

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL**

**HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 27 JULY 2022**

**THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5  
CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

**Members Present:**

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	Councillor Kabir Hussain
Councillor Faroque Ahmed	Councillor Kamrul Hussain
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	Councillor Shubo Hussain
Councillor Leelu Ahmed	Councillor Sirajul Islam
Councillor Musthak Ahmed	Councillor Ahmodul Kabir
Councillor Saied Ahmed	Councillor Ahmodur Khan
Councillor Shafi Ahmed	Councillor Sabina Khan
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	Councillor James King
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	Councillor Amy Lee
Councillor Asma Begum	Councillor Abdul Malik
Councillor Nathalie Bienfait	Councillor Abdul Mannan
Councillor Rachel Blake	Councillor Ana Miah
Councillor Mufedah Bustin	Councillor Ayas Miah
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury	Councillor Harun Miah
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	Councillor Amin Rahman
Councillor Jahed Choudhury	Councillor Rebaka Sultana
Councillor Abu Chowdhury	Councillor Maium Talukdar
Councillor Mohammad Chowdhury	Councillor Bellal Uddin
Councillor Marc Francis	Councillor Abdal Ullah
Councillor Peter Golds	Councillor Abdul Wahid
Councillor Iqbal Hossain	

**Members Present Virtually:**

Councillor Asma Islam

During the meeting, the Council agreed to vary the order of business to consider: Agenda Item 13.1, an urgent motion regarding the Youth Offending Services report and Agenda Item 12.1, Motion regarding the Council's Finances before the conclusion of Agenda Item 11 Member Questions. To aid clarity, the Minutes are presented in the order that the items originally appeared on the agenda

### **The Speaker of the Council, Councillor Shafi Ahmed in the Chair**

The Speaker of the Council provided his update to the Council. He noted that this had been a busy couple of months, both for himself as the new Speaker and fellow new Councillors. There had been a lot of learn. However he had made every effort to commence his duties quickly. The highlights included:

- Civic engagements to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee including the lighting of the beacon at the Tower of London, a special citizenship ceremony at St George's Town Hall and community celebrations.
- A courtesy call from representatives of the Royal Navy of Oman, who were berthed in the Borough's docks.
- A new civic Mayors induction day with fellow civic colleagues.
- The launch of the Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest Centres, a longstanding charity who provided shelter for those in need.
- The Disability Sports Day at Mile End Stadium.
- Attending the historic annual rent ceremony at Billingsgate Market.
- A number of Eid events in the community and other celebration events.
- Numerous other community events.

He also noted the recent census figures, showing that the Borough has the highest population growth of all the London Borough's. He welcomed the new residents to the Borough.

The Speaker also had the honour of becoming a dementia friend, an amazing programme run by the Alzheimer's Society. He encouraged others to do the same.

He was also pleased to announce that he had chosen the Tower Project and in particular their Autism Services as his chosen Charity. He looked forward to working with them and fundraising for them over the coming year.

Finally turning to sad news. The Speaker offered his condolences to Councillor Abdul Wahid on the recent loss of his father. He also paid tribute to and spoke in remembrance of:

- Mr Enam Ali MBE, FRSA, who founded the British Curry Awards, Spice Business Magazine and Ion TV
- Mark Baynes, East End Enquirer website owner and well know campaigner in Tower Hamlets

The Council sent their best wishes to their family and friends.

The Speaker also reported that, to better space out this year's Council meetings, he had agreed to move the next meeting from 28 September to 5 October 2022.

### **Procedural Motion**

Councillor Maium Talukdar **moved** a procedural motion under Council Procedure Rule, 11.2 that an urgent motion be considered on the Youth Offending Services Report, as set out in the supplementary agenda. The

Speaker of the Council indicated that he accepted the grounds for urgency. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**.

The Speaker of the Council also agreed to accept an urgent question from Councillor Peter Golds under Council Procedural Rule 10.4, as set out in the supplementary agenda. The Speaker indicated that he accepted the reasons for urgency.

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Ohid Ahmed
- Councillor Amina Ali
- Councillor Maisha Begum and
- Councillor Saif Uddin Khaled

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS**

Councillor Nathalie Bienfait declared a Non - Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 5.1, Petition regarding the Antill Road vehicle filter. This was on the basis of the Councillor's involvement in setting up the Petition.

