

TOWER HAMLETS BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

Monday, 19 March 2018 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	(Executive Mayor, Tower Hamlets Council)
Sir Steve Bullock	(External Representative - THBVIB)
Alan Finch	(Local Government Association)
Alan Wood	(Chair, Children's Improvement Board)
Will Tuckley	(Chief Executive)
Sharon Godman	(Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Partnerships)
Councillor Peter Golds	(Leader of the Conservative Group)
Councillor Sirajul Islam	(Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing)
Councillor Rabina Khan	(Leader of PATH Group)
Councillor Oliur Rahman	(Leader of the Independent Group)
Councillor David Edgar	(Cabinet Member for Resources)
Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs	(Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services)
Councillor Dave Chesterton	(Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

Contact for further enquiries:
Antonella Burgio, Democratic Services,

Tel: 0207 364 4881
E-mail: antonella.burgio@towerhamlets.gov
Web: www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/committees

Scan this code to your mobile phone to view Committee website.



Public Information

Attendance at meetings.

The public are welcome to attend meetings of the Committee. However seating is limited and offered on a first come first served basis.

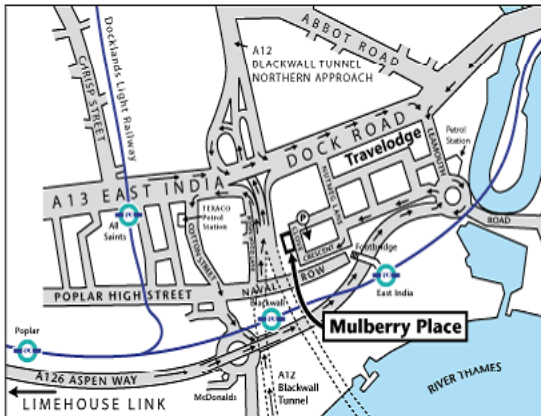
Audio/Visual recording of meetings.

Should you wish to film the meeting, please contact the Committee Officer shown on the agenda front page.

Mobile telephones

Please switch your mobile telephone on to silent mode whilst in the meeting.

Access information for the Town Hall, Mulberry Place.



Bus: Routes: D3, D6, D7, D8, 15, 108, and 115 all stop near the Town Hall.

Docklands Light Railway: Nearest stations are East India: Head across the bridge and then through complex to the Town Hall, Mulberry Place Blackwall station. Across the bus station then turn right to the back of the Town Hall complex, through the gates and archway to the Town Hall.

Tube: The closest tube stations are Canning Town and Canary Wharf

Car Parking: There is limited visitor pay and display parking at the Town Hall (free from 6pm)

If you are viewing this on line: (http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/content_pages/contact_us.aspx)

Meeting access/special requirements.

The Town Hall is accessible to people with special needs. There are accessible toilets, lifts to venues. Disabled parking bays and an induction loop system for people with hearing difficulties are available. Documents can be made available in large print, Braille or audio version. For further information, contact the Officer shown on the front of the agenda



Fire alarm

If the fire alarm sounds please leave the building immediately by the nearest available fire exit without deviating to collect belongings. Fire wardens will direct you to the exits and to the fire assembly point. If you are unable to use the stairs, a member of staff will direct you to a safe area. The meeting will reconvene if it is safe to do so, otherwise it will stand adjourned.

Electronic agendas reports and minutes.

Copies of agendas, reports and minutes for council meetings can also be found on our website from day of publication.

To access this, click www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/committee and search for the relevant committee and meeting date.

Agendas are available at the Town Hall, Libraries, Idea Centres and One Stop Shops and on the Mod.Gov, iPad and Android apps.



QR code for smart phone users.

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS
TOWER HAMLETS BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

MONDAY, 19 MARCH 2018

6.00 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE
PECUNIARY INTEREST**

5 - 8

To note any declarations of interest made by Members, including those restricting Members from voting on the questions detailed in Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992. See attached note from the Monitoring Officer.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record of the proceedings the unrestricted minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2018. (To follow)

**4. BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017-18 -
Year End Report**

9 - 32

5. SPOTLIGHT - GRANTS

To receive a presentation.

6. ICT TRANSFORMATION

To receive a presentation

**7. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT-
Progress Report**

33 - 46

**8. CLEAR UP PROJECT - Recommendations
Implementation**

47 - 50

9. LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

51 - 58

**10. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS
CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 2.

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>

This page is intentionally left blank

BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

TITLE	Author	ITEM NO	Date
Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 – Year End Report	William Tompsett, Senior Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer		19 Mar 18

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the delivery of the Council's Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18. The report builds on the in-year updates and submissions 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 fourth quarterly update report will be submitted on 30th March 2018.

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 third update submitted in January 2018;
 - 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 The Best Value Improvement Plan sits within an Improvement Framework which outlines the work streams the Council is delivering to become an 'excellent modern council'. This includes the work being driven by the Children's Services Improvement Board led by an independent Chair, an internal time limited Adults Improvement Board and new improvement areas of customer services and Organisational culture as reported to the Board at the last meeting.

3.5 Cabinet on 19th December 2017 received a report detailing the progress the Council has made in becoming a more open and transparent organisations with ongoing work that will help to:

- Continuously provide opportunities for the public to hold the Council to account , whilst also ensuring that it always holds itself to account;
- Provide quality data, which is clear, easy to understand and accessible;
- Involve residents in the design and delivery of services enabling a more open and collaborative approach to Council business.

3.6 The latest Annual Residents Survey shows residents perception of the Council is improving with 79% saying they trust the Council and 59% agreeing the Council is open and transparent. We also saw an 11 points increase to 68% of residents feeling the Council listens to their concerns and a 9 points increase to 58% of residents agreeing that the Council involves them in the decision making.

4. 20017/18 PROGRESS AGAINST BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

4.1. During the first year of the Best Value Improvement Plan the Council has delivered the majority of the short-term and medium-term milestones and where there are any delays a revised plan has been set out. Work on the longer-term milestones are on-going with plans for delivery over the next financial year. Regular updates on progress are provided to the Corporate Leadership Team and Members and all activities have been incorporated within individual Directorate Plans to ensure focus remains on delivery.

4.2. Elections - The Council published a revised Register of Electors in December 2017 and is meeting regularly with partners to plan the Mayoral and local elections for 2018. Location for the count and enhanced security measures for

all polling stations has been agreed with the police. A comprehensive count plan is being developed alongside mandatory training and guidance for all count staff and poll clerks. Mandatory training is planned for all count staff, poll clerks and presiding officers and improved communication on voting processes is being made available. The Council has also agreed to pilot an enhanced Postal Voting Scheme with the Cabinet Office which will include increased security and guidance as well as sample checking.

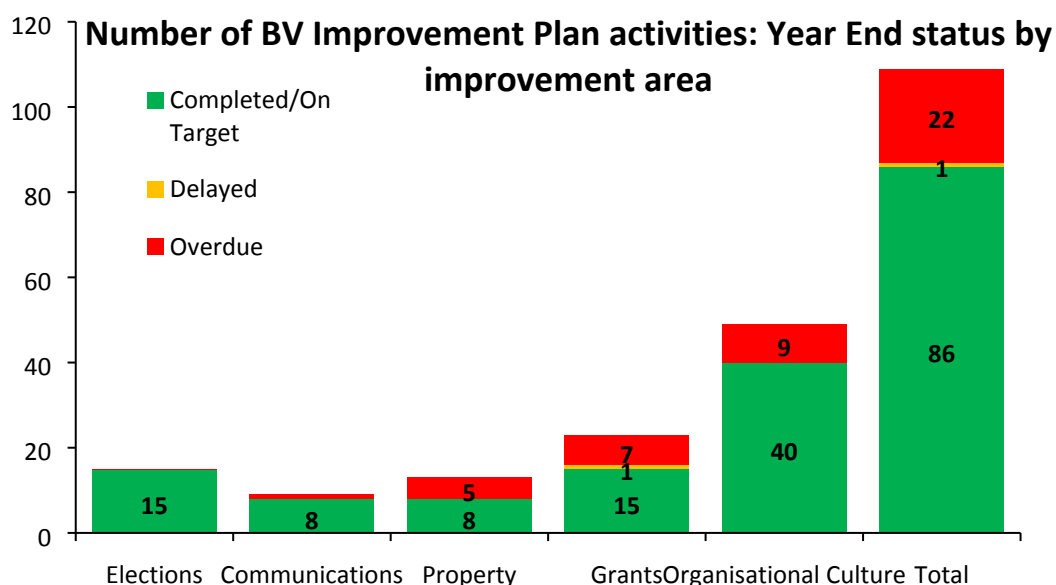
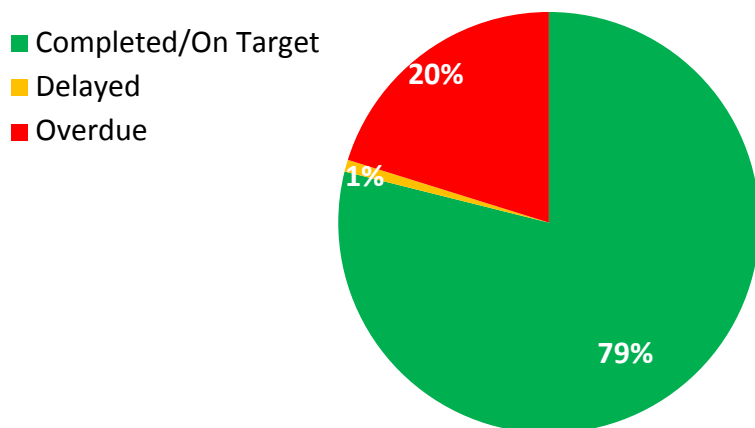
- 4.3. Communications - The communication infrastructure has been improved considerably over the last year with the development of a Communication Strategy for 2017/18. Internal communications have been enhanced by the introduction of a weekly staff email newsletter that sees continual growth in its readership and interaction with articles. The use of dedicated poster sites and 12 plasma screens in the Town Hall ensure key messages and updates for staff are seen. Also, an intranet project manager was appointed to drive the effectiveness of this media. Improvements in external communications include the completion of the media consumption survey which is being used to develop future work and ensure we can reach different audiences effectively. The survey provides a range of intelligence including areas where can further develop its communication work. We have seen significant increase in the number of residents signed up to our e-newsletter and with the segmentation of this we will be able to target information to residents according to their interests.
- 4.4. Property – A total of four sites have been identified for use as Community Hubs. The first was launched in September 2017 and work is progressing to deliver the rest over the next two years. The Council continues to manage its assets through the revised governance structure and use vacant buildings for housing and commercial use. A review of depot provision across the borough is being undertaken and specialist consultants have been appointed to conduct a feasibility study for this which is due to be completed in April 2018.
- 4.5. Grants - A new approach to grants management is being developed in partnership with the local voluntary and community sector. The system mapping of requirements to improve management reporting, information management and analysis of the new GIFTS software was completed. The Mainstream Grants Programme is monitored quarterly by the Grants Scrutiny Committee and Grants Determination Committee. An audit has been completed of the grants monitoring process and recommendations arising from this will be taken forward.
- 4.6. Organisational Culture - Revised core values have been agreed by senior management and communicated to all staff through range of engagement events across different Council sites. A staff survey and wellbeing survey were carried out in 2017/18. A refreshed Member/Officer Protocol is now in place and work is being undertaken raise awareness and implementation. A revised Whistleblowing Policy was also agreed and launched. This will now be a mandatory training requirement for all staff in the new Learning Management System. The Transformation Programme engaged staff through conversation groups and other wider staff engagement.

