

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 11th JULY 2012

**MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY
MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

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

SUMMARY

1. Fourteen motions have been submitted by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 13 for debate at the Council meeting on Wednesday 11th July 2012.
2. In accordance with the protocol agreed by the Council on 21st May 2008, the order in which the motions are listed is by turns, one from each group, continuing in rotation until all motions submitted are included. The rotation starts with any group(s) not reached at the previous meeting.
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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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 are the motions that have been submitted.

12.1 Electoral concerns in Tower Hamlets

Proposer: Councillor Peter Golds

Seconder: Councillor Tim Archer

This Council notes that:

Following concerns raised by residents, the media, local Members of Parliament and the political parties, the police announced that they would be investigating voting concerns in the borough following the Spitalfields and Banglatown by election on April 19th.

That the election in Spitalfields and Banglatown was decided by 43 votes and that local residents complained of postal votes being collected from their homes by supporters of a particular candidate.

That in one case a householder repeatedly stated that there were just three residents in their property, whilst eight names were registered and all had postal votes.

That in the by election some 14% of postal votes returned to the town hall were rejected because of issues relating to dates of birth and signatures, yet in the May GLA election this figure of rejections fell to 7.66% of postal votes rejected on return.

That the following data concerning the April by election and the May GLA elections from five small areas gives rise to concern:

Brune House, E1

Flats: **92**

Electors: **231**

Registered postal voters: **69**

Postal votes cast April 19th 2012: **55**

Postal Votes Cast May 3rd 2012: **25**

Votes cast in person at polling station on April 19th: **60**

Votes cast in person at polling station on May 3rd 2012: **54**

Herbert House House, E1

Flats: **43**

Electors: **108**

Registered postal voters: **38**

Postal votes cast April 19th 2012: **29**

Postal Votes Cast May 3rd 2012: **19**

Votes cast in person at polling station on April 19th: **27**

Votes cast in person at polling station on May 3rd 2012: **21**

Chicksand House, E1

Flats: **70**

Electors: **194**

Registered postal voters: **46**

Postal votes cast April 19th 2012: **39**

Postal Votes Cast May 3rd 2012: **24**

Votes cast in person at polling station on April 19th: **31**

Votes cast in person at polling station on May 3rd 2012: **32**

8-24 Chicksand Street, E1

Residential properties:**25**

Electors: **67**

Registered postal voters: **38**

Postal votes cast April 19th 2012:**16**

Postal Votes Cast May 3rd 2012: **7**

Votes cast in person at polling station on April 19th: **16**

Votes cast in person at polling station on May 3rd 2012: **11**

14 Brick Lane, E1

Flats: **18**

Electors: **44**

Registered postal voters: **16**

Postal votes cast April 19th 2012: **12**

Postal Votes Cast May 3rd 2012: **4**

Votes cast in person at polling station on April 19th: **0**

Votes cast in person at polling station on May 3rd 2012: **4**

Total votes cast by post from these addresses on April 19th : 151

Total votes cast by post from these addresses on May 3rd: 79

That overall the turnout in Spitalfields and Banglatown in the May 3rd GLA elections increased from that two weeks earlier, yet there is this wide discrepancy in voting as exemplified above and in other areas of the ward.

This Council believes:

That this research coupled with other information, indicates the need for a thorough investigation by the police.

This Council resolves:

To call upon the police to investigate all evidence regarding electoral malpractice in the borough and interview residents, councillors, political activists and journalists to ascertain evidence.

To call upon the Police and the CPS to pursue malpractice through the courts to ensure that everybody has confidence in the electoral process in Tower Hamlets and that it is not bought into further disrepute in this borough.

