

TOWER HAMLETS BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

Monday, 11 June 2018 at 6.00 p.m.
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)
Sir Steve Bullock	(External Representative)
Alan Finch	(Local Government Association)
Sir Alan Wood	(Chair Tower Hamlets Childrens Services Improvement Board)
Will Tuckley	(Chief Executive)
Sharon Godman	(Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Equality)
Councillor Peter Golds	(Leader of the Conservative Group)
Councillor Sirajul Islam	(Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management & Performance)
Councillor Candida Ronald	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector)
Councillor Danny Hassell	(Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People)
Councillor Abdal Ullah	(Chair of Overveiw and Scrutiny Committee)

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Web: www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/committees

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LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS
TOWER HAMLETS BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

MONDAY, 11 JUNE 2018

6.00 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS 5 - 8

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES 9 - 26

To confirm as a correct record of the proceedings the unrestricted minutes of the meetings held on 18 December 2017 and 19 March 2018.

4. Best Value Improvement Plan 2018-19 Quarterly Report 27 - 42

5. LGA Corporate Peer Challenge 43 - 50

6. Children's Social Care Improvement Plan update 51 - 68

7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

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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 and Monitoring Officer.
Tel: 020 7364 4800

APPENDIX A: Definition of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

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

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

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LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE TOWER HAMLETS BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

HELD AT 6.05 P.M. ON MONDAY, 18 DECEMBER 2017

ROOM C1, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, LONDON E14 2BG

Members Present:

Mayor John Biggs (Chair)	(Executive Mayor)
Sir Steve Bullock (Member)	(External Representative - THBVIB)
Alan Finch (Member)	(Local Government Association)
Alan Wood (Member)	(Chair, Children's Improvement Board)
Will Tuckley (Member)	(Chief Executive)
Sharon Godman (Member)	(Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Partnerships)
Councillor Peter Golds (Member)	(Leader of the Conservative Group)
Councillor David Edgar (Member)	(Cabinet Member for Resources)
Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs (Member)	(Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services)
Councillor Dave Chesterton (Member)	(Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

Officers Present:

Heather Daley	– (Divisional Director, HR & Transformation)
Janet Fasan	– (Divisional Director, Legal)
Paul Greeno	– (Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer, Legal Services)
Afazul Hoque	– (Interim Service Manager, Strategy, Policy & Performance)
Shazia Hussain	– (Divisional Director, Customer Services)
Debbie Jones	– (Corporate Director, Children's Services)
Ann Sutcliffe	– (Acting Corporate Director, Place)
William Tompsett	– (Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer)
Antonella Burgio	– (Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Sirajul Islam and an apology for lateness was received from Sir Steve Bullock.

Apologies for absence were also noted from the following officers: Zena Cooke, Corporate Director, Resources and Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2017 were approved as a correct record of proceedings.

3. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

VARY ORDER OF BUSINESS

Responding to a request, the Chair agreed to vary the order of business. Accordingly the Board discussed item 7 as the first item of business. Following this the Board resumed discussion of the items of business in the printed agenda order. For ease of reference the items that were discussed are recorded in these minutes as set out in the agenda.

4. BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017-18 Q3 MONITORING REPORT

The Acting Service Manager, Strategy, Policy & Performance presented a summary of the report that:

- Over 80% of the actions were either completed or on target to be achieved by the deadline.
- The results of the annual resident survey indicated residents' perception of the council was improving - 79% said that they trust the Council.
- Work on the delivery of Community Hubs was progressing; one Hub was operational and three more were planned to be delivered in the next two years.
- Work on all elements of the forthcoming local elections continued to progress and the Council would take part in the Cabinet Office Enhanced Postal Voting Scheme pilot.
- Work was being undertaken on a new approach to community and third sector grants based on commissioning. This was being developed in partnership with the local voluntary and community sector.
- In regard to organisational culture, a refreshed member/officer protocol and a revised whistleblowing policy had been approved by Council. Additionally a Core Value launch event had taken place with included activities to engage staff.
- A community plan was being developed through the Tower Hamlets Partnership to establish a joint vision and priorities.

The Board considered the progress reported on each of the themes in the action plan and noted the following:

- The key achievements relating to the Communications theme reported at Appendix A.

- There were good reciprocal arrangements between Grants Determination and Grants Scrutiny Sub Committees with cross-party participation at scrutiny level.
- The Head of Electoral Services had recently retired and an officer had been successfully recruited to the position; the appointee would take up the post on 2 January 2018. Regular review and planning meetings with the Police have continued and resulting from these an understanding of the Police role expected (including a presence at Polling Stations) during the Poll has been clarified. Consultation with the Electoral Commission has also continued. The venue for the counting of votes has been provisionally identified and booked at the Excel Centre; however other in-borough venues continue to be explored. The comments of the Leader of the Conservative Group and Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee were noted.

The Board asked that the following matter be taken forward by officers:

- That appropriate milestones for the delivery of the Cabinet Office Enhanced Postal Voting Scheme pilot be established and incorporated into the project/action plan.

RESOLVED

1. That the update be noted
2. That officers take forward the above action identified during the discussion

5. SPOTLIGHT - PROPERTY

The Corporate Director, Place and Acting Divisional Director, Property and Major Programmes gave a presentation outlining matters pertinent to the fulfilment of the directions. The Board heard:

Asset Management – work was focussed around the following aims and objectives:

- that Council owned assets are properly managed,
- the property portfolio demonstrates value for money,
- that the service support and enhance service delivery,
- that value for money was achieved in the management, maintenance and use of land and buildings.

Key achievements included; documentation of a new framework around asset disposals, right-to-buy buybacks and more recently purchase of Poplar HARCA surplus properties. Work was being undertaken around rental of community buildings, vacant community buildings depot reviews and the regularisation of Council assets.

Community Hubs – the first Hub had been delivered and a further three were in progress for delivery in the period 2018 and 2019.

Capital Delivery – delivery of affordable new homes, schools projects and public realm projects had been achieved and an Affordable Housing Pipeline Programme had been established. Forthcoming goals for this area were to strengthen governance arrangements with client teams, review the current staff structure and ensure there is sufficient capacity to deliver projects on time and in-budget.

Facilities Management (FM) – a customer satisfaction survey and service matrix had been introduced. A telephone help desk for staff was now operational and the FM Team had achieved ISO9001 accreditation.

The Board noted:

- that property was a theme in the Best Value Improvement Action Plan.
- that the authority was implementing a rigorous approach to the use of council assets.
- a list of community buildings was available via the Council website.
- that within the scope of this theme, it was necessary also to consider community buildings managed by other organisations.
- that there would be challenges to achieve a consistent and transparent framework. The Board welcomed the offer of the Local Government Association (LGA) to source examples of good practice in regard to the management of property.

