

TOWER HAMLETS BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

Monday, 11 September 2017 at 6.00 p.m.
Room C1, 1st Floor, Town Hall, Mulberry Place, London E14 2BG

This meeting is open to the public to attend.

Members:

Mayor John Biggs

Sir Steve Bullock

Councillor David Edgar

Alan Finch

Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs

Sharon Godman

Councillor Sirajul Islam

Councillor Clare Harrisson

Councillor Rabina Khan

Councillor Oliur Rahman

Will Tuckley

Alan Wood

(External Representative - THBVIB)

(Cabinet Member for Resources)

(Local Government Association)

(Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services)

(Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Partnerships)

(Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing)

(Vice-Chair OSC)

(Leader of PATH Group)

(Leader of the Independent Group)

(Chief Executive)

(Chair, Children's Improvement Board)

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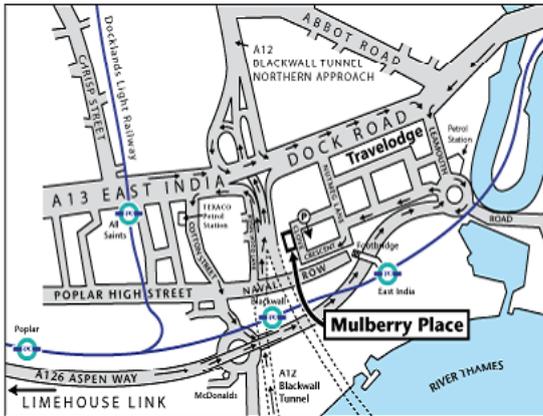
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LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS
TOWER HAMLETS BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

MONDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2017

6.00 p.m.

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Any other business that the Chair considers to be urgent.	

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LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE TOWER HAMLETS BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

HELD AT 6.05 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 14 JUNE 2017

**ROOM MP701, 7TH FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, LONDON E14
2BG**

Members Present:

Mayor John Biggs (Chair)	(Executive Mayor)
Sir Steve Bullock	(Independent External Member)
Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs	(Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services)
Councillor Denise Jones	(Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)
Councillor David Edgar	(Cabinet Member for Resources)
Councillor Sirajul Islam	(Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing)
Heather Wills	(Local Government Association)
Will Tuckley	(Chief Executive)
Sharon Godman	(Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Partnerships)
Alan Wood	(Chair, Children's Improvement Board)
Councillor Andrew Wood	(Substitute for Councillor Peter Golds)

Officers Present:

Janet Fasan	– (Divisional Director, Legal)
Heather Daley	– (Divisional Director, HR & Transformation)
Nancy Meehan	– (Interim Improvement Manager, Children's Social Care)
Zena Cooke	– (Corporate Director, Resources)
Afazul Hoque	– (Interim Service Manager Strategy, Policy and Performance)
Zakir Chaudhry	– (Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer)
Antonella Burgio	– (Democratic Services)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mayor Biggs welcomed all to the inaugural meeting of the Board and introduced Sir Steve Bullock who had been invited by the Local Government Association to undertake the role of Board External Member. Sir Steve spoke to the Board about his background expertise and the role he would fulfil to deliver the Board's outcomes.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSCENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sirajul Islam and Peter Golds and from Acting Corporate Director for Governance Graham White.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the Best Value Review Board Quarterly meeting held on 10th April 2017 were presented and reviewed.

3. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

VARY ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair proposed that the order of business should be varied from that published. In accordance with the proposal, item 7 was discussed following item 4; afterwards the remaining agenda items were discussed in the order published.

4. BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD REVISED TERMS REFERENCE

The revised terms of reference were considered by Board Members and the following were noted:

- The aims of the Board which were to drive sustainable improvement across the organisation by providing oversight support and challenge.
- The proposed structure of the meetings.
- The Council had proposed to DCLG that a similar format should be established to that of the Best Value Review Board Quarterly Meeting which operated under the previous directions.

RESOLVED

That the Terms of Reference which the Mayor has been asked to agreed as an Individual Mayoral Decision be noted.

5. BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017-18, APRIL-JUNE 2017 UPDATES

The Board heard from the Interim Service Manager Strategy, Policy and Performance that this first submission to DCLG contained elements originating in the Secretary of State's previous directions together with a progress summary for each theme reported. These were appended to the report for members to consider and comment upon.

The Board considered and discussed the report and noted the following matters:

- Members were concerned at the number of red-rated data reported in the detailed section of the appendix and asked that this should be kept under review.
- The current Mainstream Grants programme would end in 2018 and therefore it would be necessary to formulate a policy approach to the forthcoming 3-year programme.
- The outcomes of the work undertaken by the 'Clear Up Team' were noted.
- Tower Hamlets was participating in the Pilot Elections ID Registration scheme. However because of the changes in practice that would be required and the short timescales to the snap general election on 8th June 2017, representations had been made to DGLG that there was insufficient time to implement the pilot at this time. However it was anticipated that the process would be embedded in time for the local elections in 2018.
- That progress summary relating to Elections should be 'yellow' rated.
- The role of the Board was to expand on the progress made to date and to enquire how the Council would ensure that performance data demonstrates this and can be externally challenged. Additionally, the role of the LGA, on the Board, was to ensure that this was demonstrated and a culture of continuous improvement and external challenge adopted.

The Board then heard from Officers and noted the following matters:

- Since DCLG would scrutinise RAG ratings, a transparent approach was recommended.
- It would be necessary to demonstrate with evidence that the Council had moved forward and was taking mature decisions post-Commissioners.

The following actions were agreed arising from the discussion of the report:

- Where RAG data was report it was necessary to focus on detail and to report the performance data as the delivery of the plan progresses.
- It was necessary to demonstrate that the Council was able to demonstrate lessons learned therefore learning from Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB) should be shared for learning purposes with Adult Services.
- That a paper be brought to the Board on the corporate journey to improvement, focussing on the priorities, how data is measured and how the priorities are interpreted into a culture of improvement.

RESOLVED

1. That the progress reported in the submission to DCLG be noted.
2. That those actions outstanding in the plan be noted.
3. That outstanding actions be added to the Board's forward plan.
4. That learning from Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB) should be shared for learning purposes with Adult Services.
5. That the above actions be taken forward.

6. SPOTLIGHT - ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

The Corporate Director for Resources and Divisional Director, Legal Services made a presentation to the Board, the details of this are appended to the minutes. The Board considered and discussed the presentation and noted the following matters:

- That the focus of the programme presently was organisational culture and governance.
- Success of the transformation programme would be measured by a number of methods including direct feedback and proxy measures.
- The process was owned by Corporate Leadership Team and respective senior leadership teams. It was acknowledged that strategies to reach remote staff were needed and the staff survey was a key tool in achieving this.
- The wellbeing and resilience of staff was being address via a number of measures including the development of a wellbeing policy and healthy workplace charter.
- A review of the Council's constitution is being delivered in two tranches. The first was approved by Council earlier in 2017 and the second tranche will be presented to Council on 19 July 2017.
- Some elements of the Member Code of Code of Conduct had already been reviewed such as Licensing and Planning Codes. The Member/Officer and Member/Member protocols were also programmed for review and update.
- There has been a review of corporate structures and a programme to make permanent appointments to post that hither to have been filled on an interim basis.
- The Clear Up Project had completed its work and would make a report to Council.

The Board highlighted the following matters of concern arising from the discussion:

- The Member Code of Conduct
- There should be a properly resourced planned and communicated Member induction programme with facility for discussion incorporated.
- Progress on organisational culture should include measurable outcomes.
- The Council should consider how it will assess/evaluate whether it has progressed to become a learning organisation
- The Council should consider how it will identify and how it will track progress towards becoming a learning organisation

RESOLVED

That the presentation and discussion be noted.

7. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Board heard from the Chair of the recently established CSIB that:

- The Council has accepted the result of the Ofsted inspection of children's social care and shown willingness to address the issues identified. However it was necessary to understand why the issues had arisen and this would act as the basis of diagnosing what needed to be addressed.
- A meeting of CSIB had taken place on 12 June 2017.
- Alan Wood was Independent Chair of this body which would undertake to monitor the Council and its Partners and to evidence whether the arrangements for children in the borough are effective. The approach of CSIB would be that each Partner would outline the issues faced and the proposed plans to address them and also assess if these plans are likely to be effective and if there was capacity to deliver them.
- A 3-stage process would be followed to enable the Council to assess the services it wants to deliver, whether the measures offer capacity to improve, whether the service delivery has the full support of the Council and are appropriately prioritised –
 - Assess evidence and identify causes
 - Observe the service(s) in action and its/their aims and Identify any gaps
 - Stress test the plan at CSIB meetings
- The role of Partners would be to assist and contribute in terms of their roles as an agent of delivery. This would be mirrored by the Chair in his role also.

The Board discussed the report and submission from the Chair of CSIB and noted the following matters:

- The council should recognise that a child-friendly approach should be taken throughout the organisation and not confined to the directorate.
- The Draft Summary of the Inspection Improvement Plan (IIP) appended to the report covered the 'assess and observe' elements of the process.
- In producing the IIP, the Council has been tasked to look deeply into the identified key causes – failure of professional leadership, political and corporate focus on other areas and a culture of false assurance -.
- There was cross-party responsibility for corporate parenting by the Council and therefore all political groups were encouraged to engage in acknowledgement of their responsibilities.
- Reports would also be made to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to Council.
- It was necessary to learn lessons e.g. how should policy influence decision making.
- In order to assess/measure lessons learned, it was necessary to obtain user feedback as well as other type of assessment.

The Board then heard from Officers and noted the following matters:

- It was necessary to be mindful of the impact of the Ofsted outcome/judgement.
- The IIP provides elements of the causes and will test the assumptions that the Council will make.
- The IIP includes the key improvement plan.
- The Ofsted rating includes the Ofsted mandatory processes of the improvement plan.
- The Department for Education will issue directions and will appoint an Improvement Partner who will comment whether the root causes have been identified and assess whether the IIP is likely to deliver.
- There will be two Ofsted improvement visits in August and December 2017 and a visit every three months thereafter.
- The Local Government Association would also provide support.
- The aim was to evidence an improvement journey and to achieve a good rating in a two-year time frame.
- Root causes were – instability around staff structures which distracted from a focus on the ‘front-line’, insufficient and late intervention and inappropriate intervention thresholds, infrastructure issues, lack of investment, organisational culture and lack of compliance.
- A detailed improvement plan would operate by means of a quality assurance framework to ensure outcomes.
- As improvements progress the framework will change to reflect the progress made.
- Progress will be supported by audit evidence.
- Significant changes had already been made around thresholds and initial referrals.
- A current audit indicates that there was improvement due to changes in ways of working.
- The Chief Executive’s role was to ensure that the service was not isolated from other areas of the Council. The learning would be used to deliver improvements in other areas of the Council.
- To be successful, the approach must be Council-wide and Partner-wide.
- All stakeholders must be engaged and have an understanding of the direction of travel.
- There were capacity implications as a result of the CSIB and therefore Human Resources would be involved to ensure an appropriate capacity, priority and resources.

The following actions were agreed:

- There would be a standing item relating to this matter at future BVIB meetings.
- The issues brought to light should not be approached on a party political basis.
- The challenge of schools forums should be factored into the plan.
- CSIB should discuss how to improve communications.
- The engagement of family and schools partnership should be considered/discussed.

- Elected members should consider/explore what types of questioning would be appropriate to safeguard against false assurance, e.g. information from LSCB, LGA support, expertise from other local authorities and request that information be supported by evidence.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be involved in this matter.
- That CSIB, at its monthly, meetings identify the matters it wishes to examine more deeply and afterwards make a report to BVIB.

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the report and the submission of the Improvement Plan to the Department for Education by 20th July 2017 be noted.
2. That the actions recommended arising from the discussion of the report be taken forward.

8. FORWARD PLAN

The Board considered the Forward Plan and highlighted the following matters:

- That a summary/paragraph on risk and how its being mitigated should be included in the plan report.
- That a peer-to-peer review be incorporated into the plan in discussion with LGA

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the forward plan be noted.
2. That the additional elements discussed by the Board be incorporated into the plan.

9. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 8.05 p.m.

Chair, Mayor John Biggs
Tower Hamlets Best Value Improvement Board

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Agenda Item 3.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS - NOTE FROM THE MONITORING OFFICER

This note is for guidance only. For further details please consult the Members' Code of Conduct at Part 5.1 of the Council's Constitution.

Please note that the question of whether a Member has an interest in any matter, and whether or not that interest is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, is for that Member to decide. Advice is available from officers as listed below but they cannot make the decision for the Member. If in doubt as to the nature of an interest it is advisable to seek advice **prior** to attending a meeting.

Interests and Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs)

You have an interest in any business of the authority where that business relates to or is likely to affect any of the persons, bodies or matters listed in section 4.1 (a) of the Code of Conduct; and might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial position of yourself, a member of your family or a person with whom you have a close association, to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward affected.

You must notify the Monitoring Officer in writing of any such interest, for inclusion in the Register of Members' Interests which is available for public inspection and on the Council's Website.

Once you have recorded an interest in the Register, you are not then required to declare that interest at each meeting where the business is discussed, unless the interest is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI).

