

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 17th APRIL 2013

**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 17th April 2013.
2. The motions submitted are listed overleaf. In accordance with the protocol agreed by the Council on 21st May 2008, the motions are listed by turns, one from each group, continuing in rotation until all motions submitted are included. The rotation starts with any group(s) whose motion(s) were 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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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 Motion regarding Car Free Developments

Proposer: Councillor M. A. Mukit MBE

Seconder: Councillor Khaled Uddin Ahmed

This Council notes:

- The Permit Transfer Scheme (PTS) which allows some families to move to larger social rented homes in car free developments by allowing them to retain one on-street resident car parking permit.
- This scheme is designed to help to reduce the levels of overcrowding in social rented housing in the borough by enabling residents to move to properties which were previously off limits as they need access to a car.
- The Permit Transfer Scheme is only eligible to residents moving to three+ bedroom social rented car free homes

This Council Further notes:

- According to the Tower Hamlets Housing List there are:
 - o 11,532 residents in need of a one bed property
 - o 5,093 residents in need of a two bed property
- Together these two categories represent 69% of those on the borough's housing waiting list.
- The Budget amendment presented by Councillors Khan and Gibbs in 2012 that proposed extending some Car Free Development permits to 1 and 2 bedroom properties
- That the Council resolved at the 2012 Budget meeting:
 - o That the Council further notes that residents are often forced to refuse much needed new homes in Car Free developments because they need a car.
 - o That the Council resolves to call on the Mayor to implement extended car free developments to one and two bedroom properties.

This Council Believes:

- The excluding one and two bedroom properties from the Permit Transfer Scheme means that many residents have to turn down one and two bedroom homes due to the lack of parking provision.
- That the inequality of access to the Permit Transfer Scheme between one/two bed properties and three+ bedroom families unnecessarily penalises smaller

families.

- Extending the PTS would help to enable more residents to move into more appropriate property including downsizing, which in turn would create new opportunities to house larger families as well.
- That residents needing one and two bedroom properties may have as great a need for a car - because of age, disability, ill health, work or children for example - as those needing larger properties and is therefore discriminatory

This Council Resolves:

- To reissue our call on the Mayor to extend the Permit Transfer Scheme to one and two bedroom properties.

12.2 Motion regarding Mayor's Group Meeting

Proposer: Councillor Peter Golds

Seconder: Councillor David Snowdon

This Council notes the Minutes of the Mayor's Group Meeting, as published on a recent local blog, held in the Mayor's Office on 19th May 2012.

This meeting also notes:

- That the substantive subject of the Group Meeting regarded the organisation and funding for the 2014 election campaign.
- That the Mayor is asking each ward councillor "to seek out, identify local level multicultural issues and, in the words of the agenda, deliver", and that this group is to be a "parallel campaign for the ward councillors and Mayor"
- That the Mayor's Community Liaison Officer, a PO6 grade council employee, on the staff of the Mayor's office is listed as campaign Leader whose tasks include "identifying a team to collect data and identify Vote ID", preparing calling cards and literature "per ward" and setting up a bank account.
- That 10 ward supporters/stakeholders are to be identified in each ward and that the Mayor is to "lead induction/training" for these stakeholders.
- This Council further notes that it is illegal to use council facilities and staff for electoral and partisan political purposes.

The Council calls upon the Head of Paid Service to appoint an independent investigator into this and subsequent meetings of this group in order to identify all misuse of public funds by using council facilities and officers for political campaign activity.

The Council expects this investigation be undertaken promptly and a full report, including recommended actions be submitted for consideration by the full council.

That a copy of the Agenda for the 19th May Mayoral Group Meeting be sent to the District Auditor along with this resolution, to ensure that any potentially improper use of facilities and officers is fully investigated."

12.3 Motion against erasing the history of Tower Hamlets

Proposer: Councillor Ohid Ahmed

Seconder: Councillor Gulam Robbani

This Council notes:

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has completed their review of Tower Hamlets ward boundaries.
2. On 25 March 2013, the Commission announced its final recommendations on Tower Hamlets council size, ward boundaries and names.
3. The recommendations reinforce decision of the LGBCE to have 45 councillors given the shift to executive mayoral model.
4. Following the campaign by Mayor and Independent Councillors with local residents, the decision of the LGBCE to reinstate the historical ward name of Banglatown, Lansbury and St Dunstan's.
5. The decision of the LGBCE to abandon ward names proposed by Labour and Conservative groups, namely deleting Banglatown, St Dunstan's and Lansbury.
6. That Cllr Peter Golds, leader of the Conservative Group stated in an interview with satellite TV station channel S, on 22 Nov 2012, that *'what will happen if every single tiny group in the country suddenly decides they want their local government ward named after it. What are we going to have, Earls Court and Kangaroo Valley for the Australians?'*
7. That it was the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Lutfur Rahman who wrote, on behalf of the residents of Tower Hamlets, to the Commission, to reinstate 'Banglatown', 'Lansbury' and St Dunstan's in their final recommendations.