12.2 New Family Migration Rules

Proposer: Councillor Fozol Miah
Seconded: Councillor Harun Miah

This Council notes:

- a) that the Government is introducing new family migrant rules on 9th July
- b) these rules will require someone wishing to marry and bring to this country their spouse an individual annual income of at least £18,500 and that even higher income is required if children are involved
- c) these rules impose punitive language knowledge conditions
- d) that the probationary period of entry will be extended from two years to five years
- e) that these changes to the rules come on top of what are already very severe restrictions on family migration to this country

This Council believes these new rules:

- a) will have a dramatic and adverse impact on thousands of people in Tower Hamlets, both from the ethnic minority communities and more broadly
- b) are being introduced as a blatant pandering to ignorance and racial prejudice
- c) constitute an unacceptable attack on the human rights of British citizens to marry whom they wish and to enjoy family life with their spouses and children

This Council resolves to:

- a) make urgent representations to the Government urging them to withdraw these proposals
- b) inform residents in Tower Hamlets of the changes to the rules relating to family migration
- c) assist residents to preserve their basic human rights in relation to family life

12.3 Increases in serious violent and acquisitive crime

Proposer: Councillor Abdal Ullah
Seconded: Councillor Joshua Peck

This Council notes:

- The increase in incidents of serious violent crime and serious acquisitive crime over the past year.
- That there were 19 more incidents of serious violent crimes this year than there were last year; that this is 47 more than the Mayor's target; and that this is a 4.4% increase year on year.
- That there were 353 more incidents of serious acquisitive crime this year than there were last year; that this is 423 more incidents than the Mayor's target; and that this is a 6.6% increase year on year.
- There has been a 4% increase in public concern over vandalism, graffiti and criminal damage in the past year.
- There continues to be serious public concern about the rising levels of crime in Tower Hamlets.

This Council Further Notes:

- Labour's decision to introduce Safer Neighbourhood Teams in every ward led to year on year falls which followed this initiative.
- Labour's introduction of Safer Neighbourhood Teams not only reduced crime in Tower Hamlets but also increased public confidence in the police.
- The decrease in the levels of police community engagement and the loss of many local ward panels.
- The lack of a designated member with responsibility for crime and community safety.

This Council believes:

- The rise in serious violent and serious acquisitive crime over the last year is of significant public importance and should be regarded a priority issue by the executive.
- With serious acquisitive and violent crime increasing the Mayor must do everything he can to protect local communities and reduce rates of criminality.
- That the Conservative-led Government's 20% cuts to policing budgets nationally are putting local communities at risk by cutting the numbers of front line police officers.
- That the Conservative Mayor of London has failed to protect London from these destabilising cuts to the police even in the face of last year's riots and the upcoming

Olympic Games.

- The Mayor's administration has been ineffective at protecting community policing from government and GLA police cuts
- The plans for police counter closures and sharing of Safer Neighbourhood Team sergeants should be reversed to ensure a reassuring police presence in our communities.
- There is a clear need for better community based policing including local engagement through ward panels.
- That not having an executive member dedicated solely to crime and community safety sends the wrong message.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Call on the Mayor to adopt a strong policy of community based policing; advocating the retention of local ward panels.
- Request the Council produce an assessment of the impact of sharing SNT sergeants between wards.
- To request the Mayor makes a biannual statement to Council on steps taken to combat crime and reduce anti-social behaviour.

12.4 History Teaching And The English Baccalaureate

Proposer: Councillor David Snowdon

Seconder: Councillor Peter Golds

This Council notes:

Only 11.7% of Tower Hamlets school children passes GCSE History at grades A*-C. This is the fifth lowest number in England, ahead of only Knowsley, Newham, Kingston-Upon-Hull and Manchester.

Over three times more school children achieve A*-C GCSE History in the top performing council in the country, Hammersmith and Fulham.

That the new gold standard of English secondary education, the English Baccalaureate, requires school children to have A*-C passes in Maths, English, two sciences, a modern language and history or geography. Only 5.9% of children achieved this, in part due to the low number of history GCSEs entered.

Tower Hamlets has the ninth lowest number of children passing A-Level History in England.

This Council believes:

That the study of history allows our school children to develop high level analytical skills, and helps them to more fully appreciate the world around them. This in turn promotes civic and community engagement.

That in order to increase the number of Tower Hamlets school children achieving the English-Baccalaureate we need to increase the provision of History teaching in our schools. Not achieving this standard threatens to limit the educational opportunities available to our school children.

This Council resolves:

To instruct officers to write to all head teachers of schools within the Borough to make them aware of the Council's support for a higher provision of History teaching.