4.7. The Tower Hamlets Summit was held in January 2018 and brought together a wide variety of partners and stakeholders to gather views and conversation around the content and focus for the new Community Plan being developed with The Tower Hamlets.

4.8. The charts below show the reported progress against the 109 milestones in the Best Value Improvement Plan which are still active. 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 Year End 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. These Directions were revoked by letter from the Secretary of State dated 28th March 2017 and which removed the DCLG Commissioners on 31 March 2017. This letter set out fresh Directions and which are in force until 30 September 2018.
- 6.4. 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 the Board of progress and timescales.
- 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

This page is intentionally left blank

BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017- 2018 YEAR END REPORT

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, Elections, Organisation Culture, Grants and Communications.

This report notes that over the last year 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.

2 Summary of key achievements

A summary of key achievements for 2017/18 is detailed below:

- Review of UK Parliamentary Government Election delivery completed and lessons learnt will be incorporated for the 2018 elections;
- The Council has agreed to take part in a Cabinet Office Pilot on Postal Vote which will lead to improvements in security and guidance;
- Regular review and planning meetings with Police and Electoral Commission and other partners are taking place for the 2018 Mayoral/borough elections on an on-going basis now resulting in a stronger approach to identifying and tackling potential issues;
- New Communications strategy adopted and major campaigns launched throughout the year;
- A weekly staff e-newsletter has been introduced with continually growing open rates throughout the year;
- A media consumption survey was held and results used to target communication information more effectively to different audiences;
- New Statutory Notice Publication Scheme established;
- 4 Community Hub sites have been identified with feasibility work undertaken and costings finalised for two so far. The opening of the second hub is expected to take place in April 2018;
- Planning consent granted to convert vacant community buildings to residential use for transfer to Tower hamlets Homes/Homelessness Services;
- A review of depot provision across the borough is being undertaken and specialist consultants have been appointed to conduct a feasibility study;
- Comprehensive review of Third Sector Team completed;
- The Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee has met regularly throughout this municipal year to consider a range of Grants Decision Reports and MSG monitoring

reports. The Committee is currently planning an in-depth review into grant spending on organisations that provide physical activities for young people;

- All Community Cohesion contracts have now been mobilised and are delivering with a view to bring successful contract timelines in line with MSG grants enabling them to be considered and co-produced as part of the future grants/commissioning process;
- Clear Up Project report went to Council in July 2017 with updates and actions reported through the year;
- Staff Survey and Wellbeing Surveys completed;
- Year one of the Smarter Together Programme completed as planned
- Reports outlining revised Council Procedure Rules and Member/Officer Relations were approved by Council on 22 November 2017;
- Planning Code of Conduct reviewed and updated;
- A Report went to GPC on 12 October 2017 and then Audit Committee on 16 November 2017 with a revised Whistleblowing Policy, Procedure, Guidance for Managers and Guidance for Investigators as well as an Action Plan for the implementation of a more effective whistleblowing framework;
- The Corporate Peer Challenge proposals were agreed by the Best Value Improvement Board at their last meeting. Planning for this is currently underway and will be held in June 2018;
- A Members Seminar was jointly delivered with the LGA on Members' role in Children's Services.

Best Value Improvement Plan Summary

ELECTIONS: Progress Summary

The Council has 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 2017/18	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published revised Register of Electors on 1st Dec 2017. • The Excel Exhibition Centre has been confirmed as the Count Centre. A site visit in March by the core management team will enable a comprehensive count plan to be prepared. • Regular review and planning meetings with Police and consultation work with Electoral Commission Office have taken place for 2018 Elections. • Police presence and increased security at all polling stations has been confirmed with the including the use of photo ID for count staff.. • Mandatory training and written guidance is planned for all count staff, Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks. • Council taking part in Cabinet Office Postal Vote Pilot. • Comprehensive communications/engagement plan in place with a media plan being developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued scheduling of project group and partner agency meetings. Attendees include senior officers and representatives from relevant agencies /bodies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner and management meetings will continue to be held on a regular basis. • Count processes to be reviewed and documented including the use of grass skirt counting method for mixed votes and improving the layout of the count venue. • Due to the complexity of the combined elections in 2018, mandatory face to face training will take place in April 2018 • Recruitment and allocation of experienced staff for count and polling stations to identify further training needs and opportunities. • Awareness raising and publicity for 2018 elections is ongoing and a media plan will form part of the comprehensive communications/engagement plan. • Visual aids to be included in combined election training 2018 and for this to be made available at all polling centres to help voters with language difficulties. More work to be done by LBTH Communications Team to promote this new resource and to make voters aware of polling centre rules in particular that staff can only speak in English whilst on duty in the polling station.

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 2017/18	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council tax booklet completed and sent to all households. • Communications Strategy for 17/18 completed with major campaigns launched. • Internal communications improved through the placement of new poster sites and 12 plasma screens now live in the Council Town Hall, Mulberry Place. All being regularly monitored for timeliness and quality of presentation. • Over 1,000 marketing sites identified through an asset audit. • Launch and development of staff newsletter with a forward planner of articles and a range of regular updates including on Cabinet decisions, ICT improvements and Learning and Development opportunities. • Intranet project manager appointed and specification/project scope developed. • Media consumption survey has been completed and analysed to target communications better. • Statutory Notices contract procured and mobilised with 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 was at 50% in Q1 and has now reached average 64% (including an issue at 73%). • The media consumption survey has been completed and involved 943 residents. Analysis of the results has enabled us to identify gaps in service delivery and areas for improvement. 	<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. • Progress on intelligent newsletter and new intranet site is continuing. • Scoping for delivery of the new intranet project and procurement to be completed in the next few months.

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 2017/18	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Community Buildings previously used by THH caretakers formerly handed back to Housing Management. • Property inspection audit completed and all actions for regularising occupations allocated to asset managers to progress as BUA. • 4 new Community Hub locations identified with the second due to be delivered in April 2018. • 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. • Template for new governance arrangement prepared. • Vacant building in Watney Market ready for marketing with evaluation of offers scheduled for March. • Specialist consultants appointed to conduct feasibility study on plans for depot provision across the borough. • On-going work to agree occupation agreements with building occupiers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads of terms agreed for leases to 5 of the 8 nursery / playgroup properties within the CB portfolio • 4 Community Hubs identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of the remaining Community Hubs. • Specialist consultants have been appointed to provide additional consultancy advice for a complete review of depot provision across the borough. Work on the feasibility work has started; this is now due to be completed by April 2018. • Temporary community use is in place for Turin Street, approved by the Mayor, which is due to come to an end in July 2018. • Remaining regularisation work as a result of the audit of assets due to be completed in June 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 member review and challenge to the grants decision making process.

Key achievements 2017/18	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. • External evaluation of the MSG Programme which has engaged a range of stakeholders. • Audit of grants monitoring completed. • New Third Sector Team structure developed with full implementation due to be completed in April 2018. • The system mapping of requirements to improve management reporting, information management and analysis of the new GIFTS software has now been completed. • Detailed and technical work is progressing to revise the business processes, streamline the system for grant awards and monitoring via the internet, ensuring accessible information and reporting for members, the VCS and the public. • Working collaboratively with TH CVS and the sector to develop a Grants Policy. • Commissioning of Community Cohesion theme completed with all contracts mobilised and delivering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete audit of grants monitoring completed. • 8 contracts previously grants co-commissioned with the voluntary and community sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is on-going work to get greater involvement of voluntary and community sector in the co-production of commissioned services. • Development of a voluntary sector Compact to be finalised with the new Compact to be considered alongside the new grants policy and replacement programme for the current mainstream grants. • Co-production programme to produce new grants policy is underway working with TH Council for Voluntary Service. First stage to develop policy framework will be complete by Christmas and on target for consideration by Cabinet in March 2018. Second stage of co-production to develop the detailed scheme and procedures in 2018 with a view to launching the new programme early in the summer. • Engagement has been undertaken with Commissioners across the Council and also research on best practice examples for the comprehensive review of contract and grants and approach to commissioning. A working Group has been formed which will take forward this work and align to the development of the wider Grants Policy.

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 2017/18	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 through range of engagement events across different Council sites. • Reorganisation of the top 3 tiers implemented. • Independent review of industrial relations completed with actions recommended. • Leadership development programme established, including online resources, peer to peer coaching, qualification training and external partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58% of managers registered with online leadership development tools • 14 senior managers trained as facilitators for peer to peer coaching • 180 managers inducted onto Chartered Management Institute accredited courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Corporate Scheme of Management and Scheme of Delegations due to be completed in 2018. • Planning for Corporate Peer Challenge underway and on schedule to deliver independent review by June 2018 and reporting to Secretary of State in August 2018. • Refreshed Member/Officer Protocol being cascaded to all staff and will form part of induction for new staff and members. • Ongoing communication to members and officers about revised whistleblowing arrangements with the related mandatory e-learning module to be added to the Learning Management System.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work completed with on-going monitoring of the Mid-Term Financial Savings plan is now in place. • Smarter Together programme set up with governance structures and framework in place. • Corporate Project Management Office (PMO) set up and resourced to deliver MTFS savings. • The Children's Services Improvement Board has met regularly and 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 and will be updated monthly. • LGA supported seminar for Members to increase understanding of their roles in Children's Services. • Refreshed Member/Officer protocol agreed by Full Council which also included Member to Member conduct. • Transformation Programme engaged staff through conversation groups and other wider staff engagement • Revised whistleblowing framework agreed by general Purpose Committee and implemented. • 2017 Annual residents Survey completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 750 employees attended the Staff Conference and staff awards presentation • 80% of staff say that they are proud to work for Tower Hamlets • 60 staff trained in Outcome Based Accountability methodology • Programme Board and Smarter Together Governance agreed and Boards meeting monthly • Smarter Together Programme plans agreed and progress monitored by Transformation Board 	
--	--	--