This Council believes:

1. The LGBCE final recommendations for Tower Hamlets was based on evidence and not political posturing and divisive rhetoric.
2. That the decision was taken following representations by the Mayor, Independent Councillors with the support of Tower Hamlets residents.

This Council resolves:

1. To condemn in the strongest possible terms the clear attempt by the Conservative Party, led by Cllr Peter Golds, and Labour Group, led by Cllr Joshua Peck, to attempt to abolish historic ward names.

2. To acknowledge the deep offence caused by Cllrs Golds' and Pecks' attempts to influence the LGBCE, an independent body, in this way
3. To demand that the Conservative Group and Labour Group leaders publicly apologise to the residents of Spitalfields and Banglatown, Stepney Green and St Dunstan's and East India and Lansbury, for the offence and upset they have caused both with the initial proposals and subsequent remarks on the matter.
4. To endorse the Mayor's position on retaining these historic ward names and thank the Commission for their final recommendations.

12.4 Motion regarding Open Spaces Strategy

Proposer: Councillor Amy Whitelock

Seconder: Councillor Carlo Gibbs

This Council Notes:

- The motion passed by Council on the 16th May 2012 which resolved:
 - o To amend the Open Spaces Strategy to include a section on Commercial Events in parks, to reflect the prior decisions of Council, that:
 - In regards to Victoria Park:
 - Limits the number of large commercial music events in the park to six days each year;
 - Prevents the park being used for commercial events on consecutive weekends throughout the summer, with at least two weekends free after a weekend of events;
 - Sets a closing time for events to 10pm;
 - Sets a reduced noise levels for commercial events.
 - In regards to Sir John McDougal Gardens, Millwall Park and Island Gardens:
 - Prevents the holding of commercial events.
 - In regards to the gardens at Trinity Square:
 - Allow the use for weddings but prevent the holding of other commercial events.
 - o To exclude the Live Site events in Victoria Park in 2012 from the above.
- The resolution of Council on 8 December 2010 calling on the Mayor to put limits on the use of Victoria Park for commercial events, whilst still recognising that some events should still be allowed
- The resolution of Council on 21 December 2011 asking that Sir John McDougal Gardens, Millwall Park and Island Gardens should not be made available for commercial events.
- That over 400 residents signed a petition presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, calling for the number of events to be reduced.
- That no amended Open Spaces Strategy has been presented to Council even though it is included in the list of policies reserved for Council who have expressed a will to see the policy amended.
- The serious damage done to the park by last Summer's commercial events and the continued degradation of the park.

This Council Believes:

- That the Mayor should respect the democratic mandate of the Council and the wishes of residents and bring forward a revised Open Spaces Strategy which reflects the stated position of Council.
- That a failure to do so not only fails to show regard for the Council's democratic ruling but also leaves the Council open to unnecessary legal challenge.
- That the adoption of this amendment would be in the interests of local residents and those visiting the borough as it would provide a sustainable and manageable basis on which to hold commercial events.
- The events in excess of the cap proposed by Council will have a detrimental effect on local residents and users of the park.

This Council Resolves:

- That the Mayor should bring forward a renewed Open Spaces Strategy to the next ordinary Council meeting including within it the amendments set out above.

12.5 Motion regarding East End Life

Proposer: Councillor David Snowdon

Seconder: Councillor Peter Golds

This Council notes that:

- At the Second Budget Council meeting of March 7, Tower Hamlets Council agreed a budget for FY2013-14, at which funding of £1.214m was deleted from *East End Life's* budget including £433,000 of budgetary savings.
- Full Council's decision to reduce the council's advertising bill and reduce the spend on Choice Based Letting advertising was ruled proper and legal by the Section 151 Officer. No finance or legal officer objected to this amendment to the budget
- In a behind-closed-doors Executive Decision Making on March 26, the Mayor refused to implement the decision of full council and instead vired £433,000 from reserves to maintain his vanity 'newspaper'.
- The government will shortly place on a statutory basis a ban on Council 'newspapers', including *East End Life*.