To instruct officers to contact schools to see what barriers exist to a higher level of provision of history teaching, and report back to full council within six months.

To ask the Mayor to champion the case of history teaching in Tower Hamlets, and investigate what he can do to promote this objective

12.5 Defending the Welfare State

Proposer: Councillor Harun Miah

Seconder: Councillor Fozol Miah

This Council notes:

a) the Condem government is planning an extra £18 billion welfare cuts, on top the £18 billion already in train

b) this will condemn more families to poverty and undermine progress made in reducing child poverty in Tower Hamlets and nationally.

c) Government attempts to depict these cuts as largely affecting the long term unemployed or disabled are misleading

d) most of those drawing benefits are the working poor like cleaners, carers and caterers who are working hard yet need benefits to survive because of their very low pay.

e) Britain's low wage economy and lack of jobs are driving up our benefits bill, as is our failing housing market

f) 95% of the recent £1 billion rise in housing benefit is paid to those in work.

This Council agrees:

a) the defence of the welfare state from Tory driven attempts to dismantle it is a political priority for the people of Tower Hamlets

b) that Government austerity is self-defeating

c) instead of creating growth and jobs these policies are shrinking the economy, strangling growth, increasing unemployment, and driving the country deeper into recession.

d) that we urgently need a programme of job creation, housing building, and measures to ensure people are paid a real living wage and have access to decent, affordable and secure housing.

12.6 Urgent summit to avert a severe housing crisis

Proposer: Councillor John Pierce

Seconder: Councillor Sirajul Islam

This Council notes:

- London is suffering from a housing crisis. High housing costs are blighting lives in London.
- Social housing is under attack from David Cameron, Nick Clegg and the Tory-led Coalition government.
- The average house price in London is now double that for the country as a whole and prices in London continue to rise, despite falls elsewhere. Moreover, since 2008 private sector rents have risen 30%.
- Far too many workers cannot afford to buy or rent a decent home on the open market, and the social rented sector is struggling to cope with the severe demands placed on it.
- Overcrowding, homelessness and social housing waiting lists are all increasing – sure signs of the strain on people's finances and lives.
- The average house price in London in 2010 was £408,384, 15.1 times the median London income of £27,128, and easily the highest ratio of prices to incomes in the country.
- In 2010, there were 22,707 household on the council's housing waiting list.
- The gross income needed for a mortgage, based on 75% at 3.5 times, was £74,111.

This Council further notes:

- The Mayor of Tower Hamlets recently blogged that "We are committed to building over a thousand new homes each year – which is far more than any other local authority".
- Based on HCA figures, from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012, a derisory 200 affordable homes were started, with only 31 social rented, 124 affordable rent, 14 intermediate and 31 affordable home ownership.

This Council resolves:

- The Mayor has broken his pledge to build 1,000 homes a year. In the first full year of the mayoralty, he has only achieved 1/5 of what he had promised during April 2011 to March 2012.
- This failure to build affordable housing will exacerbate the severe housing crisis in the borough.
- That the Mayor should urgently call a summit of social landlords and housing developers working in our borough to devise a strategy to avert this severe housing crisis caused by his administration's lack of leadership on house building.
- To call upon the Mayor to be honest with the electorate about house building and his ability to deliver new homes for the borough.

12.7 Social Landlords

Proposer: Councillor Gloria Thienel

Seconder: Councillor Peter Golds

This Council Notes:

- That the Minister for Housing and Local Government has praised social landlords such as Viridian and Home Group for their plans to publish expenditure over £500.
- That the Housing Minister calls on social landlords to follow Viridian and Home Group's example and become more transparent.
- That the government is committed to a consultation with social landlords on whether to expand the scope of the Freedom of Information Act to apply to them.

This Council Believes:

- That the example shown by Viridian and Home Group is a step in the right direction and all social landlords should consider following their lead.
- That the government should extend the Freedom of Information Act to apply to social landlords and all Housing Associations; so they will publish spending over £500.

This Council Resolves:

- To support the Government in its consultation.
- To encourage and support Housing Associations/Social landlords in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to publish all spending over £500.