Elections					
Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
1. Planning for 2018 Mayoral and local elections					
Key Milestones					
Joint working with partner agencies - First meeting February 2017	Will Tuckley/Robert Curtis	May-18	On Target	50%	There has been a plethora of meetings with all partners since the beginning of the year. This has involved the police, both locally and across London, the Cabinet Office, Electoral Commission and internal departments. All meetings have been minuted and the RO has also attended a GLA Crime Committee meeting to detail the preparations in place.
Project group to meet monthly from April 2017, fortnightly from December 2017 and more frequently as required immediately prior to elections.	Will Tuckley/Robert Curtis	May-18	On Target	50%	Election Project meetings have been held as scheduled and have been attended by all partners. In addition, a meeting with the Minister Chloe Smith was held here at the Council Offices to discuss the preparations underway, election integrity and the postal pilot scheme.
Ensure integrity of the process and good order at polling stations	Will Tuckley/Robert Curtis	May-18	On Target	50%	This has been discussed with the police and it is confirmed that a police officer will be on site throughout the day at all polling places. In addition the hatched areas outside each station will also be kept as this was considered good practice at recent elections.
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.	Robert Curtis	Jan-18	On Target	50%	It is planned for those appointed to be in the main experienced officers and where necessary polling clerks can attend the PO training which will add resilience to the pool of staff available. The allocation of staff is actually dependent on availability so the allocations are difficult to predict until we know who is available so in practice training PC's is fine but whether this will then enable us to train them and allocate with PO's is subject to process.
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/Robert Curtis	Feb-18	On Target	50%	All PO's and PC's will be trained appropriately for the combined polls but we may not procure the E Learning modules because of the combination which isn't covered in the products available.
Continuation of RO instruction to ensure polling staff only speak in English whilst on duty in the polling station	Will Tuckley/Robert Curtis	May-18	On Target	50%	This is to continue
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/Robert Curtis	Mar-18	On Target	50%	This is agreed and will be the standard instruction
Full review of count procedures and paperwork in consultation with EC	Will Tuckley/Robert Curtis	Jan-18	On Target	20%	A comprehensive count plan will be prepared with provisional agreement reached on the methodology. The count venue will be visited on 16 March by the core management team to ensure what is being proposed is feasible and reflected in the written document produced
Count venue booked	Will Tuckley/Robert Curtis	Jan-18	On Target	50%	This is booked and is confirmed as the Excel Exhibition Centre
Dedicated count training for accountants using Xpress count module	Robert Curtis	Jan-18	On Target	20%	It is not yet agreed that the Xpress Count module will be used but the top table will be manned by experienced officers who will receive training on the IT systems utilised at the verification and count
Enhanced mandatory training for count staff before taking up roles. To include dedicated training on count procedures.	Will Tuckley/Robert Curtis	Mar-18	On Target	20%	All count supervisors and count management will receive training encompassing the methodology to be adopted and the paperwork that will need to be used. The actual counters will receive written guidance and will receive training before the commencement of proceedings on the night and on the Friday
Enhanced security measures including photo ID checks at count; non-Council security staff; non-transferable security wristbands	Will Tuckley/Robert Curtis	May-18	On Target	20%	It is proposed, subject to IT capability, to have photo ID for certain staff at the count and photo ID before entrance granted, this to be confirmed with the returning Officer. Count security is also being discussed with the police and will form part of the count program and plan to be finalised.
Platform area for RO and Accountants to ensure visibility of count area	Will Tuckley/Robert Curtis	Jan-18	On Target	20%	The RO will be afforded a platform area for the result and a raised area for the top table will be discussed as part of the count venue visit on the 16 March 2018
Review of Media Pack to ensure up-to-date information provided	Andreas Christophorou/Kelly Powell	Jan-18	On Target	20%	There is a comprehensive communications/engagement plan in place and a media plan will be part of that plan drafted after the site visit
2. Participate in pilot ID scheme					
Key Milestones					
Meeting Government Officials to discuss pilot voter identification scheme proposal	Will Tuckley/Robert Curtis	Feb-17	N/A	0%	These actions are no longer required as TH is no longer participating in the ID Pilot Scheme.

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
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	N/A	0%	These actions are no longer required as TH is no longer participating in the ID Pilot Scheme.
Identification of electors who have already provided evidence to support their registration application	Robert Curtis	Jun-17	N/A	0%	These actions are no longer required as TH is no longer participating in the ID Pilot Scheme.
Liaise with partners for possible provision of Electoral ID Cards/Letters	Will Tuckley/Robert Curtis	Dec-17	N/A	0%	These actions are no longer required as TH is no longer participating in the ID Pilot Scheme.
Additional information provided on poll cards	Robert Curtis	Feb-18	N/A	0%	These actions are no longer required as TH is no longer participating in the 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	Robert Curtis	Jan-18	N/A	0%	These actions are no longer required as TH is no longer participating in the ID Pilot Scheme.
Include training for PO's and PC's for ID and signature verification checks	Robert Curtis	Feb-18	N/A	0%	These actions are no longer required as TH is no longer participating in the ID Pilot Scheme.
Deliver Postal Vote Pilot scheme with the Electoral Commission	Will Tuckley/Robert Curtis	May-18	On Target	40%	The postal pilot scheme has now been approved in principle and will involve two surveys. One of postal packs delivered and one of postal packs returned. The draft order is still being discussed with the Cabinet Office and once agreed will be subject to a consultation with the Electoral Commission before formal announcement. The data will be analysed by the Electoral Commission.

Communications					
Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
3. Develop and deliver Communication Strategy for 2017-18					
Key Milestones					
Launch new weekly staff newsletter	Andreas Christophorou	Apr-17	Completed	100%	We have published 49 Tower Hamlets Now Newsletter since its launch. The weekly newsletter details key campaigns, Council activities and staff contribution. The average open rate is above 65% with further work taking place to improve staff engagement including supporting two way communication and refresh of the newsletter template. Informal feedback from staff through events has been very positive about the newsletter and through staff surveys and other activities will look to build on success of the newsletter.
Commission media consumption Survey	Andreas Christophorou	Apr-17	Completed	100%	Media Consumption Survey was presented to CLT and MAB in December. It has provided the Communications Team with valuable data to measure public perception and readership of our channels including Our East End, the website, social media and media. It has also shown us which media titles or read or watched the most by our residents. We are using this information to prioritise coverage in those titles in order to reach the biggest audiences. We will be using the survey further to assess our audiences for other communications work such as campaigns and we are considering doing a light version of the media consumption survey every year to measure our progress.
Build a range of communication infrastructure	Andreas Christophorou	Jul-17	Completed	100%	This year we have developed new infrastructure including: New advertising infrastructure; 66 agrippa panels on 33 refuse and recycling vehicles to advertise our campaigns. Use of 14 BT Inlink digital panels for council campaigns (438 hours of content per panel per year). So far (up to Q3) 20 gold or silver campaigns linked to our strategic priorities have been completed or underway. A new intelligent newsletter that segments our residents based on their interests has been commissioned and will start in Q4. We are working with the Idea Stores to have a greater council brand presence. We will be taking on a social media monitoring and allocations service in Q4 to improve our social media work. We have restructured the Communications Team in this financial year - the restructure was completed in March 2017 and we have now filled all the vacant roles in the new structure. There has been a significant commitment to training in this financial year to provide the team with new skills for a more rounded communications service with a better digital focus.

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
Develop Intelligence Newsletter allowing better targeting of information to local people	Andreas Christophorou	Dec-17	Completed	100%	We have commissioned a new newsletter system from Granicus. We are currently setting the system up and it will start in Q4. In tandem with the new system, there will be a focus on signing up residents to it at our five biggest touch points - places where residents engage the most with the council such as our Idea Stores and One Stop Shops. The work is being done in tandem with customer service improvements and IT so that the data we get can be used across the council and that any sign ups to other council accounts such as the single view of the customer feeds into our newsletter as well.
Launch new Intranet Site	Andreas Christophorou	Mar-18	Overdue	30%	The Digital Team has researched the use of our current intranet. It has shown us what is widely used and what is not, with many pages very out of date and not updated by services. Our database of staff for example has 10,000 entries. The Digital Team presented a paper to CLT in October on direction of travel and have been working with teams across directorates since to understand their needs. A new paper was sent to CLT in February recommending the use of our current website CMS for the intranet. Our target of the new intranet in place this financial year turned out to be too optimistic due to the volume of work so instead we changed our goal to be selection of the CMS this financial year with the migration to and launch of a new system in the coming financial year.

4. Procurement of statutory notices

Key Milestones					
Invitation to tender	Andreas Christophorou	Feb-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Evaluation	Andreas Christophorou	Feb-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Contract award	Andreas Christophorou	Apr-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Contract mobilisation	Andreas Christophorou	May-17	Completed	100%	This has concluded on time and responsibility for statutory notices now rests with Planning and Licencing rather than Communications as they are the ones paying for advertising in East London Advertiser. This is a more dynamic and cost effective approach that using Communications as an unnecessary middle person.

Property

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
5. Deliver Asset Rental Account Action Plan					
Key Milestones					
Managers' briefing on moves procedure	Richard Chilcott	Apr-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned. New moves procedure has been advertised on the Council's intranet. The new procedure will be implemented for upcoming moves.
6. Implement Community buildings programme					
Key Milestones					
Agree action plan for validation of TRAs with THH	Richard Chilcott	Apr-17	Overdue	90%	Agreement has been made with Lead Member and with THH for lettings of Community Buildings to TRAs, at a peppercorn rent. THH has a process for approving TRAs in terms of proper functioning and governance. This process supports the issuing of heads of terms for leases to the approved TRAs. We are aiming to complete the exercise by the end of March 2018.
Formally transfer caretaker's facilities to THH	Richard Chilcott	Jun-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Complete marketing and letting of vacant buildings identified for commercial use	Richard Chilcott	Jun-17	Completed	100%	The action concerns Unit 6 in Watney Market which has been vacated by the previous occupiers, a leaseholders association. Following a review of the options for carrying out pre-marketing work, GVA has been appointed to undertake the marketing which has commenced. The property will be on the market until March when offers will be evaluated. Heads of terms for a lease will then be offered to the successful bidder.
Complete and open second community hub	Richard Chilcott	Jun-17	Overdue	60%	Original plan had been to deliver Raines House as a second hub, but as a listed building this requires more comprehensive community consultation and a listed building consent before works could be carried out. Tramshed has now been identified as the second community hub. Work has begun on Tramshed to make it available for letting as a community hub; budget allocation increased in February 2018 to ensure sufficient funds are available for the works. Upgrade work is now underway and on target for completion by end of April 2018.