A DPI is defined in Regulations as a pecuniary interest of any of the descriptions listed at **Appendix A** overleaf. Please note that a Member's DPIs include his/her own relevant interests and also those of his/her spouse or civil partner; or a person with whom the Member is living as husband and wife; or a person with whom the Member is living as if they were civil partners; if the Member is aware that that other person has the interest.

Effect of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest on participation at meetings

Where you have a DPI in any business of the Council you must, unless you have obtained a dispensation from the authority's Monitoring Officer following consideration by the Dispensations Sub-Committee of the Standards Advisory Committee:-

- not seek to improperly influence a decision about that business; and
- not exercise executive functions in relation to that business.

If you are present at a meeting where that business is discussed, you must:-

- Disclose to the meeting the existence and nature of the interest at the start of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent, if later; and
- Leave the room (including any public viewing area) for the duration of consideration and decision on the item and not seek to influence the debate or decision

When declaring a DPI, Members should specify the nature of the interest and the agenda item to which the interest relates. This procedure is designed to assist the public's understanding of the meeting and to enable a full record to be made in the minutes of the meeting.

Where you have a DPI in any business of the authority which is not included in the Member's register of interests and you attend a meeting of the authority at which the business is considered, in addition to disclosing the interest to that meeting, you must also within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the Register.

Further advice

For further advice please contact:-

Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance & Monitoring Officer,
Telephone Number: 020 7364 4800

APPENDIX A: Definition of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

(Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012, Reg 2 and Schedule)

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vacation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by the Member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of the Member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority—</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to the Member's knowledge)—</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where—</p> <p>(a) that body (to the Member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either—</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>

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Best Value improvement Board

TITLE	Author	ITEM NO	Date
Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 – April-Sept 2017 Update	Afazul Hoque Interim Service Manager Strategy, Policy & Performance		11 th September 2017

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the Council's Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 covering the period April-September 2017. The report builds on the June 2017 submission to the Secretary of State and details the continuous progress against the five areas of Communications, Property, Elections, Organisational Culture and Grants and the 26 actions found within the Improvement Plan.
- 1.2. The Directions from the Secretary of State for Department of Communities & Local Government (DCLG) requires the Council to submit quarterly update reports. The second quarterly update report will be submitted on 29th September 2017.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. The Board is asked to:
 1. Consider and comment on the draft update report attached as Appendix 1
 2. Consider and agree any revised milestone timescales in the Improvement Plan attached as Appendix 2.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. The Council as part of its final submission to the Secretary of State for DCLG submitted a Best Value Improvement Plan 17-18 and outlined proposals to set up a Best Value Improvement Board to drive sustainable improvement across the organisation by providing oversight, support and challenge. Following the Secretary of State revoking the previous Directions and the removal of the Commissioners involved in the governance of the Council, the Secretary of State issued new Directions which will be in force until 30th September 2018.
- 3.2. In line with the new Directions the Council has undertaken the following:
 - Submission of quarterly reports on all outstanding actions in the Best Value Action Plan and Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 to the Secretary of State with the first update submitted in June 2017;
 - Set up a new Best Value Improvement Board, chaired by the Mayor, with cross party representation and external representatives to provide suitable challenge to improve all Council activities;

- Developed proposals for an independent review of achievement against the Best Value Action Plan and Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18. This will be undertaken with the LGA in the form of a Corporate Peer Review and is planned for June 2018.
- 3.3. The Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 has five key priority areas comprising 26 strategic actions. These priority areas are a continuance of those found in the Best Value Action Plans arising from the original Secretary of State's Directions. The Plan demonstrates continued implementation where previous activities could not be implemented before the Directions expired as well as continued improvements.
 - 3.4. During the period April-Sept 2017 work has continued to deliver the milestones in the Improvement Plan. Regular updates have been provided to Corporate Leadership Team and all activities have been incorporated within individual Directorate Plans to ensure focus remains on delivery.
 - 3.5. A review has been undertaken on the lessons learnt from the delivery of the UK Parliamentary Election 2017. These will be taken forward for the upcoming local elections in 2018. Following discussions with the Cabinet Office the Council has withdrawn from participating in the Pilot ID Scheme as there was not sufficient time to develop an effective scheme. A project group will meet on a monthly basis to plan for 2018 elections ensuring all milestones set out in the Best Value Improvement Plan are delivered.
 - 3.6. The Council's new Communications Strategy, now widely shared with four major campaigns, launched this quarter. An asset audit (identifying 1,183 marketing sites) has been completed and poster sites and 12 plasma screens are now live in the Council Town Hall, Mulberry Place. An intranet project manager is now in post and specification/project scope is currently under development. The Council's revised core values have been agreed by senior management and communicated to all staff. Conversation groups are also in place to engage staff in upcoming changes.
 - 3.7. The Children's Services Improvement Board has now met three times, and has set a clear forward plan to focus on relevant thematic issues for each meeting. The Improvement Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 19 July 2017. This will be updated monthly, and will feed into the Quarterly Progress Report to the Best Value Improvement Board, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
 - 3.8. Planning consent has been granted for the conversion to residential use for two vacant community buildings that will be transferred to Housing. Temporary community use has also been agreed for a vacant community building by the Mayor.
 - 3.9. The review of the Third Sector Team has been a comprehensive review and is now complete and proposals for consultation have been produced. The review included benchmarking with other Local Authorities, a full options appraisal (exploring savings and efficiencies, incorporating Commissioner, Committee and Senior Management expectations) and liaison with our ICT

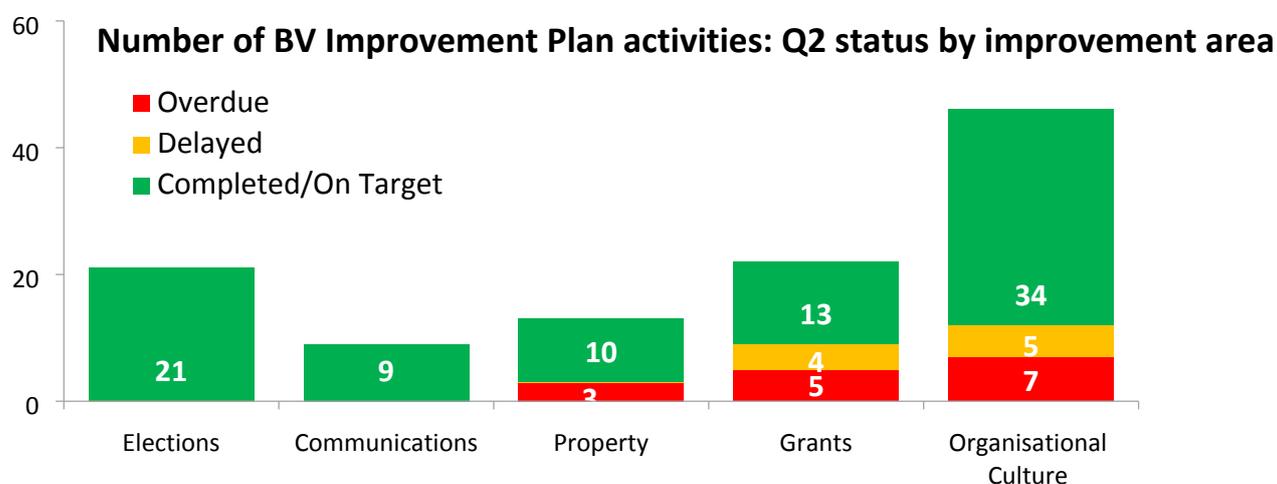
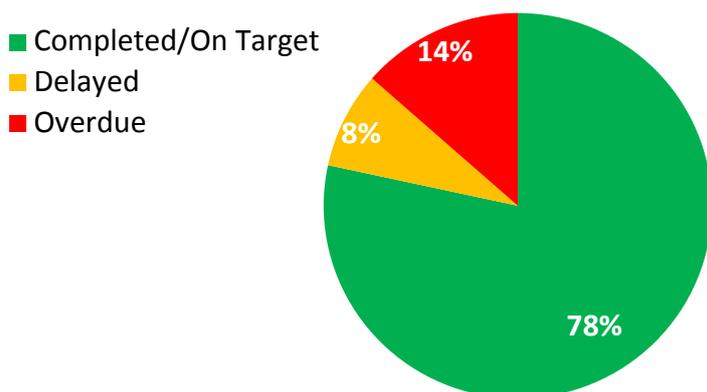
partner to develop an improved, transparent, online Grants system. Commissioning of the Community Cohesion Theme completed for 5 out of the 8 lots that were put out to tender with plans to award the remaining 3 lots in the next few months. Scoping work for development of Grants Policy completed, which will be developed with stakeholders over the next quarter.

4. OVERALL PROGRESS AGAINST BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

4.1. The charts below shows progress against the 115 milestones in the Best Value Improvement Plan. In order to ensure consistency in the reporting of the status of key milestones the following criteria have been applied:

- **On Target** – where the key milestone will be achieved by the deadline
- **Completed** – Where the key milestone has been achieved by the deadline
- **Delayed** – where the key milestone has not yet been completed but will be completed within a month of the original deadline
- **Overdue** - where the key milestone has been delayed by more than a month from the date of the original deadline

BV Improvement Plan activities : Overall Q2 Status



5. **COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 5.1. The Best Value Improvement Plan is a priority for the Council, and requisite resources have been identified within the budget in order to deliver the outcomes. Any additional resources required to deliver any of the activities will need relevant authority before commencing.

6. **LEGAL COMMENTS**

- 6.1. The Council is a best value authority within the meaning of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999. As a best value authority, the Council has an obligation under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness” (the best value duty).
- 6.2. Where the Secretary of State is satisfied that an authority is not meeting its best value duty, the Secretary of State may: (1) direct the authority to take action to bring itself into compliance with that duty; (2) direct that specified functions be carried out by the Secretary of State or a nominee and that the authority follow the Secretary of State’s instructions and provide such assistance as may be required (Local Government Act 1999). In accordance with this power the Secretary of State gave directions to the Council on 17 December 2014, 29 April 2015 and 6 May 2015. Revised directions were also given on 16 January 2017.
- 6.3. The directions are enforceable by the Secretary of State, who may seek an order in the High Court requiring the Council to remedy any breach. Under the current circumstances, it is appropriate for the Council to take steps to comply with the directions and to monitor its compliance with the directions. The report relevantly informs members of progress and appropriately indicates that Cabinet approval will be sought before presenting the required update to the Department of Communities and Local Government.
- 6.4. Although the Directions expired on 31st March 2017 and the specified functions to be carried out by the Commissioners on behalf of the Secretary will return to the authority, it is open to the Secretary of State to issue fresh directions to the Council for it to take specific action which is considered necessary or expedient to secure the Council’s compliance with its best value duty without specifying that specified functions be carried out by the Secretary of State or a nominee.
- 6.5. When taking action in response to the directions, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (the public sector equality duty). Compliance with this duty has been a feature, to the extent relevant, of the Council’s action in response to the directions.

6.6. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

Appendix 1: Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 summary

Appendix 2: Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 delivery plan

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BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN APRIL-SEPT 2017 UPDATE**1 Introduction**

The Council is pleased to provide an update on the progress made in implementing the Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 as required under the Directions of March 2017. The Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 includes 26 strategic actions against the five areas of property, election, organisation culture, grants and communication.

This report notes that in the first six months of this action plan, covering the period between April-Sept 2017, a large number of milestones have been completed and where any are overdue or delayed a revised plan has been developed to ensure delivery. This demonstrates the focused determination of the Council in delivering continuous improvement and provides the Council with momentum as it works to deliver the remaining milestones in the plan over the next six months.

2 Summary of key achievements

A summary of key achievements for this quarter is detailed below:

- Review of UK Parliamentary Government Election delivery completed and lessons learnt will be incorporated for the 2018 elections;
- Monthly project group meetings for planning 2018 elections established with next meeting taking place in September 2018;
- New Communications Strategy now widely shared with four major campaigns launched during Q2. Poster sites and 12 plasma screens now live in Mulberry Place;
- Procurement for the media consumption survey completed and is currently in the field going to a representative group of 900 residents;
- New statutory notice publication scheme established and communicated to staff through the intranet and Managers Briefing;
- Planning consent has been granted for the conversion of two vacant community buildings into housing;
- Comprehensive review of Third Sector Team completed with consultation with staff taking place;
- Commissioning of the Community Cohesion Theme completed for 5 out of the 8 lots that were put out to the market with plans to award the other 3 lots in the next few months;
- Core Values revised and shared with senior managers in July and team talks held with all staff in August;
- Ongoing monitoring of all programme plans linked to MTFS now in place;
- Programme Board and Smarter Together Governance agreed and Boards meeting monthly. Programme plans agreed and progress monitored by Transformation Board;
- The Children's Services Improvement Plan submitted to the Secretary of State in July and Improvement Board meeting on a six weekly basis;

- Clear Up Project report published and submitted to Cabinet in June and Full Council in July 2017. Plans for further updates on outstanding actions and implementing recommendations developed and will be reported.

Best Value Improvement Plan Summary

COMMUNICATIONS: Progress Summary

Communications in Tower Hamlets had a history of being reactive with a heavy reliance on the Council's weekly publication, East End Life. Many of the messages and activities being communicated were determined by services' willingness and ability to pay and there was little use of insight or data to identify appropriate communication channels and support the delivery of effective communications campaigns. Since the Best Value Action Plan was introduced there has been significant progress in reforming the way the Council deals with internal and external publicity management.

