

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 22nd JANUARY 2014

PETITIONS

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

SUMMARY

1. The Council's Constitution provides for up to three petitions to be received at each Council Meeting. These are taken in order of receipt. This report sets out the valid petitions submitted for presentation at the Council meeting on Wednesday 22nd January 2014.
2. The deadline for receipt of petitions for this meeting is noon on Thursday 16th January. However, at the time of agenda despatch the maximum number of petitions has already been received as set out overleaf.
3. The texts of the petitions received for presentation to this meeting are set out in the attached report. 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, other than a Cabinet Member or Committee Chair responding at the end of the item, should confine their contributions to questions and not make statements or attempt to debate.

5.1 Petition requesting support for initiatives to create a sustainable environment (Petition from Mr Muhammad Haque and the CBRUK umbrella organisation on behalf of 50+ associated voluntary non-profit and charitable initiatives, groups and bodies working in LBTH)

“We, the undersigned, residents and/or members of the Community in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and/or persons who spend our working time and have social contacts with people in Tower Hamlets most of the time in the week, support this CBRUK petition calling for tangible and affordable support of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for the creation of a sustainable environment in Tower Hamlets that markedly and significantly helps people feel and experience living in a cohesive environment that can be felt in peoples’ ordinary lives and we especially support the call in this CBRUK petition for Tower Hamlets Council to support initiatives, old and new, that are done by people in the ordinary community in Tower Hamlets which would make this Borough a better place all round.”

5.2 Petition regarding leaseholder charges and services delivered by Tower Hamlets Homes (Petition from Ms Allison Charles and others)

“We, the undersigned residents of Tower Hamlets, are concerned about the rapidly increasing yet unsubstantiated costs of Housing Services delivered by Tower Hamlets Homes (THH), whilst historic concerns about the quality of the services continue to be ignored.

An independent audit, conducted by Beever & Struthers in 2010 recommended THH make a series of service improvements designed to deliver better quality services, reduce a complex and expensive cost base and provide accounting transparency. Additional recommendations extrapolated from the Audit Commission findings (2011) and THH’s own internal exercises created a 54 point action plan for implementation by THH between 2011 and 2013.

We are yet to see any demonstrable evidence that these recommendations have been implemented; instead in 11/12 THH introduced a privately developed service charge methodology which resulted in significant increases for many, circa 70% in some cases.

Over the last three years THH have conducted substantial restructuring/operational revisions which have resulted in greater confusion around their cost base, none appear to address the historic issues of lack of accounting transparency, below par services and poor value for money. Another significant change is proposed for 2014.

This consistent need to significantly revise operations is a worrying indication of an organisation in chaos, meanwhile residents experience decreasing input and influence over its conduct.

We are calling upon the council to formally address these issues, more specifically the failure to implement the 54 LAPWG recommendations, including why the assessments made by B&S, identifying substantial cost savings to be realised in 2010/11 have not been achieved (also raised in a Labour Party motion tabled for the

November Full Council but not discussed and in the SELA resident scrutiny review submitted to THH and LBTH in August 2013).

Furthermore we ask that what is rapidly becoming an annual exercise in substantial restructuring conducted by THH be suspended until the outcome of a thorough review is made public including the details of and justifications for the revised service charge methodology including the introduction of a 17% overhead uplift and ever increasing SLA's between THH and LBTH. Aside from the obvious cost implications of these restructuring or reshaping exercises, they have historically only served to muddy the waters making it increasingly difficult for residents to attain the truth regarding THH's activities and accounts."

5.3 Petition highlighting problems with Anti-Social Behaviour at Anson House (Petition from residents of Anson House)

"We, the residents of Anson House, are petitioning Tower Hamlets Homes, who manage Anson House, to tackle the Anti-Social Behaviour within the building and on Ocean Estate.

For several years the building and local area has had little security to prevent ASB, especially the constant abuse of drugs and noise nuisance within the building. There is a constant presence of individuals in the building with a strong smell of drugs. Residents are intimidated and do not feel safe within their homes. Residents should not have to put up with this and are entitled to live peacefully in their home and building.

We demand THH take immediate action to prevent and deter ASB in Anson House, through the use of Law Enforcement Officers and CCTV."