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
Establish implementation plan for third hub and wider roll-out across the borough	Richard Chilcott	Jun-17	Overdue	40%	<p>Raines House has been identified as the third community hub.</p> <p>Concept designs for reconfiguring the existing space within the building to create a community hub have been carried out and community consultation started in January 2018; a planning application is expected to be submitted by the end of March 2018; a budget allocation for the full refurbishment project was agreed in February 2018. Progress on the fourth hub continues to be made – community consultation in February 2018 ahead of planning submission by end of March 2018. Existing users to be provided with temporary accommodation during the building works which are expected to take place between September 2018 and Summer 2019.</p> <p>Progress was delayed by the need to bring to an end the lease arrangements with the existing occupier and for the community to be fully consulted on changes to a listed building within their neighbourhood.</p> <p>The works will be complete and the building open for community use by Spring 2019 to enable the 300-year celebration of the building's history to be held.</p>
Complete and open third community hub	Richard Chilcott	Mar-18	Overdue	40%	As above.
Convert vacant community buildings identified for housing use to housing and transfer to THH/Homeless Services	Richard Chilcott	Mar-18	On Target	85%	<p>Temporary community use is in place for Turin Street, approved by the Mayor, which is due to come to an end in July 2018.</p> <p>Work has commenced on conversion of Bethnal Green Cottage and is expected to complete by June 2018; further community buildings have been identified to create a programme of conversions, feasibility studies have been completed and the process of procuring a build contractor is due to start in March 2018 to create at least 14 new homes.</p> <p>First completions in June 2018 rather than March 2018 because of delays within the planning process which took 3 months longer than expected.</p> <p>A Programme monitoring group has been set and in place to keep the project on track.</p>
7. Strengthen governance arrangements					
Key Milestones					
Review of revised governance arrangements	Richard Chilcott	Sep-17	Completed	100%	Template for new governance arrangements has been signed off and is now fully operational.
8. Asset reviews and service delivery plans					
Key Milestones					

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
Complete review of depot provision across the borough	Richard Chilcott	Sep-17	Overdue	60%	<p>Specialist consultants, Peter Brett Associates were appointed in October 2017 to deliver a feasibility study. The project is being jointly led by Asset Management and Public Realm. The architect within the PBA team is Fletcher Rae. The purpose of the study is to consider how additional functions, currently located at other sites across the borough, could potentially be accommodated at Blackwall Depot. The other sites involved include Commercial Road car pound, Southern Grove Veolia operation and Tower Hamlets Community Transport in Newell Street. The study will consider issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether the existing main building should be refurbished and extended or demolished and a new building put up elsewhere on the site, • would multi-level parking be the best solution to accommodate a significant commercial and private vehicle parking requirement on a relatively small site, • how best to configure a layout to deal with the presence of the Blackwall Tunnel under part of the site and the proximity of residential properties in the development taking place on an adjoining site. <p>The study team specialisms include transport planning, geotechnical engineering, planning and design. An initial options paper has been presented. The Council is validating all the inputs regarding the service requirements and the scope of the review. The study is due to be completed by April 2018.</p>
Complete review of leisure facilities across the borough	Richard Chilcott	Mar-18	Completed	100%	Working with colleagues in leisure and finance to progress as required to match service delivery plans. In May 2017 the Council adopted an indoor sports facilities strategy which sets out an action plan for leisure facilities across the borough. In January the Council agreed proposals for the leisure service to include £1.5m capital investment and the leisure management contract extension to 2022. Commensurate lease extensions will be put in place when the contract extensions are documented.
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%	This has been completed as planned.
Complete any regularisation work required (e.g. enter into leases)	Richard Chilcott	Dec-17	Completed	80%	Asset managers are assigned to progress the seven cases, which are at a variety of stages. Other cases have been completed already and new leases are in place. In some cases heads of terms for new occupation agreements have been issued to be progressed to Legal Services. In others alternative action is being progressed to achieve regularisation, for example where more efficient use of premises would be achieved through relocation. The target date for completion of the whole exercise is June 2018

Grants					
Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
10. Complete review of Third Sector Team					
Key Milestones					
Review of Third Sector Team completed	Steve Hill	Mar-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
New team structure finalised	Steve Hill	Mar-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Staff / Trade Union consultation on new team structure completed	Steve Hill	Apr-17	Completed	100%	The consultation on the new structure has been completed
Assimilation into posts / interviews	Steve Hill	May-17	Overdue	60%	The assimilation interview process is scheduled to take place in March 2018.
Full Implementation of new team structure	Steve Hill	Jun-17	Overdue	10%	Full implementation is anticipated to be during March and April 2018.
11. Implement web based GIFTS software					

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
Key Milestones					
System mapping of requirements to improve management reporting, information management and analysis	Steve Hill	Feb-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Development of web-based solution completed	Steve Hill	Apr-17	Overdue	75%	Detailed and technical work is continuing to revise the business processes, streamline the system, ensure accessible information and reporting for members, the VCS and the public relating to grant awards and monitoring via the internet.
Full implementation of new web-based system	Steve Hill	Jun-17	Overdue	60%	Full implementation is anticipated to be from March 2018 in line with the full implementation of the new staffing structure
12. Development of Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee					
Key Milestones					
Grants Scrutiny Committee Induction and work planning	Sharon Godman	Jun-17	Completed	100%	This was used to develop the work programme for the municipal year.
Develop Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee Work programme 2017-18	Sharon Godman	Jul-17	Completed	100%	The Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee has met 6 times this municipal year considering a range of grants decision reports and MSG monitoring reports. The Committee has also completed an in-depth review of recreation activities for children and young people and this included how grants support a more active lifestyle.
Strengthen resident and local stakeholders involvement in Committee's Work programme	Sharon Godman	Aug-17	Completed	100%	There is on-going work to publicise the work of the Committee. All papers are published on the Council website and the meetings are open to local residents. The review considered residents views about sports and leisure through engagement already undertaken.
13. Complete commissioning of Community Cohesion Theme					
Key Milestones					
Tender advert	Steve Hill / Emily Fieran-Reed	Mar-Apr 17	Completed	100%	The tender went out to advert in March 2017.
Tender evaluation	Steve Hill / Emily Fieran-Reed	May-17	Completed	100%	Interviews have been completed
Contract award	Steve Hill / Emily Fieran-Reed	Jun-17	Completed	100%	All 8 lots have been awarded and delivery began from 1 October for the final 3 lots.
Contract mobilisation	Steve Hill / Emily Fieran-Reed	Aug-17	Completed	100%	All contracts have now been mobilised and are delivering. The New Economics Foundation provided training and review to ensure that the contracts are co-delivered with the community and between the provider and Council in a way which delivers against co-production principles. Where contracts are successfully delivering we will extend by a further 7 months to bring the end date into line with MSG grants. This will enable them to be considered as part of the future grants/commissioning process.
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	Overdue	10%	This work has been paused whilst a wider review of grant policy is undertaken. At the completion of that wider review the role of the Sub-Committee will be completed.
Forward plan implemented to set out future work plan	Matthew Mannion / Steve Hill	On-going	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Grants Determination Sub-Committee away-day	Matthew Mannion / Steve Hill	Sep-17	Overdue	0%	The away day will take place once the review listed above is completed.
Grants Determination Sub-Committee Members development seminars	Matthew Mannion / Steve Hill	On-going	Delayed	0%	This will be considered as part of the wider Member Development Programme following the May 2018 elections. The nature of these seminars/sessions has yet to be determined as it will depend on the wider review of grants policy which will then clarify the role that Members will be playing in the future.
15. Strengthen grants management and work strategically with voluntary and community sector					
Key Milestones					

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
Complete audit of grants monitoring	Minesh Jani	Oct-17	Completed	100%	Audit completed. Report has been discussed with the service and recommendations will be taken forward.
Review and update the Council's grants policy, working closely with services	Sharon Godman	Mar-18	On Target	90%	Grants Policy Framework scheduled to go to Cabinet on 20 March 2018. This policy framework provides the basis for an outcomes based corporate grants programme and was developed through a process of co-production with the voluntary and community sector. Over 70 organisations participated in the open workshop events with a further five focus groups and a number of individual conversations. The policy framework sets out the rationale for using grants rather than commissioning for particular activities, a set of initial themes for the grants programme, eligibility criteria and levels of funding. Second stage will also be developed through co-production with the VCS. Scheduled to be completed in the summer with the launch of the new programme, this co-production develops the detail of the initial themes, setting out priorities and outcomes. It will also develop the processes and procedures to administer the programme. Work plan for this stage in place and on schedule for completion on time.
Work with the voluntary sector to develop a voluntary sector compact	Sharon Godman	Mar-18	On Target	90%	New Compact scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 20 March 2018. The Compact is a way of working between the voluntary sector and the public sector setting out agreed values and principles. The current Compact between the Council and the local voluntary and community sector was agreed in 2011. The Voluntary Sector Strategy action plan agreed by the Mayor in Cabinet in April 2016 includes a commitment to renew the Compact. The revised Compact restates the Council's commitment to working with the voluntary and community sector, sets out common principles and values, and includes undertaking for both sectors to help reinforce the relationship. There will be further work to develop an action plan to support the Compact.
Undertake comprehensive review of contracts and grants to inform the development of the Council's new approach to commissioning	Sharon Godman	Mar-18	Overdue	40%	Engagement has been undertaken with Commissioners across the Council and also research on best practice examples. A working Group has been formed which will take forward this work. This work is also being aligned to the development of the wider Grants Policy and will be completed in June 2018.

Organisational Culture

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
16. Permanent recruitment to the post of Corporate Director Governance					
Key Milestones					
Advert	Will Tuckley	Jan-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Long-list Interviews	Will Tuckley	Feb-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Short-list Interviews	Will Tuckley	Mar-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Appointment confirmed	Will Tuckley	Apr-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned and reported in Q2.
17. Complete review of Constitution					
Key Milestones					
Constitutional Working Group review parts 5,6 and 7	Asmat Hussain	Apr-17	Completed	100%	Reports went to GPC on 12 October 2017 with a revised Council Procedure Rules and Member/Officer Relations Protocol. Reports agreed by Council on 20 November 2017.
Amendments to General Purpose Committee	Asmat Hussain	Apr-17	Completed	100%	On 18 May 2016 Council agreed to establish a new enlarged GP Committee incorporating the Human Resources and Appeals Committees. A revised Terms of Reference were agreed at that time. On 17 May 2017 Council established the GP Committee for the municipal year 2017/18 under the same Terms of Reference
Full Council approval of parts 4 to 7	Asmat Hussain	May-17	Completed	100%	Council has approved all of Parts 4 to 7 except Part 4.1 (Council Procedure Rules) and Part 5.2 (Member/Officer Relations Protocol). Reports agreed by Council on 20th November 2017 for approval
18. Recruitment of seniors officers to complete new corporate structure					
Key Milestones					
Advert	Will Tuckley	Jan-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
Short-listing	Will Tuckley	Feb-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Interviews	Heather Daley	Mar-Apr 18	Completed	100%	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 Commissioning & Health (Joint post with the CCG - appointment made February 2018) - DD Children's Social Care (substantive post holder on outward secondment)
19. Implement actions from Clear Up Project					
Key Milestones					
Publish report	Asmat Hussain	Apr-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Report and recommendations to Full Council	Asmat Hussain	Jun-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Implement recommendations from Clear Up Project	Asmat Hussain	July 17 onwards	On Target	75%	The Clear Up Board made recommendations for action in respect of a total of 41 of the 66 allegations that had been reported to the Clear Up Team. As at 26th February 2018, 30 of those 41 had been fully actioned leaving 11 cases outstanding. Progress has been made on those 11 cases as 23 of the 37 recommendations associated with those 11 outstanding cases have also been completed.
Review progress against implementation	Asmat Hussain	Quarterly	On Target	75%	As per above.
Review Whistleblowing arrangements and implement new scheme	Heather Daley	May-17	Completed	100%	A Report went to GPC on 12 October 2017 with a revised Whistleblowing Policy, Procedure, Guidance for Managers and Guidance for Investigators as well as Action Plan for the implementation of a more effective whistleblowing framework. The Whistleblowing Policy and supporting documents have been relaunched with the widest possible audience. All political group Leaders will be asked to encourage the promotion of the policy within their group membership. The Audit Committee will be the responsible committee for the oversight of Whistleblowing and will be asked to assess the effectiveness of the Policy as well as monitoring the implementation of the policy. An e-Learning module has been prepared and is to be added to new Learning Management System (LMS) as well as forming part of the Learning and Development Core Offer training packages for all staff and Members. It will be mandatory for officers.
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%	This has been completed as planned.
Workshops with key stakeholders held to identify issues	Heather Daley	Feb-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
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	Overdue	80%	A briefing report on employment policies, provisions and procedures was considered by General Purpose Committee in October 2017 and ongoing engagement with the trade unions continues. Engagement with staff will follow - re-estimate time for this is now Q2 2018/19
Implement changes to practice through (a) BP training (b) management and staff training	Heather Daley	(a) Sept-17	Overdue	50%	Close working with employment lawyers within Legal services taking place via weekly meetings. HR restructure consultation concluded January 2018 and new structure being implemented which strengthens requirement and provision for expertise, training and mentoring, quality assurance and proactive management of employee related matters.
21. Develop and implement refreshed employee values					
Key Milestones					
Staff survey completed	Heather Daley	Jan-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Focus Groups	Heather Daley	Feb-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Revised values developed and: (a) communicated (b) staff engaged via their managers	Heather Daley	Mar-Apr 17 (a) August (b) By October	Completed	100%	Core values launch week held in October across different Council sites. Engagement tool publicised to all managers. Significant engagement achieved and further on going activities planned.
22. Deliver Year 1 of Smarter Together Programme					

