

Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 5 December 2016	
Report of: Graham White, Interim Service Head, Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Motions submitted by Members of the Council	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Committee Services Manager, Democratic Services.
Wards affected	All wards

SUMMARY

1. Five motions have been submitted by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 13 for debate at the Council meeting on Monday 5 December 2016.
2. The motions submitted are listed overleaf. In accordance with the protocol agreed by the Council on 21st May 2008, the motions are listed by turns, one from each group, continuing in rotation until all motions submitted are included. The rotation starts with any group(s) whose motion(s) were not reached at the previous meeting.
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in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.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 are the motions that have been submitted.

12.1 Motion regarding the future of the Tower Hamlets Youth Service

Proposer: Councillor Gulam Robbani

Seconded: Councillor Oliur Rahman

This Council notes that:

1. Former Mayor Lutfur Rahman had a positive vision for the Youth Service which was expressed, for example, at the Cabinet in April 2012:

“He considered that what really mattered were the young people of Tower Hamlets who represented the future of the Borough and that youth services were provided that benefited them. It was his intention as Mayor that young people in Tower Hamlets received the best youth services and best education possible.”

2. That the main motivations of bringing the Youth Service back in-house were:

- to save money on duplicating management functions and re-invest it in the front line of the service;
- to respond to the Government’s localism agenda;
- to strengthen the Council’s partnership agenda;
- to obtain extra value by, for example, the youth service working effectively.

3. That although bringing the Service back in-house was a decision of the Executive Mayor, councillors were able to discuss the transfer openly within Council structures – for example, Cllr Oliur Rahman was able to explain the decision to the April meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at which Cllr Rachael Saunders declared a personal interest on this item as she had “been in receipt of information from some of the service providers managing the contract in question.”

This Council further notes that:

1. The current Mayor’s intention to make a fundamental change in the way that the Youth Service is run (initially on an interim basis) was not mentioned at the Cabinet on 10th May 2016, although planning must have been well underway by then.

2. The Mayor’s intention to make this fundamental change was set out in a briefing paper from the Mayor’s office dated 12th May 2016 which was circulated to all councillors.

3. This paper stated that the interim delivery plan would begin in July, which clearly precludes any wider member involvement (indeed, the paper refers to the decision having been developed in discussion with John Biggs and Cllr Saunders) and a future delivery model will be in place from April 2017 (and there will be full member involvement in options for this model, but how this will happen is not explained).

4. This paper also stated that a gap analysis is underway with a view to there being a programme of procurement and commissioning in June 2016 targeted at local third sector organisations.

5. This paper also states that it is the intention to offer youth services for the rest of this financial year from only eight venues in the borough – despite the fact that youth are often very reluctant to travel far to a formal provision. The paper states that the Council intends to offer an outreach service to encourage you to travel to the formal provision and also to rely, in the interim, on whatever additional services are provided in an un-co-ordinated manner by local charities or voluntary organisations.

This Council further notes that:

1. The Mayor's decision was revealed at the Council's Annual Meeting on 18th May 2016 by Cllr Rachael Saunders in what appeared to be an unplanned announcement. This included Cllr Saunders reading out an email from her mobile phone but not saying who had sent her the email (in sad contrast to her previous openness about who was briefing her).

2. Cllr Saunders stated that "The service has faced allegations of fraud and corruption" and other serious allegations. She also said that "Investigations into these serious allegations are ongoing," and that the Youth Service does not have the capacity to deliver as much as it has in the past. She stated that "we" were working out a service plan which would be based on reduced capacity and on when that had been developed would consideration be given to identifying and filling gaps. She expected the identification of gaps to be finished by June (a couple of weeks after she was speaking) – but did not mention John Biggs's intention to fill these gaps by contracting out parts of the service to third sector organisations (or who, in the event of this being done, would manage these organisations).