Key achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Communications Strategy now widely shared with 4 major campaigns launched this quarter. • Asset audit (identifying 1,183 marketing sites) completed. • Poster sites and 12 plasma screens now live in the Council Town Hall, Mulberry Place. • Intranet project manager now in post and specification/project scope under development. • Statutory notices contract mobilisation is now live and communications sent to staff regarding the new contract and its processes via intranet article and managers' briefing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tower Hamlets Now open rate continues to improve with an average 63% (including an issue at 70%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture change regarding communications: a critical aspect of changing the culture is to work collaboratively with teams to determine delivery milestones related to key programmes so that they can be communicated widely to residents. • The media consumption survey is currently in the field going to a representative group of 900 residents. Analysis of the results will identify gaps in service delivery and will determine areas for improvement. • Progress on intelligent newsletter and new intranet site is continuing.

PROPERTY: Progress Summary

The Council owns, occupies or maintains around 860 non-HRA properties, valued at £1bn, located within the borough. The Council also owns around £800m of HRA properties (the housing element is managed and maintained by Tower Hamlets Homes (THH), the Council's arms-length management organisation) as well as a further £50m of community assets.

Key achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning consent has been granted for conversion to residential use for two vacant community buildings that will be transferred to Tower Hamlets Homes/Homelessness Services. • Temporary community use agreed for a vacant community building by the Mayor (12 months). • Tender process underway for additional specialists' consultancy advice for a complete review of depot provision across the borough. • Former Santander building in Watney Market likely to be used by WorkPath (Council led activities). Business case being considered by Economic Development. • Template for new governance arrangement prepared and awaiting final sign off. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads of terms agreed for leases to 5 of the 8 nursery / playgroup properties within the CB portfolio and have now been issued to tenants - once agreed legal have been instructed to issue draft leases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further meetings with Tower Hamlets Homes regarding the validation of Tenants and Residents' Associations (TRAs) were held to agree the way forward. The current proposal is to grant leases to TRA's at a peppercorn rent subject to certain criteria being met on utilisation sharing of space. • Awaiting conclusion of feasibility work. Raines House is now likely to be the third hub. The Council is now looking to bring forward two smaller premises which will be used as hubs. A formal marketing exercise will be required which will follow completion of any refurbishment works. Further work is required to agree further phases of the hub roll out plan to other existing properties and opportunities that may come forward as part of a section 106 agreement. • Currently awaiting instructions from the client team regarding the scope of the review of leisure facilities across the Council. Work will be undertaken in the next few months to scope the parameters of the review. • Tender process underway for additional specialists' consultancy advice for a complete review of depot provision across the borough. Submissions due by end of August.

ELECTIONS: Progress Summary

The Council has successfully delivered a number of successful elections and referendum since 2015 which include:

- UK Parliamentary Election May 2015
- Election of Executive Mayor June 2015
- Election of Mayor of Tower Hamlets and Greater London Authority elections May 2016
- EU Referendum June 2016
- Whitechapel ward by election December 2016
- UK Parliamentary Election May 2017

Key achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staging area identified for Returning Officer and Accountants use for the elections in 2018. This will ensure visibility of the count area. • Media pack reviewed for the UKPGE 2017. To be reviewed again for the combined elections in 2018. • All count staff to receive mandatory training in April 2018, to include counting of ballot papers. Dedicated training for accountants, supervisors and DRO's to confirm roles and responsibilities. • All accountants to receive Xpress count module training in January 2018. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial meetings have taken place along with UK Parliamentary General Election (UKPGE) 2017 review meetings. The next meeting scheduled for September 2018. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for 2018 elections. • Lessons learnt and areas for improvement from the UKPGE 2017 will be incorporated into poll staff training. Exclusion Zones will be laid out and Police presence at all polling places from 7am - 10.30pm. • Whilst the Returning Officer is in favour of ID at polling stations Tower Hamlets is no longer participating in the Cabinet Office ID Pilot Scheme. • Revised Register of Electors 2018 to be published December 2017. • Awareness raising and publicity for 2018 elections. • Due to the complexity of the combined elections in 2018, mandatory face to face training will take place in April 2018.

GRANTS: Progress Summary

All actions in the original Grants Best Value Action Plan have been completed. Work has been undertaken to review and develop approaches to, and processes for, grant making with the Grants Determination Sub-Committee. The Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee continues to provide cross party members review and challenge to the grants decision making process.

Key achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-going delivery of the Action Plan of the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy. • The Grants Determination Sub-Committee (GDSC) and Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee continue to meet every six weeks. • The system mapping of requirements to improve management reporting, information management and analysis of the new GIFS software has now been completed. • A paper has been drafted outlining the scope of the Council's grants policy. • This work for the Grants Scrutiny and Determination committees to take place in September. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater involvement of voluntary and community sector in commissioning of services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review of the Third Sector Team has been a comprehensive review, including benchmarking with other Local Authorities, a full options appraisal including exploring savings and efficiencies, incorporating Commissioner, Committee and Senior Management expectations and liaison with our ICT partner to develop an improved, transparent, online Grants system. This work has taken longer than anticipated and as a consequence, delivery has been delayed, however the review has now been completed and proposals for consultation have now been produced. • The full implementation of the GIFTS software is now planned for October 2017. • Work with the voluntary sector to develop a voluntary sector compact is currently pending the recruitment of a suitably experienced officer to take this forward. It is hoped that this will happen soon, in which case it is hoped that the original deadline will be able to be met.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE : Progress Summary

Organisational culture is recognised as a key component in moving the Council forward. The aims of the Organisational Culture Plan are to: ensure that the culture of the organisation continues to be one which strives for continuous improvement; engages and invests in staff; ensures relationships between groups of members and between members and officers are professional, respectful, open and honest and rebuild trust in the areas where this has, or is perceived to have, broken down.

The key outcomes we are looking to achieve are:

- Staff engaged with and committed to delivering the Council’s vision and priorities;
- Improved clarity and understanding of formal roles and responsibilities of the Executive, non-Executive and senior officers of the Council in a Mayoral system;
- Effective working relationships between elected members, and between elected members and senior officers, to enable all to work together to achieve the best outcomes for Tower Hamlets and its residents;
- A shared commitment to a set of agreed behaviours and cultural values to underpin formal roles and responsibilities;
- A sustainable approach to maintaining and refreshing this shared commitment.

Key achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised core values agreed by senior management and communicated to all staff. • Work completed with on-going monitoring of the Mid-Term Financial Savings plan is now in place. • The Children's Services Improvement Board has now met three times, and has set a clear forward plan to focus on relevant thematic issues for each meeting. The Improvement Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 19 July 2017. This will be updated monthly, and will feed into the Quarterly Progress Report. The first report was completed in August 2017 and will report to the Best Value Improvement Board, oversee scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in September 2017. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Board and Smarter Together Governance agreed and Boards meeting monthly • Smarter Together Programme plans agreed and progress monitored by Transformation Board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More detailed visioning is required to ensure the end goal and principles for the Smarter Together, which will form the basis of engagement and change management activities with staff. Changes in PMO resources and a review of the governance of the programmes have created a delay in this work. There is a risk that this may slip further if new senior responsible officers (SROs) are not fully engaged in the process. • There are interim arrangements in place for all 4 Divisional Director roles advertised at the beginning of the year. • Investors in people (IIP) assessor completing observations as part of the pre-assessment work. Arrangements for the staff survey to be agreed with the Assessor shortly.

Key achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversation groups are in place to engage staff in upcoming changes. Programme Managers attended Chief Executive's Roadshows to provide an update on the programme/increase interest in joining conversation groups. • A new Communications Officer has been appointed and discussions have been held with Divisional Director of Communications to increase interest and engagement in the programme by better defining and communicating the look and feel of the end goal. • Q1 budget monitoring report is being presented to Cabinet in September 2017 including savings tracker information. • The Corporate Induction now includes a slot on Decision Making / Role of Members / Member Officer Protocol etc. The first induction using the updated protocol was presented in July. • A distinction between: policy, provision/rules, procedure and guidance has now occurred. • A cross referencing with 6 x emerging key themes within a revised HR Strategy has now occurred. • A cross referencing with review of Whistleblowing Policy/Procedure is taking place. 		

Elections					
Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	QUARTER 2 COMMENTS
1. Planning for 2018 Mayoral and local elections					
Key Milestones					
Joint working with partner agencies - First meeting February 2017	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	May-18	On Target	20%	Initial meetings have taken place along with UKPGE 2017 review meetings. Next meeting scheduled for September 2018
Project group to meet monthly from April 2017, fortnightly from December 2017 and more frequently as required immediately prior to elections.	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	May-18	On Target	20%	Meetings will take place monthly from September 2017, fortnightly from January 2018 and weekly from April 2018.
Ensure integrity of the process and good order at polling stations	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	May-18	On Target	20%	Lessons learnt and areas for improvement from the UKPGE 2017 will be incorporated into poll staff training. Exclusion Zones will be laid out and Police presence at all polling places from 7am - 10.30pm
Train 40/50 experienced poll clerks to act as presiding officers in May 2018, to be placed with an experienced PO at a double station.	Louise Stamp	Jun-17	On Target	20%	Initial training to take place in December 2017 with additional mandatory training in April 2018.
Enhanced mandatory training for polling station staff before taking up roles. To include bespoke e. training and dedicated training for PO's with specific scenarios.	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	Feb-18	On Target	20%	Due to the complexity of the combined elections, mandatory face to face training will take place in April 2018.
Continuation of RO instruction to ensure polling staff only speak in English whilst on duty in the polling station	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	May-18	On Target	20%	This was briefed for the UKPGE 2017 and will be reiterated for the combined elections in 2018.
Ballot papers at polling stations - folded to assist with check of ballot paper number before being placed in the ballot box and to ensure secrecy of the ballot.	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	Mar-18	On Target	20%	Supplier to provide quotation. To be included in poll staff training.
Full review of count procedures and paperwork in consultation with EC	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	Jan-18	On Target	20%	Lessons learnt and areas for improvement from the UKPGE 2017 will be incorporated into the 2018 training. Paperwork currently under review.
Count venue pre-booked - East Wintergarden, Canary Wharf	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	Jan-17	Completed	100%	Completed.
Dedicated count training for accountants using Xpress count module	Louise Stamp	May-17	On Target	20%	All accountants to receive Xpress count module training in January 2018.
Enhanced mandatory training for count staff before taking up roles. To include dedicated training on count procedures.	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	Mar-18	On Target	20%	All count staff to received mandatory training in April 2018, to include counting of ballot papers. Dedicated training for accountants, Supervisors and DRO's to confirm roles and responsibilities.
Enhanced security measures including photo ID checks at count; non-Council security staff; non-transferable security wristbands	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	May-18	On Target	20%	Dedicated front of house team to deal with entry checks and security.
Platform area for RO and Accountants to ensure visibility of count area	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	Jan-18	On Target	20%	Staging area identified for RO and Accountants use.

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	QUARTER 2 COMMENTS
Review of Media Pack to ensure up-to-date information provided	Andreas Christophorou/Kelly	Jan-18	On Target	20%	Media pack reviewed for the UKPGE 2017. To be reviewed again for the combined elections in 2018.
2. Participate in pilot ID scheme					
Key Milestones					
Meeting Government Officials to discuss pilot voter identification scheme proposal	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	Feb-17	Completed	100%	Tower Hamlets is no longer participating in the Cabinet Office ID Pilot Scheme.
ID at polling stations - extensive awareness campaign informing electors what ID must be produced at polling stations to enable them to cast their vote (include sanction)	Andreas Christophorou/Kelly Powell	Jan-18	On Target	0%	Will be included as part of the communications plan to be developed for the Election (due to be discussed at planning meetings in September)
Identification of electors who have already provided evidence to support their registration application	Louise Stamp	Jun-17	On Target	0%	Tower Hamlets is no longer participating in the Cabinet Office ID Pilot Scheme.
Liaise with partners for possible provision of Electoral ID Cards/Letters	Will Tuckley/Louise Stamp	Dec-17	On Target	0%	Tower Hamlets is no longer participating in the Cabinet Office ID Pilot Scheme.
Additional information provided on poll cards	Louise Stamp	Feb-18	On Target	0%	Tower Hamlets is no longer participating in the Cabinet Office ID Pilot Scheme.
Additional staff identified for polling stations to act as 'meet and greet' to check that suitable ID is available and assist with queues	Louise Stamp	Jan-18	On Target	0%	Tower Hamlets is no longer participating in the Cabinet Office ID Pilot Scheme.
Include training for PO's and PC's for ID and signature verification checks	Louise Stamp	Feb-18	On Target	0%	Tower Hamlets is no longer participating in the Cabinet Office ID Pilot Scheme.

