


Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 27 th July 2022	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Motion for debate submitted by an Opposition Group	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services
Wards affected	All wards

SUMMARY

1. Council Procedure Rule 11 allows for time at each Ordinary Council meeting for the discussion of one Motion submitted by an Opposition Group. The debate will follow the rules of debate at Council Procedure Rule 13 and will last no more than 30 minutes.
2. The motion submitted is listed overleaf. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, submission of the Opposition Motion for Debate will alternate in sequence between the opposition groups. This Opposition Motion is submitted by the Labour Group.
3. Motions must be about matters for which the Council or its partners has a direct responsibility. 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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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. Notice of any proposed amendments to the Motions must be given to the Monitoring Officer by Noon the day before the meeting.

MOTION

Set out overleaf is the motion that has been submitted.

8 – OPPOSITION MOTION FOR DEBATE - EMERGENCY BUDGET TO TACKLE THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Proposer: Councillor Marc Francis

Seconder: Councillor Mufeedah Bustin

This Council notes:

- The steep increases in the costs of energy and food since the war in Ukraine began in February 2022 and the impact this is already having on Tower Hamlets' poorest residents;
- Councillors agreed a £200,000 increase in the Residents Support Scheme (Local Welfare Assistance) in the 2022/23 Budget meeting in March specifically to help residents struggling with their energy bills;
- Councillors also agreed an additional £370,000 in the same Full Council meeting for the continuation of the Food Distribution Hub in 2022/23;
- The Mayor agreed a Cost of Living package at Cabinet on 11th July 2022.

This Council believes:

- This cost of living crisis demands an urgent response from both central, regional and local government if we are to prevent even worse levels of poverty and destitution;
- The Chancellor's statement on 26th May only goes a small way in easing the cost of living crisis, especially for those on the lowest incomes;
- Tower Hamlets Council is now set to receive income significantly higher than originally anticipated in February 2021 and even March 2022 and that while some of this is due to be allocated, enough remains to give some scope for further measures to support Tower Hamlets' poorest residents over the next two years.

This Council therefore resolves:

- To call on the Mayor of Tower Hamlets to bring forward a full Emergency Budget, including the following measures specifically designed to ease the financial burden on our poorest residents over the years 2022/23 and 2023/24:
 - To increase the "Standard Utilities Allowance" used in the calculation of Homecare charges from £5 a week back to £15 a week as of 1st April 2022 (estimated cost – £250,000);
 - To allocate a sum of £500,000 to top-up the Discretionary Housing Payment funding pot to the same level as 2021/22, so LBTH can help more tenants affected by the Tory Government's "Bedroom Tax", Benefit Cap and Local Housing Allowance (LHA) "freeze" on their Housing Benefit / Universal Credit entitlement;
 - To allocate a £500,000 Council Tax "Hardship Fund" for residents struggling with these bills, including self-employed residents affected by the use of DWP's Minimum Income Floor in calculating their entitlement to Council Tax Support and disabled residents whose Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is included as "income";

- Set aside a total sum of £100,000 to award one-off grants to the voluntary food-banks operating in Tower Hamlets in 2022/23 so that they are better able to ensure no-one goes hungry in the East End this year;
- Add a further one-off top up of £200,000 to LBTH's own Residents Support Scheme pot to help those who are unable to afford essential white goods, utility bills or who are in difficulty with priority debts;
- Allocate an additional sum of £150,000 to the School Uniform Grant funding to enable an increase in the £110 allowance per child agreed in 2019/20 and a second payment to be made for each eligible child, for example when starting Primary School;
- Fully utilise the expected £1.75 million allocated from the Department for Education's Holiday Activity & Food Programme (HAFP) in 2022/23 and aside an additional sum of £250,000 to cover the removal of contingency funding so as to ensure every child in receipt of free school meals has access to a nourishing lunchtime meal throughout the summer holidays;
- Explore options for the immediate extension of Free School Meals from September 2022 onwards to the parents of secondary school children where they are in receipt of Universal Credit, but currently have a household income of more than £7,400.