3. The Council Communications Office issued a press release on 26th May referring to the change only having been prompted by "historic shortcoming". This announced that an interim delivery model would be adopted "by the summer". It gave details of the interim delivery model and stated that young people's views had been listened to throughout the review process. (The members have yet to see a concrete tangible and evidence of that)

4. There have been a number of reports in the local press since the Council AGM which have reported the detail of various allegations – presumably either on the basis of their own imaginations or on the basis of briefings from unknown parties in the Council which have not been shared with all councillors.

5. That as a result of the way the Mayor and relevant Cabinet Members have dealt with this issue, it is entirely unclear what is happening to the youth service – which has led to a great deal of serious concern among service users and in the wider community.

This Council believes that:

1. If and when there are allegations of corruption or other serious malpractice, these should be investigated in accordance with Council procedures and individuals should be dealt with appropriately. (Independent Group fully supports this approach and have publicly offered to work together for the benefit of young people of Tower Hamlets).

2. That if a service is to be reviewed in order to spend or save money by cutting certain provisions, and/or deliver the service more efficiently or effectively, this should be discussed openly, including with councillors and services users and the wider community rather than playing politics or blame-game.

3. (1) and (2) above should not be confused.

This Council further believes that:

1. The current position, in which the Administration appears to have responded to allegations against individuals by pre-emptively altering the service as a whole, and in which the Youth Service is to be run on an interim delivery model based on reduced capacity and enhanced by some sort of ad-hoc procurement, is ill thought out and poorly planned.
2. The interim service delivery model will, for the rest of this financial year, lead to an increase in Anti-Social Behaviour across the Borough – to the irritation of the whole community, for whom this is already a massive problem.
3. The interim service delivery model will, for the rest of this financial year, incur a risk of extra spending on management and quality assurance of the service – risks which have not been addressed in the little documentation available or in such public statements as have emerged.

This Council resolves that:

1. The current Mayor, John Biggs, should honour his commitment to govern in a transparent manner and he should put on the public record a full account of what has been going on, including what allegations have been made, when these were made, by whom and how - and critically how these are being investigated (releasing as much information as is possible without compromising the investigations or the individuals concerned); what prompted the service review and how it took place; and what his intentions are towards the service.
2. The current Mayor, John Biggs, to immediately stop any further work to drastically reduce and cut the Youth Service provision in the name of interim delivery model and engage in a serious, open, transparent consultation with the young people, residents and stakeholders.
3. The current Mayor, John Biggs, to reverse the decision to close unprecedented number of Youth Centres and look for an alternative way to provide effective, efficient and fit-for-purpose Borough-wide localised youth service provision.
4. The current Mayor, John Biggs, must keep the Youth Service in-house rather than privatising or contracting it out.
5. In the event that the current Mayor, John Biggs, should not agree to do think again, he must issue a statement clarifying how he intends to procure a service to fill in the gaps from the third sector, given that the Commissioners have been running grant-making functions; and he must also issue a comprehensive statement covering which of his chosen eight venues will pick up delivering the service previously provided by centres which John Biggs and Cllr Saunders have closed and how service users whose centres have been closed are expected to access the replacement services, including details of travel arrangements, etc.

12.2 Motion regarding the future of school provision in the borough

Proposer: Councillor Andrew Wood

Seconded: Councillor Julia Dockerill

This council notes that:

According to the Office of National Statistics the population of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets rose from 211,200 people in 2004 to 284,000 in 2014. This was an increase of 34%.

The Office of National Statistics estimates a further increase of 25% between 2014 and 2024 which will result in a population of 355,400 for the borough, the highest since 1931.

The current 2016 estimate for the Isle of Dogs is that there are 36,000 new homes; either under construction, approved or in consultation (last year the GLA estimated 30,000).

The current draft of the Local Plan estimates that by the year 2020 the Borough will have 25,136 new homes, 49,505 new homes by 2025 and 54,241 by 2031. More than 60% of those new homes will be in the south east of the borough with half being to the south of Chrisp Street Market in south Poplar & the Isle of Dogs.