The Council believes that:

- The Mayor has a democratic obligation to the people of Tower Hamlets to implemented the budget as agreed by Full Council on March 7.
- The Mayor is aware that Full Council has stated its desire to reduce the Mayor's ability to vire funds to £200,000, and his decision of March 26 flies in the face of the stated intent of Full Council

This Council calls on the Mayor to:

- Reverse his decision of March 26
- Commence the closure of *East End Life* with immediate effect

12.6 Motion regarding right to work, right to strike

Proposer: Councillor Oliur Rahman

Seconder: Councillor Shahed Ali

This Council notes that:

1. Workfare, forced unpaid work, for people who receive welfare benefits is wrong.
2. Workfare profits employers by providing free labour which in turn undermines real jobs, wages and workplace organisation.
3. Workfare threatens the poor by taking away welfare benefits if people refuse to work without a living wage.

This Council believes that:

1. The use of retrospective legislation is simply making sure that illegality is made legal and sets an extremely dangerous precedent.
2. The 44 Labour who defied their party whip to vote against the Jobseekers (Back-to-Work Schemes) Bill, should be applauded.

This Council further believes that:

1. The right to strike is a fundamental human right that gives workers dignity in employment; the right to protest without fearing for their job, home and family.
2. All workers have a right to strike.
3. The Tory-led government has indicated that it is willing to restrict existing strike laws.

This Council condemns:

1. Those who seek to force welfare recipients into working for nothing.
2. Labour for helping the Tory-led government rush through new retrospective laws to stop benefit rebates after the recent Poundland ruling.

This Council resolves to:

1. Call upon local MPs and the Labour Party leadership to oppose workfare and any further laws to restrict the right to strike.

12.7 Motion regarding the Women's Library

Proposer: Councillor Denise Jones

Seconder: Councillor Rachael Saunders

This Council notes:

- In 1997, the Council agreed to the disposal of land at Oldcastle Street to the London Guildhall University/Fawcett Library to support the conversion of the old Bath Houses into the Women's Library building. The Fawcett Library collection then expanded into the new building.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund donated over £4 million, being 75% of the costs of the land and development of the building. The council donated 25% of the land value and the University paid the balance of 25%.
- As a result of this financial support and commitment, the Council is represented on the Women's Library Council. It was agreed that Library facilities should be made available free of charge at all opening times to Members and officers of the Council, local school use, students in the Borough, a defined list of Local History Societies and Charities in the Borough, all residents with Library/Leisure passes for 20 days a year. The disposal was conditional upon a separate agreement to ensure the University provided the existing Barrow Store for Petticoat Lane market and the Community School.
- In the spring 2012, London Metropolitan University Trust (previously Guildhall University) agreed they could no longer find the revenue costs to operate the Women's Library and started a process to dispose of the Collections. Most Members of the Women's Library Council were not informed of the process until the press carried the announcement that LSE had agreed to take the collections.
- In mid-summer, MPs, Lords, London Assembly Members, Local Councillors, Residents, Trade Unions, Academics, Architects and local residents formed the 'Save the Women's Library Campaign' with the campaign objective of keeping the collections in the building.
- Save The Women's Library Campaign called on the Heritage Lottery Fund to intervene, in line with the original objectives of its grant, to keep the library in its home. To date the Heritage Lottery Fund has not intervened to this effect.
- While the collections have been preserved, London Metropolitan University made no attempt to keep them in its own building.
- The Women's Library collections have now been taken on by London School of Economics and are currently being transferred there.
- Whilst the Women's Library building has been registered as a Community Asset with the council, the future of the building in Oldcastle Street is uncertain.

This Council believes:

- The Women's Library collections belong in Tower Hamlets with its proud women's history.
- The Women's Library Council, on which Tower Hamlets Council is represented, was not adequately consulted about the disposal of the collection or the future of the building.
- The Council made an investment in the Women's Library building in good faith that the building would remain in women's and community use.
- It would be wholly inappropriate for the investment made by Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund to be lost and for the Women's Library building to revert to generic university use.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund should be asked to intervene to ensure that the Women's Library Building retains a community use.

This Council resolves:

- To formally investigate the conditions attached to the sale agreement of the old bath houses by Tower Hamlets Council.
- To call on the Heritage Lottery Fund to claw back the grant that it made in the building, should the building revert from women's and community use.
- To recognise the Women's Library as a community asset for women's and community use.

