

Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 19 th July 2023	 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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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 Motion on CELEBRATING MIGRATION

Proposed by: Cllr Musthak Ahmed

Seconded by: Cllr Amina Ali

This Council notes:

- The integral and invaluable role that migrants, refugees, and asylum seeking peoples have played in shaping the history and culture of Tower Hamlets.
- That those fleeing tyranny and oppression – whether they be the Jewish communities fleeing the pogroms of Tsarist Russia; the fascism of Mussolini, Franco and Hitler; the Irish, Caribbean, Bangladeshi, and South East Asian communities escaping the poverty and deprivation of colonialism; or Somali and Ukrainian refugees seeking safety from war – have always been welcomed into this Borough, enriched our community, and thrived.
- That the contribution of these communities to the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of the Borough have changed its identity for the better.
- That these groups have worked with and forged great links of solidarity and friendship with pre-existing working class communities, who themselves have played a proud and positive role in the forging of the borough we live in today.
- That these communities have stood together and fought against racism and hatred in every generation: from those who stood bravely against the fascist Blackshirts in the 1930s; to the Caribbean community that fought against racism in the 50s and 60s; the Bangladeshi and South East Asian community – including the Mayor and many members from across the chamber – who faced down the National Front in the 70s and 80s; and the broad coalition of communities that expelled the EDL in the 2010s.

This Council believes:

- Tower Hamlets should always be a borough where the poor, the tired, the oppressed, and the hungry can come and know they will be welcomed and treated with dignity and respect.
- That our borough's diversity and openness represents the best of humanity, and demonstrates that tolerance, respect, and understanding will always produce caring and cooperative places for people to live.
- That regardless of religion, skin colour, sexual orientation, gender, or belief system, Tower Hamlets will always be a safe place for all its residents.

This Council resolves:

- To produce an exhibition showcasing the rich history of migration to Tower Hamlets, to be showcased in the new Town Hall.
- To build on the borough's work with organisations that support and protect migrants and refugees.

- To work with relevant epistemic communities and external stakeholders to develop and enhance its institutional knowledge in protecting and promoting refugees and asylum seeking peoples, building on the good work of the existing Refugee and Families teams.
- To work with boroughs and authorities across London and the country to protect migrants, refugees, and asylum seeking peoples from hostile environments.
- To officially state its wish to be designated a 'Borough of Sanctuary' – cementing its commitment to inclusivity, tolerance, and dignity for all people.

12.2 Motion regarding PUBLIC BODY PAY GAP

Proposed by: Cllr Maisha Begum

Seconded by: Cllr Kabir Ahmed

Research from across civil society, including the GMB union shows that there is an Ethnicity Pay Gap, between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic worker and non-Black Asian and Minority Ethnic workers who are otherwise equal in educational attainment. This is not only reflected in the pay of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers, but this disparity is also apparent in the promotion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers in the workplace.

This council notes that:

- One in six Bangladeshi residents across England and Wales live in Tower Hamlets. Locally, the Bangladeshi population remains by far the largest in the country in both proportionate (34.6%) and numerical (107,333) terms.
- Other significant ethnic groups include White British (22.9%), White Other (14.6%), Black African (5%), Chinese (3.3%) and Somali or Somalilander (2%)
- GMB Race, the union's self-organised groups in London, sent out a survey to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic London workers to collect information about their Pay, Terms and Conditions. GMB Race's survey results, while disappointing, unsurprisingly show the fact that only half of respondents thought they received equal treatment and access to bonuses, overtime, pension, and other plus payments compared to non-BAME staff.
- The TUC's own research shows that the Ethnicity Pay Gap for minority workers has shown that students who entered the workplace after GCSE are paid 11% less than their white counterparts. Whilst those who attained degrees, the pay gap more than doubled to 23%. The race pay gap impacts the standard of living of those affected and also worsens for people who have aspired and succeeded in further education.
- The Resolution Foundation has shown that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers lose out on £3.2bn a year in wages compared to white workers. It found Pakistani and Bangladeshi male graduates earned an average £2.67 an hour (12%) less, while among female graduates, black women faced the biggest pay penalty, of £1.62 an hour (9%).
- Within Tower Hamlets only 33.1% of the borough's top 5% of earners are BAME.
- The general reporting of the pay gap is poor and recent figures show so far only 3% of employers with over 250 employees are voluntarily reporting their ethnicity pay gap.
- The Government has acknowledged this weakness and that Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting should be mandatory. However, this has not happened.
- The Women's and Equalities Committee's (WESC) report Ethnicity Pay Gap in February 2022 recommended that the Government should introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting by April 2023. This should be for all organisations that currently report for gender and that legislation should include the requirement for employers to publish a supporting narrative and action plan.

- This call has been echoed by the TUC.

This council believes that:

- All those that live and work within Tower Hamlets should be equally able to flourish in their place of employment. Therefore, there should be no glass ceiling because of the colour of someone's skin. Pay, promotions, career development and progression and bonuses in all sectors should be underpinned by ability and fairness. This is vital in eradicating systemic racism and division in wider society and a cause acutely relevant to the diverse community in this borough.
- With a cost-of-living crisis hitting households hard, the diminishing earnings of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers will disproportionately push many of such workers further into work poverty.
- This disproportionately affects local authorities, like Tower Hamlets, who are proud of their diverse and multicultural communities.
- All public bodies within the borough should be committed to being open and transparent about publishing its data on employees, whilst running fair, open and inclusive promotion strategies within its public sector duties. Such public data is the first step in creating awareness of the ethnicity pay gap with a view to drive change.
- Other employers across all sectors should do the same and that there should be mandatory reporting of the Ethnicity Pay Gap for all employers with 250 or more staff members.

