


Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 5 th October 2022	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Motions submitted by Members of the Council	

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

SUMMARY

1. The following motions have been submitted by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 11 for debate at the Council meeting.
2. The motions submitted are listed overleaf. In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules, the motions alternate between the administration and the other Political Groups.
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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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 is the motions that have been submitted.

12.1 Cross Party Motion Regarding Mental Health

Proposer: Councillor Maium Talukdar

Seconder: Councillor Amy Lee

This Council notes:

- One in four adults and one in ten children experience mental illness during their lifetime, and many more of us know and care for people who do.
- Improved mental health and well-being is associated with a range of better outcomes for people of all ages and backgrounds. For example, improved physical health and life expectancy.
- World Mental Health Day aims to raise awareness of the issues around the world, whilst also helping more people get the support they need.
- 10th October will be World Mental Health Day and the theme is “**Making Mental Health and Well – Being a Global Priority.**”
- That in order to be part of the Global Campaign we need to act locally.

This Council believes that:

- Random acts of kindness can reduce the risk of suicide. Our actions, no matter how big or small may provide hope to someone who is struggling. Simply asking someone how they are feeling and giving them the opportunity to talk about something which is troubling them can be the first step towards recovery.
- Our Staff are our most important resource and creating a work environment which nurtures them and allows everyone to give of their best is essential for creating a healthy work environment.
- Encouraging Work/Life Balance will produce a happy, productive workforce

This Council resolves:

- To provide visible and accessible support for anyone needing help
- To work with the local NHS trust to ensure residents have quick access to good quality mental health care and support.
- To encourage training in Mental Health First Aid so we have a workforce able to spot the signs of Mental Health Distress
- To support mental well-being work in the Council, the Community and in homes.

12.2 Motion on the D3 and D7 Bus Routes

Proposed by: Cllr Bellal Ahmed

Seconded by: Cllr Maium Talukdar

This Council notes

- with great concern, the short-sighted approach to bus services, in particular the proposed cut to the D3 and D7 bus services.
- that buses help improve Community Health by encouraging walking to bus stops.
- the likely impact on Air Pollution. Research suggests that leaving a car at home can reduce carbon dioxide emissions significantly and buses connect parts of the borough in practical ways.
- that a good bus network helps to reduce road congestion, provides equitable transportation & improves Community Mobility.

This Council further notes that:

- bus routes are often used by our borough's poorest residents, who cannot afford the luxury of a car or regular use of the train system - buses are significantly cheaper to use.
- the removal of these routes will financially punish the poorest and most economically vulnerable communities at the height of a cost of living crisis, following the havoc caused by the Pandemic.
- the Deputy Mayor wrote to the Mayor of London on the 2nd of June 2022 raising the point that the D7 is critical for connectivity in the local economy
- children rely on the service to get to and from school
- elderly residents use it to make essential trips to the shops - trips that would otherwise go unmade
- vulnerable residents see the D7 route literally as a matter of life and death as they rely on the service to take them to GP and other appointments
- the loss of the bus routes means removing a vital transport lifeline and represents an unacceptable attack on the poor and vulnerable at a time when they need support.

This Council believes that:

- residents will suffer a loss of quality of life if the proposal is implemented.
- the thinking behind the proposals fails to put people before profit.
- the economic benefit of Public Transport has not been taken into account, especially the research that indicates for every £1 invested, there is a £4 return.
- Public Transport improves Commuter Productivity by enabling use of travel time to catch up on social correspondence, read, relax, or even sleep - enabling workers to arrive in a positive state of mind.
- This Council further believes that the Green Agenda will be impacted negatively, especially those aspects built on the use public transport and the reduction of air pollution.

This Council resolves that:

- a. a letter supporting the Deputy Mayor's letter of 2nd June 2022 should be sent to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, in order to amplify the request that the decision to axe the bus routes should be reconsidered.
- b. a response should be sent to Transport for London's Consultation, highlighting the reasons why the proposal to remove the D3 and D7 services should be dropped.
- c. a letter should be sent to our GLA Representative, seeking support for retaining the bus service.
- d. the Community should be encouraged to support the Council's efforts to save the bus services.

12.3 Motion regarding Access to GPs

Proposed by: Cllr Amina Ali

Seconded by: Cllr Ayas Miah

This Council notes that:

- Primary care is in crisis, with people across Tower Hamlets and the rest of the UK struggling to access GP services and dental treatment.
- New figures from NHS England show that 18% of people in the NHS North East London Integrated Care Board, covering Tower Hamlets, could not get an appointment to see or speak to a GP or nurse the last time they tried.
- The Government has failed to remain on track to deliver 6000 additional GPs by 2024-25.
- Our doctors and nurses across the NHS in Tower Hamlets work hard for residents while grappling with the biggest staffing crisis in its history in the face of Government inaction.

This Council believes:

- That everyone should be able to get an appointment to see a doctor when they need to and has the right to receive dental treatment when they need it.

This Council, therefore, resolves to:

- Forward a copy of this motion to the new Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and call on her to urgently bring forward a plan to fix the crisis in primary care, to meet the Government's GP target and ensure everyone who needs an NHS dentist can access one.
- Request the local Members of Parliament support this motion and raise this important issue in Parliament.
- Work with the local NHS trust to ensure Tower Hamlets residents have full access to their GP and dentists.