Councillor Iqbal Hossain declared a Non - Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda item 5.2, Petition regarding the Silvertown Tunnel. This was because he had recently attended an event held by the Stop the Silvertown Tunnel group.

## **3. MINUTES**

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Annual General Council meeting held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and the Speaker be authorised to sign them accordingly:

## **4. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE SPEAKER OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Chief Executive, Will Tuckley provided his regular update to the Council meeting, highlighting the following issues:

- Covid rates and vaccines. Rates of covid infection have been rising in the Borough as everywhere, but appeared to be slowing. The Council were working with the NHS to provide further boosters for over 50 year olds and others in Autumn and to deliver flu vaccines and a variety of childhood immunisations.
- Inspections. He noted the findings of the Youth Offending Service report and the work underway to deliver improvements. He also noted the more positive findings of the recent unannounced Ofsted inspection

looking at Children in Care. Further details will be made available on 31<sup>st</sup> August, when the letter was due to be published. The Council have also received a positive letter from the Ombudsman service for England and Wales regarding improvements in the Council's performance in dealing with complaints.

- He also expressed best wishes to Judith St John, (Director of Culture and Children's Commissioning), in view of her retirement from the Council after 34 years of service. He also acknowledged the work of the Member recruitment Panel to appoint a successor. An announcement would be made soon.
- Continuing success at Awards. He congratulated the Strategic Planning Team on winning the London Planning Team of the Year at the Royal Town Planning Institute awards. He also expressed appreciation for the work of the parks services, as Bartlett Park had been awarded a green flag bringing the Council's total to 13.

## **5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS**

### **5.1 Petition regarding Keep Antill Road vehicle filter**

Amanda Franco addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency then responded to the matters raised in the petition. He stated that he was mindful of the harmful impacts of air pollution on people's health. However, he felt that the low traffic policies, pursued by the previous Administration, caused more pollution and traffic. He also stated that the Council were committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2025. In view of this, the Administration were working on a range of measures. This included: increasing tree planting, providing additional charging points for vehicles and other measures. He thanked the Petitioners for their engagement.

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

### **5.2 Petition regarding the Silvertown Tunnel**

Dr Jackie Applebee addressed the meeting on behalf of the petitioners, and responded to questions from Members. Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency, then responded to the matters raised in the petition. The Administration welcomed steps to reduce pollution and ease congestion in the Borough. They were of the view that the Silvertown Tunnel will help achieve this and achieve a greener borough. He thanked the Petitioner for their engagement

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition be referred to the Corporate Director, Place for a written response within 28 days.

**6. MAYOR'S REPORT**

Mayor Lutfur Rahman presented his report to the Council.

The Opposition Group Leader, Councillor Sirajul Islam then responded briefly to the Mayor's report.

Mayor Rahman provided concluding remarks

**7. ADMINISTRATION MOTION DEBATE REGARDING ADOPTION OF THE ASPIRE MANIFESTO**

Councillor Maium Talukdar **moved** and Councillor Jahed Choudhury **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Following debate, the motion was put to a vote and was **agreed**

**RESOLVED:**

This Council notes:

- The mandate given to Mayor Lutfur Rahman and the Aspire Group of Tower Hamlets to implement their manifesto.
- That this manifesto will radically restructure the balance of economic and social power in the Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- That the Mayor and the Aspire Party will aim to implement most – if not all – of the policies and pledges by the end of the current Mayoral term.

This Council believes:

- That the Aspire manifesto should serve as the basis of the Council's policy platform for the coming term.
- That this manifesto will enable the Mayor and his Council to:
  - Tackle the cost of living crisis
  - Build green, affordable and sustainable homes for the future
  - Accelerate and develop lifelong, educational opportunities in the borough
  - Make Tower Hamlets a hub of culture, business, jobs and leisure
  - Invest in public services
  - Empower the communities of Tower Hamlets, fight crime and make the Borough's streets a safe place to live.
  - Provide a cleaner, greener future for all residents.