Communications					
Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	
3. Develop and deliver Communication Strategy for 2017-18					
Key Milestones					
Launch new weekly staff newsletter	Andreas Christophorou	Apr-17	Completed	100%	We have now had 24 issues with an improved open rate average of 63% for last four issues (including one at 70%).
Commission media consumption Survey	Andreas Christophorou	Apr-17	Completed	100%	Procurement completed and supplier appointed. The survey is currently in the field going to a representative group of 900 residents. Initial results are expected by end of August.
Build a range of communication infrastructure	Andreas Christophorou	Jul-17	On Target	75%	New Communications Strategy now widely shared with 4 major campaigns launched this quarter. Asset audit (identifying 1,183 marketing sites) completed, poster sites and 12 plasma screens now live in MP. Progress on intelligent newsletter and new intranet site continuing as
Develop Intelligence Newsletter allowing better targeting of information to local people	Andreas Christophorou	Dec-17	On Target	50%	Scoping paper developed. Advice sought from LBTH procurement.
Launch new Intranet Site	Andreas Christophorou	Mar-18	On Target	15%	Intranet project manager now in post and specification/project scope under development

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	QUARTER 2 COMMENTS
4. Procurement of statutory notices					
Key Milestones					
Invitation to tender	Andreas	Feb-17	Completed	100%	Tender published in February 2017.
Evaluation	Andreas	Feb-17	Completed	100%	Evaluation completed in March 2017.
Contract award	Andreas Christophorou	Apr-17	Completed	100%	Contract award approved in April 17 and notification sent in May 17.
Contract mobilisation	Andreas Christophorou	May-17	Completed	100%	Contract LPG5043B live and communications sent to staff regarding the new contract and its processes via intranet article and managers' briefing.

Property					
Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	
5. Deliver Asset Rental Account Action Plan					
Key Milestones					
Managers' briefing on moves procedure	Richard Chilcott	Apr-17	Completed	100%	
6. Implement Community buildings programme					
Key Milestones					
Agree action plan for validation of TRAs with THH	Richard Chilcott	Apr-17	Overdue	60%	Further meeting with THH held end of June 2017 to agree the way forward following meetings with the Mayor and Cabinet Member for Resources. Current proposal is to grant leases to TRA's at a peppercorn rent subject to certain criteria being met on utilisation sharing of space.
Formally transfer caretaker's facilities to THH	Richard Chilcott	Jun-17	Completed	100%	All properties have now been passed back to THH Housing Management.
Complete marketing and letting of vacant buildings identified for commercial use	Richard Chilcott	Jun-17	On Target	65%	Former Santander building in Watney Market likely to be used by WorkPath (Council led activities). Business case being considered by Economic Development. 6 Watney Market - Possessions need to be removed by former tenant and agents have been appointed to take to market.
Complete and open second community hub	Richard Chilcott	Jun-17	Overdue	30%	Conclusion of feasibility work still awaited. Raines House is now likely to be the third hub. Now looking to bringing forward two smaller premises which will be used as hubs, a formal marketing exercise will be required which will follow completion of any refurbishment works.
Establish implementation plan for third hub and wider roll-out across the borough	Richard Chilcott	Jun-17	Overdue	25%	As above. Work on Granby Hall feasibility continues as initial works were too costly. Further work is required to agree further phases of the hub roll-out plan to other existing properties and opportunities that may come forward as part of a section 106 agreement. Aiming to agree by end of October 2017.
Complete and open third community hub	Richard Chilcott	Mar-18	On Target	5%	Opening of third hub dependent on progress on issues 53 and 54.
Convert vacant community buildings identified for housing use to housing and transfer to THH/Homeless Services	Richard Chilcott	Mar-18	On Target	75%	Planning consent has been granted for both conversions. Temporary community use agreed for 10 Turin Street by Mayor (12 months). Housing Strategy to take forward Bethnal Green Cottage.
7. Strengthen governance arrangements					
Key Milestones					
Review of revised governance arrangements	Richard Chilcott	Sep-17	On Target	95%	Template for new governance arrangement prepared and awaiting final sign off.

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	QUARTER 2 COMMENTS
8. Asset reviews and service delivery plans					
Key Milestones					
Complete review of depot provision across the borough	Richard Chilcott	Sep-17	On Target	40%	Tender process underway for additional specialists consultancy advice. Submissions due by end of August.
Complete review of leisure facilities across the borough	Richard Chilcott	Mar-18	On Target	10%	Instructions are currently awaited from the client team regarding the scope of this item of work. Work will be undertaken in the next quarter to scope the parameters of the review.
9. Complete audit of assets					
Key Milestones					
Complete audit, specifically any additional requests for information or documentation following visits in 2016/17	Richard Chilcott	Jun-17	Completed	100%	Audit complete and also reported to Asset Management Working Group in May 2017.
Complete any regularisation work required (e.g. enter into leases)	Richard Chilcott	Dec-17	On Target	60%	Heads of Terms issued to tenants, once agreed, legal have been instructed to issue draft leases.

Grants					
Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	
10. Complete review of Third Sector Team					
Key Milestones					
Review of Third Sector Team completed	Steve Hill	Mar-17	Completed	100%	The review of the Third Sector Team has been a comprehensive review, including benchmarking with other Local Authorities, a full options appraisal including exploring savings and efficiencies, incorporating Commissioner, Committee and Senior Management expectations and liaison with our ICT partner to develop an improved, transparent, online Grants system. This work has taken longer than anticipated and as a consequence, delivery has been delayed, however the review has now been completed and proposals for consultation have now been produced.
New team structure finalised	Steve Hill	Mar-17	Completed	100%	The team structure was finalised in May 2017.
Staff / Trade Union consultation on new team structure completed	Steve Hill	Apr-17	Overdue	80%	The timetable for consultation has been revised to reflect the time required for the review of the team and future requirements. The documentation and JDs have been produced and consultation has commenced and is due to be concluded in early September.
Assimilation into posts / interviews	Steve Hill	May-17	Overdue	30%	The dates for the Assimilation and Interviews have been revised and are expected to take place in late September.
Full Implementation of new team structure	Steve Hill	Jun-17	Overdue	0%	The full implementation is now planned in October 2017.
11. Implement web based GIFTS software					
Key Milestones					
System mapping of requirements to improve management reporting, information management and analysis	Steve Hill	Feb-17	Completed	100%	The system mapping of requirements to improve management reporting, information management and analysis has been completed. The scope of the ICT work required is substantial and requires upgrading the current ICT system.

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	QUARTER 2 COMMENTS
Development of web-based solution completed	Steve Hill	Apr-17	Overdue	50%	The web-based solution has been developed to take account of the findings from the review and best practice learning from other councils. This relates to workflow, monitoring and reporting which will enable all council grants to be captured. This will significantly enhance the Council's ability to provide comprehensive and accessible information on all grant funding and not just mainstream grants. This wider work is underway and expected to be completed in October.
Full implementation of new web-based system	Steve Hill	Jun-17	Overdue	50%	Full implementation is expected to be completed by November 2017.

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	QUARTER 2 COMMENTS
12. Development of Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee					
Key Milestones					
Grants Scrutiny Committee Induction and work planning	Sharon Godman	Jun-17	Completed	100%	Work planning discussions held with Grant Scrutiny Sub-Committee, senior cabinet members and senior officers.
Develop Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee Work programme 2017-18	Sharon Godman	Jul-17	Completed	100%	Draft work programme developed and reported to the Overview and Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee in September.
Strengthen resident and local stakeholders involvement in Committee's Work programme	Sharon Godman	Aug-17	On Target	70%	Proposals agreed to strengthen engagement through a range of methods including participation at meetings, press releases and use of the council website and social media.
13. Complete commissioning of Community Cohesion Theme					
Key Milestones					
Tender advert	Steve Hill / Emily	Mar-Apr 17	Completed	100%	The tender went out to advert in March 2017.
Tender evaluation	Steve Hill / Emily	May-17	On Target	80%	Interviews have been completed
Contract award	Steve Hill / Emily Fieran-Reed	Jun-17	Delayed	63%	5 of the 8 lots have been awarded and are due to go live from 1 Sept 2017. In the remaining 3 lots, the quality was not sufficient to award. It is proposed that this be addressed by inviting some of the higher scoring bidders from other lots to deliver the remaining contracts. It may not be possible to do this by 1 September but it is hoped that any delay will be short.
Contract mobilisation	Steve Hill / Emily Fieran-Reed	Aug-17	Delayed	63%	Contract mobilisation for the 5 lots where an award has been made is on track and taking place during August. Contract mobilisation for the remaining 3 lots may be slightly delayed due to the time to set these up.
14. Review and improve working of Grants Determination Sub-Committee					
Key Milestones					
6 - month review of the Grants determination Sub-Committee	Matthew Mannion / Steve Hill	Sep-17	Delayed	10%	This is being linked to the wider review of Grants Procedures at the Council. It is considered sensible to wait the outcome of the wider review before finalising a specific review of the Sub-Committee.
Forward plan implemented to set out future work	Matthew Mannion / Steve Hill	On-going	Completed	100%	Forward Plan developed for Committee which will be reviewed on an on-going basis.
Grants Determination Sub-Committee away-day	Matthew Mannion / Steve Hill	Sep-17	Delayed	0%	This will take place at the appropriate time during or following the wider grants procedures review being undertaken.
Grants Determination Sub-Committee Members development seminars	Matthew Mannion / Steve Hill	On-going	On Target	0%	This is being fed into the wider review of the Member Development Programme currently being undertaken and will also be considered as part of the Member Induction process after the elections in 2018.
15. Strengthen grants management and work strategically with voluntary and community sector					
Key Milestones					
Complete audit of grants monitoring	Minesh Jani	Oct-17	On Target	10%	Audit is currently in place and is scheduled to report by end of October.
Review and update the Council's grants policy, working closely with services	Sharon Godman	Mar-18	On Target	20%	A paper has been drafted outlining the scope of this work for the Grants Scrutiny and Determination committees in September.
Work with the voluntary sector to develop a voluntary sector compact	Sharon Godman	Mar-18	On Target	10%	This work is currently pending the recruitment of a suitably experienced officer to take this forward. It is hoped that this will happen soon, in which case it is hoped that the original deadline will be able to be met.

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	QUARTER 2 COMMENTS
Undertake comprehensive review of contracts and grants to inform the development of the Council's new approach to commissioning	Zena Cooke	Mar-18	On Target	10%	A review of grants register has been undertaken for 17-18 and further work is being undertaken to review contracts information. This piece of work will inform the future grants policy which is being led by the Strategy, Policy and Performance Team.

Organisational Culture

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	
16. Permanent recruitment to the post of Corporate Director Governance					
Key Milestones					
Advert	Will Tuckley	Jan-17	Completed	100%	Completed
Long-list Interviews	Will Tuckley	Feb-17	Completed	100%	Completed
Short-list Interviews	Will Tuckley	Mar-17	Completed	100%	Completed
Appointment confirmed	Will Tuckley	Apr-17	Completed	100%	Corporate Director started with the Council in July 2017.
17. Complete review of Constitution					
Key Milestones					
Constitutional Working Group review parts 5,6 and 7	Asmat Hussain	Apr-17	Overdue	80%	Further reviews of the Constitution is being undertaken. Report taken to Council on 19/7 with regards to revision to Constitutional on Part 3.3, 4.2,4.3,4.5,4.6 ,5.7 and 5.2. Report due to General Purpose Committee in October to consider further reports on code of conduct, member officer protocol and officer procedure rules.
Amendments to General Purpose Committee	Asmat Hussain	Apr-17	Overdue	80%	
Full Council approval of parts 4 to 7	Asmat Hussain	May-17	Overdue	80%	
18. Recruitment of seniors officers to complete new corporate structure					
Key Milestones					
Advert	Will Tuckley	Jan-17	Completed	100%	Completed
Short-listing	Will Tuckley	Feb-17	Completed	100%	Completed
Interviews	Heather Daley	Mar-Apr 17	On target	85%	The following senior posts are covered on an interim basis: - CD Place (internal acting up arrangements in place for 12 months to July 2018 - review to take place at that time) - DD Adult Social Care - DD Children's Social Care (substantive post holder on outward secondment) - the two DD roles in CS have closed and longlisting is on going. Shortlisting will take place in September and final interviews in October. The 2 DD roles in HAC are live and will close in September . Final interviews for the DD Growth and Economic Development position took place on 8th August.
19. Implement actions from Clear Up Project					
Key Milestones					
Publish report	Asmat Hussain	Apr-17	Completed	100%	Clear Up project report published as part of the June 2017 cabinet meeting papers.
Report and recommendations to Full Council	Asmat Hussain	Jun-17	Completed	100%	Report went to Full Council on 19/7. Outstanding action reports and monitoring of the Project will be undertaken by CLT and OSC and SAC at regular intervals throughout the year and are pre-diarsed.
Implement recommendations from Clear Up Project	Asmat Hussain	July 17 onwards	On Target	20%	As per above updates will be reported to Corporate Leadership Team, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Standing Advisory Committee.
Review progress against implementation	Asmat Hussain	Quarterly	On Target	0%	As per above.

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	QUARTER 2 COMMENTS
Review Whistleblowing arrangements and implement new scheme	Heather Daley	May-17	Delayed	80%	Corporate Leadership Team agreed the GT report and the follow up work, implementation and actual review of the policy is ongoing taken by Divisional Director of HR the Corporate Director Governance . Report to go to GPC in October.