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
Key Milestones					
Resource programme and project roles	Heather Daley	May-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Programme plans mapped to MTFS to ensure benefits are realised	Neville Murton	Jun-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.
Change managed and staff engagement maintained and measured via staff pulse surveys	Heather Daley	Jan-18	Overdue	45%	A staff survey is planned for autumn 2018 that will measure any changes to levels of staff engagement.
Year 1 MTFS benefits realised via Programme	Neville Murton	Mar-18	Completed	100%	Slippage and non achievement of savings has been included in relevant budget management reports to Members. The latest position (P10) indicates achievement of 89% of programmed savings. Progress against the delivery of saving and growth (Investment) proposals continues to be reviewed at quarterly portfolio performance meetings by the Mayor and Lead member (Resources). Overall the Council's financial position is healthy with an estimated £1.5m General Fund underspend currently projected.
Smarter Together Programme plans delivered	Neville Murton	Mar-18	Completed	100%	The Smarter Together programme has moved into delivery stage. Activity is now underway to deliver a series of quick wins to manage demand and achieve efficiencies within this financial year to support achievement of savings targets. In parallel, we are continuing work on change initiatives identified in the MTFS and the invest to save initiatives to achieve our vision of becoming an outcomes-based organisation. A number of controls have been introduced to make sure our priority change initiatives are sufficiently resourced and progress against plans is expedited. We have increased our efforts to manage risks and dependencies on early warning signals and triggers for senior leadership escalation and attention. A rigorous process for managing benefit delivery has been agreed. The iterative process of benefit validation has commenced to provide assurance that benefits are on track, being monitored effectively and instances of over or under delivery are quickly identified and acted upon. A benefits dashboard is being developed to strengthen the monitoring process for MTFS and other council efficiency initiatives
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%	All recommendations from the Ofsted Inspection have been reviewed and are responded to through the activities and outcomes identified in the Children's Services Improvement Plan. This Plan is updated regularly by the Interim Divisional Director for Children's Social Care. Progress against key improvement targets is reported monthly to CLT in the form of the Children's Services Improvement Summary Report, and quarterly to Cabinet through the Quarterly Children's Services Improvement Report.
Review Annual Residents Survey 2017	Sharon Godman	May-17	Completed	100%	In addition to this, the Children's Services Improvement Board and Operations Group forward plan reports on progress against key areas for improvement, as well as discussing and scrutinising the Improvement Summary reports.
Establish regular meetings of Tower Hamlets Partnership	Sharon Godman	Apr-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned. The Partnership organised a Summit with over 100 organisations and nearly 300 stakeholders in attendance to develop a shared vision and priorities for the borough.
Investors in People Gold Accreditation	Heather Daley	Dec-17	Completed	100%	IIP reaccreditation assessment took place in December 2017 and an organisation-wide action plan to ensure retention of IIP silver accreditation has been drawn up by senior managers. This now needs to be reviewed by the assessor.
ADASS Peer Review	Denise Radley	Apr-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned and reported in Q1.
Undertake a programme of improvement work with LGA	Sharon Godman	Apr 17- Mar 18	Completed	100%	The Corporate Peer Challenge proposal was agreed by the Best Value Improvement Board at their last meeting. Planning for this is currently underway and will be held in June 2018. A Members Seminar was jointly delivered with the LGA on Members role in Children's Services. A Planning Peer Review will also be undertaken with LGA.
24. Complete phase 2 of Officer Schemes of Delegation					
Key Milestones					

Activities	Lead Officer	Deadline	Status	%Comp	Year-End Comments
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	Asmat Hussain	Jun-17	Overdue	75%	The Council Scheme of Delegations (SOD) is being reviewed, the first stage is the Council Overall Scheme which will form part of the Constitution and agreed by CLT. Any subsequent changes to the Constitution will follow the governance process changes to the constitution including General Purpose Committee . The Second Stage will be departmental SOD and each Directorate to review and update their Departmental SOD which will require publication within the Council. The work in underway and due to be completed in the summer 2018 be reported to CLT this quarter.
Circulate revised proposed Officer Scheme of Delegations to Corporate and Divisional Directors	Asmat Hussain	Jul-17	Overdue	0%	This will be considered once the Corporate Scheme of Management has been finalised.
Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer sign off on respective Officer Scheme of Delegations for Directorates	Asmat Hussain	Sep-17	Overdue	0%	As above
Report to Cabinet on the final Officer Scheme of Delegations	Asmat Hussain	Nov-17	Overdue	0%	As above
Report to General Purposes on the final Officer Scheme of Delegations	Asmat Hussain	Nov-17	Overdue	0%	As above
Report to Council on the final Officer Scheme of Delegations	Asmat Hussain	Nov-17	Overdue	0%	As 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%	This has been completed as planned.
Review and Update Member /officer Protocol	Asmat Hussain	May-17	Completed	100%	This has been reviewed and updated and reports have gone to GPC on 5 July 2017 and 12 October 2017 and to SAC on 19 October 2017. Report agreed by Council on 20 November 2017
Corporate Induction to include session on Member and Officer Protocol	Asmat Hussain	Jun-17	Completed	100%	The revised Member/Officer Relations' Protocol will be cascaded down to DLTs, SMTs and Team Meetings. It will also form part of the Induction for both Members and new members of staff. Corporate Inductions include a session on Member/Officer Protocol delivered by the Corporate Director Governance.
Develop and agree Member to Member protocol	Asmat Hussain	May-17	Completed	100%	This has now been included in the Member/Officer Relations Protocol and which was agreed at GPC on 12 October 2017 and to SAC on 19 October 2017. Report agreed by Council on 19 November 2017.
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%	Findings 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 has been completed as planned.
Annual Officers Declaration of Interest 17-18	Heather Daley	Jun-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as part of the Personal Development Process and updated as and when circumstances change.
Audit of 2017-18 Staff Declarations of Interest	Minesh Jani	Dec-17	On Target	50%	This audit is planned and will be carried out following the refresh of declarations made by officers. All employees must complete a 'new' declaration of interest form by the 31st March 2018. This has been communicated to managers and employees through the Managers Briefing, the front page of the Intranet and individual liaison with managers whose staff do not have access to the online form in HR Self Service. An audit of the refreshed declarations will be carried out in Qtr 1 of 2018/19 financial year.
Annual Members Declaration of Interest	Asmat Hussain	Dec-17	Completed	100%	This has been completed as planned.

BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

TITLE	Author	ITEM No.	DATE
Children’s Services Improvement-progress report	Anthony Walters- Programme Manager, Children’s Services Improvement		19/03/2018

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 at least ‘good’ by April 2019, which is the minimum our children and families deserve. The council has now had two monitoring visits from Ofsted.

- 1.2 In their letter reporting findings from the most recent of these visits in December 2017, Ofsted noted that improvements have been made and sustained within children’s services and that leaders and managers showed increased in-depth knowledge of strengths and areas of weakness. In particular, the way we assess referrals of children and families for social care support was identified as being timely and thresholds for help were appropriately applied, meaning that no children in the cases they sampled were at risk of immediate harm. The letter also pointed to some areas needing further improvement and we are continuing our focus on these areas through our improvement plan.

- 1.3 The body of this report includes commentary on progress in the four themes of our improvement plan at the end of the third quarter of our improvement programme.

- 1.4 Whilst we are making progress in embedding the changes that have been made in the first 9 months of our improvement programme, giving us a firm foundation for improvement, there remain significant challenges to ensuring that the service improves to meet a ‘good’ inspection standard and sustains this improvement. The focus in our next stage is to build on the progress made so that further improvement is achieved and sustained.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Best Value Improvement Board is recommended to:
 - Note the progress made in delivering the children’s services improvement programme.
 - 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 for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the local safeguarding children board 'inadequate' overall (but with some areas requiring improvement.) Subsequently, Cabinet agreed an improvement plan on 27th June 2017 which has now been agreed by the Department for Education and Ofsted.
- 3.2 The improvement 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 on 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 2 months by our independently chaired Improvement Board. The Mayor, Chief Executive, Cabinet Member and Director of Children's Services meet fortnightly to review and address key issues and challenges. Quarterly updates are reported to Cabinet, Best Value Programme Board and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This third update report details progress made between October 2017 and the end of December 2017.
- 3.3 In July 2017 the Department for Education (DfE) appointed Lincolnshire and Islington councils as our Improvement Partners (IPs). The role of the IPs is to support us in our improvement journey by acting as external expert advisors. They provide regular reports on progress which are shared with the DfE. The focus of their support is in the following areas where they have specific expertise that the council can learn from:
- Early help
 - Legal support
 - Workforce strategy
 - Leadership and governance
 - Commissioning
 - Finance
 - Looked after children
- 3.4 The council aims to achieve at least 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. Our improvement plan sets out a three stage journey to achieving this aim. We are currently in the second stage of that journey, which is called 'embedding sustained improvement' and runs until the end of March 2018.
- 3.5 The table below shows overall progress in the aims that we set for this second stage. This work will ensure that the foundations put in place during stage 1 are built upon and improvement is sustained over the length of the programme:

Our aim	Progress and outcome
Workforce strategy agreed and in implementation	<p>The first draft of our workforce strategy was agreed and an action plan is being implemented. We are in the process of refining this to ensure that our strategy effectively positions Tower Hamlets as an employer of choice for children’s social workers, with advice from Islington Council as our Improvement Partner. Workforce is regularly discussed at the Improvement Board and among the council’s leadership. Further updates on specific workforce related activity are provided under ‘Theme 1’ below.</p>
Early Help changes implemented including commencing commissioning processes for any new services	<p>Following a review of early help services it has been agreed that the Early Help redesign will incorporate the principles of working with troubled families in order to engage with families that have two or more of the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents or children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour • Children who are not attending school regularly • Children who need help: children of all ages, who need help, are identified as in need or are subject to a Child Protection Plan • Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion or young people at risk of worklessness • Families affected by domestic violence and abuse • Parents or children with a range of health problems. <p>The redesign of Early Help will take place in two phases which will support a quick implementation (phase 1) and which will provide the opportunity to embed (phase 2). Phase one redesign has now started and will be completed in May 2018.</p> <p>Arising from the new Early Help redesign children, young people and families will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered support to address needs at tiers 1 and 2.