12.8 Motion on the Government's recent budget

Proposer: Councillor Kabir Ahmed

Seconder: Councillor Lutfu Begum

This Council notes:

1. Coalition claims that profligate Labour spending is responsible for our current economic woes is a myth.
2. The last Labour government spent less (and taxed less) as a share of GDP than the two preceding Conservative governments. Spending on the public sector has been falling relative to GDP since the 1970's.
3. The current financial crisis is result of a criminal recklessness in the financial sector which came to the point of total disintegration in 2008. According to the Bank of England the cost of propping up the banks so far is £1.278 trillion.
4. Instead of debt created in the private sector residing with private institutions responsible, it has been forced into the public realm.
5. The consequences of the bank bailouts and the subsequent 'credit crunch' has driven the economy into recession. Government austerity as a solution has worsened the situation and is demonstrably failing.
6. In his emergency budget of 2010 George Osborne promised he would deliver growth, cut the deficit, and reduce the national debt, ensure 'fiscal creditability', attract investment and deliver recovery.
7. By time of his recent budget Osborne was presiding over an economy on the verge of a triple-dip recession with a down-graded credit rating, a growing national deficit and a shrinking economy. By 2015, the government will probably have borrowed about £200bn more than it forecast.

This Council Resolves:

1. The government's assault on public spending is ideologically driven and designed to deflect responsibility for a crisis caused in the private sector onto the public sector.
2. That while benefits are being slashed the government has given tax cuts to wealthy.
3. That it is wrong that women, BME communities and poorest third in our society should be bearing the brunt of the cuts.
4. That economic revival requires an end to austerity and government intervention to create jobs and address the housing crisis.

5. That such growth measures could in part be paid for by the introduction of a financial transactions tax. Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) shows that the financial sector can comfortably afford paying another £20 billion in tax.

6. That the priority for this council will be to follow policies that seek to protect residents, and their quality of life, from the impact of recession.

7. Welcomes policies in the Mayor's recent budget to that end such as absorbing cuts to council tax benefits which benefit 25,000 people on low incomes and 10,000 pensioners; extending of free school meals provision which will benefit 4,000 pupils; and funding schemes such as bursaries for university students and Mayor's Educational Award to ensure economic hardship does prevent out students from completing their studies.

12.9 Motion regarding bedroom tax

Proposer: Councillor Rania Khan

Seconder: Councillor Aminur Khan

This Council notes that:

- On April 2 2013 another of the Government's Welfare Changes came into effect.
- The Bedroom Tax is a reduction in Housing Benefit to households in Council and Housing Association properties, who are deemed to have extra bedrooms.
- Households will lose 14% of their rent if they have 1 extra bedroom and 25% of their rent if they have 2 or more extra bedrooms.
- The Bedroom Tax will affect thousands of residents in Tower Hamlets.
- Last month the government U-turn exempted Foster Carers, families of disabled siblings and families of service men and women from the tax.
- The Government's own figures suggest that 420,000 disabled adults will be affected by this tax.
- The Council has launched a Prepare and Act Now Campaign to ensure that residents are aware of all the welfare changes and can seek advice and assistance from the Council and third sector organisations. Five events were held across the borough where residents could speak to Housing staff, Benefit Team staff, Skillsmatch and JCP staff, as well as staff from third sector advice agencies. There are a further four events planned during the summer.

This Council believes that:

- The government's U-turn demonstrates that this is a misguided policy
- These measures will have an adverse and disproportionate effect on Tower Hamlets residents, especially those already living on a low income.
- The Bedroom Tax disproportionately affects disabled residents, many of whom need an additional bedroom for medical reasons as well as due to large medical equipment and supplies.
- These measures will increase poverty, and reduce the ability for residents to adequately heat their homes and feed and clothe their children.

This Council resolves:

- To lobby against the coalition's policies which clearly have a discriminatory affect on the residents of Tower Hamlets.
- To call on the government to also except disabled adults from the Bedroom Tax.
- To continue to offer support and guidance to any families who find themselves in financial difficulties due to these changes

12.10 Motion regarding Recorded Votes

Proposer: Councillor Ohid Ahmed

Seconder: Councillor Shafique Haque

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 further notes:

1. The recent report by the electoral commission on voter fraud in Tower Hamlets that found no evidence of widespread fraud as alleged by some in the opposition.
2. That the report cited a "breakdown of trust" between politicians in this chamber and that this heightens the need for public accountability.

