


Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 2 nd October 2024	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Linda Walker, Interim 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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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 - SCRAP THE REVISED HOMELESSNESS

ACCOMMODATION PLACEMENT POLICY

Proposed by: Cllr Asma Islam

Seconded by: Cllr Sirajul Islam

This council notes:

- In July, the Mayor and Cabinet adopted a revised 'Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy.'
- The revised policy removed the 90-minute journey time limit, allowing the council to place families and individuals experiencing homelessness in temporary accommodation beyond the Home Counties.
- This decision contradicted the 90-minute journey time limit established by the Supreme Court in the Westminster test case, which determined that families should not be placed in accommodation further than 90 minutes from their home.
- Under the policy, those in their final year of GCSEs or A-Levels are to be placed in temporary accommodation within the borough.
- Children in other school year groups can be placed anywhere within London.
- Families with very young children, who are not yet of school age, may be placed in temporary accommodation anywhere in the Home Counties.
- People with health needs, including mental health concerns, should be rehoused in temporary accommodation (TA) either within or close to the borough, to ensure they can access necessary support services.
- There has been a rise in Section 21 (no-fault) evictions over the past two years, leading to an increased number of residents declaring themselves homeless to the council.
- Placing working residents in temporary accommodation in distant areas, such as Zones C and D, risks forcing them to leave their jobs, further contributing to poverty among affected families.
- The Greater London Authority (GLA) has announced £40 million in new funding aimed at procuring homes for overcrowded and homeless families.
- Of this, £8.3 million from the Government has been allocated specifically to Tower Hamlets Council, with a mandate to purchase 32 homes for use as temporary accommodation.
- It is acknowledged that high rents in Tower Hamlets make it unaffordable for residents affected by the benefit cap to continue living here, putting additional strain on homeless families.

The Council believes:

- Relocating families away from their support networks can have a detrimental impact on the wellbeing and education of children.

- The best outcomes for families experiencing homelessness are achieved when they are placed in a locality where they can easily access support services and maintain existing social ties.
- The 90-minute journey time limit should be reinstated, and the revised 'Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy' should be reversed.
- Introducing a ban on no-fault evictions would relieve pressure on homelessness and help stabilise rental prices.
- Homes purchased by the Council using GLA and Government funds should have rents capped at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, ensuring affordability for benefit-capped households.

This council resolves to:

- Recommend to the Mayor that a new report is presented at the next Cabinet meeting, reversing the 'Homelessness Accommodation Placement Policy' adopted in July.
- Explore ways to use GLA and Government funding to purchase properties where rents can be capped at LHA rates, ensuring more affordable housing for homeless and overcrowded families.