- Give residents a Council that listens to their needs, concerns and ideas

This council resolves:

- That this Manifesto should be incorporated into the London Borough of Tower Hamlets' official policy platform and programme for the full duration of this Mayoral term

## 8. OPPOSITION MOTION DEBATE- REGARDING EMERGENCY BUDGET TO TACKLE THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Councillor Marc Francis **moved** and Councillor Mufedah Bustin **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda.

Councillor Kabir Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Maium Talukdar **seconded** the following amendment as set out in the supplementary agenda

Additions underlined

Deletions struck through

### **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 woefully inadequate £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 People of Tower Hamlets were not impressed with the measures and voted for a new approach.
- With this resounding mandate, the Mayor has already agreed a Cost of Living package worth nearly £3 million at Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and agreed to incorporate his Manifesto into Council Policy at this Council Meeting.

### **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 26<sup>th</sup> May ~~only goes a small way is nowhere near sufficient~~ 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~~. While some of this is due to be allocated, enough remains to ~~give some scope for ringfence further measures funds to be reserved for future investment~~ 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.~~

**This Council therefore resolves:**

- To congratulate the Mayor on the historic win in the May elections and the clear mandate this gives him to implement his manifesto.
- To support all measures needed to implement the will of the People
- To give the Mayor the time and space to implement the Vision he put before the People of Tower Hamlets, outlined in the Aspire Manifesto and confirmed at this Full Council meeting.
- This includes:
  - Freezing Council Tax for four years
  - Investing in the provision of care for vulnerable members of the Borough, both adults and children
  - Providing sufficient remuneration for care workers to ensure they are adequately rewarded for their work and not left to struggle from day to day
  - Protecting tenants from revenge and unfair evictions
  - Establishing a homelessness fund to protect those living rough in the Borough and those in temporary accommodation
  - Establishing a fund to support young people who want to stay in education post 16, ensuring they are not punished for their family's income or background, or prevented from pursuing their ambitions and potential.

This Council also resolves to adopt and implement with urgency the Strategic Plan designed by the Mayor and Officers to be agreed at the next Cabinet on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, to accelerate the implementation of the above-mentioned measures

Following debate, the amendment **moved** by Councillor Kabir Ahmed was put to a vote and was **agreed**.

The motion as amended by Councillor Kabir Ahmed was put to a vote and was **agreed**



**RESOLVED:****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 woefully inadequate £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 People of Tower Hamlets were not impressed with the measures and voted for a new approach.
- With this resounding mandate, the Mayor has already agreed a Cost of Living package worth nearly £3 million at Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and agreed to incorporate his Manifesto into Council Policy at this Council Meeting.

**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 26<sup>th</sup> May is nowhere near sufficient 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. While some of this is due to be allocated, enough remains to ringfence further funds to be reserved for future investment to support Tower Hamlets' poorest residents over the next two years.

**This Council therefore resolves:**

- To congratulate the Mayor on the historic win in the May elections and the clear mandate this gives him to implement his manifesto.
- To support all measures needed to implement the will of the People
- To give the Mayor the time and space to implement the Vision he put before the People of Tower Hamlets, outlined in the Aspire Manifesto and confirmed at this Full Council meeting.

- This includes:
  - Freezing Council Tax for four years
  - Investing in the provision of care for vulnerable members of the Borough, both adults and children
  - Providing sufficient remuneration for care workers to ensure they are adequately rewarded for their work and not left to struggle from day to day
  - Protecting tenants from revenge and unfair evictions
  - Establishing a homelessness fund to protect those living rough in the Borough and those in temporary accommodation
  - Establishing a fund to support young people who want to stay in education post 16, ensuring they are not punished for their family's income or background, or prevented from pursuing their ambitions and potential.
  
- This Council also resolves to adopt and implement with urgency the Strategic Plan designed by the Mayor and Officers to be agreed at the next Cabinet on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, to accelerate the implementation of the above-mentioned measures.

## **9. REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES**

### **9.1 Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021-22**

The Council considered the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee setting out it's Annual Report

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2021-22

### **9.2 Report of the Standards Advisory Committee: Standards Advisory Committee Annual Report 2021-22**

The Council considered the report of the Standard's Advisory Committee setting out it's Annual report.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. To note the Annual Report of the Standards Advisory Committee for 2021-22.