Our aim	Progress and outcome
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be provided with the support from a named Lead Professional who will build a relationship them, assess the needs of the whole family; undertake family planning and co-ordinate interventions. • Empowered to support to help themselves. <p>The Early Help service will be offered on a locality basis providing services (in the NW, NE, SW and SE of the borough). This will cement strong, local, relationships between families, staff and our partners.</p> <p>To ensure alignment with the improvements in Children’s Social Care, the Early Help redesign will offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single front door aligned to the MASH. Which will yield better planning and outcomes for children and young people • Embedded processes in place for “step down” of cases <i>from</i> Children’s Social Care; and “step up” of cases into Children’s Social Care. • A range of evidence based interventions linked to parenting support, education, employment, housing, positive activities for youth, domestic violence support, emotional health and wellbeing (pre-Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) threshold) support, adult mental health and substance misuse to name but a few. <p>As part of the implementation work done to date, clearer processes have been introduced for joint working between the Early Help Hub (EHH) and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in order to create one front door, with use of Framework-i (our case management system) across the Hub and MASH to ensure that there is a more joined up approach to managing referrals between social care and early help. The organisational change process to implement phase one of our new early help model will commence in February 2018. The restructure will deliver central capacity for case management and commissioning of early help services ensuring greater consistency, effective</p>

Our aim	Progress and outcome
	<p>targeting of resources to those families that need early help, and the provision of support to effectively meet need. Alongside the organisational change, processes are being redesigned, an outcomes framework is being developed, a commissioning strategy is being identified and an early help workforce plan is being put in place, so that early help professionals are equipped with the right skills to effectively support families. Implementation of this first phase will be completed in May 2018.</p> <p>The second phase of the Early Help redesign will bring together multi-disciplinary professionals in locality-based teams to better coordinate support for children and families.</p>
<p>Performance data, case audit and dip sampling is used systematically to show progress and identify areas for further improvement</p>	<p>Following the work done during stage 1 to improve performance management within the Children's Social Care service, the use of performance data, case audits and dip samples is becoming embedded as a fundamental part of the service improvement process. The detailed updates below give examples of where this is taking place to improve our support to children and their families. In their recent monitoring visit, Ofsted fed back that they could see much more use of performance information by team managers to support social workers and tackle drift and delay.</p>

3.6 The next, and final, stage on our improvement journey will be as follows:

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.

This will be a challenging phase given the recruitment challenges faced by all London councils, the high volume of contacts and referrals we are experiencing, and the need to embed improvements across the whole service.

3.7 Our progress is being monitored by Ofsted through quarterly monitoring visits. The second of these visits took place on 12th and 13th December 2017. In their feedback letter, Ofsted said:

“In the cases sampled by inspectors, thresholds for help and protection were appropriately applied,

decision-making was timely and no children were identified as being at risk of immediate harm.”

“...it is encouraging that most improvements identified by the previous visits have been sustained and, in many case, further improved. Senior leaders and elected members have an increased in-depth knowledge of their strengths and areas of weakness. They are aware of the challenges that they face to embed the positive changes that have been made, while simultaneously addressing the areas of poorer practice. They fully recognise that there is considerably more work to be undertaken to ensure that vulnerable children in Tower Hamlets experience consistently good quality help and protection from harm. Leaders and managers demonstrate considerable determination, commitment and tenacity to embed and sustain these changes.”

The full letter has been published on Ofsted’s website and can be found at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/tower-hamlets> .

- 3.8 Ofsted noted the considerable progress that had been made in the following areas:
- Application of thresholds and timely decision making in the MASH (the ‘front door’ of the service);
 - Implementation of performance management processes to ensure that staff are held to account for the quality of their practice and that children do not experience delay in getting support;
 - Improving the quality of assessments, including using the views of children to inform them;
 - Effectiveness and timeliness of child protection processes (strategy meetings and section 47 enquiries).
- 3.9 They identified further progress is needed in the following areas:
- Multi-agency case conferences need to focus more on capturing children’s voices and experience and acting upon it;
 - Whilst improvements were noted in the quality of assessments, the quality of analysis is variable;
 - Oversight and challenge from child protection conference chairs and the quality of child protection plans;
 - Continuing to bring down caseloads for social workers and to increase the permanent workforce.
- 3.10 Ofsted’s third monitoring visit is due to take place on 1st and 2nd May 2018. This will focus on our response to supporting young people who go

missing and/or are at risk from involvement in gangs or sexual exploitation. This will require a concerted effort by children's social care, other parts of the council such as community safety and our partners including the police, schools and health.

- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 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. A new Divisional Director post has been created and permanently recruited to which covers children's commissioning, including social care placements and early help, which further adds to capacity at senior management level. Additional capacity has also been put in place at service manager level. £5.2m of growth has been put in the Children's Services budget for 2017/18 and £4.5m has been identified thus far as the requirement to support the improvement plan. This will need to be monitored as part of the ongoing monitoring and modelling to ensure that there is a sustainable funding position for children's services now and in the future.
- 3.13 The following paragraphs set out in more detail the progress that has been made in each of the four themes of our improvement plan.

Theme 1- Leadership, Management and Governance

- 3.14 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.

- 3.15 Governance and performance management arrangements were put in place as part of stage 1 of our improvement programme and are embedding well, as recognised by Ofsted in their monitoring visit. Political leadership and knowledge of Children’s Social Care has been developed through two seminars for all Members; including a seminar specifically on child sexual exploitation; practice visits for the Mayor, Lead Member and Scrutiny Lead; spotlight sessions at Overview and Scrutiny Committee; regular discussion at Cabinet and pre-Cabinet meetings; verbal briefings by the Director for opposition Members; and fortnightly meetings between the Mayor, Lead Member, Chief Executive and Corporate Director, alternately attended by the independent Improvement Board Chair. The Mayor, Lead Member and Cabinet Member have also benefitted from training and mentoring organised by the Local Government Association.
- 3.16 Staff recruitment remains a challenge. As at the end of December 2017, 36% of posts across the Children’s Social Care service were filled by agency staff, with the rate much higher in some teams. This is due to the competitive nature of the market in London for qualified social workers, coupled with the pressure of increased workload and the drive for improvement post Ofsted. Staff turnover has reduced, but recruitment remains a challenge. We are continuing to run a rolling recruitment campaign with our streamlined process and are continuing to work with our agency social workers to encourage them to move into permanent posts to introduce further stability in the workforce. The vacant posts in the senior management team in Children’s Social Care that are currently occupied by interim staff have been recruited to and are expected to be filled by April 2018. Unfortunately, having attracted initially high levels of interest, the number of people applying for social work positions after our attendance at the national recruitment fair has been disappointingly low. We are ensuring that everyone who expressed an interest in the recruitment fair is being contacted to encourage them to pursue an application to the council. In addition, we are developing an improved ‘grow your own’ scheme to recruit more newly qualified workers and provide them with enhanced support so that they are able to develop their skills and provide the resources that our children and families need.
- 3.17 Our ‘back to basics’ training programme has been delivered, with good feedback from staff. We have completed a training needs analysis which has identified further development needs that is informing a programme of training for the coming months. We are continuing to provide 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.
- 3.18 Sufficiency of emergency and unplanned placements remains an area of concern. Too many children experience having to move between

different placements, leading to instability and disruption. Our sufficiency strategy is now being implemented to address the availability of suitable residential and foster care placements for our current cohort of looked after children. As part of this work, we have introduced new 'edge of care' services for families with older children who are likely to enter the care system where appropriate support for the family may be able to prevent this, enabling them to stay at home. This will improve outcomes for these children as well as reducing demand for care placements helping us to better manage the budget for Children's Social Care. It is too early to say whether these changes are being effective, and a strong focus remains in this area.

- 3.19 The remaining challenges relating to workforce and sufficiency of looked after children are the main focus of this theme in phase 2 of the improvement programme, as we move into implementation of the two strategies outlined above.

Theme 2- A robust model of social work practice.

- 3.20 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.
- 3.21 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.
- 3.22 The council's approach to practice improvement includes 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.
- 3.23 Our early improvements in the 'front door' of MASH and A&I have been sustained. Ofsted's second monitoring visit acknowledged that these improvements are starting to be embedded and this is also evidenced in our performance monitoring and quality assurance activity. For example, there has been significant improvement in the proportion of contacts where an initial decision is made on how to respond within 1 day (the figure for December 2017 was 74% compared to 49% in July), more assessments are being completed within 45 working days, and the proportion of contacts progressing to referral has increased indicating that partners understand thresholds for intervention and are referring children appropriately. These improvements have been achieved whilst the number of referrals being received is continuing to increase. As well as being more timely, our case auditing is showing that the quality of work is improving. This means that we can be more certain that children are receiving appropriate and timely interventions to keep them safe.
- 3.24 Activity in the third quarter continued to focus on achieving similar improvement in the Family Support and Protection (FSP) teams, who deal

with longer term casework of children who are assessed as being in need or subject to a child protection plan. All cases held by the FSP teams have now been reviewed, to ensure that the information held about them is accurate and that they are effectively managed to ensure appropriate and timely support is in place for families and that children are kept safe. Management oversight across the service has continued to improve and in December, 87.9%, of cases had management oversight recorded in the last 8 weeks. In the majority of FSP teams, this figure was over 95% and targeted management action is being taken to improve performance in the remaining teams. The improvements in case management across the service have resulted in an increase in the proportion of children in need that have a plan in place from 51% in June 2017 to 78.1% at the end of December, a figure we expect to increase further as this work progresses. Approximately 92% of these children had a review of their plan within the last six months. At the same time, there has been an improving trend in the proportion of children being regularly visited by social workers.

- 3.25 The review of our early help services was concluded during stage 1 of our improvement programme. We are now implementing the findings of this review, changing the way we support families before they need help from social care services, to prevent problems from escalating and manage demand in the social care system. These changes will see the implementation of a 'single front door' and multi-disciplinary, locality-based teams to ensure that the right families receive the right support in a timely way and that resources are properly targeted to areas of need. Phase 1 of these changes will be implemented by April 2018.
- 3.26 In light of concerns about our local thresholds for social care intervention, in particular the extent to which these are well understood by partner agencies, a decision has been taken through the Local Safeguarding Children Board to adopt the Pan London child protection thresholds. This will bring us in line with most other London boroughs and help to ensure consistency. Work is progressing with partners and the new thresholds will be fully rolled out by the end of January 2018. Meanwhile, the increasing proportion of children receiving assessments and services as an outcome from referrals indicates that thresholds are becoming better understood by referring agencies.
- 3.27 Alongside this work, we have completed the first phase of engagement with staff and partners on a new model of social work practice following a decision to move away from the 'signs of safety' model, which had been poorly implemented. Feedback from staff about this change has been largely positive with a core group of social workers involved in developing the new model, rooted in relationship-based practice and family group conferencing. Planning for the next phase of development is now in progress.
- 3.28 Whilst progress has been made across this theme, and the improvements seen during the first phases of our improvement programme have been sustained and built upon, there remain significant challenges in ensuring that social work practice is consistently robust. Although the improvements noted above are significant, and the overall trend is of improvement, performance is not yet at the level that would be expected

from a 'good' service. The focus of our work over the next quarter, as articulated in our improvement plan, is to ensure that the processes put in place during stage 1 are used to support continuing and sustained improvements. The work that is ongoing as part of theme 1 to address our workforce challenges will be key to this as they begin to deliver a more stable and skilled workforce.