12.8 Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations

Proposer: Councillor Alibor Choudhury

Seconder: Councillor Rabina Khan

This Council notes:

- That Tower Hamlets Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) has produced a Residents Charter
- That the Residents Charter sets out some basic standards which residents believe that social landlords in the borough should adopt

This Council welcomes:

- The fact that TRAs are working together to give residents a voice in the important task of securing improvements in service standards of social landlords.

This Council believes:

- That all social landlords should sign up to the Residents Charter

This Council resolves:

- To endorse the Residents Charter which the Federation has produced
- To request the Mayor to ask social landlords in the borough to commit to meeting the standards set out in the Charter.

12.9 High Earners and Council Housing

Proposer: Councillor Tim Archer

Seconder: Councillor Peter Golds

This Council Notes:

- There are some 6,000 Council houses across the UK that have tenants earning more than £100,000 a year living in them.
- That it has been reported that there are 15,000 tenants in social housing earning more than £80,000 a year.
- That there are a number of such tenants resident in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, including key supporters of the Mayor and his administration, who fall into this category.
- The wish by the Spitafields Housing Association for the introduction of new measures which will enable them to re-let a Town House in Wapping to tenants more serving then the current resident.
- That the Minister for Housing and Local Government, Grant Shapps MP has brought forward plans that would give social landlords new powers to increase rents for high-income tenants.

This Council Believes:

- That these new powers social landlords will be granted in the proposals by the Department for Communities and Local Government will help solve this problem, and return much needed social housing to those in need.

This Council Resolves:

- To support the Department for Communities and Local Government in putting in place these new powers.
- To encourage all social landlords in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to not subsidise rents for those high earners earning over £80,000 a year.

12.10 Threats of violence

Proposer: Councillor Rabina Khan

Secunder: Councillor Kabir Ahmed

This Council notes:

- That reports in media about the behaviour of Cllr Kosru Uddin after the full council meeting on 16th May, 'in which it is alleged that he 'threatened to kill' Cllr Rania Khan' and 'that screams were heard coming from the Town Hall as a "violent fracas" erupted'.

This Council believes:

- That it is completely unacceptable that any member of this council engage in violent behaviour against other members.

This Council resolves:

- That in view of the serious nature of these allegations, violence and threats of violence against fellow members of the council and public will not be tolerated;
- That any member found to be guilty of such actions will be expelled immediately by their group;
- That the individual(s) in question will be barred from all council activities and premises;
- That the council will seek the maximum penalty permitted under the law.

12.11 Housing Benefit Reform

Proposer: Councillor Oliur Rahman

Seconder: Councillor Rabina Khan

This Council notes that:

- Some London councils are seeking to 'export' council tenants saying they can no longer afford to house residents owing to rising rents in the capital and the impact of housing benefit reforms.
- In Tower Hamlets, the changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) means that 77% of LHA recipients will see a reduction in income.
- Despite Grant Shapp's comments that there is a National Discretionary Housing Payments Fund of £91m, Tower Hamlets has received only £490,000.
- Residents in the borough are now receiving collectively £3.2m less than before April 2011 in benefits.
- On 28th February 2012, the Mayor and key partners in Tower Hamlets signed a Welfare Reform Pledge, which committed the Council and its partners to limiting the impact of Central Government's reforms on Tower Hamlets' Residents.

This Council believes that:

- Grant Shapps MP's defence of Housing Benefit Reforms was disingenuous and ignored the unique circumstances faced by inner London boroughs.
- These Central Government reforms will have a disproportionate impact on Tower Hamlet's residents, as it limits the level of housing benefits to large families and in areas of high rents.
- This is a deliberate attempt by the coalition government at social engineering.
- Inner London should remain somewhere people on all incomes can live.

This Council resolves:

- To continue to work with all partners to develop solutions which will help residents to stay in the borough.
- To support the lobby for a larger Discretionary Housing Payments Fund for London Boroughs.
- To support the lobby for a living rent.
- To offer support and guidance to any families who find themselves in financial difficulties due to these changes.

