

Non-Executive Report of the:  <b>COUNCIL</b>  27 <sup>th</sup> September 2023	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
<b>Motion for debate submitted by the Administration</b>	

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

## SUMMARY

1. Council Procedure Rule 11 allows for time at each Ordinary Council meeting for the discussion of one specific Motion submitted by the Administration. 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. The Administration Motion is submitted by the Aspire 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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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.

## **Administration Motion on the Management of Council Assets**

**Proposer: Cllr Saied Ahmed**

**Seconder: Cllr Kabir Ahmed**

### **This Council notes:**

- That overcrowding in the borough has increased from years 2015 to 2022, with over 14,000 residents now classified as living in acutely overcrowded conditions.
- That the development of new, affordable homes for rent has not kept pace with the rapid population growth and concomitant rise in said overcrowding during the same period.
- That in the same period, millions of pounds worth of council assets were disposed of – assets that could have been developed and prioritised for tackling this growing issue and dearth of affordable housing.
- Indeed, for the period 2015-2022, twenty sites owned by the council were disposed of, to the tune of £92.9million, little of which was reinvested into affordable homes for rent.
- That Tower Hamlets possess some of the most valuable parcels of land in the country, due to its proximity to the city and location in the heart of London.
- That despite this fact, one such property, 34 Mount Terrace, E1 2BB in Whitechapel ward, saw the freehold granted to the NHS for £1 – way below the market value.
- That the previous administration also overspent on the construction of the new Town Hall by at least £40million.

### **This Council believes:**

- That there could have been instances where disposals of council-owned assets have been disposed of way below their market value.
- That many of these disposals may not have represented best value for the council.
- That the proceeds of these disposal were not properly reinvested into frontline services and the reprovisioning and development of affordable homes for rent.
- That the residents in this borough have suffered due to the poor financial and political decisions of the last Labour administration.

### **This Council resolves:**

- To call on the Chief Executive to launch an investigation into all disposals of Council-owned assets made during the period 2015-2022, with an evaluation on whether best value was achieved for each disposal.

- That this should include all freeholds granted after the disposal of leasehold interests – for example, 34 Mount Terrace saw its freehold sold for £1 *after* the initial leasehold disposal.
- That where this best value was not achieved, that an explanation be provided as to why.
- To identify what the lands were used for once the disposal had taken place.
- To call on the CEO to prepare a report on the Town Hall overspend, focusing on specific areas that saw costs increase the most.
- That Council proposes the Mayor is provided with a report to the next available meeting of the Council's cabinet and – if deemed necessary – to be brought to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the next full meeting of the Council for discussion.