As a result the increased population will require ten new primary schools and three new secondary schools on the Island alone. Currently only five school sites have planning permission and only one of those is guaranteed to be built.

The Greater London Authority and the Mayor of Tower Hamlets are currently negotiating a new housing target for the Isle of Dogs & South Poplar as part of an Opportunity Area Planning Framework, which may result in as many as 50,000 new homes in addition to those already approved.

The council further notes:

Despite the borough having two of the finest potential new secondary school sites in inner London, Wapping London Dock and Westferry Printworks each with an extant planning consent, there is no council activity taking place to bring schools at both of these sites into fruition to meet the needs of the present and future population.

That parents informed of the delay to the provision of a secondary school on the Isle of Dogs have informed local Councillors that they will have to leave the Borough once their children hit secondary school age.

There are also delays in bringing forward other potential sites across the borough.

The Council calls upon the Mayor:

- To urgently bring forward proposals for both the Wapping London Dock and Westferry Printworks schools and to engage local parents in the process.
- To consult on and bring forward a comprehensive borough wide schools strategy utilising all available resources to ensure that educational provision matches the population increase.

12.3 Motion regarding Bow School

Proposer: Mayor John Biggs

Seconded: Councillor Rachael Saunders

This Council notes the tragic death of Nasar Ahmed who passed away at the Royal London Hospital.

Council notes that Mayor Biggs and Tower Hamlets Council have offered their full support to the police, Bow School and other agencies as the circumstances of his death are thoroughly investigated. Council notes that Mayor Biggs has met the family twice and has committed himself to doing everything he can to support the family.

It is important is that the police, working on behalf of the Coroner's Service, gather the facts quickly and that we learn all the lessons we can from this incident so we can prevent anything similar from ever happening again.

Council further notes that the police have consulted the Health and Safety Executive and agreed to take the lead on an independent investigation. A Metropolitan Police central investigation team will be conducting this investigation as they have the resources and capability to carry out a complex and lengthy enquiry.

This Council resolves to fully support the police, Bow School and other agencies as the circumstances of Nasar Ahmed's' death are investigated.

Tower Hamlets Council resolves to offer all the support it can to Nasar's family, friends and fellow pupils during this extremely difficult time.

12.4 Motion on Tackling Air Pollution in Tower Hamlets

Proposer: Cllr Denise Jones

Seconder: Cllr Ayas Miah

This Council notes:

1. Poor air quality is a significant problem in Tower Hamlets and we exceed EU limits for air pollution across the whole borough
2. Figures from the British Lung Foundation show people in Tower Hamlets are twice as likely to die from lung cancer and other lung diseases than people in London's most well off boroughs like Westminster or Kensington & Chelsea
3. Emerging research shows the impact of air pollution on children is particularly devastating, reducing their lung capacity permanently which can lead to a range of health problems
4. Pollution in London is a public health priority, and over 9,400 Londoners – including almost 200 Tower Hamlets residents – die early every year due to air pollution.

This Council welcomes:

1. Strong leadership from the Labour Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, on tackling London's air pollution, including proposals to bring forward and expand implementation of the Ultra Low Emission Zone and to introduce green buses on London's worst polluted routes from next year
2. Local Mayor John Biggs' public commitment to make improving our air quality a priority for the whole council, working with partners within and beyond the borough, giving a much-needed new local focus to this vital issue
3. Support from our local MPs Jim Fitzpatrick and Rushanara Ali in campaigning on this issue along with residents and raising the issue in Parliament
4. Work already being done by the council with local schools such as Marner Primary and Cubitt Town Junior schools to raise awareness of air pollution and encourage children and families to minimise their exposure and adopt less polluting behaviours.