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	QUARTER 2 COMMENTS
20. Review employment policies and practices and implement them					
Key Milestones					
Project Group formed and policies prioritised for review	Heather Daley	Jan-17	Completed	100%	A project group involving managers, trade unions and HR business Partners have identified four policies for review which could include disciplinary, managing absence, resolution (grievance and harassment) and performance and disciplinary.
Workshops with key stakeholders held to identify issues	Heather Daley	Feb-17	Completed	100%	Project group has held 6 workshops to review policies.
First draft proposals developed on good practice and procedural amendments	Heather Daley	Mar-17	Completed	100%	Engagement with trade unions informally has occurred.
Development of detailed changes and stakeholder engagement	Heather Daley	Apr-17	Delayed	80%	A distinction between: policy, provision/rules, procedure and guidance has now occurred. A cross referencing with 6 x emerging key themes within a revised HR Strategy has now occurred.
Implement changes to practice through (a) BP training (b) management and staff training	Heather Daley	(a) 01/09/2017	Overdue	10%	Additional interim resource within HR for ER casework management engaged and now commenced (a) BP training likely by end of October.
21. Develop and implement refreshed employee values					
Key Milestones					
Staff survey completed	Heather Daley	Jan-17	Completed	100%	50% response rate from all staff. The results have been analysed and disseminated to management and staff with discussions taking place at team meetings.
Focus Groups	Heather Daley	Feb-17	Completed	100%	4 focus group held with staff to explore themes coming out of staff survey to develop core values and further engagement undertaken at the staff conference attended by 750 staff.
Revised values developed and: (a) communicated (b) staff engaged via their managers	Heather Daley	Mar-Apr 17 (a) August (b) By October	Delayed	90%	(a) Revised core values agreed by CLT and MAB - communicated to CLT and SMF in July - communicated by email August (b) All managers asked to use engagement tool to engage with Staff and summarise actions emerging by end of September.
22. Deliver Year 1 of Smarter Together Programme					
Key Milestones					
Resource programme and project roles	Heather Daley	May-17	Completed	100%	Programme and Project Managers appointed.
Programme plans mapped to MTFS to ensure benefits are realised	Neville Murton	Jun-17	On Target		Work completed with on-going monitoring in place.
Change managed and staff engagement maintained and measured via staff pulse surveys	Heather Daley	Jan-18	On Target	45%	Conversation groups are in place to engage staff in upcoming changes. Programme Managers attended CE Roadshows to provide an update on the programme/increase interest in joining conversation groups. New Communications Officer appointed and discussions held with DD Communications to increase interest and engagement in the programme by better defining and communicating the look and feel of the end goal.
Year 1 MTFS benefits realised via Programme	Neville Murton	Mar-18	On Target	50%	Q1 budget monitoring report is being presented to Cabinet in September 2017 including savings tracker information.
Smarter Together Programme plans delivered	Neville Murton	Mar-18	On Target	50%	Programme Board and Smarter Together Governance agreed and Boards meeting monthly. Programme plans agreed and progress monitored by Transformation Board.

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	QUARTER 2 COMMENTS
23. Ensure Council more outward focussed and review feedback from external stakeholders					
Key Milestones					
Ofsted Inspection - Review recommendations and develop improvement action plan	Debbie Jones	Apr-17	Completed	100%	The Children's Services Improvement Board has now met three times, and has set a clear forward plan to focus on relevant thematic issues for each meeting. The Improvement Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 19 July 2017. This will be updated monthly, and will feed into the Quarterly Progress Report. The first report was completed in August 2017 and will report to the Best Value Improvement Board, oversee Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in September 2017.
Review Annual Residents Survey 2017	Sharon Godman	May-17	Completed	100%	The results have been analysed and communicated to staff and residents. Areas of improvement have been identified including suggestions for the Best Value Improvement Board to consider.
Establish regular meetings of Tower Hamlets Partnership	Sharon Godman	Apr-17	Completed	100%	The partnership continues to meet on a regular basis. A workplan has been developed to refresh the committee plan for 2018 setting out a clear vision and priorities for the borough which all parties are signed up to.
Investors in People Gold Accreditation	Heather Daley	Dec-17	On Target	50%	IIP Assessor completing observations as part of the pre-assessment work. Arrangements for the staff survey to be agreed with the Assessor shortly.
ADASS Peer Review	Denise Radley	Apr-17	Completed	100%	The ADASS peer review on outcome based commissioning is now complete and feedback has been shared and discussed with all staff, partners and residents who participated. The review identified considerable positive practice and progress and the learning and issues for consideration have been taken forward as part of the continuous improvement approach within the directorate.
Undertake a programme of improvement work with LGA	Sharon Godman	Apr 17- Mar 18	On Target	40%	A range of work has been agreed with LGA including a corporate peer challenge in 2018, member development, best practice and staff development.
24. Complete phase 2 of Officer Schemes of Delegation					
Key Milestones					
Report to Council on Constitutional changes including in respect of revisions proposed to Parts 3.7 and 3.8 of the Constitution and which relate to Limitations and Delegated Decision Making – General Principles respectively; and on Directorate Scheme of Management	Graham White	Jun-17	Overdue	20%	New Monitoring Officer reviewing approach to this piece of work and revised implementation date of November 2017 is proposed.
Circulate revised proposed Officer Scheme of Delegations to Corporate and Divisional Directors	Asmat Hussain	Jul-17	Overdue	0%	As per above
Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer sign off on respective Officer Scheme of Delegations for Directorates	Asmat Hussain	Sep-17	Overdue	0%	As per above
Report to Cabinet on the final Officer Scheme of Delegations	Asmat Hussain	Nov-17	On Target	0%	As per above
Report to General Purposes on the final Officer Scheme of Delegations	Asmat Hussain	Nov-17	On Target	0%	As per above

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	QUARTER 2 COMMENTS
Report to Council on the final Officer Scheme of Delegations	Asmat Hussain	Nov-17	On Target	0%	As per above
25. Review and implement Member/Officer Development work programme					
Key Milestones					
Review and update Planning Code of Conduct	Asmat Hussain	Apr-17	Completed	100%	
Review and Update Member /officer Protocol	Asmat Hussain	May-17	Delayed	50%	
Corporate Induction to include session on Member and Officer Protocol	Asmat Hussain	Jun-17	On Target	70%	The Corporate Induction now includes a slot on Decision Making / Role of Members / Member Officer Protocol etc. The first induction using the updated protocol was presented in July
Develop and agree Member to Member protocol	Asmat Hussain	May-17	Delayed	50%	Draft protocol developed and will be consulted with a range of stakeholders.
26. Declarations of Interest - Members & Officers					
Audit of 2016-17 Staff Declarations of Interest & follow up in six months	Minesh Jani	Apr 17 & Oct 17	Completed	100%	Audit is complete and findings from this work will be reported to the Audit Committee.
Follow up on audit of management and control of staff hospitality and gifts	Minesh Jani	May-17	Completed	100%	This audit was completed and reported to the Corporate Leadership Team and Audit Committee in June 2017.
Annual Officers Declaration of Interest 17-18	Heather Daley	Jun-17	On Target	80%	This is being completed as part of the Personal Development Process for all staff.
Audit of 2017-18 Staff Declarations of Interest	Minesh Jani	Dec-17	On Target	5%	This has been scheduled into the Annual Audit Plan for 2017-18 and will be completed by December 2017.
Annual Members Declaration of Interest	Asmat Hussain	Dec-17	On Target	0%	This will be undertaken in December 2017.

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Agenda Item 6.

Best Value Improvement Board

TITLE	Author	ITEM NO	Date
Corporate Improvement Journey	Afazul Hoque, Interim Service Manager Strategy, Policy & Performance		11 th September 2017

1. Summary

- 1.1 At the first meeting of the Tower Hamlets Best Value Improvement Board it was agreed that a report be developed detailing the Council's improvement journey to date and plans for on-going improvement to achieve its aim of becoming an 'excellent modern council'. This report also provides new improvement areas for consideration by the Board based on improvement work taking place across the organisation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Best Value Improvement Board is asked to:
- I. Note the Council's improvement journey and comment on the Improvement Framework as set out in paragraph 3.11;
 - II. Consider new improvement areas for consideration by the Board as set out in paragraph 3.13.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

Introduction

- 3.1 Being subject to Government Direction from 2014-17 was a challenging experience for the Council. However, today, the Council is a different organisation to the one that existed three years ago. It has changed to one that is outward looking, open to constructive challenge and focused on learning and improvement. There are many activities that have helped and that will continue to help shape this journey including:

- Delivery of 205 improvement actions across procurement, grants, elections, communications, property and organisational culture which were outlined in the Council's original Best Value Action Plans;
- Establishment of a new senior leadership team;
- Development of a medium term financial strategy supported by the Smarter Together transformation programme designed to transform services and the way the Council works;
- Developing a new performance management culture;
- Reconstituting the Tower Hamlets Local Strategic Partnership;
- Engaging the services of the Local Government Association to provide ongoing external challenge to our improvement journey;
- An improvement infrastructure with a clear plan and focus on driving the Council to excellence;

- A staff and leadership development programme to provide an effective workforce with the required skills;
- Review of the Council's governance including the Constitution with a focus on transparency and community engagement.

3.2 It is a continuing journey and the Council is not complacent about how tough it has been or will be in the future to deliver and sustain the continuous improvement that remains necessary. There exist ongoing internal, local and national challenges. This paper highlights those challenges and provides an overview of the Best Value improvement journey to date. It then suggests a number of further organisational improvement actions for the Best Value Improvement Board to oversee.

Context

3.3 The shared vision for the borough as set out in the Community Plan is to: *'Improve the lives of all those living and working in the borough'*. The Council's Strategic Plan supports the delivery of this vision and focuses on 3 key priorities and 10 outcomes:

Priority 1: Creating opportunity by supporting aspiration and tackling poverty

- A dynamic local economy, with high levels of growth that is shared by residents
- Residents in good quality, well-paid jobs
- Children get the best start in life and young people realise their potential
- People are healthy and independent for longer
- Gaps in inequality have reduced and diversity is embraced

Priority 2: Creating and maintaining a vibrant and successful place

- An improved local environment
- People feel safe and places have less crime and anti-social behaviour
- Better quality homes for all
- Communities are engaged, resilient and cohesive

Priority 3: Working smarter together as one team with our partners and community

- An enabling and efficient Council

Key challenges

3.4 There are a number of challenges that face the Council in delivering this vision:

- i) Demographics: The borough's population reached 304,900 in June 2016 and has doubled in the past thirty years, making Tower Hamlets the fastest growing local authority area in the UK. Migration and regeneration has driven the majority of population growth in the borough which has also led to a widening of inequality.
- ii) Budgetary pressure and demand: The demands of a growing population are compounded by the budgetary pressures which have resulted in the Council having to make £138m savings since 2010 and created the need to save an estimated £58m over the next three years from its annual budget. The Council has developed a medium term financial strategy supported by the Smarter

Together Transformation Programme to find innovative, sustainable solutions to reduce demand, respond to local needs and to work with the community to design and deliver services.

- iii) National policy changes: The Queen’s speech in June set out some key bills relating to local government such as the Draft Tenants’ Fees Bill, Draft Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill as well as consultations on social care, housing and mental health. The key issue is how realistically the government’s domestic agenda can be implemented given the time and resources stretched to deal with Brexit which will also impact local government with many EU nationals employed in social care services for example and people living and working in the borough.

Tower Hamlets Improvement Journey

- 3.5 Following an independent inspection in April 2014 the Council was placed under Best Value Directions by the Secretary of State for Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in December 2014. The Directions included the appointment of three Commissioners with decision making powers in the areas of Grants, Procurement, Property, Election and Communication. The Council developed a Best Value Strategy and action plans with 205 activities to deliver improvements across these areas. This, alongside effective engagement with the Commissioners and DCLG, led to the transitional return of power to the Council with full control being given back and removal of Directions and Commissioners confirmed in March 2017. The table below sets out some of the achievements against the Best Value areas during the period of the original Directions:

Best Value area	Achievements
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered a new quarterly magazine ‘Our East End’; • Annual Communications Strategy detailing delivery plans and budget; • Implementation of a campaigns model to support a range of high level projects; including the Mela and UK Parliamentary Election; • Establishment of the Statutory Notices publication scheme.
Elections	<p>Delivered a number of successful elections and the EU referendum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Parliamentary Election May 2015; • Tower Hamlets Mayoral Election June 2015; • Election of Mayor of London and Greater London Authority elections May 2016; • EU Referendum June 2016; • Whitechapel ward by-election December 2016; • UK Parliamentary Election May 2017.
Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed and implemented a new Community Benefit Rent Reduction scheme for organisations based in Council buildings; • Implemented a Community Hub model with investment to create a range of accessible work and community spaces across the borough; • Property audits completed on a range of Council assets; • Identified and transferred vacant council buildings to Housing Management to progress development to residential use; • Refreshed governance arrangements on asset management to strengthen transparency.
Organisational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Series of engagement events completed over 6 months to develop a new set of refreshed core values with staff and members; • Weekly staff bulletin and regular Chief Executive/Corporate Leadership Team Roadshows to engage with staff in the improvement journey and transformation; • New corporate senior management structure completed and majority of posts

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recruited; Whistleblowing related activities completed through Clear Up Project to address any remaining issues; Independent review of whistleblowing arrangements and a comparison to best practice completed; and a proposed revised Whistleblowing policy and procedure is being drafted Governance structure refreshed with review of Council Constitution; Re-constituted Tower Hamlets Local Strategic Partnership with plans to develop a new Community Plan for 2018.
Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision making and scrutiny of grants established with the Cabinet Grants Determination Sub Committee and Grants Scrutiny Sub Committee; Delivery of the Mainstream Grants Programme 2015 with independent evaluation work completed; Development of a comprehensive Grants Register reviewed annually to ensure a co-ordinated approach to grant management; Three year Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy adopted with a three year action plan, detailing how the Council will work with and support the sector.
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established a clear category management strategy to ensure value for money (VFM) for all categories of spend, to reduce costs and oversupply; Central contracts register linked to contract award implemented to capture all contracts above £25,000 including all procurement waivers; Supply Chain Ethical Code of Conduct developed and approved to strengthen adherence to ethical standards by suppliers delivering public services on behalf of the council; Improved Finance and Procurement controls introduced and implemented to increase compliance with, and transparency of, spend across the organization; New e-sourcing system rolled out which requires all procurement opportunities to be tendered through a single e-tendering system that is integrated with the Council's financial systems; Social Value Act action plan developed for implementation.