Theme 3- A sufficient and skilled workforce

- 3.29 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.
- 3.30 As noted above, management oversight has improved and at the end of December, 87.9% of cases had received management oversight in the last 8 weeks. This is a significant improvement from 60% in April 2017. We have not yet met our 95% target, and management action to improve performance is now being targeted in teams that are impacting on this overall figure. Training for managers was being delivered as part of our 'back to basics' programme, further supporting improvements in the quality of management oversight to ensure that it supports the delivery of consistently high quality social work practice.
- 3.31 There is a focus now on improving our practice in relation to children who go missing, are at risk of sexual exploitation and involvement in gang related activity. We have appointed a new Missing Young Persons co-ordinator to oversee activity in this area. The initial focus has been to ensure that we have good quality data so that we have a thorough understanding of why children are going missing and are able to respond to emerging patterns. We are now working to further improve this data, improve the completion rate for return home interviews and have linked this work to our partnership wide response on child sexual exploitation and gang related activity. In relation to child sexual exploitation the use of risk screening tools in our MASH is now embedded enabling us to better identify and intervene where young people are at risk. This area of work will be the focus of Ofsted's next monitoring visit.

Theme 4- Quality Assurance and audit

- 3.32 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.
- 3.33 Our quality assurance and audit programme was fully launched in August 2017 and we are continuing to use audit activity systematically to inform

our improvement activity under theme 2. Ofsted commented in their second monitoring visit that the use of audit was becoming more embedded although they felt that some improvement was needed in its effectiveness to support the improvement journey.

- 3.34 As part of embedding Quality Assurance at all levels, Ofsted recommended that we take forward “Practice Week”, where senior leaders spend time with frontline social workers reviewing cases and shadowing their work with children and families in order to better understand their day to day experience. Practice week took place over a three day period between 20th – 22nd November, with senior officers including the Chief Executive and Director of Children’s Services taking part, alongside the Mayor, lead member for Children’s Services and lead Overview and Scrutiny member for Children’s Services, the divisional director and the LSCB chair. Observations of practice included meeting student social workers, spending time with social work teams and observing professional meetings about children. ICT frustrations were observed as well as concerns around caseloads, personal development / training and the approach to compliance and communication. These observations are informing our improvement activity going forward.
- 3.35 The council has embarked on a complete replacement and upgrade of its aging IT infrastructure to provide a fast, flexible and reliable service for all service users. Over £16 million has been committed to deliver this extensive programme. Recognising that effective and reliable IT is critical for the Children’s Services Improvement journey, Children’s Services has been prioritised in the replacement and upgrade programme. Whilst this replacement programme is underway, short term actions have improved the availability and performance of IT to Children’s Services. This has been reported to the Children’s Services Improvement Board and will continue to be monitored at the highest level.
- 3.36 Ensuring that care leavers have up to date and reviewed pathway plans is another subject of this theme. Whilst the proportion of care leavers with a pathway plan has been maintained at 96%, the percentage that were reviewed in the last 6 months started to improve in October but still requires significant improvement. There is some concern about the quality of pathway planning and a review of our support to care leavers is now in progress, to be completed in March 2018. The voice of young people who are in or have left care has been strengthened at the Corporate Parenting Board and is helping to shape this work, including the ambition to develop a post-16 service.

Next Steps

- 3.37 The Best Value Improvement Board will receive a further update on progress in three months’ time. The key priorities for the next monitoring period, will be:
- Continuing work on our recruitment strategy;
 - Developing our training and development offer, including consideration of a social work academy;

- Implementing the sufficiency strategy, in particular the immediate actions to support families with older children that are at the point of entering the care system (on the 'edge of care.');
- Consolidating and building on the improvements we have made in performance and quality across the social care service;
- Implementing phase 1 of the new model for Early Help services;
- Completing implementation of the new child protection thresholds;
- Continuing development of our new model of social work practice;
- Delivering short, medium and long-term improvements to the council's ICT systems to ensure it is robust and reliable for social care staff.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 It is acknowledged that the implementation of the Children's Improvement Plan will only be achieved by Council leadership providing the financial resources required for its delivery.
- 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 Council leadership is also committed to providing one-off investment funded via Transformation Reserve to support the implementation of the improvement plan. The estimated cost of the improvement plan over 2 years is expected to be £4.2m. and would be reported to Members as part of the Council's normal budget management reporting mechanism.
- 4.4 The level of the one-off funding sought will be based on 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'). 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.

- 5.2. 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. Ofsted's lead inspector will review the Inspection Improvement Plan to ensure that it reflects the recommendations contained in the inspection report. 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.
- 5.3. In respect of the recommendations contained in the report, the Council has a 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.
- 5.4. The recommendations that the Mayor in Cabinet should endorse the progress made in delivering the children's services improvement programme and agree the next steps in the improvement journey, are consistent with the Council's duty to secure continuous improvement in its functions. Failure to make the necessary improvements to children's services could result in the Secretary of State appointing a Children's Services Commissioner or removing service control from the Council.
- 5.5. In carrying out its functions, the Council must also comply with the public sector equality duty set out in section 149 Equality Act 2010, namely it must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

This page is intentionally left blank

BRIEFING PAPER FOR BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD
--

TITLE	Author	ITEM NO	Date
Clear Up Project Recommendations – Progress Update	Paul Greeno, Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer ext. 3934		19th March 2018

1. INTRODUCTION/SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is providing the Board with an update on progress on the recommendations for further action arising out of the Clear Up Report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Board is asked to note the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 17th December 2017, the Board received an update report advising that:

- Recommendations for action had been made in respect of a total of 41 of the 66 allegations that had been reported to the Clear Up Team.
- 16 of those 41 had been fully actioned.
- 17 recommendations associated with the remaining 25 cases had also been completed.

- 3.2 Substantial progress has since been made.

- A further 14 cases have been fully actioned leaving 11 outstanding cases.
- 23 of 37 outstanding recommendations in respect of those 11 outstanding cases have been completed leaving 14 outstanding recommendations.

- In respect of 5 of the outstanding cases and 8 of the outstanding recommendations, these all relate to HR and have been deferred until after the election.

3.3 A spreadsheet showing these outstanding actions is attached at Appendix 1. These have been clustered to reflect that the same recommendation may apply to more than 1 case.

4 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

4.1 There are no direct financial implications.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

5.1 The Monitoring Officer has been monitoring actions taken and where an action has been completed the Monitoring Officer has ensured that all appropriate lawful steps were taken to comply with the recommendations.

5.2 The Council has a duty under 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. This is referred to as the Council's best value duty.

5.3 By virtue of Directions that were made by the Secretary of State on 17th March 2015 the Council was required to draw up and agree with the Commissioners a strategy and action plan for securing the Authority's compliance with the best value duty. Part of that plan included a recommendation that the Council set up a Clear-Up Team to ensure that any historic unconsidered allegations of improper Council decision making or impropriety in the discharge of Council functions are properly investigated and determined. A natural consequence of the investigation and determination is to consider the findings and implement recommendations so as to continue to demonstrate the Council continued commitment to the best value duty.

5.4 Pursuant to the Direction of 28th March 2017 progress upon this matter will be included in the quarterly reports to the Secretary of State upon the Best Value Action Plan and Best Value Improvement Plan.

CLEAR UP PROJECT
OUTSTANDING ACTIONS CLUSTERED

Responsible Post	Ref. No.	Recommendation	Service Update
Service Head, Risk Management	CU 009	The Corporate Investigation Team to re-examine the allegations contained within the original referral in relation to the Mosque, in order to consider whether any retrospective investigation is required to satisfy the Council that public funds have not been misused.	The review of the investigation is on-going and was scheduled to be completed by the end of the January 2018. Further update awaited.
Divisional Director, HR & Transformation	CU 015	Consider whether it would be more efficient to centralise investigations under an appropriate Directorate where there are allegations of a complex nature or serious misconduct, to ensure independence, faster turnaround of cases, and the utilisation of investigative specialist expertise. The current system leads to delays in concluding matters as Investigation Officers for HR matters still have to fulfil their normal role objectives and, in many cases, do not have professional investigative expertise.	The review and realignment of HR Policy and Procedures is underway. The first 'phase' of the review has focused predominantly on 4 key current people policies and procedures. Disciplinary; Combatting Harassment and Discrimination (CHAD)/ Grievance, Absence and Performance of employed Council staff and has considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current policies and procedures • application of those policies and procedures • perception and views of those who either use, or have been through these procedures - managers, TU's, HR and staff member Reports went to CLT on 13/09/2017 and GP Committee on 12/10/2017 The implementation of this process has been deferred on agreement with the Chief Executive and CLT until after the election
Divisional Director, HR & Transformation	CU 015	It is recommended that when an officer leaves Council employment whilst under investigation, a final investigation report is still completed and submitted to the appropriate Service Head / Director and HR, to ensure completeness of records and in anticipation of any future legal challenge to outcomes	See update for Ref. No. CU 015 above
Divisional Director, HR & Transformation	CU 015	HR processes and guidance on the suspension of employees should be reviewed, to ensure that suspension periods are as short as possible	See update for Ref. No. CU 015 above
Divisional Director, HR & Transformation	CU 015 CU 027 CU 031 CU 035 CU 057	The Council's HR Division to review the investigation process for Grievance; Combatting Harassment and Discrimination (CHAD) and Disciplinary issues with a view to ensuring members of staff are only investigated once for the same issue, with outcomes settled (not including appeals) after the first investigation. The current system whereby Grievance / CHAD investigations then lead to disciplinary investigations could be considered inefficient, wasteful of resources and public money, together with being a potential strain on all involved.	See update for Ref. No. CU 015 above
Divisional Director, Legal	CU 023	The Legal Department should consider the communication processes between the Legal Team and the relevant Council delivery team to ensure that there is clarity regarding when all executed contracts have been received and delivery can commence or, if delivery is commenced in the absence of a signed contract, for the delivery team to correctly follow the procedures to obtain approval and record the decision on the Council's risk registers	An Audit Report on the signing and sealing of contracts has made certain recommendations including in respect of the communications process. These recommendations are being put in place with completion scheduled by the end of the current quarter
Service Head, Risk Management	CU 039 CU 047	Internal Audit is requested to undertake a review to test that a sample of electors added to the electoral roll have provided appropriate evidence of their eligibility (including nationality, date of birth and address of residence). This review should be completed prior to the 2018 Mayoral and local elections.	A meeting is to take place between the Head of Elections and the Service Head Risk Management and sample testing has been arranged to take place during February 2018
Service Head, Risk Management	CU 041	2016 Internal Audit Report 'Fact Finding Report, Youth Service Review' to be finalised as soon as possible.	This report will be finalised as soon as possible. Arrangements have been made to strengthen the case management system to ensure all investigations are logged, monitored and reported. A follow up system has been developed to review recommendations raised by the corporate fraud team and for these to be reported to the Corporate Leadership Team and the Audit Committee