### 9.3 Report of the Corporate Parenting Board: Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2021

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Parenting Board setting out it's Annual Report 2021

#### RESOLVED

1. To note the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board 2021-2022

## 10. OTHER BUSINESS

### 10.1 Administrative Matters, Committee Chairs, Member Allowances Scheme

The Council considered the report relating to Administrative matters.

Councillor Maium Talukdar **moved** and Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury **seconded** a proposal that Councillor Jahed Choudhury be elected Chair of the Audit Committee for the remainder of the 2022/23 Municipal year. This proposal was put to a vote and was agreed.

#### RESOLVED

1. Agree to elect Councillor Jahed Choudhury Chair of the Audit Committee for the remainder of the 2022/23 Municipal year.
2. To agree to the following amendments to the Member Allowances Scheme:
  - a. To remove the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chief Whip
  - b. To agree the amendment set out in Paragraph 3.7 of the report clarifying the definition of a Co-opted Member in relation to the Member Allowances Scheme

## 11. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following questions and in each case supplementary questions were put (except where indicated) and were responded to by the Mayor or relevant Executive Member:

### 11.1 Question from Councillor Jahed Choudhury:

Will the Mayor provide an update on how this Council plans to alleviate the current cost of living crisis on the residents of our borough, and any specific measures that have either been implemented or are likely to be implemented in the near future?

**Response of Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living:**

At the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2022, Cabinet approved a package, of just under £3 million, to ease the cost of living crisis for 26,000 residents in the Borough. The Council has a Residents Support Grant Scheme, which distributes £600,000 in grants for white goods every year. This year, this has been increased to £800,000 to further support those who are struggling in the energy crisis. Regarding Council Tax, we will explore ways of helping the self employed on low income. We believe that they should receive the same benefit as those receiving wages.

At this point in the meeting, the Speaker invited Councillor Peter Golds to ask his question as set out in the supplemental agenda, under urgency procedures:

**Question from Councillor Peter Golds:**

Would the Mayor comment on the police raid of the former Isle of Dogs Police Station during on the evening of Sunday, 24th July, which was being used as a Cannabis factory. Would the Mayor also comment on the police statement that the premises had been sold in February 2022, although land registry records show the ownership of the building to be the Metropolitan Police?

**Response of Mayor Lutfur Rahman:**

It saddens me that public places are used in this way to grow cannabis. Not only here but at the Davenant Centre, due to this premises being left empty and the users wrongly ejected. This was a great premises. Its shameful and totally unacceptable.

This is a high crime Borough and the closure of the Police Station was wrong. Tackling crime was a top priority of our previous Administration. We invested in 55 Police Officers and Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs) and CCTV cameras. We also upgraded state of the art CCTV systems. I appreciate the money that has been allocated towards CCTV at this time. But we are a crime ridden Borough.

Fighting crime is one of our Manifesto pledges. We want everyone, our youngsters, our women and our elders to feel safe. We will be investing in more Police Officers. We are already in discussions with the appropriate authorities and the outgoing and now the Acting Borough Commander regarding measures. For example, we are looking at investing in more THEOs. Most importantly, we want a joined up approach to fighting crime and to achieve this, we need to invest in youth services and public services to make sure we work collectively to bring down crime.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Peter Golds:**

I was delighted to hear the Mayor refer to both the Isle of Dogs and the Davenant Centre, as well as the meetings with the Borough Commander. Can

you assure the Council and residents that you will be asking the Police about the theft of the electricity to support the cannabis factory and the action to recover the money?

**Mayor Lutfur Rahman's response:**

Yes. We want to see a base for the Police on the Island. We have approached the Borough Commander about this and will continue to discuss this with the appropriate authorities.

**11.2 Question from Councillor Sirajul Islam:**

Further to the announcement of the re-opening of the Rushmere One Stop Shop, can the Mayor confirm whether this will be permanent to ensure it remains open for residents for the foreseeable future?

