as a mother tongue teaching.

You know as well as we know that the teaching of Bengali should be made available at any cost in a school where 90% children come from families where home-language is Bengali. Opportunity for learning our mother tongue Bengali is not only our right and entitlement but also an instrument for our socio-cultural emancipation. We cannot keep quiet when such a plot has been matured through the direct support of the head teacher of the school.

May we therefore request you to please intervene into the situation and order for a independent investigation so that teaching-learning of Bengali at Langdon Park Secondary School can be resumed in full sewing in the interest of safeguarding the entitlement of our children to learn their mother tongue and achieve higher in the future career.

We look forward to your kind action and hearing from you soon.”

**5.2 Petition from Emily Sawyer and signed by 47 persons plus others online regarding the ‘Residents Solidarity Campaign’:**

“Since the beginning of 2012, the police in Tower Hamlets have been targeting women involved in street-based prostitution with arrests, displacement and threats of ASBOs in an effort to ‘clean up’ the streets for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Many of the women have had early experiences of abuse and violence; they have been groomed or forced into prostitution. For the vast majority, prostitution is a choice of ‘no choice’. In addition, they experience high levels of sexual and physical violence on the streets and in their intimate relationships. They are faced with homelessness, drug addictions and poverty.

We call on the police and the council to stop this victimisation and instead to focus on those who buy sex (kerb-crawlers), those who perpetrate violence against women and those who exploit them (abusive partners and drug dealers).

This campaign has been supported by Toynbee Hall.”

### **5.3 Petition from Mr A S Alom and signed by 39 persons regarding ‘Sex and Relationship Education (SRE)’:**

“We, the undersigned, are concerned about SRE (Sex and Relationships Education) provision in Tower Hamlets (TH).

We are calling on the Local Authority (LA) to support our campaign in defending our rights as parents and opposing the premature sexualisation of young children through explicit teaching of SRE in TH schools.

We call upon the LA, head teachers and governing bodies to:

1. Consult effectively with parents on the SRE policy and the content of SRE within the school;
2. Take steps to ensure that if sex education is taught to any pupils that it is done in a way that is culturally appropriate;
3. Respect and value the role of parents as the primary educators of their children in matters of sex and relationships;
4. Consider a review of the approach and practices in supporting schools in the teaching and learning of SRE; and
5. Facilitate an urgent meeting with the Mayor and Cabinet member to reassure us as parents on the teaching of SRE to our children.”