RESOLVED

1. That the spotlight report be noted
2. That LGA offer of assistance be noted.

6. IMPROVEMENT AREAS: CUSTOMER SERVICES & ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

The Divisional Directors for Customer Service and for HR & Transformation each gave a presentation.

Customer Services - The Divisional Director for Customer Services gave a presentation outlining the key themes, progress and challenges in achieving modern customer services and where the customer continues to remain at the centre of Council focus. Drivers of the programme are; customer needs, the changing world, corporate culture, demand and exploitation of new technologies

The Board heard:

- That customer access is a theme which is being investigated to develop better insight into customers' preferred patterns of access in order to inform how Council services can be better offered to residents.
- That use of IT has expanded exponentially over the past 50 years and has influenced how the public wish to interact with Council.

- That the Council is required to change not just to meet in the new technological advances but also to meet the needs of a changing demographic (by 2030, over 50% of the borough will be aged under 30).
- That the residents' survey indicated that 90% of residents in the borough have access to the Internet and engage with the digital world in their personal lives. Therefore they do not need intensive levels of Council support.
- That future customer service would provide a seamless customer journey by changes to back office functions, use of technologies, and building on best practice and expertise. Risks and challenges to achieving this are: literacy, digital skills, ICT infrastructure, poor data and a citizen centred staff.

Responding to the presentation:

- The Board felt assured that the customer would remain the focus of this service throughout the changes proposed and drive of the types of service to be provided. The Board noted also that the intended transformation of this service was large and would require staff levels and capability matters to be addressed. Members were informed that the Council's ICT infrastructure was a factor which limited staff capability as they were unable to access tools necessary to properly deliver their role.
- It was acknowledged that changed culture was also needed and therefore the Council intended to explore how the Idea Stores might form part of the 'front door' element of the provision. To achieve this it was necessary to progress these outlets from paper-based processes.
- The Board considered that although there would be risks, progress should not be impeded by these. It was necessary to adopt a 'deliver and test' approach rather than delay implementation to find first an optimal solution. It was noted that that computer literacy levels in the borough were approximately 70% therefore such skills should be utilised so that the Council might better target its resources to areas of greater need and devise better ways of engagement for the vulnerable and hard to reach. Delivery of digital interfaces with the customer would allow the Council to put more resources and thought into how it can deliver its face-to-face services and where these would be required. Members were informed that suitable IT infrastructure and web-based access for community safety matters would enable the Council to respond more quickly and effectively to issues raised in the community. This would enable the Council-community relationship to evolve.
- The Board observed that much could be achieved by better use of IT but it was necessary also to ensure that there is a human face for residents and that service quality is retained.
- The Board noted that there were very many different contact numbers across the Council and highlighted the potential consequences of the inadequate administration of customer contact numbers. Services such as the Police have experienced loss of intelligence as a

consequence of a decline in the use of the nonemergency contact number. Members were informed that there was a managed programme to progressively terminate unused and surplus contact numbers which were not used or were not answered. Additionally the Council was researching arrangements at Councils such as Brent and Hackney which operated advanced IT arrangements.

- The Board was informed of activity in the following areas:
 - Registrars -- directly responding to email requests
 - Parking Permits -- will be online by March 2018
 - Revenues and Benefits – an Web facility is being created which will allow online transactions.

To enable service delivery to be transformed in the above areas, the pages of the Council website for these services were presently being redesigned.

The Board asked that:

- Officers identify five beneficial (customer service) outcomes that are visible and can be quickly achieved and pursue their implementation.
- That progress on the delivery of these be reported to the Board.

Organisational Culture – The Divisional Director, Human Resources and Transformation gave a presentation. She informed the Board that:

- This area had been part of the original directions and had been identified as a key issue going forward.
- An action plan with key themes had been developed.
- The case for change, key themes and the action plan were informed by the desired outcomes that the Council had identified.
- It will be necessary to plan, act and deliver in all of the key areas; this will important in assessing the Council's impact.

Responding to the presentation, the Board:

- Noted that organisational culture was an important theme throughout the Council; Commissioners had previously identified Member behaviours and consistency of approach as two areas for attention within this theme.
- Was satisfied that outcomes incorporated tangible changes and the action plan incorporated targets around employee health and noted work done around the new Healthy Workplace Charter and to gather intelligence around staff views.
- Heard that Chief Executive's Roadshows and staff engagements indicated concerns around leadership and future workforce uncertainty.
- Noted that there could be changes to established organisational structures which could require staff to engage with many service reviews.
- Noted that the experiences of encountering and engaging with change in Children's Services Directorate might provide useful casework for the wider organisation. Additionally the organisation should take account of lessons learned from the amalgamation of Children's and

Adults Services in 2014, noting the role that Members performed at this time.

- Noted that there should be a mechanism for checking the fitness of work structures. The Divisional Director advised that this would be indicated by assessing whether outcomes had been achieved and by Member scrutiny.
- Noted that bringing in change was also a learning process. It was therefore necessary to be able to reflect on the choices made and learn from them.

The Board asked that:

- Feedback and themes arising out of the staff health survey be reported to Cabinet.
- Feedback on action being taken to address Member issues be reported to the Board

RESOLVED

1. That the presentations of the Divisional Directors for Customer Service and for HR & Transformation be noted
2. That the above actions identified as during the discussion be taken forward

7. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT- PROGRESS REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services presented the report in forming the Board that:

- This second quarterly update outlined progress made in delivering improvements to children's services arising from the findings of the OFSTED inspection in April 2017.
- A visit had been carried out by OFSTED during the week of 11 December 2017 involving a 'front door' visit, and looking at in-depth work on Family Support and Protection Teams. A second letter was, arising from this visit would be published by OFSTED at the end of January 2018.
- Following its visit, OFSTED provided the following feedback:
 - Improvements had been observed - changes at front door were now embedded and consistently implemented. The Family Support Team has also implemented some changes; these were assessed as fragile at the time of visiting and there were still some challenges. Assurances were awaited around what services' workload would be case led.
 - The records of 50 children were sampled; it was found that none were at risk and there had been improvements around making work child-centred.

- Caseloads were found to be still too variable although some progress reducing caseload was noted.
 - The volumes of contacts at 'front door' were large.
 - There was positive feedback around investment in workforce strategy and now OFSTED awaited evidence of more permanent staff in the workforce.
- The Children's Services Improvement Board and Children's Operational Board acknowledged the feedback and will build on the positive outcomes of this visit.
- The Cabinet Member was encouraged with the progress made, although there remained work to do.
- The next OFSTED visit was planned for early May 2018. At this time OFSTED would examine themes across the whole of the service and its partnerships.
- OFSTED's latest visit in December 2017 had not identified any children at significant immediate risk.
- The fortnightly meeting between Mayor, Cabinet Member and senior officers was an important instrument to ensure that the service did not become complacent.