12.12 Recorded Votes

Proposer: Councillor Ohid Ahmed

Seconder: Councillor Shafique Hoque

This Council notes:

1. That Council's constitution includes a provision for 'Recorded Votes'.
2. That this provision is designed to allow for maximum accountability.
3. That until 25 January 2012 the threshold of members required to trigger a Recorded Vote in Full Council was 10.
4. That on 25 January 2012 a motion was carried by a majority in Full Council increasing the threshold from 10 members to 20.
5. That this threshold is unreasonably high without precedent in Tower Hamlets and elsewhere.
6. That in Camden, the threshold is 7 members, in Barnet it is 10 members, in Newham it is 6 members, in Westminster it is 10 members, and in Greenwich it is 5 members.

This Council believes:

1. That the 'Recorded Vote' thresholds are generally low so that a minority can make their views known when votes go against them, to communicate to the public that whilst something they did not support may be Council policy, it is not unanimous and the minority opposed it.
2. That having a threshold of 20 members defeats the object of this provision, since (assuming whipping) recorded votes can only go ahead if the majority group is in favour.
3. That raising the threshold from 10 to 20 members was a backward step as regards the health of local democracy, and a grave mistake.
4. That having the highest threshold in the land, particularly when compared to the other aforementioned London boroughs, is deeply embarrassing for this authority.

This Council resolves:

1. To lower the threshold of support required to trigger a recorded vote from 20 members to 7 members.

12.13 Dignity Code for nurses and care workers for the elderly

Proposer: Councillor Gulam Robbani

Seconder: Councillor Abdul Asad

This Council notes that:

1. Recent exposes of shocking abuse of elderly and vulnerable patients in Care Homes for the elderly.
2. The calls from public figures, politicians and charities that Nurses and care workers should sign a Dignity Code guaranteeing that elderly patients are treated with respect.
3. The comments of Jeremy Hughes, chief executive of the Alzheimer's Society, that the care system in the UK is at further risk due to underfunding.

This Council believes that:

1. The care of elderly and vulnerable residents is one of the most important responsibilities of local government.
2. All residents of care homes have the right to the highest quality of care, as well as the right to live in dignity and be treated with respect.

This Council resolves:

1. To condemn all forms of abuse in care homes.
2. To call on the Government to improve the national inspection of Care Homes and protect funding for care homes.
3. To improve our own systems of reporting and investigating abuse to ensure that all vulnerable people in our care receive the highest standards of care.
4. To support the national call for Nurses and care workers to sign up to a Dignity Code.

12.14 Recession

Proposer: Councillor Rania Khan
Seconder: Councillor Shafiqul Haque

This Council notes:

1. Tory driven austerity measures are not working; unlike the United States, UK economic output has yet to return to the levels before the recession began four years ago.
2. This economic picture is set to worsen; national debt is expected to continue rising, from 67.3% of GDP this year, to peak at 76.3% of GDP in 2014/15, contrary to George Osborne's claims that his cuts would reduce the debt.

This Council agrees:

1. To support calls for a Plan B for the economy, outlined by over one hundred leading economists last year (Guardian Saturday 29 October 2011) which would include 'reversing cuts to protect jobs in the public sector, directing quantitative easing to a green new deal to create thousands of new jobs, increasing benefits to put money into the pockets of those on lower and middle incomes and thus increase aggregate demand. This could in part be paid for by the introduction of a financial transactions tax.'
2. To support the call for 'Robin Hood' taxes on the financial sector. A tiny tax on short-term, casino-style trading, which employs a small number of highly paid bankers in London, not the tens of thousands employed in high street financial services, would raise an estimated £20 billion. Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) shows that the sector can comfortably afford paying another £20 billion in tax.
3. That the priority for this council will be to follow policies that seek to protect residents, and their quality of life, from the impact recession by maintaining frontline services, protecting lower waged staff, reducing housing waiting lists and overcrowding by meeting the Mayor's affordable homes pledge, reducing energy bills via the setting up of new borough-wide energy co-op, and campaigning for a programme of public investment to create jobs and improve infrastructure.
4. That in light of the fact that the financial sector is responsible for the current economic crisis, and that they have received huge handouts from the public purse, the bankers have a moral responsibility to get their industry in order and repay their debt to the British people.