

BUDGET COUNCIL MEETING – 27th FEBRUARY 2013

Independent Amendment

Proposer: Cllr Oliur Rahman

Seconder: Cllr Shafiqul Haque

This Council Notes:

1. The report from the University and College Union that Bethnal Green and Bow constituency has the highest number of people without formal qualifications in the country.
2. The report from the Campaign to End Child Poverty that Tower Hamlets continues to have among the highest levels of child poverty in the county.
3. The progress made over the last decade in the borough to increase the numbers of people with formal qualifications and reduce levels of child poverty. The recent census information shows a decrease in the proportion of people without any formal qualifications from 35% in 2001 to 20% in 2011. The current figure of 42% of children living in poverty is a decline from 53% in 2009 and 60% 2006.

This Council Agrees:

1. Government cuts threaten to roll back these advances:
 - Instead of improving access to education for poorer communities, the government is restricting it. They have slashed the education maintenance allowance, increased tuition fees, and replaced financial support for adult learners with prohibitive loans.
 - Instead of lifting people out of poverty, government welfare reform threatens to place more families to poverty. The DWP have identified thousands of households in Tower Hamlets that will be affected by welfare reform, not just large families or the workless, these are families living on low incomes. The average reduction will be £101 a week. 37% will lose more than £100 a week. 30% will lose between £50-10 a week.

This Council Notes the following resource implications:

1. The Council currently has a healthy level of reserves, expected to be £32,897,000 in March this year.

This Council Believes:

1. That the requirement to maintain a healthy level of reserves to meet current and future risks must be balanced responsibly with the needs of Tower Hamlets residents and the opportunity to invest in the borough's future.

This Council Resolves:

1. To allocate the one-off funding in the following areas allocated from funding already set aside in the budget for third sector grants :

This Council Resolves:

1. To extend provision in the borough for those without formal qualifications and effected by welfare cuts by committing £65,000 to the establishment the new Unite Community Centre in St George's Town Hall.
2. This is a partnership between the council, Unite - Europe's largest trade union and Barclay's Bank.
3. The Unite Community Centre will offer:
 - Education courses, employment and welfare advice services and community events.
 - It will run three Skills for Life courses a week, and each will hold three sessions a week.
 - Over the course of the year it aims to have 300 learners take Skills for Life courses.
 - Based on this, and the provision of non-accredited ESOL, art and photography courses, and cultural events, the centre expects 50 unique visitors a week.