The Corporate Director, Children's Services advised that she had met with the Chief Executive and her staff to discuss the outcome of the OFSTED visit. The key messages of the visit had been conveyed to all. She also noted that corporate and practical leadership are necessary to ensure that progress is maintained.

The Board noted that:

- ICT was a risk and agreed that it should review ICT arrangements. Officers acknowledged that ICT was an area for improvement and informed the Board that this would be addressed as part of the corporate ICT improvement programme.
- Reducing levels of agency social workers was a problem nationally; notwithstanding this it would be necessary to set targets to achieve this outcome. The Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services responded highlighting that fragility reported following the visit was linked to staff churn, in particular at the 'front door' element of the service where there were a number of agency staff. The Board acknowledged that in the circumstances, the task of increasing the numbers of permanent social workers at the authority would be challenging to achieve. Additionally it was noted that the caseload had increased therefore interim staff had been engaged to meet the additional demand.

The Chair highlighted that there was a role for the whole Council to consider around how it was able to act as a 'corporate parent' and necessary work with NHS and other Partners in children's safeguarding.

The Board asked that the following matters be taken forward:

- That ICT arrangements should be reviewed by the Best Value Improvement Board
- That targets toward reducing levels of agency social workers should be set.
- Consider how the NHS and other Partners may be engaged to fulfil their role in children's safeguarding

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted
2. That the above actions identified as during the discussion be taken forward

8. CLEAR UP PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTATION

The Senior Corporate and Governance Lawyer presented the report which provided an update to the Board on progress of the recommendations for further action arising from the Clear Up Project.

The Board heard that, since its completion, Legal Services have acted to ensure that Project recommendations have been actioned; these were reported at paragraphs 3.6 - 3.8. Action monitoring continues and is reported quarterly to the Council's Corporate Leadership Team.

The Board:

- Noted the query raised by Councillor Golds in relation to case ref CU031 and that he would take up these concerns with the Chief Executive.
- Enquired whether the costs incurred in undertaking the Project could be made known to the Council. Members were advised that officers would investigate if this type of data could be provided.
- Asked that any outstanding issues relating to Cabinet Members' portfolios be circulated to the relevant Member.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted
2. That a summary would be brought to a future meeting.

9. FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was presented and the Board Members were invited to suggest additions to the Plan via the Chief Executive or the Mayor.

The Board requested that the following matters be added to the agenda for discussion at the next meeting; ICT, Peer Review, Clear Up Project, and Children's Services Improvement Board.

RESOLVED

1. That the Forward Plan be noted.
2. That the above topics identified be brought for discussion at the next meeting.

10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Nil items

The meeting ended at 8.15 p.m.

Chair, Mayor John Biggs
Tower Hamlets Best Value Improvement Board

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE TOWER HAMLETS BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

HELD AT 6.00 P.M. ON MONDAY, 19 MARCH 2018

ROOM C1, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, LONDON E14 2BG

Members Present:

Mayor John Biggs (Chair)	(Executive Mayor)
Sir Steve Bullock	(External Representative - THBVIB)
Alan Finch	(Local Government Association)
Sir Alan Wood	(Chair, Children's Improvement Board)
Will Tuckley	(Chief Executive)
Sharon Godman	(Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Partnerships)
Councillor Sirajul Islam	(Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing)
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)

Officers Present:

Zena Cooke	–	(Corporate Director, Resources)
Adrian Gorst	–	(Divisional Director, IT)
Asmat Hussain	–	(Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer)
Paul Greeno	–	(Senior Corporate and Governance Legal Officer, Legal Services)
Debbie Jones	–	(Corporate Director, Children's Services)
William Tompsett	–	(Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer)
Antonella Burgio	–	(Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for lateness was received on behalf of Councillor Whitelock-Gibbs.

Councillors Edgar and Islam each submitted an apology for leaving early.

The Board also noted an apology for lateness from Debbie Jones, Corporate Director for Children's Services.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were declared.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were deferred.

VARY ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair moved and it was agreed that the order of business be varied. The business of the meeting was discussed in the following order: Item, 5, 6, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 10. For ease of reference the minutes are printed in the published agenda order.

4. BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017-18 -YEAR END REPORT

The Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer presented the report which informed the Board of progress against the delivery of the Council's Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18. The Board noted that 79% of the activities in the Plan were complete or on target for completion and those which were overdue or delayed included a report of mitigating actions.

Some of the highlight achievements reported for 2017/18 include:

- Regular planning meetings for the Mayoral and local elections with a comprehensive count plan and training being developed for count staff and poll clerks. Count location confirmed as Excel Centre and enhanced security arrangements agreed for count and polling stations in partnership with the police;
- Agreed piloting of enhanced Postal Voting scheme with the Cabinet Office;
- New Communications Strategy adopted in 2017
- Weekly staff email newsletter with growing open rates and interaction with articles and an Intranet project manager appointed to drive improvements;
- Introduction of dedicated poster sites and information screens in council buildings to improve communication with staff and visiting public;
- Media consumption survey informing how to communicate more effectively with different audiences and an increased sign-up to e-newsletters;
- Move from weekly printed public newsletter to more focussed communications supporting thematic messages and projects;
- Revised governance structure to manage council owned property enabling the use of vacant buildings for housing and commercial use;
- 4 sites identified for use as community hubs;
- Grants management in partnership with local Voluntary and Community Sector and system mapping completed to enable new GIFTS software;

- Mainstream grants monitored by Grants Scrutiny Committee and Grants Determination Committee;
- Revised “TOWER” core values - Together, Open, Willing Excellent Respect -devised in consultation with staff and adopted;
- Staff Survey and Staff Wellbeing Survey completed;
- Refreshed Member/Officer Protocol and Whistleblowing Policy developed and adopted;
- Transformation programme actively engaging staff.

The Board noted the updates presented around each of the Plan themes and that due to timescales some projects had been delayed.

RESOLVED

1. That the draft update report attached as appendix 1 be noted.
2. That the revised milestone timescales in the improvement plan attached as appendix 2 be approved.

5. SPOTLIGHT - GRANTS

Corporate Director, Resources presented a Best Value Spotlight on Grants outlining information on the following areas: aims and objectives, key achievements and their expected impact, on-going work and future aims/targets.

