

# **CITY OF WESTMINSTER**

## **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

At the Meeting of the Council of the City of Westminster held at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 29th April, 2015 at Porchester Hall, Porchester Road, Bayswater, London, SW1E 6DU.

### PRESENT

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Audrey Lewis

### COUNCILLORS

Heather Acton	Angela Harvey
Ian Adams	David Harvey
Nickie Aiken	Richard Holloway
Barbara Arzymanow	Adam Hug
Daniel Astaire	Louise Hyams
Richard Beddoe	Patricia McAllister
Rita Begum	Guthrie McKie
David Boothroyd	Tim Mitchell
Iain Bott	Adnan Mohammed
Susie Burbridge	Gotz Mohindra
Ruth Bush	Nilavra Mukerji
Melvyn Caplan	Jan Prendergast
Danny Chalkley	Papya Qureshi
Paul Church	Vincenzo Rampulla
Brian Connell	Robert Rigby
Antonia Cox	Rachael Robathan
Thomas Crockett	Glenys Roberts
Peter Cuthbertson	Philippa Roe
Robert Davis, DL	Ian Rowley
Tony Devenish	Karen Scarborough
Paul Dimoldenberg	Andrew Smith
Nick Evans	Steve Summers
Christabel Flight	Shamim Talukder
Jean Paul Floru	Barrie Taylor
Peter Freeman	Cameron Thomson
Murad Gassanly	Aziz Toki
Jonthan Glanz	Judith Warner
Barbara Grahame	Jason Williams
Lindsey Hall	

## 1 APPOINTMENT OF RELIEF CHAIRMAN

Motion, moved by the Lord Mayor and seconded by Councillor Melvyn Caplan that Councillor Louise Hyams be elected as Relief Chairman.

Motion put, and on a show of hands, declared **CARRIED**.

## 2 MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings at the Council meeting held on Wednesday 4 March 2015 were, with the assent of the Members present, signed by the Lord Mayor as a true record of the proceedings.

## 3 LORD MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.1 The Lord Mayor drew the Council's attention to her communications set out in the agenda. The Lord Mayor advised that this week saw the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the award of the Victoria Cross to a Westminster, William Rhodes Moorhouse. The citation read as follows:

"The Victoria Cross was awarded to William Rhodes Moorhouse "For most conspicuous bravery on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1915, in flying to Courtrai and dropping bombs on the railway line near that station. On starting the return journey he was mortally wounded but succeeded in flying for 36 miles to his destination, at a very low altitude and reported the successful accomplishment of this object. His aircraft was found to have 95 bullet and shrapnel holes in its fuselage. He died of his wounds the following day."

## 4 VOTE OF THANKS

- (a) **Vote of Thanks to the retiring Lord Mayor and Consorts, Councillor Audrey Lewis, Miss Victoria Lewis, Miss Frances Gladwin and Miss Nancy Gladwin**

Motion moved by Robert Davis and seconded by Councillor Richard Beddoe that the full Council resolve to record a vote of thanks to Councillor Audrey Lewis for the distinguished service rendered by her as Lord Mayor and Miss Victoria Lewis, Miss Frances Gladwin and Miss Nancy Gladwin for the constant and invaluable help given by them as the Lord Mayor's Consorts.

We assure them of our gratitude for, and high appreciation of, the dignity and ability with which they have carried out their many duties in accordance with the highest traditions of the City and this Vote of Thanks be inscribed on Vellum under the Common Seal and presented to them.

Motion put and on a show of hands declared **CARRIED** following which the Lord Mayor replied.

**RESOLVED:** That we assure them of our gratitude for, and high appreciation of, the dignity and ability with which they have carried out their many duties in

accordance with the highest traditions of the City and this Vote of Thanks be inscribed on Vellum under the Common Seal and presented to them.

## **5 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

5.1 During the course of debates, at the commencement of their respective speaker, the following members declared a personal interest:

Councillor Hall that her property may be subject to a future Mansion Tax.

Councillor Glanz that he has interests in properties which may be subject to a future Mansion Tax.

Councillor Boothroyd that he is employed by a Planning Consultancy but he has no involvement in any Westminster related applications.

## **6 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS, IF ANY**

There were no Petitions or Deputations.

## **7 QUESTIONS**

The questions, supplementary questions and replies are included on the Council's website.

## **8 COUNCILLOR ISSUES**

### **(a) Improving the NHS through Scrutiny**

Councillor David Harvey spoke and Councillor Rachael Robathan replied.

### **(b) Silver Sunday/Sir Simon Milton Foundation**

Councillor Christabel Flight spoke and Councillor Philippa Roe replied.

