

Amended Motion on Women's Safety

Proposed by Cllr Abu Talha Chowdhury

Seconded by: Cllr Kabir Ahmed

Additions in Bold

Deletions ~~struckthrough~~

This Council notes:

- That many women and girls in Tower Hamlets face harassment, assault and violence in public and private spaces, which affects their freedom, dignity and wellbeing.
- That Tower Hamlets has very high levels of domestic abuse and sexual offences reported to the police, as well as 14 domestic homicides since 2011.
- In Tower Hamlets on average 6000 Domestic abuse incidents reported to the police each year.
- Last year 2,082 sexual offences were reported, of that 1348 were non rape offences and 734 rape offences.
- That improving women's safety is the responsibility of everyone, especially men, and requires more action from the Council and its partners.
- **That for some time now the council's service offer around women's safety has been far too limited, and that this lack has only been exacerbated by austerity measures occurring over the last 7 years such as the closing of the Jagonari centre.**
- **That the mayor Lutfur Rahman acknowledges these historic failings and has already demonstrated a commitment to reversing trends of service cutting by identifying new funding options for crucial VAWG services such as our women's criminal justice pathway coordinator role and investing community safety resources in a new series of ground-breaking digital women's safety walks.**
- **That the mayor has taken personal responsibility for the development of a new VAWG strategy being produced for 2024, which under the direct oversight of the newly hired Women and Equalities Officer, is intended to set a new standard for direct government intervention in issues of violence against women and girls.**

This Council resolves to:

- Launch a public advertising campaign to raise awareness and challenge violence against women and girls, and to communicate the Council's commitment to women's safety using council communications and the public relations departments of partner agencies. The campaign should also promote positive messages about consent, respect and healthy relationships, and encourage bystander intervention. **This**

campaign will also focus on intersectionality in women's safety, prioritising the needs of LGBTQI women, BAME women, and women involved in sex work and/or sexual exploitation in line with the mayor's equalities priorities.

- Strengthen the enforcement partnership between the Council, the Police and other agencies, and use innovative anti-social behaviour legislation to fine individuals who harass and cat-call women on our streets. The partnership should also work to improve the reporting, investigation and prosecution of domestic abuse and sexual offences, and provide specialist training for frontline staff.
- **Support the work being done to build a mayor's anti-crime task force that will strive to build specialisation around VAWG and women's safety issues into our local enforcement service, while also increasing the capacity of our THEO service to respond to issues of street harassment and abuse more generally.**
- **Continue to** increase the visibility and effectiveness of CCTV cameras across the borough **following the massive upgrade of our CCTV cameras and control overseen by the mayor.**
- Ensure that CCTV operators monitor lone individuals, particularly women, during the night and early hours of the morning. The Council should also **continue and expand its** use of other technologies, such as street lighting, alarms and apps, to enhance women's safety in public spaces. **The council should also continue to build on the successes of the mayor's recently rolled out women's safety walks and expand the use of resident consultation in shaping street patrols and CCTV placement.**
- Organise women's safety community meetings to connect residents with the Council and the Police, and to address their concerns and suggestions on how to improve women's safety in Tower Hamlets. **These meeting will be built out of the digital women's safety walks that were rolled out this spring.** The meetings should also provide opportunities for women and girls to share their experiences, access support services and participate in co-designing solutions.
- **Support the development of upcoming Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and facilitate a wide-ranging consultation process that will ensure the new strategy is first and foremost based around the needs of women across the borough and from a wide variety of different racial, religious, economic, and sexual identity-based backgrounds.**
- **Reverse/mitigate the impact of the closure of the Jagonari centre by making the development of new BAME women's centre capable of providing a variety of resources around VAWG advocacy and support a top priority.**
- **Reassess the way that this borough supports women involved in sex work and victims of sexual exploitation. The council will begin this process by committing to the recommendations of the off street sex work action plan and scoping the feasibility of both a sex workers hostel and a prostitution needs assessment.**

- **Ensure that transgender women in particular are properly served by our VAWG strategy and by the variety of VAWG women's safety services offered by the council. Trans women continue to be victims of sexual violence and hate crime at an alarmingly high rate, and yet Tower Hamlets has historically done almost nothing to support this marginalised. The council will therefore work to embed the needs of this community across the council and into our VAWG services in particular.**