The Board heard that:

- 90% of the recommendations of the Best Value Plan (BVP) had been implemented
- A review of the Third Sector Team had been completed and a restructure proposal has been consulted on and a final structure agreed for implementation.
- A web based grants system was being implemented that would provide greater functionality in terms of monitoring and reporting and would be more accessible for grant recipients and members. Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee (GSSC) had broadened its scope of engagement to include a wider grant-related remit. Under this, a review into recreational activities for young people had recently been completed.
- The grants framework would move towards commissioning. Strategy Policy and Performance officers were working on this framework with Tower Hamlets VCS and co-production was at the heart of the new arrangement; this would also include a Voluntary Sector Compact and Grants Policy.
- The next steps would include a review of GSSC, development of a GSSC work programme for the new municipal year and implementation of the remaining BVP actions.

The Board noted:

- The report of the reorganisation of the Third Sector Team.

- That the Chair of GSSC had had input into the development of the web-based facility and had also identified Member development needs.
- Some Member development had been delivered through mentoring. However targeted training was also planned in the new Municipal year for GSSC Members.
- That the Council was also working with the Centre for Public Scrutiny around improving the delivery of scrutiny.
- That there needed to be a mediating voice between large and small voluntary sector organisations.

The Board:

- Asked that the action plan outcomes be linked to the individual actions in the report.
- Noted that not all voluntary sector organisations would be able to deliver under a commissioned arrangement, asked that officers review/investigate what mechanisms would be suitable to deliver an appropriately balanced grant-making - commissioning environment to support a wide scope of voluntary sector projects.
- Asked that signposts are conveyed to Ward Councillors so that they also might mediate engagement between voluntary sector organisations and the Council.

RESOLVED

1. That the presentation be noted.
2. That the actions arising from the discussion be referred onward and taken forward.

Action by:

Z. Cooke, Corporate Director, Resources

6. ICT TRANSFORMATION

The Divisional Director, Information Technology presented an update on the transformation programme to deliver improvements in the Council's ICT arrangements across the organisation.

The Board heard that:

- Although ICT was not part of the BVP, it was significant in its delivery as it formed a key element of several services that featured in the Plan.
- Previously there had been underinvestment in ICT, however Cabinet had approved a significant improvement plan. This would be delivered in three phases: fix existing structures, modernise out-dated elements and transform the framework to futureproof the ICT environment.

The Board noted:

- That the specifications for ICT in the new Whitechapel Council premises will need to ensure that the Council will be fit for future.

- That there had been collaboration between Children's Services Directorate and the Corporate Director, Place to ensure that infrastructure was appropriate for the work patterns of Children's Services staff.
- That investments in technology went beyond premises based factors.
- That a portal where residents may report faults and repair requests was being developed and would be implemented once foundational platforms had been brought up to date.
- That the Executive was presently investigating whether an in-house or out-sourced environment would provide the most appropriate approach for the Council's business.
- That a customer relationship management approach would be incorporated into the IT transformation process. Additionally future provision would be assessed around the requirements of the organisation as a whole.
- That there was a programme to provide greater IT based information access for Members.
- That IT staff had been recruited that would enable the Council to achieve its aims around ICT provision and environment.
- There were many IT projects in progress presently. These would need to be assessed in order to ensure those of highest priority could be implemented accordingly.

The Board asked:

- That all systems that the Council intended to adopt should supply properly integrated solutions.
- That officers explore products and areas of good practice to ensure that the Council focuses its resources on products that will effectively contribute to the efficient operation of the organisation.

RESOLVED

1. That the presentation be noted.
2. That the actions arising from the discussion be referred onward and taken forward.

Action by:

A. Gorst, Divisional Director, IT

7. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT- PROGRESS REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services introduced the report which provided an update on progress in delivering improvements to Children's Services arising from the OFSTED report in April 2017.

The Board heard that:

- There had been scrutiny of the Children's Services Improvement Plan which had delivered a form of internal review that had been beneficial.

- There had been a monitoring visit from OFSTED in December 2017. This reported that most improvements were being sustained and in many cases further improved. The full letter was published on OFSTED's website.
- There had been a visit from the Department for Education which also gave positive feedback had also been given.
- Work was being undertaken around areas of concern identified and the organisation was aware of strengths and weaknesses.
- There was strong leadership and rigorous focus from Senior Leadership.
- Recruitment of permanent staff was ongoing.
- Areas for improvement identified were; consistency around Child Voice and embedding this into the social work model.
- Reviews were currently being undertaken around Chairs of Child Focus conferences, contacts at Front Door and recruitment and retention.
- There was confidence around data. This now reflected activity and officers were able to use this to inform their discussions and drive improvements.
- There were risks around the potential for change arising from the Local Elections and around sustainability of the improvements programme due to the challenging environment and timescales relating to the improvement notice.

The Board noted:

- There had been much progress which itself raised expectations of progress and created a challenge of maintaining the pace of progress.
- Issues of recruitment and retention and staff morale were factors important to achieving sustainable improvement.
- Partnership working had greatly improved.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) had considered the matter of recruitment and noted that accommodation was an influencing factor. OSC recommended that the Council consider whether this factor should be further explored.

The Board asked:

- That officers explore how to make best use of partnership working by identifying services that they may deliver and which then will enable the Council to focus on driving forward improvements.
- That officers consider the date for the completion of the improvement programme and how the completion will be achieved in the next phase.

RESOLVED

1. That the progress made in delivering the children's services improvement programme be noted.
2. That the next steps in the improvement journey which will be updated on in the next report be noted.
3. That the actions arising from the discussion be referred onward and taken forward.

Action by:

D. Jones, Corporate Director, Children's Services

8. CLEAR UP PROJECT - RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTATION

Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer introduced the report which provided the Board with an update on progress on the recommendations for further action arising out of the Clear Up Report.

The Board heard that the majority of actions recommended were now complete and therefore the projects to which the actions related were now closed. Projects with actions outstanding relating to HR have been deferred until after the local elections.

The Board noted the progress reported.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9. LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

The Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer presented the report which informed the Board of the scoping of the Peer Challenge and arrangements for delivery.

The Board noted:

- That undertaking the Peer Challenge would fulfil one of the Secretary of State's Directions, issued in March 2016, which required an independent review of achievement.
- That the Peer Challenge adopts a critical friend approach to deliver an assessment of progress.
- The scope would incorporate retrospective and forward facing elements.
- The timeline as set out at 3.6 of the report.
- That Members that would be involved in the review, interviews would be confirmed following the Local Elections.
- The role of OSC in delivering challenge to the organisation.
- That OSC was to make a response to the Select Committee Review of Scrutiny; this response would also provide useful information for the Peer Challenge.
- That the Local Government Association would provide support where there were new appointments to key roles around the Peer Challenge.

The Board asked:

- That the OSC work programme to be provided alongside the position statement should also reference its effectiveness and role in the organisation.
- That OSC work be linked into the Peer Challenge review.
- That a Focus Group be held as part of the onsite review giving opportunity to existing and former Scrutiny members, co-opted members and officers to present the full overview of the work and effectiveness of the Scrutiny function.
- That since the review was a corporate peer challenge, it should include cross-working between the themes outlined at 3.2 of the report.

