

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

**MINUTES OF THE TOWER HAMLETS TRANSFORMATION AND IMPROVEMENT
BOARD**

HELD AT 6.05 P.M. ON MONDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2019

**ROOM C1, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Mayor John Biggs (Chair)	(Executive Mayor)
Councillor Asma Begum	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Equalities)
Councillor Rachel Blake	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Planning, Air Quality and Tackling Poverty)
Councillor Sirajul Islam	(Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing)
Councillor Andrew Wood	(Leader of the Conservative Group)
Sir Steve Bullock	(External Representative - THBVIB)
Kate Herbert	(LGA Representative)
Will Tuckley	(Chief Executive)
Sharon Godman	(Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance)

Officers Present:

Jane Abraham	– (Housing Project Manager)
Richard Baldwin	– (Divisional Director, Children's Social Care)
Adam Boey	– (Senior Strategy & Policy Manager - Corporate)
Rupert Brandon	– (Interim Head of Housing Supply)
David Knight	– (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor James King, the Chair of the Councils Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were received at the meeting.

3. REVIEW OF MINUTES/ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September, 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and the Chair was authorised to sign them accordingly.

4. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan 2018-2022

The Board received a report that provided Q3 progress updates on the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan's 11 recommendations; developed in response to the findings of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (June 2018) and captures the improvement activity currently undertaken in the Council. The main points of the discussions are summarised as follows.

The Board noted that:

- In June 2018, the Council had participated in a LGA Corporate Peer Challenge. The purpose of this review was to achieve an independent perspective of the Council's achievement against its Best Value Improvement Plan and to learn from best practice;
- The Peer Challenge represented a significant milestone in the Council's strengths, weaknesses and provided a catalyst to deliver the ongoing improvements required to improve services for residents;
- The Corporate Peer Challenge identified a number of areas where the Council can make further improvements.
- Whilst the report outlines the significant transformation and improvement activity being undertaken by the Council to become a modern and efficient Council. It was noted that there are large areas within the Council that are in need of modernisation with some services operating under a traditional and paternalistic model of delivery;
- The Council therefore needs to expedite the pace of change as it remains too risk averse as a result of past decision making;
- The Council should focus on taking a more proportionate risk approach and empower officers to be less cautious and bureaucratic in order to drive through a real change in culture;
- This means becoming more financially disciplined, commercial, adaptable and innovative at all levels that resources are managed;
- The key questions are (i) to know where the Council is in this journey of improvement; (ii) that there is still scope for future improvement; (iii) a recognition that there is a more challenging environment financially to address the pressures; (iv) the need to look at the extent that the Council can use its resources to facilitate local communities and businesses in working through problems in an effective way;
- It is important to consider (i) how effective is the leadership within the Council at driving performance; (ii) the development of a cost conscious culture within the Council so that every decision is built on informed financial assessment; (iii) how well officers are demonstrating financial awareness and ensuring a coherent approach to financial management the Council's corporate centre;
- Whilst there have been reforms the Councils management arrangements in terms of systems and personnel, there is more work to do on the development of financial discipline **E.g.** whilst work has been

undertaken on outcome based budgeting there is still more work to be undertaken on this; and

- The Council needs to address the services in need of improvement and integration e.g. resource management.

Accordingly the Transformation and Improvement Board **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the progress with regards to the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan.

4.2 Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge - Follow up and future

The Board received a report that (i) outlined the improvement journey to date; (ii) sought the Board's approval for a proposed approach to a follow up visit by the LGA; and (iii) asked the Board to consider options for continuing the Council's public transformation and improvement journey in 2020. The main points of the discussion on this report are summarised below:

The Board:

- Was advised that when the Local Government Association (LGA) had performed the Corporate Peer Challenge of the Council in June 2018. It had been suggested that as part of the Challenge process there should be a follow up visit by the LGA to occur within two years of the original visit;
- Noted that the purpose of this follow up visit was to: (i) help the Council assess the impact of the peer challenge; and (ii) demonstrate the progress that it has made against the areas of improvement and development as identified by the peer review team;
- In considering the options for continuing the Council's transformation and improvement journey in 2020 felt that both Members of the Cabinet, together with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should hold a number of deep dive meetings into the Council's transformation and improvement progress, focussing on particular areas of interest or improvement and this could be held post LGA follow-up visit;
- Felt that the benefits of this option would be that it is public-facing, and would involve the non-executive elected members (scrutiny) and that this is a streamlined approach. Although the drawback is that these events need to be managed and supported;
- Agreed that it was important to show what the Council is doing every day to improve the quality of life of local residents;
- Noted that the Council needs to share the stories behind the huge variety of vital services that it provides every day to highlight the amazing work that is going on in the local communities;
- Noted that the Council provides hundreds of different services to residents that cover all aspects of daily life, so it is important as mentioned to showcase what LBTH does. This will mean the local

communities are better informed about how the Council helps and assists them;

- Was informed that the work it has undertaken has meant that more of the internal transformation process has been exposed and there is a need to ensure the progress is publicised **e.g.** the triumphs and evaluation of progress;
- Acknowledged that there was a need also to look at the challenges and situations with regards Audit and Pensions;

Accordingly the Transformation and Improvement Board **RESOLVED**:

1. To approve the proposed approach for a follow up visit by the LGA Peer Challenge Team, as a part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process;
2. To agree on an LGA follow-up visit from June 2020, pending LGA Peer Challenge Team's availability; and
3. That members of the Cabinet, together with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should hold a number of deep dive meetings into the Council's transformation and improvement progress, focussing on particular areas of interest or improvement - and can be held post LGA follow-up visit.

5. TRANSFORMATION AND IMPROVEMENT SPOTLIGHT

5.1 Community Safety Transformation

The Board received and noted a report presented by Ann Corbett (Divisional Director, Community Safety), that focused on the progress of seven areas of priority set out in the letter from the Mayor to the Chief Executive on 6th June, 2018 under the heading 'Safer communities and ASB'. These being (i) Rise in youth violence; (ii) Reassuring the community about wider crime and ASB; (iii) Close working with police; (iv) Violent Crime Summit; (v) Council funded police officers; (vi) Neighbourhood Management Pilot; and (vii) Chairing of a Crime and ASB Board. The main points of the discussion regarding the ongoing work of the community safety priority areas may be summarised as follows:

The Board:

- Was advised that the ASB Blueprint had been produced in March 2017 following a 6 month independent review of how the Borough dealt with ASB. The Blueprint had identified a new, victim centred approach for the Council and partners to adopt in order to better respond to anti-social behaviour and the impact on residents' quality of life and set out an ambitious programme of change in terms of how the Council would tackle ASB;
- Noted that the report covered the transformation journey that the Council has undergone since then (i) within the community safety service; and (ii) the achievements and the challenges the Council faces in responding to community safety concerns;

- Observed that in response to the rise in knife violence in the Borough, the Knife crime action plan had been produced which reflected a shift from a criminal justice to a public health approach, looking at the long term solutions;
- Noted that the Plan committed the Council and its partners to delivering 65 actions;
- Was informed that since commencement of the knife crime action plan, police crime data has shown a downward trend of offences compared on a rolling year and between 2018-2019 Tower Hamlets experienced the biggest decrease in knife crime injury victims of all London Boroughs;
- Noted that Operation Continuum was launched in December 2017 to promote closer working with the police and in response to ongoing reports of drug dealing, drug use and associated criminality. It involves coordinating Council teams and partners including the Partnership Task Force (PTF) the team of police officers funded by the Council and are tasked to a number of key priorities agreed with the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime, Tower Hamlets Homes, CCTV team, clean and green, Police Safer neighbourhood Teams, Trading Standards and Licencing and the ASB team;
- Was informed about the Rapid Response Team (RRT) that works with young people (both as victims and perpetrators) to reduce knife crime and group violence. This was innovative project funded by the Council had set up in January 2019 with the Royal London Hospital;
- Noted that as part of the RRT a Violent Crime Reduction (VCR) Officer is now based at Royal London Hospital to work with people aged 10-26 who have been victims of weapon enabled violence including knife crime to support them through preventative work either in their position as a perpetrator or a victim;
- Noted that admissions to London's major trauma centres due to personal violence related injuries are the highest in the UK;
- Observed that the Royal London Hospital Major Trauma Centre is a leading specialist centre which treats some of the most seriously injured patients in London e.g. victims of violent crimes such as assault and gun or knife crime. The number of young people admitted is high; the unit is one of only three major trauma centres serving the capital so patients come from anywhere within the M25;
- Was informed that in September 2017 the Mayor in Cabinet had agreed to invest £3m to fund additional police officers for Tower Hamlets under Section 92 of the Police Act 1996. The Section 92 agreement for the PTF included a suite of key performance indicators that reflect the priorities of the Council and the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). They range from the number of drug supply arrests, stop and search for drugs and weapons, knife recoveries, and the measure of public perceptions of crime and ASB;
- Noted that inspite operating at 50% capacity during the full year 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019, this team of officer's has made 356 arrests, stopped and searched 460 individuals, issued over 350 anti-