**Response of Mayor Lutfur Rahman:**

We had four such shops during my previous Administration. Councillor Sirajul Islam was the Deputy Mayor under the Labour Administration. They closed three of them. I can assure you that by closing such facilities, the Council has deprived those who are not IT literate, the elderly and the infirm from face to face services from Council Officers. We are reviewing that. We have asked for the Rushmere One Stop Shop to remain open. I can assure you that we will have face to face services across the borough

**Procedural Motion**

Councillor Kabir Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Maium Talukdar **seconded** a procedural motion that under Council Procedure Rule 12.1 (c) the urgent motion relating to Youth Offending Services Report is considered as the next item of business. The Speaker indicated that he was satisfied that there were exceptional circumstances to permit such a change. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. (Motion set out at the end of these minutes)

Following the consideration of the urgent motion, Councillor Kabir Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Maium Talukdar **seconded** a procedural motion that under Council Procedure Rule 12.1 (c), Agenda item 12.1, Motion relating to the Council Finances is considered as the next item of business. The Speaker indicated that he was satisfied that there were exceptional circumstances to permit such change. The procedural motion was put to the vote and was **agreed**. (Motion set out under Item 12.1 in these minutes)

The Speaker of the Council moved a procedural motion that under Council Procedure Rule 9.1 the meeting be extended for 20 minutes to allow for the full 30 minutes to be allocated to hearing Member Questions. (Time being 9:55pm). This was put to the vote and was **defeated**.

**11.3 Question from Councillor Bodrul Choudhury:**

Many families are having to make the choice between eating and heating, often to the detriment of the educational needs of our Borough's children. Will the Mayor clarify how his Council will be safeguarding our young people from the current crisis, both inside and outside of the classroom?

**Response of Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning Statutory Deputy Mayor:**

This Administration is serious about delivering for the people of Tower Hamlets. Education and Children's services is one of our top priorities. The Mayor has already announced £2.7 M for cost of living support. We are also looking into investing into free school meals for secondary schools and reintroducing University grants/ Education Maintenance Allowances.

There were many other good measures on the way.

**11.4 Question from Councillor Marc Francis:**

Will the Mayor and Lead Member for Housing set out the actions he intends to take to ensure social landlords in Tower Hamlets that are underperforming in terms of housing management, repairs and accountability to residents are required to take decisive action to improve those services?

**Response of Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding:**

The Council has a close working relationship with 15 Housing Associations that provide 38,557 homes. The partnership is the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum. Where performance is unsatisfactory, the Council meet with the Housing Association to agree an action plan with timescales for improvements. If performance remains consistently substandard, the Council can make a referral to the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulators.

In terms of scrutiny involvement, I am happy to work with you and the scrutiny committee to address specific issues with Housing Associations. I am in support of working collaboratively to challenge poor practice and lack of service delivery.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Marc Francis:**

In respect of Clarion Housing in Bow, I am aware that a large number of residents are unable to report repairs due to a cyber attack. This situation is intolerable and has gone on for nearly 6 weeks. Something needs urgently to be done. I have emailed the Mayor about Clare House, which was also an urgent situation. Can you set up a meeting with yourself, the Mayor and all of us who represent the tenants to look into this and get decisive action.

**Councillor Kabir Ahmed's response to supplementary question:**

I will work across the house to challenge bad practice. I am happy for us to join a cross party meeting with the Mayor, so we can send a unified message to landlords who are failing in their duty of care of their residents.

Question 11.5 – 11.22 were not put due to lack of time. (Written responses to follow)

## 12. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

### 12.1 Motion regarding the Council's Finances

Councillor Saied Ahmed **moved** and Councillor Jahed Choudhury **seconded** the motion as printed in the agenda

Councillor James King **moved** and Councillor Rachel Blake **seconded** the following amendment as set out in the supplementary agenda

This Council notes that:

- Labour inherited a deficit from the previous Tower Hamlets First administration (now Aspire) when it won power of the Council in 2015.
- The Council at this time was run by Government Commissioners due to the mismanagement of finances by the Tower Hamlets First administration.
- The Labour administration worked hard under the guidance of the Commissioners to bring the budget under control.
- From 2015 the Government's spending review failed to fund Local Authorities adequately. Councils were told to manage within their means at times of great austerity, leading to a number of Councils filing for a Section 114 notice – essentially filing for bankruptcy. Despite this context, the Labour administration built up the Council's finances and healthy reserves.
- These reserves were built up by Labour to safeguard our residents from future Conservative government austerity, especially given the rhetoric displayed by the two candidates for the Conservative Party leadership.
- the Aspire Manifesto Priorities for 2022 to 2026 point to rebuilding Tower Hamlets and rebuilding our future building on the strong work of the previous Labour administration for the future of our residents.
- the Residents of Tower Hamlets overwhelmingly endorsed that vision.
- that progress on those aspirations can only be achieved in a stable financial environment, which the inherited Council finances do not provide. provided by the previous Labour administration.
- the mishandling and mismanagement of the Council's accounts by the previous administration
- administration issues which occurred outside of the control of the previous Labour administration has led to:

- Outstanding Audit Certificates for the years 2016/2017 and 2017/2018, thus rendering the Audits for those years incomplete
  - The Audits for 2018/2019, 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 remain incomplete -statutory deadlines have been missed.
  - The Audit for the last financial year (2021/2022) will not be completed by the statutory deadlines due to the unresolved backlog outlined above.
  - This year's audit (2022/2023) hasn't started due to the delay from previous years
- The external auditor has given draft qualified audit opinions for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 citing:
    - Insufficient appropriate quality supporting working papers for audit from management
    - Delays in receiving information and explanations in response to subsequent audit queries
    - Other technical accounting errors that have required correction
  - The Council received an independent expert report from Worth Technical Accounting Solutions which was presented to the Audit Committee in January 2021, and a finance improvement plan was subsequently put in place.
  - Progress on the finance improvement plan has been reported to the Audit Committee at every meeting since January 2021, and the update can be found in each agenda's report pack.
  - ~~the scale of the failure in the Council's financial accounts is so big and has been unresolved for so long that a 35 page appendix was required to outline the size of the task in reversing the decline.~~
  - ~~the financial limbo is having a serious impact on the performance of other departments. The overall quality of data is poor and unhelpful for management decisions. There are worrying instances of misplaced data. The finance issue does not sit in isolation but has a knock-on effect on other departments thereby creating an atmosphere of dysfunction and incompetence which requires immediate action.~~

This Council believes that:

- that the state of affairs with the Council's accounts may point to past ineffective political management and leadership which was resolved by the previous Labour administration and placed us in a healthy financial position from the chaotic times of the Tower Hamlets First administration. This resulted in the Local Government Association stating in 2021 that Tower Hamlets Council had made good progress on its improvement journey.
- ~~this unprecedented financial situation warrants~~ received immediate critical and immediate attention when this issue was first raised with the previous administration which is why an independent audit expert investigated this in 2021 and advised on a finance improvement plan,



~~and that the Council cannot be seen as financially prudent or responsible if we allow it to persist any longer.~~

- ~~to ensure nothing like this happens again in future, it is vital to understand the root cause and extent of the problem so we can rectify matters identify where governance and management issues may need to be addressed.~~
- ~~current senior finance officers are working with the auditors to address their findings so the accounts can be signed off, and Council wishes to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our ~~current~~ Finance Officers Team who have worked incredibly hard over the past six years to assist the previous administration in achieving a balanced budget every year in these difficult economic times. However, Council remains concerned that the process of rectifying the situation is far from complete.~~
- ~~the residents of Tower Hamlets, as well as the employees and businesses, deserve a speedy resolution of the issues and improvements in financial management processes to restore continue its confidence and secure our future.~~

This Council resolves to:

- Take note of the independent expert report from Worth in January 2021 and continue its work in following the finance improvement plan to ensure the Council's finances remain strong and do not go back into a deficit like it was prior to 2015.
- ~~Appoint an Independent Diagnostic Consultant able to assist this Council in understanding what went wrong and how to avoid it ever happening again The Independent Consultant will:~~
  - ~~build on previous work to give us reasons for the current situation~~
  - ~~especially, the unsigned accounts from 2016 to 2022.~~
  - ~~undertake a council wide audit to ensure that there are no similar~~
  - ~~problems on the horizon~~
  - ~~give us the tools to implement a robust system which strengthens data~~
  - ~~quality issues and information management in the Council.~~
  - ~~will carry out an all systems review to help us develop a healthy~~
  - ~~organisation able to react quickly to the external environment, insulate itself~~
  - ~~from any negative consequences and deliver for the people of this borough~~
- ~~Ring fence measures that tackle the Cost of Living Crisis and ensure that support for our most vulnerable residents, people and families struggling the most are protected and not neglected by the current administration for political reasons affected by Council actions to address concerns about the finances.~~

- work with Community Organisations and businesses large and small to safeguard stakeholders' interests throughout the independent investigation.
- work with our unions to safeguard local jobs

Following debate, the amendment moved by Councillor James King was put a vote and was **defeated**

The motion was put to a vote and was **agreed**.