The Board thanked the Independent Representative and Local Government Association Representative for their contribution to the planning of the Peer Challenge.

RESOLVED

1. That the key areas of focus for the scope for the peer challenge as detailed in paragraph 3.4 be noted.
2. That the actions requested in the above minute relating 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 paragraphs 3.2 and 3.5 be taken forward.
3. That Board Members commit to work with councillors, key officers and stakeholders to ensure attendance and participation in interviews and discussions with the LGA Peer Challenge Team during the on-site element of the Peer Challenge in the week commencing 18th June 2018.
4. That the progress made with the preparation for the Peer Challenge and the revised timeline to delivering the Peer Challenge included in paragraph 3.6 be noted.

Action by:

William Tompsett, Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer

10. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 7.25 p.m.

Chair, Mayor John Biggs
Tower Hamlets Best Value Improvement Board

Best Value Improvement Board

TITLE	Author	ITEM NO	Date
Best Value Improvement Plan 2018 – 19 Quarter 1	Afazul Hoque, Service Manager Strategy, Policy & Performance		11 June 18

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the delivery of the Council's Best Value Improvement Plan for 2018. The report builds on last year's updates and submissions to the Secretary of State and details actions remaining on the five areas of Communications, Property, Elections, Organisational Culture and Grants.
- 1.2. A total of 14 actions have been carried forward from the 2017/18 action plan and there are 43 deliverable milestones due for delivery this year.
- 1.3. The Directions from the Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) requires the Council to submit quarterly update reports.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. The Board is asked to:
 1. Consider and comment on the draft update report and revised milestone deadlines attached as Appendix 1

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. The Council as part of its final submission to the Secretary of State for MHCLG 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 fourth update submitted in March 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.

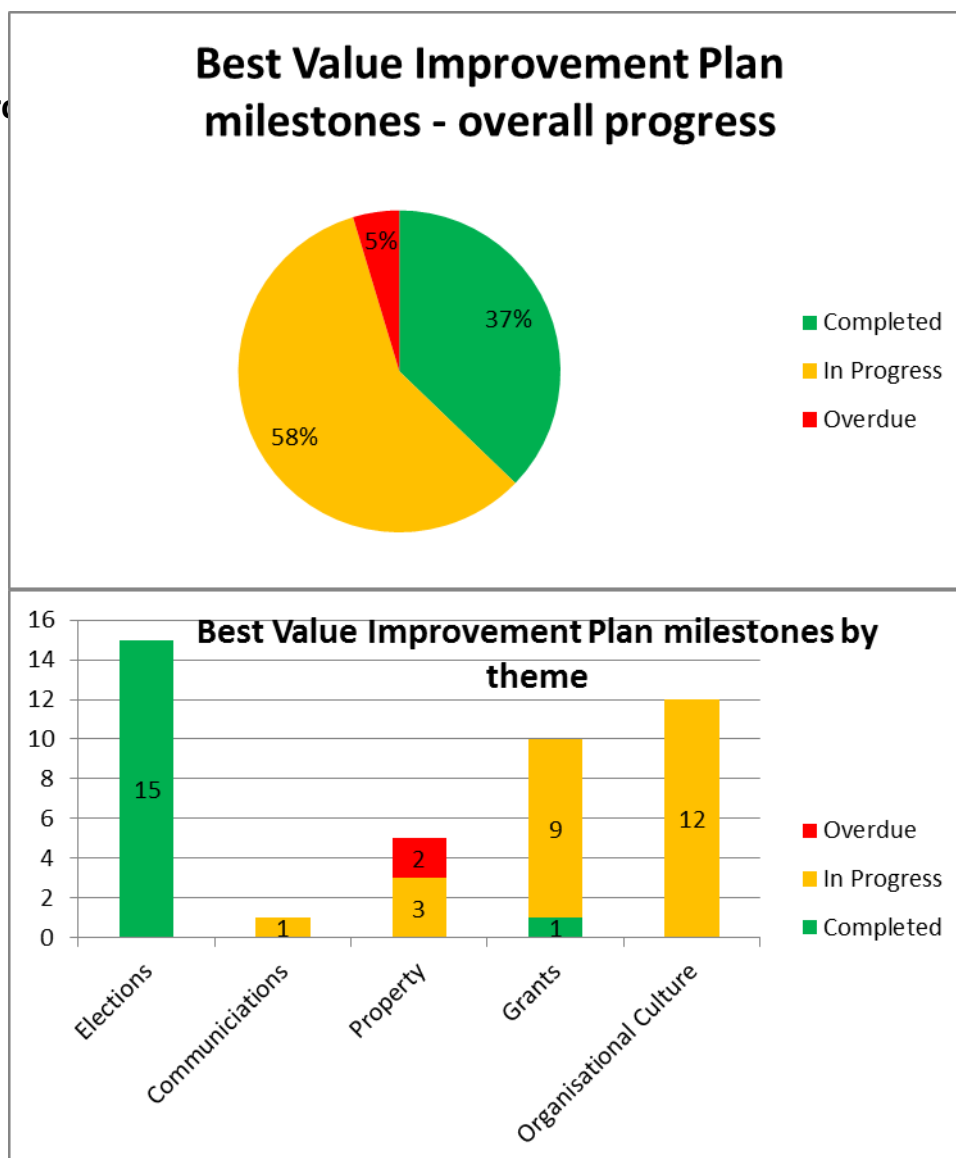
- 3.3. The Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 has five key priority areas comprising 26 strategic actions. These priority areas are a continuance of those found in the Best Value Action Plans arising from the original Secretary of State's Directions. The Plan demonstrates continued implementation where previous activities could not be implemented before the Directions expired as well as continued improvements.
- 3.4. At the end of 2017-18, there were 14 actions carried forward for completion in 2018 to be delivered through the completion of 43 specific milestones. These actions and milestones have been mapped on to Pentana, the Council's Performance Management System, in order to monitor and manage their delivery effectively.
- 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.

4. 2018 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. 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 successfully delivered the 2018 Local and Mayoral elections as well as the delivering the Postal Vote Pilot scheme with the Electoral Commission. All of the planned training and review milestones were met effectively and key learning points identified. The count venue required significant planning and administration before it could be signed off. The Xpress software module was introduced and used effectively for the count along with increased security measures and ongoing liaison with partners to ensure the integrity and security of the entire election process.
- 4.3. **Communications** – The only outstanding Communications action carried forward to 2018 is the launch of the new intranet site. The research phase which included working with representatives from council directorates to understand business need for the new intranet has been completed and a decision was taken to use Contensis as the CMS for the new intranet. Delivery of the project is projected to be completed by the end of September 2018.
- 4.4. **Property** – There were 2 actions carried forward for the Property theme –

“Implement Community Buildings Scheme” and “Asset Reviews and Service Delivery Plans”. There has been a revision in the order of delivery of the Community Hubs as the Raines House site that was originally planned as the second hub is a listed building and, as such, has a longer lead in time. A planning application for alterations at Granby Hall has been submitted. The action plan for validation of TRAs with Tower Hamlets Homes is almost completed and work is underway to convert units into temporary accommodation at Bethnal Green Cottage. The feasibility study on Blackwall Depot is almost complete and awaiting confirmed numbers for staff and vehicles to be accommodated to finalise proposals.