3.6 In March 2017 the Secretary of State (SoS) issued new Directions which will be in force until 30th September 2018. These require the Council to:

- Submit quarterly reports on all outstanding actions in the Best Value Action Plan and Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 to the SoS. The first report was sent in June 2017;
- Set up a new Best Value Improvement Board. This met in April 2017 and is chaired by the Mayor, with cross party representation and external representatives to provide challenge to improve all Council activities;
- Set up an independent review of achievement against the Best Value Action Plans and Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 to be submitted to the SoS by 1st August 2018.

Children's Services

3.7 An Ofsted inspection undertaken in January and February 2017 rated our services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the local safeguarding children board inadequate overall with some features requiring improvement. The report made 15 recommendations and highlighted poor frontline practice and ineffective, complacent and sometimes resistant management practices which enabled non-compliance with basic standards (including legal requirements) and in some cases left children at risk of harm. The report also highlighted the need for stronger leadership, management and

governance to ensure there is robust performance management and scrutiny of children's social care.

- 3.8 In consultation with the Department of Education (DfE) a Children's Services Improvement Board led by an Independent Chair has been established and an Improvement Plan has been submitted to DfE in July 2017. The Board ensures that there is clear leadership of the improvement journey at corporate, political and partnership levels. The Board's key focus has been on understanding why this happened in Tower Hamlets and how to put this right through the development, implementation and monitoring of the Improvement Plan. An Operational Group has also been set up to support the work of the Board and is chaired by the Corporate Director of Children's Services. The Council is working with its DfE appointed Practice Improvement Partners from Lincolnshire and Islington councils, to ensure that it learns from best practice in councils that have achieved a 'good' standard in the Ofsted single inspection framework. Ofsted will be carrying out quarterly monitoring visits to ensure that its recommendations are being robustly addressed. The first of these monitoring visits took place at the end of August 2017.
- 3.9 The Children's Service Improvement Board will continue to focus on the themes identified in the Ofsted report looking at progress made and providing support and challenge on areas of on-going work. Quarterly progress updates will be provided to the Best Value Improvement Board and the Council's Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Adults' Services

- 3.10 The Council has set up an internal time limited Adults Improvement Board to drive up standards in relation to performance and practice in adult social care to improve outcomes for vulnerable adults in the borough. There are four broad areas of focus:
- Practice – improving safeguarding practice will be a key feature;
 - Culture – adopting a strengths-based approach with a focus on prevention and demand management;
 - Capacity planning – a key strand of work will be around our workforce and its development;
 - Performance – which will include a focus on performance against the key outcomes identified in the Directorate Plan, and associated measures and data.

With support from an LGA Improvement Adviser, Dr Adi Cooper, the Adults Improvement Board has utilised the ADASS Risk Toolkit to assess risk and inform the prioritisation of improvement activity. The Adults Improvement Board has developed plans to address priorities for action to ensure consistent and effective practice results in improved outcomes for vulnerable adults in the borough. This includes improving: practice, practice governance, safeguarding, workforce stability and planning, skills, quality and performance management. This Board will report on the progress against work streams at a future meeting of the Best Value Improvement Board.

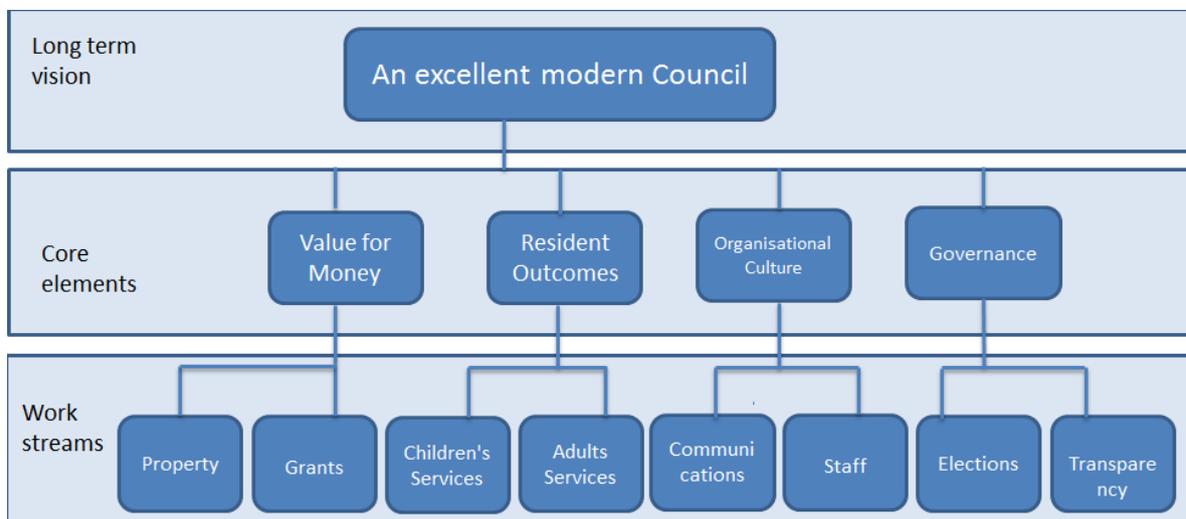
Tower Hamlets Improvement Framework

- 3.11 The Tower Hamlets Improvement Framework sets out the core elements and work streams that will develop the Council into an 'excellent modern council' which is:
- delivering improved outcomes for local people;

- providing value for money;
- embracing modern technology and innovations;
- working effectively with all stakeholders including staff, local residents and partners from all sectors;
- externally recognised.

The diagram below details the Council's long term vision; core areas of focus and a range of supporting work streams that are taking place across the organisation to develop an 'excellent modern council'. These work streams are supported by the following groups and boards:

- Best Value Improvement Board
- Children's Services Improvement Board
- Adults' Improvement Board
- Cabinet
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Performance Improvement Board



- 3.12 Given the range of work taking place across the organisation the Council will share the learning and communicate this to local people and its staff and partners. It will co-ordinate improvement activities to reduce duplication and ensure learning is embraced from best practice. The Council will also be undertaking a Corporate Peer Challenge with the Local Government Association in 2018 to help understand progress made and areas for further development.

New Improvement areas for consideration by the Board

- 3.13 With the cross party and external representation the Best Value Improvement Board is the right forum to add value and oversee key improvement activities across the Council. As part of the Council's refreshed Performance Management and Accountability Framework a performance digest was produced for 2016-17 which focused on data from a range of sources including budget, risks, audit, customer insight and strategic measures. The report identifies a range of areas where improvements needs to be made and how the existing infrastructure is taking forward these pieces of work. The table below recommends 2 areas for review by the Best Value Improvement Board which are cross cutting focusing on delivery to local people and development of the organisation where there is limited oversight and the Board can add value without duplicating existing work streams:

Issue	Rationale
<p>Customer services</p>	<p>Resident opinion remains fairly negative on the issue of Council responsiveness. In the Annual Residents Survey 47% felt the Council was 'difficult to get through to on the phone'. This view was constant across different population groups though those who made contact over the last 12 months by phone were more likely to agree than those who had not made contact (57% v 37%).</p> <p>However, the percentage who felt that the Council 'responds quickly when asked for help' rose by 7 points up to 62 per cent. Agreement with the statement 'the Council doesn't do enough for people like me' fell by 8 points to 41 per cent. Despite this improvement, this remains one of the most negatively rated aspects of the Council's image.</p> <p>Some of these issues will be addressed through the Customer Access Transformation Programme which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a better, fit for purpose website - where residents can pay their bills, get their problems resolved and find out about Council services - that is so convenient and easy to use it will become most customers preferred form of contact; • Make sure that if customers need to phone the Council it will be easy to get through to the right person to help them; • Develop our Idea stores so there is the very best face to face service available to every resident in their local area which gives them access to the right service at the right time. <p>As part of this programme a customer service and digital outcomes framework is being developed which could be an area of focus for the Board to understand and contribute to the work the Council will undertake to achieve the outcomes in the framework and the key indicators to measure its success.</p>
<p>Organisational culture</p>	<p>Organisational culture has been at the core of the Council's improvement journey at the same time recognising this is a long-term piece of work which will take time to embed in practice. The Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 contains a range of activities that supports this work to enable the Council to become more outward facing organisation with a skilled workforce, a transparent governance system, a strong leadership team with a corporate one council approach to delivering services which provide value for money and improve outcomes for local people.</p> <p>The Council's Core Values have been refreshed and need now to be embedded in the organisation by Members and Officers. Core values support the vision and shape the culture. They are the essence of the organisation's identity – its principles and beliefs. Establishing and living by strong core values has many advantages including educating stakeholders about what is important to the organisation and helping to establish its identity.</p> <p>The Council's employment/HR policies and procedures - including changes where needed to the Constitution, and Scheme of Delegation - are also now the subject of focus and review. Ensuring these changes occur swiftly; and that the changes made empower and enable the Head of Paid Service and Officers of the Council to be responsible for employment matters, other than where Member involvement is required statutorily are an important, and necessary cultural shift.</p> <p>Achievement of Investors In People standards is one possible indicator of a positive organisational culture. However, establishing, measuring and reporting on other key indicators of cultural change within the organisation</p>

	are important and is an area where the Board can add value to this area of work.
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- 3.14 Subject to the discussion and agreement of the Board these items will be scheduled into future meeting including detailing where input from the Board will add value.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 This report details the Council’s improvement journey to date and also set out further improvement framework for the Boards consideration.
- 4.2 This paper proposes recommendations which if implemented will create a better, fit for purpose website for residents, easier access to services and provide face to face services through further development of our Idea stores. Some of the cost of these improvements would be met from the transformation reserve. There may be future on-going costs as a result of the improvement which will require further approvals.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Council is a best value authority within the meaning of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999. As a best value authority, the Council has an obligation under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness” (the best value duty).
- 5.2 Where the Secretary of State is satisfied that an authority is not meeting its best value duty, the Secretary of State may: (1) direct the authority to take action to bring itself into compliance with that duty; (2) direct that specified functions be carried out by the Secretary of State or a nominee and that the authority follow the Secretary of State’s instructions and provide such assistance as may be required (Local Government Act 1999). In accordance with this power the Secretary of State previously gave directions to the Council on 17 December 2014, 29 April 2015 and 6 May 2015. Revised directions were also given on 16 January 2017.
- 5.3 Although those Directions have now been revoked and the specified functions which were carried out by the Commissioners on behalf of the Secretary have been returned to the authority, the Secretary of State issued fresh directions on 28th March 2017 to the Council for it to take specific action which were considered necessary or expedient to secure the Council’s compliance with its best value duty without specifying that specified functions be carried out by the Secretary of State or a nominee.
- 5.4 The new directions are enforceable by the Secretary of State, who may seek an order in the High Court requiring the Council to remedy any breach. This report whilst detailing the Council’s improvement journey to date, also sets out a further improvement framework for the Board’s consideration which are considered to be necessary or expedient to secure

the Council's continued compliance with its best value duty.

- 5.5 When taking action in response to the directions, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (the public sector equality duty). Compliance with this duty has been a feature, to the extent relevant, of the Council's action in response to the directions.

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Best Value Improvement Board

TITLE	AUTHOR	ITEM NO	Meeting Date
LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Proposal	Afazul Hoque, Interim Service Manager Strategy, Policy & Performance		11th September 2017

1. INTRODUCTION/SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Secretary of State wrote to the Council in March 2017 stating that he had revoked the Directions issued in December 2014 and removed the Commissioners that were involved in the governance of the Council. The Secretary of State also issued new Directions one of which required the Council to set up a new Best Value Improvement Board which includes external representation by the Local Government Association (LGA) to provide suitable challenge to improve all Council activity.
- 1.2 As the Council builds momentum in delivering on its Best Value action plan an opportunity has arisen to drive further improvement across the organisation in the form of a Peer Challenge.
- 1.3 This report outlines the purpose of and the process involved in undertaking a Peer Challenge by the LGA. It also sets out a provisional date for the review – June 2018.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 MAB/ Best Value Improvement Board is asked to:
 - Provide steer in terms of the timing and the process of the Peer Challenge;
 - Comment on prioritising upto two additional areas of focus from the best value areas detailed in paragraph 3.11.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Secretary of State wrote to the Council in March 2017 stating that he had revoked the Directions issued in December 2014 and removed the Commissioners that were involved in the governance of the Council. The Secretary of State also issued new Directions one of which required the Council to set up a new Best Value Improvement Board (BVIB).
- 3.2 The new BVIB met for the first time on 14th June 2017. The Board meets quarterly, in public and membership includes Cabinet Members,

opposition group leaders, and external representations by the LGA to provide suitable challenge to improve all Council activity.