CLEAR UP PROJECT
OUTSTANDING ACTIONS CLUSTERED

Responsible Post	Ref. No.	Recommendation	Service Update
Corporate Director, Resources	CU 055	The Council should consider whether they wish to approach officials of the two organisations where grant applications may have been submitted with intent to deceive, to request an explanation of the similarities and issues with their Mayor's Community Chest grant applications made in 2013. It should also be considered whether it would be appropriate to request the return of the funding provided subject to proof being provided that the funds were spent in accordance with the grant agreements.	This is still being considered

BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

TITLE	Author	ITEM NO	Date
LGA Peer Challenge	William Tompsett, Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer		19 Mar 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Tower Hamlets Council have been progressing an extensive improvement journey since 2014 when Commissioners were brought in by the Secretary of State for DCLG. This progress was evidenced by the return of decision making powers in March 2017 with Directions to deliver an improvement plan in key areas with regular reporting of progress and performance.
- 1.2. One of the conditions of the Directions is to ***“set up an independent review of achievement against their Best Value Action Plan and Best Value Improvement Plan 2017/18 to be submitted to the Secretary of State by 1st August 2018”***. The Plan contains a set of objectives with deliverable milestones that have been reported on a quarterly basis to the Best Value Improvement Board with progress letters going to the Secretary of State for DCLG.
- 1.3. As part of its sector-led improvement offer, The Local Government Association provides a tailored Peer Challenge facility for all local authorities. These are sector-led improvement reviews that look at a standard range of themes as well as the more specific requirements of the authority.
- 1.4. It was agreed at Best Value Improvement Board in September 2017 that the Council adopt the LGA Peer Challenge as the chosen mechanism for providing the independent review of progress and improvement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. The Board is asked to:
 1. Consider key questions and areas of focus for the scope for the Peer Challenge as detailed in 3.4.
 2. Commit to providing evidence and input into the Council’s Position Statement and supporting documents according to the enclosed timeline with particular reference to lead officers highlighted in 3.2 and 3.5.
 3. Commit to work with Councillors, key officers and stakeholders to ensure attendance and participation in interviews and discussions with the LGA Peer Team during the on-site element of the Peer Challenge in the week commencing 18th June 2018.
 4. Note the progress made with the preparation for the Peer Challenge and the revised timeline to delivering the Peer Challenge included in 3.6.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. The LGA Peer Challenge is an improvement focused tool delivered in partnership with the Local Authority utilising a team of peers from across the sector looking at issues the host authority has chosen as a focus.
- 3.2. There are a set of standard themes that all Peer Challenges look at. In order to ensure these areas are suitably represented through the process, a Corporate Lead is recommended to take ownership of signing off key messages and the provision of appropriate information.
- **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? – **Chief Executive and Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance**
 - **Leadership of place** – Does the Council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders? - **Chief Executive and Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance**
 - **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? – **Corporate Director of Resources and Divisional Director Finance, Procurement & Audit**
 - **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? – **Corporate Director Governance and Corporate Director Resources**
 - **Capacity to deliver** – Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the Council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes? – **Chief Executive and Corporate Director Resources**
- 3.3. On top of the standard themes, the Local Authority is able to shape the scope of the review by agreeing questions in advance with the LGA that the Peer team will look for evidence to answer when on site. This gives each Authority the option to tailor the challenge process to meet their needs. In the case of Tower Hamlets, the scope needs to encompass the range of the directions we are currently working to deliver against and provide an independent assessment of their delivery through the Best Value Improvement Plan.
- 3.4. Suggested questions to base the agreed scope of the review on include the following:

- **“To explore how LBTH adequately addressed the directions issued by DCLG?”** – something to address the desire to use the peer challenge as an independent check on progress. This could take the form of more specific, theme based questions.
- **“Is LBTH adequately addressing its chosen priorities and are these delivering measurable improvement to local residents and businesses?”** – Linked to the desire to the delivery of a robust OBA and OBB approach
- **“Is the authority setting realistic yet ambitious targets for its future?”**
– reinforcing ongoing and sustainable improvement beyond the directions

3.5 Tower Hamlets’ Best Value Improvement Plan has activities and targets under 5 themes with 2 additional improvement areas added as priorities from the Tower Hamlets Improvement Framework. Lead Corporate Officers have been identified to oversee the provision of information and representation of these themes.

- Elections – Corporate Director Governance
- Property – Acting Corporate Director Place
- Grants – Corporate Director Resources
- Communications – Divisional Director of Communications and Marketing
- Organisational Culture (this includes Governance) – Corporate Director Governance and Corporate Director Resources
- Ofsted Children’s Services– Corporate Director Children’s Services
- Adult Improvement Work – Corporate Director Health, Adults and Community

3.6 A revised timeline of deliverable actions and key dates/activities is detailed below.

Activity	Timeline	Lead Officer
Scoping Agreed	March 2018	Chief Executive/ Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance
Agree Peer team with LGA	March 2018	Chief Executive/ Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance
Identify and collate key documents	March 2018	CLT/Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer
Preparation of position statement	March 2018	CLT/Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer
Identify and agree key stakeholders and partners for inclusion in the review	March 2018	CLT

Activity	Timeline	Lead Officer
Council Elections	3 May 2018	-
Council AGM	Mid May 2018	-
Intorductory pre-meets	May/June 2018	Chief Executive/ Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance
On-site Visit	w/c 18th June 2018	Chief Executive/ Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance
Draft Report	Mid July 2018	LGA/Chief Executive/Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance
Final Sign Off	End of July 2018	CLT
Submission to Secretary of State DCLG	1 August 2018	Chief Executive/ Mayor
Action Plan Development	Aug-Sept 2018	-
Follow up visit	Jan 2019 Dec 2019	-

4. POSITION STATEMENT

4.1. Prior to the Peer Challenge taking place, the Council will provide the Peer Team with a summary position statement. This document should give an overview of the borough including its residential and business demographics as well as provide an overview of the authority, its services and its aims and ambitions. This should be presented alongside relevant plans, strategies and other supporting evidence in a format that will enable the Peer Team members to generate a working understanding of Tower Hamlets before coming on site.

4.2. Documents to be provided alongside the position statement include (but are not limited to):

- Understanding of Local Place and Priority Setting
 - o Strategic Plan
 - o Best Value Improvement Plan
 - o Local Spend Analysis
 - o Borough Needs Assessments
 - o Local Plan
 - o Performance Management Reports

- Leadership of Place
 - o Community Plan
 - o Annual Residents Survey
 - o Partnership Governance Structure
 - o Voluntary Sector Strategy
 - o Compact
 - o Grants
 - o Community Commissioning
 - o Summit Report
 - o Editions of "Our Eastend"

- Financial Planning and Viability
 - o MTFS/Budget
 - o Capital Strategy

- Organisational Leadership and Governance
 - o Management Structure/Organisation Chart
 - o List of Councillors/Portfolios/Committees
 - o HR Strategy
 - o Ofsted Report and follow up
 - o Investors In People report
 - o Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

- Capacity to Deliver
 - o Transformation Programme

4.3. The Position Statement will be sent to the challenge team one month prior to the onsite visit. All directorates will be given the opportunity to feed into the document to ensure the full range of Council activity and focus is taken into account and presented clearly.

4.4. In order to get the Position Statement signed off by the relevant groups, it is proposed to have a draft completed by the middle of March. Co-ordination of this will be managed by the Corporate Strategy, Policy and Performance Team with responsible officers identified in 3.2 and 3.5 agreeing the content for their themes and focus areas..

5. THE CHALLENGE PROCESS

5.1. The Peer Challenge Team is made up of a Peer Challenge Manager and senior officers and Councillors from an appropriate range of authorities and backgrounds. The team is chosen to match the scope of the challenge and the authority with specialisms and experience in the key areas. Details of the individual members of the Peer Team, their backgrounds and areas of interest are currently being agreed with LGA and will be made available prior to the onsite visit.

5.2. The Peer Challenge Team will be onsite for 4 days from 18th June 2018. The first three days consist of interview sessions with Councillors, staff and

stakeholders in order to gather evidence around the themes and agreed scope of the challenge. There will be up to 15 interview sessions held each day and all attendees must be identified and fully briefed in advance.

- 5.3. At the end of each of the first three days, the Peer Team will meet with the Chief Executive to discuss the findings from the day's sessions and request any extra information or evidence.
- 5.4. Off-site visits can be incorporated into the challenge process providing they are relevant and provide value. These may be considered an appropriate way to combine stakeholder interviews with providing the Peer Team with first-hand experience of local projects, achievements or development plans.
- 5.5. The fourth day of the onsite review is set aside for the Peer Team to prepare and present its initial findings and feedback. The authority can decide the audience for this feedback session, usually senior managers and Councillors although it is often opened up so that anyone who has fed into the process through interviews etc could be in attendance.

6. LOGISTICS

- 6.1. Whilst on site, the Peer team will require the use of 4 rooms – 1 larger room to use as their main office and 3 interview rooms. It is hoped that these rooms can be located close to each other in order to minimise travelling back and forth between sessions. It may be that any pre-existing room bookings will need to be re-arranged in order to facilitate this.
- 6.2. The team will also require security passes, Wi-Fi facilities and access to printing facilities. Key contact details for support when on-site will also be made available along with refreshments throughout the four days.
- 6.3. Access to key performance data and electronic copies of evidence documents will be provided through a dedicated portal on Pentana, the Council's Performance Management System. This will provide 24 hour access to information and documentation before and during the Peer Challenge process. This access is being managed through the Corporate Strategy and Equality team.

7. COMMUNICATIONS

- 7.1. It is recommended that regular communication is conducted with all staff to make them aware of the challenge and their opportunity to take part. Briefings with interviewees should be held before the Peer Challenge Team are on site and debriefing sessions after the interviews are seen as a useful tool for ensuring key issues have been covered.
- 7.2. Similarly, effective involvement of key stakeholders in the process will rely on early engagement and communication. It is important to identify service delivery partners, community groups, local business leaders etc whose views are vital to providing an accurate picture of Tower Hamlets as a place and as a Council.

8. FEEDBACK

- 8.1. After the onsite challenge has taken place and initial feedback has been provided, the peer challenge team manager will draft the team's findings along with any recommendations. The Council will have the opportunity to feed into the drafting of this document before it is published on the LGA website. It is important to note that this is not a scored assessment or judgement of the authority. The feedback will address the agreed areas of focus and provide a constructive overview of the Council's position.
- 8.2. It is up to the Council to decide how best to utilise the feedback from the Peer Challenge. This may involve developing an action plan to further any recommendations made or referencing findings in future policy development. The LGA will often offer or signpost access to further support tools and mechanisms specific to any recommendations made through the Peer Challenge process.
- 8.3. There is an expectation that the Council will commit to a follow up visit within 6 – 18 months after the peer challenge. The purpose of the visit is to help the Council assess and demonstrate the impact of the peer challenge and the progress made against the areas of improvement and development identified by the peer team. It is a lighter-touch version of the original visit and does not have to involve all of the original peer team. The timing of the visit can be determined by the authority.

9. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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.

10. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 10.1 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).
- 10.2 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).

- 10.3 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.
- 10.4 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.
- 10.5 Further, all the focuses of the Peer Challenge as set out in paragraph 3.2 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."¹
- 10.6 It is therefore also sound from a good governance perspective for the Peer Challenge to be undertaken.

¹ Section 1.2 of the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework – CIPFA/SOLACE