

Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 15 th November 2023	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Motion for debate submitted by an Opposition Group	

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

SUMMARY

1. Council Procedure Rule 11 allows for time at each Ordinary Council meeting for the discussion of one Motion submitted by an Opposition Group. 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. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, submission of the Opposition Motion for Debate will alternate in sequence between the opposition groups. This Opposition Motion is submitted by the Labour 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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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.

OPPOSITION MOTION FOR DEBATE – MORE SUPPORT FOR THE INFORMATION AND ADVICE SECTOR

Proposed by: Cllr Mufeedah Bustin

Seconded by: Cllr Sabina Akhtar

This council notes:

1. The voluntary sector in Tower Hamlets provides critical support to our residents, particularly in times of crisis.
2. The council's support of the information and advice sector is unique: many council's have reduced grants for this vital service.
3. Despite government funding reducing by over £200M in 10 years, the previous administration continued to invest in the information and advice sector, providing £900,000pa per year to the advice consortium from 2018-2023.
4. The 2021 LBTH Poverty Review identified the impact of multiple factors effecting residents' livelihoods, including the pandemic, a reduced welfare state and Brexit.
5. The Cost of Living crisis, high inflation and increasing interest rates, as well as the increasing cost of rents, is having a detrimental impact on the livelihoods of Tower Hamlets residents.
6. The Poverty Review also identified the important of local intervention in creating a safety net, in particular:
"To make the biggest practical difference to residents, we recommend that the council works in partnership with other organisations and the community to achieve a step change....." through "early financial intervention - taking a whole systems approach to increasing incomes, reducing costs, and averting financial crisis and homelessness"
7. That the 2023 Mayor's Community Fund has not increased the budgetary allocation for information and advice. Inflation means this is in effect a budgetary reduction, meaning reduced support for our residents.

This council further believes:

8. That the information and advice sector is experiencing an increased demand on its services as more and more people are seeking support and advice on a range of matters.
9. That this demand will increase significantly once the rollout of Universal Credit is fully implemented in the next 12 months.
10. That cross-organisation initiatives such as Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN) provides efficiencies of scale, training and up to date welfare information, as well as resource sharing across the sector.

11. THCAN also maintains the digital referral system which allows organisations and individuals to refer cases to advisors which reduces waiting times and ensure urgent issues can be dealt with, preventing residents from experiencing crises and destitution.
12. This is not the time to be reducing support to the information and advice sector, and the council should, instead be increasing support.

This council resolves:

13. To call on Mayor Lutfur Rahman and the Lead Member to review the allocation of funding to the information and advice sector and THCAN with a view to increasing it and ensuring ongoing support.