- 3.3 In addition to supporting the Best Value work the LGA has been working with the Council on other programmes including Members Peer support as well as informing the Council's work on developing a successful Children's service.
- 3.4 As the Council builds momentum in delivering on its Best Value action plan an opportunity has arisen to drive further improvement across the Council in the form of a Peer Challenge.
- 3.5 Peer challenge is a tried, tested and trusted tool to support improvement. An independent evaluation of the current Corporate Peer Challenge programme, 'Rising to the challenge'¹ (February 2017) concluded that peer challenge is an effective tool for improvement, and has a positive impact for participating Councils and the sector as a whole.
- 3.6 The LGA has been conducting Corporate Peer Challenges across councils since 2011. The LGA has delivered over 700 peer challenge reviews including the London Boroughs of Lewisham, Hackney, Redbridge and Southwark. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has been clear that they wish to see all councils taking up the LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge once every 4-5 years.
- 3.7 The Peer Challenges are co-ordinated by LGA officers, with peer teams comprising members and officers of local authorities and, where required, additional expertise from private and third sectors, and central government. They are provided free of charge to LGA members, with the only cost to the Council being office accommodation and daytime refreshment costs during the on-site visit.
- 3.8 Key principles related to Peer Challenges are:
 - Peer challenge is not an inspection, it is a tool for improvement – an external, independent, 'critical friend' review.
 - Peer challenge is undertaken at a time which is most appropriate for the council and focuses on what is of most importance to a council.
 - The process is designed to be proportionate – minimising the burden, focusing on making appropriate preparation and maximising the benefits.

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/rising-challenge-independent-evaluation-lgas-corporate-peer-challenge-programme>

What does a Peer Challenge focus on?

3.9 Every peer challenge includes the following core components:

- **Understanding of the local place and priority setting:** Does the Council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
- **Leadership of Place:** Does the Council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
- **Organisational leadership and governance:** Is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?
- **Financial planning and viability:** Does the Council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
- **Capacity to deliver:** Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the Council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

3.10 This enables the council to demonstrate its openness to 'critical friend' challenge, considered on comparable terms to other councils.

3.11 There is also the possibility for councils to choose specific areas of focus in addition to the core components. As part of the scoping work with LGA the Council will look to identify other potential areas of focus.

3.12 The choice of additional areas of focus is entirely a matter for the Council, and will be agreed following discussion with relevant stakeholders and a detailed scoping meeting with the LGA.

The Peer Challenge Process

3.13 If the Council agrees to proceed, the LGA proposes at least a 6 month lead-in to the visit. This is longer than normal but would allow for the confirmation of appropriately high calibre peer team members.

3.14 During this period, the following will be undertaken:

- i) Preparation of a position statement by the Council (members and officers):**
Around 10-15 sides of A4 that tells the Council's story. This should provide general contextual information about the Council and summarise strengths and weaknesses in relation to the corporate themes and any additional areas of focus. Background

information should also be collated and sent in advance e.g. Corporate Plan, MTFs, key corporate and partnership strategies and plans.

ii) Compilation and selection of the Peer team:

The Peer Team consists of a team of approximately six peers, picked for their relevance to the scope and the place. The team is likely to consist of at least:

- Mayor or Leader
- Chief Executive
- LGA Programme Manager
- Senior Managers x 2

In places where challenging politics has been part of the Council's recent history, the LGA recommends consideration of additional member peers in the team: in the case of Tower Hamlets, this would mean a Conservative and an Independent member peer, as well as, potentially, an additional Labour member.

iii) On-site visit of 4 days to include a programme of meetings with:

- Mayor
- Cabinet
- Opposition Group Leaders
- Chief Executive
- Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)
- Focus groups of frontline Councillors, scrutiny members, middle managers and frontline officers
- Key external stakeholders and partners

iv) Final day:

On the last day on site, there will be a presentation of the peer team's findings (usually to a meeting of Cabinet and CLT).

v) Report:

The draft report will be provided by the LGA around 3-4 weeks after the visit: the Council will have the opportunity to review this and request amendments before signing off the final version. The Council is strongly encouraged to publish the report.

vi) LGA Follow-up:

The LGA will meet with the Council following the peer review to discuss any further support relevant to any areas for consideration. The Council will have the opportunity for a follow-up visit to take place between six and eighteen months after the review, to consider progress made.

Further considerations

3.15 It is suggested that, in order to comply with the DCLG direction to commission an independent review of achievement, to be submitted to the Secretary of State by 1 August 2018, the Challenge is conducted on-site early in June 2018. This will take place immediately after the local elections and consideration will need to be given to the appropriateness of the timing of the Review. An outline timetable is detailed below:

Activity	Timeline
Review Scoping	Sep – Dec 2017
Final Meeting to agree scope	Jan 2018
Preparation of position statement	Feb-May 2018
Submission of position statement to LGA	Early 2018
Council Elections	3 May 2018
Council AGM	Mid May 2018
On-site Visit	Early June 2018
Draft Report	Early July 2018
Final Sign Off by Best Value Improvement Board	End of July 2018
Action Plan development	Aug-Sept 2018
Submission to DCLG	1 st Aug 2018
Follow up visit	Jan 2019 Dec 2019

3.16 In order to facilitate the planning of the Corporate Peer Challenge, the Council will be asked to provide a lead contact for oversight, and an administrative lead to co-ordinate the on-site programme.

4 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

4.1 The Secretary of State has directed the Council to set up a new Best Value Improvement Board which includes external representation by the Local Government Association (LGA) to provide suitable challenge to improve all Council activity.

4.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. If the findings of the peer review give rise to actions which have financial consequences, officers will then be obliged to seek appropriate approval through the Council's financial approval process.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

5.1 The Council is a best value authority within the meaning of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999. As a best value authority, the Council has an obligation under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness" (the best value duty).

- 5.2 Where the Secretary of State is satisfied that an authority is not meeting its best value duty, the Secretary of State may: (1) direct the authority to take action to bring itself into compliance with that duty; (2) direct that specified functions be carried out by the Secretary of State or a nominee and that the authority follow the Secretary of State's instructions and provide such assistance as may be required (Local Government Act 1999).
- 5.3 The Secretary of State issued fresh directions on 28th March 2017 to the Council for it to take specific action which it considered necessary or expedient to secure the Council's compliance with its best value duty without specifying that specified functions be carried out by the Secretary of State or a nominee. These include setting up a new Best Value Improvement Board, chaired by the Mayor, with cross party representation and external representatives to provide suitable challenge to improve all Council activities.
- 5.4 The new directions are enforceable by the Secretary of State, who may seek an order in the High Court requiring the Council to remedy any breach. In the circumstances, it is appropriate for the Peer Challenge to be undertaken.
- 5.5 Further, all the focuses of the Peer Challenge as set out in paragraph 3.9 of the report touch on core principles of good governance. "Good governance leads to good management, good performance, good stewardship of public money, good public engagement and, ultimately, good outcomes for citizens and service users. Good governance enables an authority to pursue its vision effectively as well as underpinning that vision with mechanisms for control and management of risk. All authorities should aim to meet the standards of the best and governance arrangements should not only be sound but also be seen to be sound."²
- 5.6 It is therefore also sound from a good governance perspective for the Peer Challenge to be undertaken.

² Section 1.2 of the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework – CIPFA/SOLACE

Best Value Improvement Board

TITLE	Author	ITEM NO	Date
Children's Services Improvement-progress report	Anthony Walters- Programme Manager, Children's Services Improvement		11/9/2017

1 Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on progress in delivering improvements to Children's Services in response to the report published by Ofsted in April 2017 which rated our services 'inadequate'. The Council's improvement plan aims to achieve a standard of 'good' by April 2019, which is the minimum our children and families deserve.

1.2 The body of this report includes commentary on progress in the four themes of our improvement plan, which was submitted to the Department for Education and Ofsted in July 2017. Whilst some progress has been made in all four themes, this first quarterly report identifies that there remain significant challenges in moving the service towards a 'good' standard.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Best Value Improvement Board is recommended to:

1. Note the progress made in delivering the children's services improvement programme.
2. Note the next steps in the improvement journey which will be updated on in the next report.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 In April 2017, Ofsted published its report rating our services inadequate overall (but with some areas requiring improvement.) These findings were based on its inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the local safeguarding children board, which took place in January/February 2017 under the Single Inspection Framework.
- 3.2 On 27th June, Cabinet agreed the council's response to this report and the submission of our improvement plan. The report agreed by Cabinet set out our analysis of the contributing factors to the inadequate judgement.
- 3.3 A full improvement plan has now been submitted to the Department for Education and Ofsted. The plan responds directly to the 15 recommendations identified in the Ofsted inspection report. It is an operational tool used by managers and frontline staff to drive our improvement activity which, crucially, focuses on the impact changes will have for vulnerable children. It is monitored and updated on a monthly basis by the Children's Services Improvement operational board, chaired by the Director of Children's Services, and every six weeks by our independently chaired improvement board. Quarterly updates will be reported to Cabinet and Best Value Improvement Board. This is the first quarterly update.
- 3.4 The council aims to achieve a 'good' rating for its children's services within two years, by April 2019. This is an ambitious undertaking given the extent of failings identified in the Ofsted report and the level of change required. The overall timeline for meeting this aim is:
- **Stage 1- Laying the foundations**
By September 2017, we will have completed the first phase of improvement activity which includes data cleansing, establishing governance and performance management arrangements, putting in place 'back to basics' training for social work staff, completing our initial recruitment campaign and workforce strategy and restructuring the children's social care service to improve management and accountability.
 - **Stage 2- Embedding sustained improvement**
By March 2018, we will be implementing our workforce strategy, have made changes to our delivery of early help services and be using performance data and qualitative case audits to show progress and identify areas for further improvement.
 - **Stage 3- Continuous improvement to a 'good' children's service**
Between April 2018 and March 2019 we will see a stabilised workforce with permanent posts filled and turnover reduced, and continuous improvement in performance data and qualitative audits towards a good service.
- 3.5 Our current improvement plan deals primarily with the first stage of this journey, so that we can maintain the flexibility to learn from the early stages of improvement activity, and the feedback we will get from our improvement partners and Ofsted monitoring visits. Future stages will be planned in more detail as we progress through the journey.
- 3.6 The council will be supported in its implementation of improvements by improvement partners appointed by the Department for Education in late July. Our partners are senior colleagues from Lincolnshire and Islington councils- both

of which have achieved 'good' ratings in their Ofsted Single Inspection Framework judgements.

- 3.7 Our progress will be monitored by Ofsted through quarterly monitoring visits. The first of these visits took place on 30-31 August. At the time of writing this report, the findings from that visit were not known.
- 3.8 On 27th June 2017, the Mayor in Cabinet approved our summary improvement plan, setting out the 10 components of a successful children's service and our vision of what a 'good' service will look like. To give them focus, the objectives and actions that are being implemented to achieve this vision are grouped under 4 themes that directly relate to the findings of the Ofsted inspection. This report sets out the contribution that our improvement plan and each of its themes is making towards this vision.
- 3.9 Additional capacity has been provided to the service to ensure that rapid progress can be made whilst maintaining day to day service provision. An experienced interim Divisional Director for Children's Social Care has been appointed to implement operational improvements and provide leadership in our improvement journey. The budget for Children's Services has been increased by £5.2m for 2017-18. Further one-off investment is also being made to support the implementation of the improvement plan. The budget for this is being finalised.
- 3.10 Improvement activity at operational level is under way with an initial emphasis on getting the basics right to ensure a consistently good and legally compliant level of social work practice. The initial focus has been on Early Help alongside the 'front door' of our Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Assessment & Intervention (A&I), Child Sexual Exploitation and missing children as well as children in need (CiN). Work is also now underway through the rest of the child's journey through the social care system. The approach has involved ensuring that there is greater clarity in what 'good' looks like, compliance with minimum standards and rigorous use of child level data and audit to monitor practice. This has started to show results in some areas although reported performance has initially declined due to data cleansing activity and an increased volume of referrals at the front door. Whilst this progress indicates some encouraging signs, there remain significant challenges in achieving a consistently 'good' service.
- 3.11 At the end of the first quarter, we are half way through the first stage of our improvement journey, 'laying the foundations.' The focus of improvement activity has been on establishing the fundamentals of a clear understanding of what 'good looks like', robust performance management using accurate child level data, and quality assurance processes that feed directly into improved service delivery and better outcomes for children. This has enabled us to begin to tackle the practice issues raised by Ofsted. Progress in our four themes is detailed in the following paragraphs.