- 4.5. **Grants** – The review of the Third Sector Team is almost complete with assimilation into new posts and interviews expected to be completed by the end of August and full implementation of the new team by the end of September. Implementation of the web-based “GIFTS” software is on target for the end of August. Review of the Grants Determination Sub-Committee was rescheduled to happen after the recent elections and progress in this area will continue once the new membership has been confirmed. The Voluntary sector Compact was agreed in March Cabinet and reviews of the Council’s Grants Policy and contracts is scheduled to be completed in August and June respectively.
- 4.6. **Organisational Culture** – The HR Division restructure encompasses the review of employment policies and practices, involving stakeholder engagement to facilitate the implementation of changes by the end of September along with delivery of Year 1 of our Smarter Together programme. External expertise is being commissioned to help amalgamate revised officer delegations into a single corporate scheme with a revised due date of September 2018. Directorates will appoint a lead officer to work with Legal Services to agree and manage directorate delegations going forward. A follow-up audit on Officers Declaration of Interest is underway.
- 4.7. The charts below show the reported progress against the 43 milestones in the Best Value Improvement Plan. In order to ensure consistency in the reporting of the status of key milestones the following criteria have been applied:
- **Completed** – where the key milestone has been achieved
 - **In Progress** – where the key milestone will be achieved by the deadline
 - **Overdue** - where the key milestone has not been completed by the deadline date



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 MHCLG 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 Q1 Update

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BVIP Milestone update Q1




Status: In Progress 1 Assigned 11 Completed 2



Status	Theme	Action	Milestone	Due Date	Completed?	Note
<div> <div>✓</div> <div>Page 33</div> </div>	Elections	BVIP2018-A-1 Planning for 2018 Mayoral and local elections	Ballot papers at polling stations – folded to assist with check of ballot paper number before being placed in the ballot box and ensure secrecy of the ballot	31-May-2018	Yes	The elections had a varied selection of papers some with 18 candidates and the Mayor a completely different design. All staff were trained to fold the papers to understand the secrecy requirements but also the implications on the count if not carried out correctly.
			Continuation of RO instruction to ensure polling staff only speak in English whilst on duty in the polling station	31-May-2018	Yes	This instruction was continued but it is difficult to enforce when some innocently enters the station with a bona fide member of the family who may be young to explain what to do.
			Count venue booked	18-May-2018	Yes	The count venue was a significant task with Excel insisting on a plethora of plans and administrative tasks before most things could be signed off. The cost is also a major factor for such a high profile and corporate venue.
			Dedicated count training for accountants using Xpress count module	31-May-2018	Yes	We introduced the Express count module and this was shown to the three top table officers in advance of the poll. The system is very simple to use and only took an hour or use provisionally and then use on the night.

Status	Theme	Action	Milestone	Due Date	Completed?	Note
			Enhanced mandatory training for count staff before taking up roles. To include dedicated training on count procedures	31-May-2018	Yes	It is proposed that comprehensive training is provided to counting staff particularly the ways in which to actually count ballot papers properly. It was clear in 2018 that the counters had not been shown the best and most efficient ways to count ballot papers.
			Enhanced mandatory training for polling station staff before taking up roles. To include bespoke e-training and dedicated training for POs with specific scenarios	31-May-2018	Yes	No e-training was undertaken with all training undertaken face to face. Training will be looked at in detail now that all staff received 2 hours training prior to the elections in May which was a bit repetitive for those who have undertaken the task before.
			Enhanced security measures including photo ID checks at count; non-council security staff; non-transferable security wristbands	31-May-2018	Yes	This was introduced but will need streamlining and will replace wristbands and lanyards. It was successful but was a significant task to set up.
			Ensure integrity of the process and good order at polling stations	31-May-2018	Yes	Extensive liaison with the police, candidates and agents contributed to order at the polling stations.
			Full review of count procedures and paperwork in consultation with EC	31-May-2018	Yes	A formal count plan was produced and published on the web page and distributed to all the main stakeholders namely the police, electoral commission and agents.
			Joint working with partner agencies	31-May-2018	Yes	Meetings were held regularly with the main stakeholders namely the police, electoral commission, cabinet office on occasion and all TH internal departments were considered necessary.

Status	Theme	Action	Milestone	Due Date	Completed?	Note
			Platform area for RO and Accountants to ensure visibility of count area	31-May-2018	Yes	The main stage was maintained as in previous elections but the top table were separated away from any scrutiny.
			Project group to meet monthly from April 2017, fortnightly from December 2017 and more frequently as required immediately prior to elections	31-May-2018	Yes	A formal project planning board was established from September 2017 and met monthly initially this reduced to bi-weekly and then weekly in the immediate run into the poll. This was supplemented with meetings with the police at Bethnal Green and Scotland Yard.
			Review of Media Pack to ensure up-to-date information provided	31-May-2018	Yes	The media pack and general communications were maintained by our internal communications who were in constant touch with the elections team. The immediacy of social media is the latest issue to address and we will need to consider expanding our strategic approach to this in future years.
			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	31-May-2018	Yes	40-50 is a bit high but we are reviewing all poll clerks used to assess their suitability.
	Elections	BVIP2018-A-2 Deliver Postal Vote Pilot scheme with the Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office	Deliver Postal Vote Pilot Scheme with the Electoral Commission	31-May-2018	Yes	The two elements of the postal pilot scheme went very well with data to be exchanged with the commission no later than 20 days after the poll. Once the data is collated we will see if there is anything that needs to be addressed.
	Communications	BVIP2018-B-1 Develop and deliver Communications Strategy for 2017/8	Launch new intranet site	30-Sep-2018	No	We have completed the research phase which included working with representatives from council directorates to understand business need for the new intranet. Subsequently a

