

Labour Group Amendment to the Conservative Motion regarding Probity in the Planning System

Proposer: Cllr Asma Islam

Seconder: Mayor John Biggs

This Council notes:

That Tower Hamlets has more development going through the planning system than most local authorities.

That the Council already have the checks and balances in place to ensure robust decisions in the planning system, which includes the Member's Code of Conduct, the LBTH Staff Codes of Conduct and the Council's Whistleblowing policy.

That the Council takes all allegations of corruption seriously and investigates any type of wrong-doing to ensure it goes through the correct oversight.

That the gross development value of many developments exceeds £100 million and some such as the recently consented ASDA site exceed £1 billion.

There is frequently local opposition to development for a range of reasons including issues including sunlight, daylight access and the provision (or lack) of social infrastructure and that planning decisions involve balancing many competing interests and ensuring an informed judgement is made while taking into account local and regional policy and the national policy framework. This can mean schemes are approved despite local opposition.

This Council further notes:

~~The prominence of some well-known local businesspeople in the role of supporting developers with public relations consultancy support.~~

~~The situation at ASDA whereby the Developers sponsored a public event during the determination of the planning application at which awards were distributed to attendees which went beyond public consultation.~~

~~Previous Any allegations of bribery will continue to be taken seriously by the Council and will be reported to the police and necessary agencies. which were never as far as is publicly known investigated by the Police.~~

That the Council and our community is awaiting an imminent decision from the Government concerning Westferry Printworks, following the scandal last year which saw the former secretary of state go against the council's planning committee and the independent planning inspectorate in order to approve the Westferry application just one day before Tower Hamlets Council introduced a new Community Infrastructure Levy charge - which would have cost the developer an extra £43m if the application had been approved after the new charge was introduced – leading to allegations of "cash for favours."

This Council resolves:

~~To restore continue with our work to ensure public trust in the planning system which involves the planning process in the Council being as structured and transparent as possible, with open meetings and public consultation. and to counter the narrative from some residents that brown paper envelopes full of cash explains why Tower Hamlets approves so many developments.~~

This Council therefore recommends:

For all planning applications subject to a decision by the Strategic Development Committee:

- ~~1. The creation of a Register of all public relations and public affairs companies, individuals and consultants engaged by developers active in Tower Hamlets to be on a publicly available list with the organisations contact details made available. That this register be made available on the Council website.~~
- ~~2. That developers are asked only to use public relations agents listed on this register.~~
- ~~3. That all such organisations are members of the appropriate trade body, the Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA) which includes a register of clients and consultants for each company on their publicly available website.~~
- ~~4. That in the event of an applicant using a company that is a non PRCA member, or an individual practicing in a freelance capacity, this be noted by the council and the information made available to the public on the council website.~~
- ~~5. That all donations / financial support made to local political parties or for Council events from those listed on the Register are declared.~~
- ~~6. That the planning portal details the public relations agent(s) employed by developers on their planning application~~
- ~~1. That members continue to abide by the robust measures already in place to ensure informed decisions are made. These measures include the Members Code of Conduct and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Staff Codes of Conduct and Council's Whistleblowing Policy, which require members to reporting report directly to the Police ASAP any attempts to bribe or create undue influence.~~
- ~~8. That all members of the Council who are employed by any organisation lobbying on behalf of planning applications, whether it be a PR company, developer or acting as a freelance consultant to developers, declare this and recuse themselves from membership of the Strategic Development Committee.~~
- ~~9. That members of the Strategic Development Committee have no direct relationship with any developer nor their agents by way of meetings or events including exhibitions, social events meetings without the involvement of Council planning officers, during the entire planning process from preapplication to the final decision by committee.~~
- ~~2. For members to continue to note the guidance as set forward in the Local~~

Government's guide to Probity in Planning which provides guidance on members meeting with developers and lobbyists.

10. That the Council writes to the Government: ~~and urges them to bring forward preforms promised prior to them taking office in 2010 regarding the compulsory registration of all lobbyists~~

- 1) To urge the Government to ensure that all due processes are correctly followed by its ministers and MPs, and to work with opposition parties and local authorities both at a national and local government level to ensure politics is a force for public good.