## **RESOLVED**

This Council notes that:

- the Aspire Manifesto Priorities for 2022 to 2026 point to rebuilding Tower Hamlets and rebuilding our future.
- the Residents of Tower Hamlets overwhelmingly endorsed that vision.
- that progress on those aspirations can only be achieved in a stable financial environment, which the inherited Council finances do not provide.
- the mishandling and mismanagement of the Council's accounts by the previous administration has led to:
  - Outstanding Audit Certificates for the years 2016/2017 and 2017/2018, thus rendering the Audits for those years incomplete
  - The Audits for 2018/2019, 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 remain incomplete - statutory deadlines have been missed.
  - The Audit for the last financial year (2021/2022) will not be completed by the statutory deadlines due to the unresolved backlog outlined above.
  - This year's audit (2022/2023) hasn't started due to the delay from previous years
- The external auditor has given draft qualified audit opinions for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 citing:
  - Insufficient appropriate quality supporting working papers for audit from management
  - Delays in receiving information and explanations in response to subsequent audit queries
  - Other technical accounting errors that have required correction
- the scale of the failure in the Council's financial accounts is so big and has been unresolved for so long that a 35 page appendix was required to outline the size of the task in reversing the decline.

- the financial limbo is having a serious impact on the performance of other departments. The overall quality of data is poor and unhelpful for management decisions. There are worrying instances of misplaced data. The finance issue does not sit in isolation but has a knock-on effect on other departments thereby creating an atmosphere of dysfunction and incompetence which requires immediate action.

This Council believes that:

- that the state of affairs with the Council's accounts may point to past ineffective political management and leadership.
- this unprecedented financial situation warrants critical and immediate attention, and that the Council cannot be seen as financially prudent or responsible if we allow it to persist any longer.
- to ensure nothing like this happens again in future, it is vital to understand the root cause and extent of the problem so we can rectify matters identify where governance and management issues may need to be addressed.
- current senior finance officers are working with the auditors to address their findings so the accounts can be signed off, and Council wishes to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our current Finance Officers. However, Council remains concerned that the process of rectifying the situation is far from complete.
- the residents of Tower Hamlets, as well as the employees and businesses, deserve a speedy resolution of the issues and improvements in financial management processes to restore confidence and secure our future.

This Council resolves to:

- Appoint an Independent Diagnostic Consultant able to assist this Council in understanding what went wrong and how to avoid it ever happening again. The Independent Consultant will
  - build on previous work to give us reasons for the current situation especially, the unsigned accounts from 2016 to 2022.
  - undertake a council-wide audit to ensure that there are no similar problems on the horizon
  - give us the tools to implement a robust system which strengthens data quality issues and information management in the Council.

- will carry out an all systems review to help us develop a healthy organisation able to react quickly to the external environment, insulate itself from any negative consequences and deliver for the people of this borough
  - Note – implementation of these proposals to be discussed at the next available Cabinet meeting.
- Ring fence measures that tackle the Cost of Living Crisis and ensure that support for our most vulnerable residents, people and families struggling the most are not affected by Council actions to address concerns about the finances.
  - work with Community Organisations and businesses large and small to safeguard stakeholders' interests throughout the independent investigation.
  - work with our unions to safeguard local jobs

### 13. URGENT MOTIONS

#### 13.1 Urgent Motion regarding Youth Offending Services report

Under Council Procedure Rule 11.2, Councillor Maium Talukdar **moved** and Councillor Bodrul Choudhury **seconded** the motion as set out in the supplementary agenda.