Status	Theme	Action	Milestone	Due Date	Completed?	Note
						decision was taken to use Contensis as the CMS for the new intranet.
	Property	BVIP2018-C-1 Implement Community Buildings Scheme	Agree action plan for validation of TRAs with THH	30-Jun-2018	No	This is almost agreed except for some outstanding issues that the Resources and Policy Team are looking at.
			Complete and open second community hub	31-May-2018	No	The original plan was to deliver Raines House as a second hub, but as a listed building requires a longer lead-in time the Tramshed in Bethnal Green has now been identified as the second community hub and upgrade works are almost complete.
			Convert vacant community buildings identified for housing use to housing and transfer to THH/Homeless Service	31-Jul-2018	No	Works are underway at Bethnal Green Cottage to convert the building into 4 units of temporary accommodation. A programme of conversions has been agreed and progress is being made to deliver additional temporary accommodation through conversion. This is a rolling programme and as conversions are being identified they are being added to the programme.
			Establish implementation plan for third hub and wider roll-out across the borough	31-May-2018	No	St Andrews Community Centre (also known as the A12 building) in Bow is ready to let for community use. The next community hubs are at Raines House, Wapping and Granby Hall, Bethnal Green. The consultation process for Raines House is nearing completion, after which a planning application will be submitted and work expected to start on site at the end of

Status	Theme	Action	Milestone	Due Date	Completed?	Note
						September 2018, with completion in the summer of 2019. The planning application for the external alterations at Granby Hall has been submitted and work is expected to start in October 2018 and completed within 9 months.
▶	Property	BVIP2018-C-2 Asset reviews and service delivery plans	Complete review of depot provision across the borough	30-Jun-2018	No	The feasibility study on Blackwall depot is pretty much finished. The only outstanding issue is for Waste to confirm the numbers for staff and vehicles to be accommodated. Then the feasibility proposals can be finalised.
▶	Grants	BVIP2018-D-1 Complete review of Third Sector Team	Assimilation into posts/interviews	31-Aug-2018	No	The restructure is currently being implemented and the assimilation process/recruitment to structure is the next stage of the restructure and is due to be concluded by the end of August 2018
			Full implementation of new team structure	30-Sep-2018	No	The implementation of the new structure has commenced and the core of the new team will be fully in place by the end of September 2018, supported by robust transitional arrangements to ensure a seamless handover, improved transparency and appropriate monitoring of the extended grants programme.
▶	Grants	BVIP2018-D-2 Implement web-based GIFTS software	Development of web-based solution completed	31-Jul-2018	No	Linked to the improved processes and practices developed for the new team structure, a comprehensive training programme for staff and members has been planned. Legal problems related to the initial purchase of the current system and the

Status	Theme	Action	Milestone	Due Date	Completed?	Note
						contracts to support the new system are being resolved concurrently.
			Full implementation of new web-based system	31-Aug-2018	No	The testing phase and full implementation will be in place by the end of the end of August 2018.
	Grants	BVIP2018-D-3 Review and improve working of Grants Determination Sub-Committee	6 month review of the Grants Determination Sub-Committee	30-Sep-2018	No	This review is due to take place early in the new municipal year after the elections. Following confirmation of the composition of the GDSC and the wider scrutiny review recommendations, the scope and timing of the review will be agreed.
			Grants Determination Sub-Committee away-day	30-Sep-2018	No	The away day will be planned as part of the committee review.
			Grants Determination Sub-Committee members' development seminars	30-Sep-2018	No	The development seminars will be planned as part of the committee review.
	Grants	BVIP2018-D-4 Strengthen grants management and work strategically with voluntary and community sector	Review and update the Council's grants policy, working closely with services	31-Aug-2018	No	New outcomes based Grants Policy agreed at Cabinet 20 March 2018. Further work with VCS organisations to produce detailed prospectus now under way. Final programme to be launched in parallel with new community commissioning programme. Services funded through new programmes scheduled to commence 30 Sept 19
			Undertake comprehensive review of contracts and grants to inform the development of the Council's new approach to commissioning	30-Sep-2018	No	This is being delivered as part of the development of the new grants policy and community commissioning programme.
			Work with the voluntary sector to	30-Apr-2018	Yes	Agreed in Cabinet 20 March 2018

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Status	Theme	Action	Milestone	Due Date	Completed?	Note
			develop a voluntary sector compact			
▶	Organisational Culture	BVIP2018-E-1 Implement actions from Clear Up Project	Implement recommendations from Clear Up project	30-Sep-2018	No	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	30-Sep-2018	No	As above.
▶	Organisational Culture	BVIP2018-E-2 Review employment policies and practices and implement them	Development of detailed changes and stakeholder engagement	30-Sep-2018	No	This has commenced as part of the implementation of the HR division restructure – review working groups involving HR, TU representatives and managers have been established.
			Implement changes to practice through a) BP training and b) management and staff training	30-Sep-2018	No	This is being undertaken as part of the implementation of the HR Division restructure.
▶	Organisational Culture	BVIP2018-E-3 Deliver year 1 of Smarter Together Programme	Change managed and staff engagement maintained and measured via staff pulse surveys	30-Sep-2018	No	This is being planned as part of the implementation of the HR Division restructure.
▶	Organisational Culture	BVIP2018-E-4 Complete phase 2 of Officer Scheme of Delegations	Circulate revised proposed Officer Scheme of Delegations to Corporate and Divisional Directors	30-Sep-2018	No	The delegations in Part 3 of the Council's constitution, as supplemented by the scheme of management in the appendices to the constitution (Part 9/C) have been reviewed. In order to improve clarity and streamline

Status	Theme	Action	Milestone	Due Date	Completed?	Note
						decision making it is proposed to amalgamate these delegations into a single corporate scheme in Part 3 which also reflect the Council's corporate directorate structure. This is a significant piece of work and an experienced external expert will be commissioned to draw on best practice across London and complete the task as soon as possible. It is anticipated that this work will be concluded by September 2018 for the corporate scheme to be agreed by CLT, General Purposes Committee and Cabinet. A report will also be prepared for full Council to amend part 3 of the Constitution in the autumn. When the corporate scheme is approved by CLT, directorates will be required to appoint a lead officer to work in conjunction with Legal Services and/or the external expert to identify and agree directorate delegations which will form an appendix to the constitution. It is anticipated that this work will be concluded by December 2018 for the directorate schemes to be agreed by DLT's, General Purposes Committee and Cabinet. A report will also be prepared for full Council to update the constitution.
			Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer sign off on respective Officer Scheme of Delegations for Directorates	30-Sep-2018	No	As above.
			Report to Cabinet on the final Officer	30-Sep-2018	No	As above.

Status	Theme	Action	Milestone	Due Date	Completed?	Note
			Scheme of delegations			
			Report to Council on Constitutional changes to the Constitution and which relate to Limitations and Delegated Decision Making – General Principles respectively; and on Directorate Scheme of Management	30-Sep-2018	No	As above.
			Report to Council on the final Officer Scheme of Delegations	30-Sep-2018	No	As above.
			Report to general Purposes on the final Officer scheme of Delegations	30-Sep-2018	No	As above.
▶	Organisational Culture	BVIP2018-E-5 Declarations of Interest – Members and Officers	Audit of 2017–18 Staff Declarations of Interest	30-Jun-2018	No	Internal Audit field work currently in progress for the follow up audit on Officers Declaration Of Interests.