12.4 Motion on Local Electricity Bills

Proposed by: Cllr Rachel Blake

Seconded by: Cllr Sirajul Islam

This Council notes:

1. The efforts that this council has made under the previous administration to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy, including:
 - i. Declaring a climate emergency in March 2019;
 - ii. Launched the Net Zero Carbon (NZC) Partnership Action Plan in November 2021 to become a net zero carbon council by 2025 and a net zero carbon borough by 2045 or sooner;
 - iii. Planted hundreds of street trees;
 - iv. Approved 400 new electric vehicle charging points across the borough;
 - v. In 2021, Tower Hamlets Council was named the greenest local authority in the country.
2. That very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so.
3. That making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would enable and empower new local businesses, or councils, to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local customers.
4. That revenues received by new local renewable electricity providers could be used to help improve the local economy, local services and facilities and to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions.

This Council resolves to:

1. To support the Local Electricity Bill, supported by 306 MPs which, if made law, would establish a Right to Local Supply which would promote local renewable electricity supply companies and co-operatives by making the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate to the size of the supply operation.
2. Inform the local media of this decision.
3. Instruct the Mayor to write to the borough's Members of Parliament local MPs, asking them to support the Bill.
4. Instruct the Mayor to write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People expressing its support.

12.5 Motion on the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Referendum

Proposed by Councillor Peter Golds

This council notes that a Neighbourhood Plan Referendum was held in the Spitalfields area of the Borough on the 11th November 2021 and residents voted to support the plan whilst the small business electorate, voted against. Since the introduction of Neighbour Plans under the Localism Act over 1,200 referendums have been held and only four have been resulted in a no vote by residents, there have been no incidences of a no vote in any referendum by business voters. Therefore, the referendum in Tower Hamlets was the only referendum in which the business and wider electorate voted differently.

The neighbourhood Plan had undertaken a long period of community involvement and passed all the required legal processes.

The Plan was praised by Jill Kingaby, the independent examiner appointed by Tower Hamlets, who wrote in her report:

“The Spitalfields Neighbourhood Forum and related agencies have been working hard to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for their area, over many years since 2013. I have been highly impressed by the amount and quality of work undertaken to establish a sound evidence base for plan-making. In particular, the Character Area Appraisals and description of Non-Designated Heritage Assets, which comprise Appendices A and B of the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan, are very special in terms of their level of detail and professional scrutiny. I also consider that the measures taken by the Forum to consult and engage with the local population, business and stakeholder interests, and workers in Spitalfields, have been exemplary. I commend the Forum for its work to involve the hard-to-reach social groups in neighbourhood planning for Spitalfields.”

The Plan was also praised by Tower Hamlets Council Planning Officers in their response to the Regulation 14 Consultations that took place on the Plan in October 2020. It is a Plan which protects local heritage, defends the unique social and economic character of the area, and will conserve local green spaces for future generations. It also has radical policies to reduce rents for small business in new affordable workspace allocations. The Plan provides the framework for better decision making by Planning Officers. They will be able to justify and defend their decisions far more easily in this area with a detailed policy that takes into account the unique urban fabric of Spitalfields.

It was also supported locally by the East End Trades Guild and by the Spitalfields Small Business Association, Nijjor Manush, Save Brick Lane, Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust, Spitalfields Society, the Greater London Authority and English Heritage.

The policies contained in the Plan will protect Brick Lane and adjacent parts of Spitalfields & Banglatown from the wrong sort of corporate over-development which could destroy the unique cultural heritage and fragile social character of the area.

Tower Hamlets will be able to use the policies in the Plan, particularly Policy SPITAL 1, to justify refusing applications which damage this unique heritage and character and will be well placed to defend their decisions should big property developers appeal.

The Plan will help protect the special culture of small businesses in the area because in policy SPITAL 7 it demands that any new large commercial development must include at least 10% of its floor space at a 45% rent discount for 12 years. This quadruples the existing affordable workspace allocation discount in the Local Development Plan and will

help this area attract and retain small independent businesses that provide social connectivity, cultural value and jobs for local workers and entrepreneurs. Enabling the neighbourhood to recover from the pandemic and build up sustainable resilience that will protect the Spitalfields and Banglatown community from any future economic shocks.

The Plan also has detailed policies that will protect our precious green space as well as some additional historic buildings over the long term.

The guidance notes of the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012 sets out the criteria for a vote on a split decision. Unfortunately Tower Hamlets Council did not prepare for this consequence.

In the 11th November 2021 Referendum, the business electorate was 123 and 88 votes were cast as opposed to a residential electorate of 4,102 of which 550 votes were cast.

After the poll, when official documents were examined it was established that sixteen of the business votes were illegally cast, with one business voter casting five votes although the regulations are clear that the same business voter can only cast two votes regardless of the number of businesses that they own. The guidance sent to businesses state "Ratepayers have one vote each regardless of the number of properties that they are liable to pay rates on."

There were:

Five votes by one individual (six from the same family and seven if a vote from The Island of Jersey is included)

Four votes each by two individuals

Two votes each by three individuals

Two votes from overseas addresses (which is legal)

Furthermore, 50% of the business votes came from a single building in Brick Lane which is mainly divided into small offices.

The residential referendum should be considered as robust and trustworthy and was voted on by people who appear to live here permanently day and night and will live with the policies in the Plan and the impact they have on local planning decisions over the next many years.

The Plan was written by a broad and diverse range of people who live here and work here. The criteria provided in the guidance notes of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations when applied properly support the adoption of the Plan on the basis that the relative size of the electorates show the residential community to be very much larger than the business community, the level of support in both referendums shows that the number of votes cast in support of the plan by residents was very much larger than the number of no votes cast by businesses. The character of the neighbourhood demonstrates that the business vote may have been skewed by the influence of one major landlord, while the residential vote, despite the presence of an illegal spoiler campaign designed to suppress turnout, was successful, and must have had cross community support in order to be successful.

Under the regulations it is now up to the members of the council to decide whether to support local voters or the businesses which organised against the plan.

The Council therefore resolves to support local people and endorse the plan, which followed the legal processes.