Theme 1- Leadership, Management and Governance

- 3.12 The focus in this part of the plan has been to implement a robust governance structure with a supporting performance management framework, a workforce strategy and address sufficiency issues in relation to emergency and unplanned placements. This will contribute to the following components of our vision:
- A whole council vision for excellence
 - An outward facing organisation and culture
 - Corporate and political support and an ambition for excellence

- Strong member- officer relationships based on trust and constructive challenge
 - A clear 'golden thread' from the political leadership through to the frontline
 - Strong and dynamic leadership throughout the organisation
 - A permanent and stable workforce with capacity and resources
 - Strong coherent partnerships at strategic and operational level
- 3.13 A Children's Services Improvement Board has been established to provide direction in our improvement journey, and ensure that progress is robustly scrutinised. The Board is independently chaired by a nationally recognised expert in children's services, and its membership includes:
- Executive Mayor and lead Cabinet member for Children's Services
 - Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the lead Scrutiny member for Children's Services
 - Chair of Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Board
 - Senior representatives from key partner agencies- schools, the Clinical Commissioning Group and Police
 - The council's Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services and senior officers from relevant council services
- 3.14 The Board ensures that there is clear political, corporate and partnership leadership of the improvement journey. The Board has now met three times and has provided its leadership to the development of the improvement plan, improvements to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the consistent application of thresholds for support. It has agreed a forward plan identifying the key issues that it will be focussed on in the coming months, which include:
- Practice in relation to children who go missing and child sexual exploitation
 - The management of child in need cases
 - Workforce development
 - Culture change
- 3.15 A clear governance and reporting framework has been put in place which ensures that in addition to the Improvement Board there is oversight at appropriate levels in the officer and political governance structures. This includes Cabinet, the Best Value Improvement Board and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. We have also made changes to our corporate strategic performance indicator set, which is reported to Cabinet every quarter, to better reflect the children's services improvement priorities and ensure crucial metrics demonstrating legal compliance are visible and interrogated.
- 3.16 To strengthen political understanding and oversight, the Lead Member has undertaken a number of visits and key meetings with staff and partners. This includes spending time with the MASH and A&I teams at the front door, and with the Fostering and Adoption, Looked After Children and Family Support & Protection Teams, with visits planned to the Virtual School and local authority children's home. The Lead Member has regular meetings with the independent Chairs of both the Improvement Board and Local Safeguarding Children Board Chair, the Principal Social Workers and trades unions, as well as political support from a lead member in another, improving, local authority.

- 3.17 Training on understanding performance data has been delivered to the lead Cabinet and Scrutiny members for Children's Services and the chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Further training is being delivered in September to all elected members on their responsibilities in relation to children's services and how they can exercise these responsibilities including the interpretation of management information. We are working with the Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny to ensure that our approach to elected member scrutiny is informed by best practice from elsewhere. Alongside the direct involvement of members in the improvement governance structure, this will ensure robust scrutiny of children's services by elected members to address the failings in this area that were highlighted in Ofsted's report.
- 3.18 Staff recruitment and retention remains a challenge, with vacancy rates of 55% and over in some parts of the service. This is due to the competitive nature of the market for qualified social workers, coupled with the pressure of increased workload and the drive for improvement post Ofsted. We have reviewed our social work pay offer to ensure that it is competitive and supports the recruitment and retention of high quality staff. A recruitment campaign has taken place to start to address the immediate vacancy issues within the Children's Social Care Service. The campaign was successful in attracting a large number of 'hits' on its microsite, but attracted fewer applications from experienced social workers than hoped. We have also attracted some of our agency social workers to move into permanent posts to introduce further stability in the workforce. However, there is far more work to do to recruit and stabilise our social care workforce.
- 3.19 We are further developing our recruitment strategy to include better targeting through specialist recruitment agencies, presence at a national recruitment fair and an 'introduce a friend' scheme to incentivise staff to encourage others to apply for jobs in Tower Hamlets. We are also reviewing our rates of pay for agency workers, recognising that they will continue to play an important role in the resourcing of our service as we move towards a more stable workforce. Our approach will enable us to attract sufficient experienced social workers in the first instance, as well as developing and retaining our less experienced workers in the medium to long term through 'grow your own' schemes using Open University courses and the establishment of a social work academy. Action is also being taken to stabilise the leadership team within children's services. The senior leadership structure has been reviewed and we are recruiting permanently to strengthen capacity and skills at that level.
- 3.20 A 'back to basics' training programme has been commissioned and will be delivered for all social care staff between September and November 2017. This will be followed with a course of training in systemic social work practice. These courses of training are supplemented by ongoing training in specialist areas such as recognising and responding to child sexual exploitation and Domestic Abuse. This programme will ensure that the knowledge and skills of our staff are increased to address issues raised by the Ofsted inspection, whilst also supporting our staff retention strategy.
- 3.21 Sufficiency of emergency and unplanned placements remains an area of concern, and placement stability indicators are not showing improvement. An interim report on sufficiency is due to be completed in September, to address the availability of suitable residential and foster care placements for our current cohort of looked after children, and services for families with children who are likely to enter the care system where appropriate support may be able to prevent this. This will include the anticipated impact on future demand for care placements.

Theme 2 - A robust model of social work practice.

- 3.22 This theme is the main 'core' of our improvement plan and focusses on improvements in practice within the Children's Social Care service. The service manages all contacts received by the council where there are concerns about a child's welfare through to statutory assessments and interventions for children. This includes the placement and support of looked after children as part of the council's corporate parenting responsibilities.
- 3.23 The theme contributes to the following components of our vision:
- A strong model of practice, with good checks and balances
 - Clear and embedded systems, processes and data
- 3.24 There is a rigorous focus within the Children's Social Care Service on 'getting the basics right.' This has concentrated initially on the 'front door' of MASH and A&I, with an emphasis on consistent application of thresholds and timeliness of decision making. Evidence from auditing a sample of cases ('dip sampling') shows that significant improvements have been made in these two areas of practice. There has also been some work on practice relating to child sexual exploitation and children who go missing. We are now working through the rest of the child's journey. Our approach has included greater clarity in practice standards ('what good looks like'), management action on compliance with standards and recording, and the systematic use of data and case audits to lift quality and consistency.
- 3.25 The Ofsted inspection identified poor recording practice, leading to inaccurate performance information, as a contributing factor to its 'inadequate' judgement. Action has been taken to remedy this, with a significant amount of data cleansing of current and historic records. This means that performance data is now more accurate. At the same time, as expected after the poor Ofsted judgement, we are seeing an increase in workload with 15% more children on the caseload, an increase in monthly contacts of 41% and in referrals of 66% since April 2017. The combined effect of these two factors has led to deterioration in reported performance in our strategic performance indicator set for children's services. The actions we are taking to improve front line practice and ensure that there is a well-resourced and highly skilled service will deliver sustained performance improvement as we progress into the second and third stages of the improvement journey. Whilst progress has been made in some areas, there remain significant challenges to improve to a consistently 'good' service. For example, a recent audit of practice in relation to the 'toxic trio' of domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and mental health, has thrown up some significant practice challenges in this area which are now starting to be addressed.
- 3.26 Practice in relation to children identified as 'children in need' under the Children Act 1989 remains an area of focus, where there have been historic issues with recording and consistency of practice. All of these cases have now been reviewed and appropriate action taken to ensure children are safe. The Lead Member and the Improvement Board have asked for assurances on child in need cases and will continue to oversee this key risk area.
- 3.27 Progress is being made towards improvements in our early help offer for children and families who do not meet threshold for statutory social care services, with a strategic project to define the future model for early help on track to reach its conclusion in September 2017. This model will then proceed to implementation in the third quarter of 2017-18. Partnership buy-in to the early help offer will be critical to its success.

Theme 3- A sufficient and skilled workforce

- 3.28 This theme focusses on improvements in management oversight and supervision across all services, and in our management of private fostering cases which were highlighted as an area of concern by Ofsted. It contributes the following elements of our vision:
- Strong and dynamic leadership throughout the organisation
 - A strong model of practice, with good checks and balances
 - A permanent and stable workforce with capacity and resources
- 3.29 Progress has been made in improving management oversight, with improvement in the proportion of cases that have received timely management oversight, although further improvement is required to meet a consistently 'good' standard. At the end of June, 78.9% of cases had received management oversight within the last 8 weeks, an improvement from 60% in April 2017 although not yet meeting our 95% target. Work is ongoing within the Children's Social Care service to improve this figure. We are also carrying out dip sampling to test the quality of this oversight.
- 3.30 We have introduced new systems to robustly manage private fostering cases. All of the private fostering cases have had a case file audit, and every child has had an updated assessment to ensure we have an understanding of their holistic needs. Cases have been reviewed to ensure compliance with statute and national minimum standards for those children in private fostering arrangements. The new monitoring systems will be used to measure progress in this area in future reports.

Theme 4 - Quality Assurance and audit

- 3.31 This theme supports the following components in our vision:
- Clear and embedded systems, processes and data
 - A strong model of practice, with good checks and balances
- 3.32 Our quality assurance and audit programme was fully launched in August 2017. This activity is crucial to know whether our services are legally compliant, good quality, consistent, and making a difference for children. We have focussed on ensuring that there is a more consistent and robust understanding in the audit process of what 'good' looks like, and moderation is showing improvement in the consistency and reliability of audit findings, ensuring that we have reliable qualitative information to inform continuous improvement in practice.
- 3.33 The results of audits undertaken so far have fed directly into improvement activity in the front line. For example there has been rapid improvement in the quality of decision making in the MASH, and the robustness of challenge and scrutiny by Independent Reviewing Officers in child protection and looked after children cases.
- 3.34 Another focus in this theme is to ensure that care leavers have high quality, up to date pathway plans. Management oversight has been improved and whilst the proportion of care leavers with a plan as at the end of June is 92.7%, improvement is required in the number that have been reviewed in the last 6 months. Dip sampling to test the quality of plans commenced in August 2017. This is an area that still requires further improvement.

Next Steps

- 3.35 Cabinet will receive a further update on progress in three months' time. The key priorities for the next monitoring period, at the end of our first stage of improvement activity, will be:

- Working with our improvement partners to further develop the improvement plan
- Responding to the feedback from our first Ofsted monitoring visit, reviewing the improvement plan where necessary
- Completing our workforce strategy
- Completing the first report on our looked after children sufficiency strategy
- Focusing on key areas identified by the Improvement Board for scrutiny, including child in need practice, CSE and missing children

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 Implementation of the improvement plan is likely to have significant financial implications to LBTH.
- 4.2 Significant additional resources have already been identified as part of the 2017-2020 MTFS; in particular total additional growth of £5.2m addressing pressure in a range of areas, most of which feature in the improvement plan.
- 4.3 Direct costs relating to the improvement plan is currently being estimated as the 'Sufficiency' strategy is still being developed. It is proposed that the improvement activities will be funded by drawing down on the Transformation Reserve or the Risk Reserve.
- 4.4 The subsequent progress of the improvement plan costs will be reported to Members as part of the Council's normal budget management reporting mechanisms.
- 4.5 The level of the proposed reserve will be based on a detailed assessment of the costs associated with the improvement plan and the demonstrable improvements that will be achieved as a result of the investment.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 The framework for Ofsted inspections of Children's Services is set out in sections 135-142 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 ('the Act') and associated Employment and Education Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007 ('the Regulations').
- 5.2 Ofsted's "Framework and evaluation schedule for the inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Reviews of Local Safeguarding Children's Boards" ('the SIF') sets out a single assessment framework for assessing local authorities during inspections conducted under section 136 of the Act.

Local authorities are graded outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate in each of the areas inspected.

- 5.3 The SIF notes that a rating of inadequate indicates: *“There are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm and/or the welfare of looked after children is not safeguarded and promoted.”* (para. 31)
- 5.4 In light of the Council’s rating of inadequate in 2 out of the 3 areas assessed, Ofsted’s “Monitoring and re-inspection of local authority children’s services judged inadequate” guidance will apply. Ofsted will carry out a programme of monitoring activities, including quarterly monitoring visits, to report on the progress made by local authorities. The monitoring visits will evaluate the progress made against the recommendations since the inspection and check that there is no decline in other areas (para. 5). Inspectors will produce a brief report about their findings and, in particular, their evaluation of the Council’s progress. Other than the report arising from the first monitoring visit, these will be published (paras. 41-42).
- 5.5 Ofsted will usually re-inspect a local authority judged inadequate at its last inspection within two years of it submitting its action plan, usually after at least four quarterly monitoring visits. Because the Council has been found to be inadequate overall, this will involve a full repeat SIF, although this will be shorter than the initial SIF as inspectors will take into account information gathered during monitoring visits (paras. 50-52).
- 5.6 Implementing and reviewing the improvement plan is consistent with the Council’s duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness by virtue of section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. This is known as its Best Value Duty.

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Tower Hamlets Best Value Improvement Board 2017-18 Forward Plan

Date of Meeting	Agenda Items	Lead Officer
14 th June 2017	1. BVIB Terms of Reference	Sharon Godman
	2. Draft Q1 update report to the SOS	Sharon Godman
	3. Spotlight: Organisation Culture	Graham White/ Zena Cooke
	4. Children's Services Improvement Plan	Debbie Jones
11 th Sept 2017	1. Draft Q2 update report to the SOS	Sharon Godman
	2. Spotlight: Elections	Will Tuckley / Louise Stamp
	3. Children's Services Improvement Plan Update	Debbie Jones
	4. Corporate Improvement Journey	Sharon Godman
	5. Corporate Peer Challenge	Sharon Godman
18 th Dec 2017	1. Draft Q3 Update report to the SOS	Sharon Godman
	2. Spotlight: Property	Ann Sutcliffe
	3. Clear Up Project Recommendations – Update	Asmat Hussain
	4. Children's Services Improvement Plan Update	Debbie Jones
19 th March 2018	1. Draft year end update report to the SOS	Sharon Godman
	2. Spotlight: Grants	Zena Cooke
	3. Children's Services Improvement Plan Update	Debbie Jones
	4. Adults Improvement Board Update	Denise Radley

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