Councillor Asma Begum **moved** and Councillor Mufeedah Bustin **seconded** the following amendment as set out in the supplementary agenda

Added text is underlined  
Deleted text is scored out

#### **This Council notes:**

- The ~~shocking~~ findings of the HM Inspection of Probation report: Inspection of youth offending services in Tower Hamlets and the City of London, published yesterday 26th July 2022.
- That this report represents ~~a serious failure~~ concerns in the Council's handling of crime and youth services over the past seven years.
- That the report outlines and highlights ~~failings~~ rooms for improvement at ~~all~~ some levels of the delivery process of the services offered by the Council.
- That the Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell has stated that: "It is clear to us that Tower Hamlets and City of London Youth Justice Service is not performing to the standards we expect – many areas of their work were separately rated as 'Inadequate'."
- That the report states that: 'The service does not have the stable workforce in critical roles and senior leadership has not been effective.'

**This Council believes that:**

- ~~This report is but the latest in a series of instances highlighting the functional, structural and bureaucratic failings of Council infrastructure.~~
- ~~These failings are preventing the Council from delivering an adequate service to the service users and are undermining its ability to provide them with the care and support they are entitled to expect.~~
- This report particularly outlines with great clarity the failings of improvement needed in the Council's Youth Justice Service in preventing their young service users from falling into criminal activity and protecting residents from crime and anti-social behaviour.
- If residents are to be protected against such problematic behaviour, these young people must be deterred from engaging in criminal activity.
- Serious improvements must be made in the service.

**This Council resolves that:**

- ~~This report strengthens the Mayor's call for an independent Council-wide diagnostic, performance review and investigation, to ascertain the root causes of these failures and ensure that these improvements can be made swiftly and comprehensively.~~
- ~~The Council's Youth Justice Service and Senior Management must present a full account of the measures, procedures and performative indicators in place during the period covered in the report, to aid this above-mentioned investigation.~~
- The Mayor and the Lead Member to read the report carefully and work with the previous Cabinet Leads, as the current Lead member requested, on an action plan going forward to resolve the concerns raised by the Inspector.
- Create a bipartisan Improvement Board to report on the progress.
- Work on relationships with our statutory partners and stakeholders.
- Support must be given to staff on the frontline so they can deliver the quality service the borough needs.

Following debate, the amendment **moved** by Councillor Asma Begum was put to a vote and was **defeated**.

The motion was put to a vote and was **agreed**

**RESOLVED****This Council notes:**

- The shocking findings of the ***HM Inspection of Probation report: Inspection of youth offending services in Tower Hamlets and the City of London***, published yesterday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

- 2That this *report* represents a serious failure in the Council's handling of crime and youth services over the past seven years.
- That the *report* outlines and highlights failings at all levels of the delivery process of the services offered by the Council.
- That the Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell has stated that: "It is clear to us that Tower Hamlets... Youth Justice Service is not performing to the standards we expect – many areas of their work were separately rated as 'Inadequate'."
- That the *report* states that: 'The service does not have the stable workforce in critical roles and senior leadership has not been effective.'

**This Council believes that:**

- This *report* is but the latest in a series of instances highlighting the functional, structural and bureaucratic failings of Council infrastructure.
- These failings are preventing the Council from delivering an adequate service to the service users and are undermining its ability to provide them with the care and support they are entitled to expect.
- This *report* particularly outlines with great clarity the failings of the Council's Youth Justice Service in preventing their young service users from falling into criminal activity and protecting residents from crime and anti-social behaviour.
- If residents are to be protected against such problematic behaviour, these young people must be deterred from engaging in criminal activity.
- **Serious improvements** must be made in the service.

**This Council resolves that:**

- This *report* strengthens the Mayor's call for an independent Council-wide diagnostic, performance review and investigation, to ascertain the root causes of these failures and ensure that these improvements can be made swiftly and comprehensively.
- The Council's Youth Justice Service and Senior Management must present a full account of the measures, procedures and performative indicators in place during the period covered in the report, to aid this above-mentioned investigation.
- Support must be given to staff on the frontline so they can deliver the quality service the borough needs.

Motions 12-2 - 12.5 were not considered due to lack of time.

The meeting ended at 10.15 p.m.

Speaker of the Council