social behaviour warnings, seized 30 vehicles and confiscated over £25k cash (Proceeds of Crime Act);

- Noted that knife violence is endemic in London, and is concentrating in areas of socioeconomic deprivation. Criminal acts are an issue of law and order, but the reasons why children and young people carry knives and resort to violence is a public health issue. A public health approach to preventing knife violence is a multilevel framework that addresses the root causes of violence as well as those already involved or at risk;
- Noted that women often do not report the violence that is perpetrated against them because of the shame they feel they will bring on the family and community. Therefore, the Council; local schools and its partners are working with communities to inform women of their legal rights and educate them specifically about Domestic and Honour based violence;
- Noted the work of the Second Chance Project in White Chapel that aims to provide people with criminal records with purposeful recovery by securing and supporting their alcohol/drug free life and also in developing personally rewarding structured training, counselling and self-help, which will provide real benefit to them, their families and the community;
- Wanted to know more about what can be done to help people with criminal records obtain appropriate jobs or self-employment **e.g.** Provide them with the skills they need in the labour market and working with employers to break down the barriers to employment.

Accordingly the Transformation and Improvement Board **RESOLVED**:

To note the progress that has been made to date in relation to the Mayors community safety priority areas.

5.2 Housing and Capital Delivery

The Chair thanked Councillor Sirajul Islam (Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing); Jane Abraham (Housing Project Manager); and Rupert Brandon (Interim Head of Housing Supply) for attending tonight's Board meeting to provide an overview of Housing Capital Programme. The main points of the discussion on the report may be summarised as follows:

The Board:

- Noted that the 2019 Annual Residents' Survey had shown that the lack of affordable homes was the second highest concern (29%);
- Noted that the average house price in the Borough in November 2019 was £559,289;
- Was advised that the median ratio of house prices to local earnings in the borough is 12.7 (significantly higher than the national average of 8.0);

- Observed that the Council faces considerable challenges in delivering homes which are affordable to local people on average incomes;
- Was informed that currently circa there are 19,000 on the Council's Common Housing Register with (i) 58% in urgent priority housing need; (ii) 38% over-crowded; and (iii) highest demand for 1 beds;
- Noted that 39% of the Borough's housing stock is in the Private Rented Sector; and
- Wanted to (i) look at how to get the best use of existing housing stock **e.g.** under occupiers moving to smaller properties; (ii) look at helping people taking up to Rent to Buy/Shared Ownership properties outside of Tower Hamlets; (iii) consider the benefits in buying back properties; (iv) look at social housing stock on new developments; and (v) establish an intermediate Housing Register of interest for those living or working in Borough.

6. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Closing Comments

As this was the last meeting of the Board in closing the meeting, the Chair thanked the Members and officers for continuing the work to deliver the ongoing improvements required in services for residents.

The meeting ended at 8.00 p.m.

**Chair, Mayor John Biggs
Tower Hamlets Transformation and Improvement Board**