This Council believes:

1. Tackling air pollution is a matter of social justice – it is unacceptable that people are twice as likely to die from lung diseases if they live in deprived areas like Tower Hamlets compared to more affluent areas of London
2. Improving air quality is an urgent public health priority, given the damaging impacts of pollution particularly on children and vulnerable adults
3. While we are not in full control of air pollution within the borough, there are actions the council can take in relation to planning and development, parking and traffic policies, public health awareness and campaigning, cleaning up our own and partners' fleets, incentivising active travel and use of cleaner vehicles, and greening our public spaces and streets.

This Council resolves:

1. For all councillors to pledge to champion air quality and lead by example by using cleaner travel options as far as possible
2. For all councillors to support the National Park City campaign, which aims to make London a greener, healthier and fairer place to live
3. To call on Mayor Biggs to:

- a. Ensure the forthcoming Air Quality Action Plan is ambitious in its commitments to improve our air quality locally
- b. Consider how to roll out the positive partnership working with local schools to more schools across the borough
- c. Explore investment through the budget process in proven measures and public health campaigns to raise awareness of air pollution in the local community
- d. Explore through the Draft Local Plan (currently out for consultation) all possible measures to improve Air Quality through the planning process.

12.5 Motion regarding Housing in Tower Hamlets

Proposer: Councillor Sirajul Islam

Seconded: Councillor Rajib Ahmed

This Council notes:

1. That our population is growing faster than anywhere in the country with 11,000 additional people living here every year.
2. London's housing market is in crisis. The shortage, cost and quality of housing in the capital is exacerbating the cost of living and making it harder for families to live in London.
3. That Mayor Biggs inherited from his predecessor a scandalous situation where 238 families had been left in temporary B&B accommodation for over six weeks, breaching even the Tory Government's limit for the maximum time a family should have to live in a B&B.
 - a. That all 238 families have been rehoused and now there is not a single Tower Hamlets family in temporary B&B accommodation for more than six weeks.
4. The Government's punitive Housing and Planning Act will only make things harder for boroughs like Tower Hamlets.
 - a. Council further notes that 'Pay to Stay' measures will no longer be mandatory, but discretionary for local authorities.
 - b. The Council's new Housing Strategy, the first in the borough since 2009, will help to protect residents from the worst excesses of the Housing and Planning Act but it cannot stop everything.
5. In the last year over a thousand affordable homes were built in the borough, over 400 more than the year before. More family sized homes at social rents have been built than at any time in the last six years with well over 300 completed in the last year.
6. The Council has rehoused 1,123 overcrowded families last year.
7. The Council has invested millions of pounds to improve and expand our parks, local GP surgeries and schools.
8. Mayor Biggs established an Affordability Commission which looked at high rents and house prices in Tower Hamlets. The Commission put forward several recommendations which were approved by Cabinet, including recommendations to deliver 100% rented housing combining social target rents and homes at 'living rent' and to explore reducing rents on S106 schemes to more affordable levels.
9. A landlord licensing scheme is now in operation in three wards, and will help drive up standards in the private rented sector.

This Council believes:

1. That Tower Hamlets is on the frontline in the battle to tackle the capital's housing crisis and unlike many Tory boroughs in outer London, we are willing to do our bit to solve it.
2. We should welcome sustainable development but crucially must also work closely with our partners to encourage good quality, affordable homes and place-making which meets our community's needs.
3. We need genuinely affordable homes developed with the right infrastructure. The new Local Plan, which is out for consultation now, will help us to achieve this by focusing on making holistic places not just pursuing numbers.

This Council resolves:

1. To call on Mayor Biggs to write to the Minister for Housing and Planning:
 - a. urging a change in the law to enable the landlord licensing scheme to apply to the whole borough and not just three wards; and
 - b. urging the Government not to implement the provisions of the Housing and Planning Act which will remove the need for housing associations to seek consent from the Homes and Communities Agency for mergers, restructuring, change of status, dissolution, land disposal and change of ownership.
2. To support the Mayor and Cabinet in ongoing work to deliver more genuinely affordable homes and the vital infrastructure that must go alongside housing, in line with the Mayor's commitment to deliver 1,000 council homes.