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.

12.11 Motion regarding Gambling

Proposer: Councillor Rofique Ahmed

Seconder: Councillor Lutfu Begum

This Council notes:

- Tower Hamlets residents spend an estimated £400 million in gambling.
- Gambling can have a variety of very negative consequences for the individual concerned and wider society. These include:
 - o A significantly higher risk of psychiatric disorders, and drug misuse and smoking among gamblers compared to non-gamblers
 - o Greater risk of emotional distress, financial problems and health problems among families of problem gamblers
 - o Higher rates of separation and divorce among problem gamblers compared to the general population
 - o Increased risk of drug misuse, eating disorders and mental ill health among children of problem gamblers
 - o Increased risk of involvement in criminal activity among problem gamblers.

This Council believes:

- That the granting of licenses for casinos to operate in the borough increases the risk of problem gambling.

This Council agrees:

- It is in the best interests of the borough that dangers of problem gambling are minimised in the borough.
- That Tower Hamlets adopt of a policy of not granting licences to new casinos to operate in the borough as under Section 166 of the Gambling Act 2005.
- While we are bound by statutory gambling laws here is possibility that we could use Planning and our Commercial leasing arrangements to affect further controls.

12.12 Motion against Boris Johnson's Tower Hamlets police cuts

Proposer: Councillor Maium Miah

Seconder: Councillor Ohid Ahmed

This Council notes:

1. That on 24 March 2013 Boris Johnson published his Police and Crime plan for London
2. That this plan will result in Tower Hamlets having lost 93 officers since 2010
3. That across London, nearly half of PCSOs will be cut
4. That Bow, Isle of Dogs, Poplar and Limehouse police stations are under threat from the Conservative mayor
5. That Safer Neighbourhood teams, whose knowledge of the local area is vital to effective policing, will be dismantled and replaced by the out-moded sector policing model.
6. The petition by Miaum Miah, supported by the Mayor, against the closure of the police station on the Isle of dogs
7. That in the budget proposals published on 9 January 2013, the Mayor of Tower Hamlets has allocated funds for 17 extra police officers

This Council believes:

1. That the Conservative mayor's proposals are both a breach of his electoral pledges and his responsibility to ensure the safety of London's citizens
2. That the Conservative mayor's policing policies are driven by an asset-stripping mentality rather than the need to keep people safe

This Council resolves:

1. To call on all group leaders to join the Mayor, protesting in the strongest possible terms with the Conservative Mayor of London, to reverse these cuts and save Tower Hamlets Police Stations

12.13 Motion in support of the London Living Wage

Proposer: Councillor Abdul Asad

Seconder: Councillor Shafiqul Haque

This Council notes:

That in November 2008, the then Leader of the Council and now Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Lutfur Rahman, instituted the London Living Wage in the Council.

That the Council is seeking to extend the Living Wage into its agreements with sub-contractors to ensure that they too pay a fair and decent wage to workers.

That the Labour Leader Ed Milliband pledged to bring in a living wage for all government contracts.

That with the Government's wholesale war on the welfare state and the rights of the poorest, the living wage is more important now than ever.

This Council believes:

That paying a living wage is a cornerstone social and economic justice.

That in these times of Tory-led economic stagnation, cuts and devastating welfare reform, it is more important than ever to ensure that the incomes of the most vulnerable are protected.

This Council resolves:

To reaffirm its commitment to the London Living Wage

To support the Mayor in the battle to continue to ensure the Council's contracting practices use every measure within the law to widen the agreement to deliver the London Living Wage.

12.14 Motion supporting Energy Co-operatives

Proposer: Councillor Rabina Khan

Seconder: Councillor Shahed Ali

This Council notes:

1. That the Mayor has launched an initiative to sign people up to an energy co-operative that will allow them to purchase gas and electricity much more cheaply than through mainstream providers.
2. That to date nearly 2000 people have expressed interest in joining the co-op.
3. The recent news reports indicating “Libor-like” manipulation of the price of energy by the big providers.
4. That it has secured £40,000 from central government to support this scheme.

This Council believes:

1. That encouraging residents to sign up to the energy co-op is an effective way to ease the burden of Tory-led cuts, economic stagnation and welfare reform.

This Council resolves:

1. To call on Group leaders to work with the Mayor to publicise the Energy Co-op and the benefits it could bring to residents, especially those on low incomes.