## **9 STATEMENT ON URGENT MATTERS**

There were no urgent matters.

## **10 NOTICES OF MOTION**

### **(a) Mansion Tax**

The Majority Party had selected for debate the Notice of Motion – Mansion Tax as set out on the agenda. The Motion was moved by Councillor Melvyn Caplan and seconded by Councillor Tony Devenish.

Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg moved and it was seconded by Councillor Adam Hug that everything after "Westminster City Council and residents" be deleted and replaced with:

“Agree that proposals for a Mansion Tax are fair and will protect those on low incomes with a right to defer the charge until the property changes hands. All but higher-rate taxpayers will be able to choose to defer the charge until the property is sold at a time of their choosing. As only 5% of pensioners are higher rate taxpayers this should go a long way towards reassuring the older, longer-standing residents in higher value homes.

This Council notes that no property currently valued at less than £2 million will be included and this threshold will be uprated in line with prime value property inflation. The charge will be £250 per month for properties valued between £2 and £3 million (equivalent to the average Band H Council Tax across the country). Further bands will apply to properties valued above £3m. A recent YouGov poll found that 60% of Londoners support the Mansion Tax proposal to finance the NHS, with 28% against.

This Council further agrees that there is little difference between a Mansion Tax and a Council Tax ‘super-band’ as argued by Councillor Lindsey Hall in the ‘Evening Standard’ on 25th November 2014 when she said that, *“The cure for inequity in housing lies in re-banding council tax, perhaps with a ‘super band’ that reflects genuine ‘mansion’ status”*.

In addition, this Council notes that Mark Field, former Member of Parliament for the Cities of London and Westminster, has called for three extra Council Tax bands – *“Band H for prime properties worth between £2 and £5 million; Band I for so-called ‘intermediate prime’ properties in the £5 to £15 million bracket; and finally Band J for super prime properties worth over £15 million.”*

This Council further notes that annual property taxes have become increasingly inequitable over the last 25 years. As former Times editor Simon Jenkins recently pointed out:

*“Houses in parts of Westminster, Kensington and Camden that are now worth over £2m were in 1990 paying between £3,000 and £10,000 in rates. Had the rates not been abolished, mere inflation would now have them paying £6,000-£20,000. That is without revaluation or any increase in the cost of local services, which would have pushed some rates to more than £50,000”*

Finally, the Council agrees that we are increasingly no longer debating whether to raise the annual property charge on very high value homes, but how this is best done, where to direct any money raised (for example, to the NHS, to build more social housing) and the best means of protecting those who are ‘asset rich but cash poor’.

For all the above reasons, this Council looks forward to the implementation of a Mansion Tax by the next Government.

After debate, the Lord Mayor put the amendment moved by Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg and seconded by Councillor Adam Hug to the vote and on a show of hands declared the Motion to be **LOST**.

The Lord Mayor then put the unamended Motion moved by Councillor Melvyn Caplan and seconded by Councillor Tony Devenish to the vote and on a show of hands declared the Motion to be **CARRIED**.

**RESOLVED:**

That Westminster City Council and our residents appreciate local property prices have increased substantially over the years. Many residents have lived in their home for decades, many on relatively low fixed incomes and pensions. The majority of these homes would be considered modest in much of the UK.

The notion of a “Mansion” Tax is misleading, divisive and economically illiterate. Such a tax on ordinary family homes – by default of their location – would hurt Westminster residents who have bought their home with already taxed monies who may no longer have the income to afford such a “tax bombshell”.

A “Mansion” Tax on a property takes on account of a person’s income and their ability to pay year-on-year. Property tax is already levied at the point of purchase through Stamp Duty, through Capital Gains on secondary properties and on death through Inheritance Tax.

Such a tax in a fluctuating market could lead to many of our elderly residents and those on fixed incomes being forced out of their homes or families being saddled with major debts. A likely “capital flight” will impact on our local economy, break up communities and will not raise substantial monies to fund public services.

Councils and many MPs of all political colours across London have major concerns with this ill thought out policy. Westminster City Council resolves to lobby against any “Mansion Tax” on homes deemed to be worth more than £2m which would impose unrealistic, unworkable and unaffordable property tax burdens on our residents.

**Notice of Motion: Public Speaking at Planning Committees**

The Minority Party had selected for debate the Notice of Motion – Public Speaking at Planning Applications Committee as set out on the agenda. The Motion was moved by Councillor David Boothroyd and seconded by Councillor Ruth Bush.

After debate, to which Councillor David Boothroyd replied, the Lord Mayor put the Motion to the vote and on a show of hands declared the Motion **LOST**.

The Meeting ended at 9.58 pm

**CHAIRMAN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_