This council resolves to:

Adopt GMB Race's campaign for an Ethnicity Pay Gap, including:

- Agree to annually report on the Ethnicity Pay Gap within its own organisation;
- Endeavour to regularly analyse strengths and weakness based on its own reporting, devising and implementing annual plans to proactively put in place plans to ensure there are no bars to recruitment, training, salary levels or promotion;
- Work with GMB locally and adopt GMB Race campaigns Ethnicity Pay Gap Charter;
- Work with council suppliers, contractors and partners to seek to do the same encouraging best practice through procurement rules as relevant; and
- Call upon the Government to introduce mandatory pay gap reporting

12.3 Motion on TOWER HAMLETS COMMUNITY HOUSING

Proposed by: Cllr Marc Francis

Seconded by: Cllr Asma Islam

This Council notes:

- THCH was founded by stock transfers from LBTH and for many years delivered high-quality housing management as well as the regeneration of estates and community development;
- THCH was recently downgraded to a G3 and V3-rating by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) for both governance and financial viability;
- It has become apparent that the RSH might be encouraging THCH to be taken over by another housing association;
- The RSH has a very poor track record in enforcing mergers and doesn't proactively take any account of residents' views.

This Council believes:

- THCH tenants and leaseholders deserve a much better service than they have been getting from their landlord for several years;
- LBTH has an ongoing obligation to residents living on those estates transferred to ensure the promises made by are delivered consistently;
- Enforced mergers of local stock transfer housing associations have sometimes resulted in residents receiving an even worse service from the social landlord they join;
- The views of tenants and leaseholders in the future of their housing association should be paramount in any decision by the Board of THCH and the RSH.

This Council resolves:

- To call on the Mayor to make representations to the Regulator for Social Housing calling for the views of residents of THCH to be formally sought prior to a decision on any merger;
- To call on the Mayor to instruct council officers to urgently undertake a feasibility on the financial and practical implications of requesting a return of THCH stock to LBTH.

12.4 Motion on DEFENDING MIGRANT'S RIGHTS

Proposed by: Cllr Nathalie Bienfait

This council notes:

- That Tower Hamlets has a long and proud history of welcoming and housing migrants from all over the world.
- That Tower Hamlets is a place where many migrants have access to things that remind them of home, for example food, community and religious spaces.
- That there are currently no safe or legal routes to the UK for those who seek asylum here, including those with family members in our communities.
- That the Bill would prevent people who arrive irregularly (and there are no other ways to arrive currently) from accessing the asylum system. Instead, they will be left destitute, without the right to work and in legal limbo indefinitely.
- That people who want to come to this country are vulnerable to people traffickers, face the risk of detention and deportation and this Bill increases all of these risks for individuals.
- That the Bill would also remove vital protections for children, victims of trafficking and pregnant people, representing a shocking rollback of human rights.
- That we defend the rights of migrants and all communities to live side by side in dignity, and we intend to continue to welcome those who make our borough their home.
- That local authorities have been left out of the decision-making process so far, and yet could have a lot to offer the asylum system if the Government were to collaborate effectively with us.

This council believes:

- That we have a duty to defend the human rights of all our residents, fulfil our public sector equality duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people.
- That we have a responsibility to protect the most vulnerable in our society, and migrants are a particularly vulnerable group.
- That Tower Hamlets, because of its rich history of welcoming those from overseas, is an ideal place to further support migrants and asylum seekers.

This council resolves:

- To commit our authority to safeguarding and protecting all our children, pregnant people and our vulnerable residents.
- To commit to defending the rights of all our communities to and to working with them so that we can all thrive together.
- To raise a "Refugees Welcome" banner outside the Tower Hamlets Town Hall and to meet refugee and migrant communities in our area to discuss what more we can do to make them feel welcome here.
- Safeguard council funding into the third sector for organisations offering advice to refugees, asylum seekers and on immigration in general.
- Provide more advice services in-house: increase the current offering in the Town Hall advising on refugee, asylum claims and migrant issues in the council.

- Provide education programmes for council staff and councillors on asylum law, migrant rights & No Recourse To Public Funds.
- Contact the Home Office to discuss identifying empty buildings in Tower Hamlets and securing funding from the Home Office to renovate them and provide suitable accommodation for asylum seekers as an alternative to the unstable hotel accommodation.
- Appoint a Migrant Champion Councillor to coordinate this action within the council.
- To mandate our Mayor to:
 - To write to ask the Home Secretary to
 - A. Withdraw the Bill
 - B. Commit to resourcing an asylum system that can deliver fair and timely asylum decisions
 - C. End the contracts with providers of temporary, often poor quality and unsuitable accommodation for asylum seekers in hotels and hostels.
 - To write to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to open discussions with local authorities about the best ways and resources needed to provide good quality long term accommodation for all those in need, including asylum seekers, within our communities.
 - To call on the British Broadcasting Corporation to ask them to reflect our rejection of this bill in their broadcasting.
- To work with all our communities to develop and publicise proper reporting mechanisms for hate crime and, with all our partners in our community safety, work to ensure that all reports are followed up and action taken.