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Best Value Improvement Board

TITLE	AUTHOR	ITEM NO	Date
LGA Corporate Peer Challenge	Sharon Godman, Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance.		11 June 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 the 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. BVIB is asked to:
 1. Note the progress made with the preparation for the Peer Challenge.

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?
- **Leadership of place** – Does the Council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
- **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?
- **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?
- **Capacity to deliver** – Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the Council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

3.3. In addition to 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. It has been agreed that the Peer team will consider the following questions as part of the review:

- To explore how LBTH adequately addressed the directions issued by MHCLG and the expectations of the departed Commissioners.”
- Is LBTH adequately addressing its chosen priorities and are these delivering continued improvement to local residents and businesses?”
- Is the authority identifying key challenges and setting realistic yet ambitious targets for the future?”

3.4 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
- Property
- Grants
- Communications –
- Organisational Culture (this includes Governance)
- Ofsted Children’s ServicesAdult Improvement Work

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

Activity	Timeline	Lead Officer
On-site Visit	19-22 June 2018	Will Tuckley/Sharon Godman
Draft Report	Mid July 2018	LGA/Will Tuckley/Sharon Godman
Final Sign Off	End of July 2018	CLT
Submission to Secretary of State DCLG	1 August 2018	Will Tuckley/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 provides an overview of the borough including its residential and business demographics as well as providing an overview of the authority, its services and its aims and ambitions.

4.2. The position statement will 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. 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 East end"
- 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 have been 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.

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.

5.2. The Peer Team consists of the following officers and councillors:

- **Mary Ney**, LGA Associate & Non-Executive Director MHCLG
- **Ros Jones**, Mayor of Doncaster MBC
- **Sean Anstee**, Leader of Trafford MBC
- **Mark Bradbury**, Associate Director, Capital Assets (Chief Officer), Southampton City Council
- **Marcus Coulson**, Programme manager, Local Government Association.
- **Gifty Edila**, LGA Associate, most recently Corporate Director of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services London Borough of Hackney
- **Robert Tinlin**, LGA Associate, ex-Chief Executive, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

5.3. The Peer Challenge Team will be onsite for 4 days from 19th June 2018. The first three days consist of interview sessions with Councilors, 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. An agenda has been developed covering the Peer Team's activity during their visit.

5.4. 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.

5.5. 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 Councilors 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 (sixth floor Conference Room) and 3 interview rooms (mp602, mp603, mp704). These rooms are located close to each other in order to minimise travelling back and forth between sessions.
- 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. A communications plan has been developed to ensure all staff are aware of the challenge and their opportunity to take part. Briefings with interviewees will be held before the Peer Challenge Team are on site and debriefing sessions after the interviews will be performed to ensure key issues have been covered.
- 7.2. Similarly, effective involvement of key stakeholders in the process will rely on early engagement and communication. 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 have been identified and invited to take part in interviews and focus groups.

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 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. It is therefore also sound from a good governance perspective for the Peer Challenge to be undertaken.

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Best Value Improvement Board

TITLE	Author	ITEM NO	Date
Children's Services Improvement-progress report, Quarter 4 2017/18	Charlotte Saini, Children's Services Improvement Manager		11 June 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 three monitoring visits from Ofsted.
- 1.2 The most recent visit, on 1-2 May 2018, focused on vulnerable adolescents. In their feedback, Ofsted noted that:
- 1.3 "Since the previous inspection and the monitoring visit in December 2017, there has been a substantial improvement in the quality of practice with this group of exploited children and their families. The recent co-location of key staff and the creation of a dedicated, authoritative, multi-agency exploitation team is very effective in responding quickly to high risk situations. A renewed focus on children as victims of exploitation rather than criminalising their behaviour is leading to an enhanced understanding of their circumstances and analysis of risk. Social workers now have a better understanding of children's lived experience. Together with partner agencies, they are increasingly diligent in their attempts to work with and support these young people and their brothers and sisters."
- 1.4 Ofsted also stated that while social work practice remains variable across some teams, increasingly, overall vulnerable adolescents receive higher levels of support and intervention. This was noted as a "discernible difference to the previous poor practice and [indicates] a noteworthy change in culture in frontline social work." This is encouraging, however, we cannot be complacent, and we understand that we need to continue and embed the improvement journey and in doing so address specifically the challenges that Ofsted noted: recruitment and retention and the effective implementation of the revised Early Help strategy.
- 1.5 In summary, Ofsted stated that: "The evidence gathered during this visit has identified substantial, but very recent improvements in the quality of multi-agency and social work practice for vulnerable adolescents and their families. This is extremely encouraging given the particularly complex challenges

involved in this work. Political leaders and managers are demonstrating considerable determination and commitment to embedding and sustaining these changes, while simultaneously addressing the areas of poor practice.”

- 1.6 The body of this report includes commentary on progress in the four themes of our improvement plan at the end of the fourth quarter of our improvement programme.
- 1.7 Whilst we are making progress in embedding the changes that have been made over the first year of our improvement programme, giving us a firm foundation for improvement, there remain challenges to ensuring that the service improves to meet a ‘good’ inspection standard and sustains this improvement. The focus in the final stage of the Improvement Plan (April 2018-April 2019) is to build on the progress made so that further improvement is achieved and sustained.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS:

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 was subsequently 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 fourth update report details progress made between January 2018 and the end of March 2018.

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. The second stage of that journey, which is called 'embedding sustained improvement' and ran until the end of this quarter (March 2018). The third and final stage is "continuous improvement to a 'good' children's service", starting from April 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	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.

Our aim	Progress and outcome
<p>Early Help changes implemented including commencing commissioning processes for any new services</p>	<p>Following a review of early help services it was 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 is taking place in two phases which will support a quick implementation (phase 1) and which will provide the opportunity to embed (phase 2).</p> <p>The staff consultation for the organisational change in phase 1 was extended to enable us to respond fully to feedback and ended on April 30th. Alongside this work we are developing new processes, guidance and a workforce development programme for staff working in early help services. The new structure and processes are expected to start in July, subject to the conclusion of staff consultation.</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. • At tier 2 to 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.

Our aim	Progress and outcome
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowered to support to help themselves. <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 <i>into</i> Children's Social Care. <p>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> <p>The changes being made in phase 1 will deliver central capacity for case management and commissioning of early help services ensuring greater consistency, effective 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.</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>
Performance data, case audit and dip sampling is used systematically to show progress and identify areas for further improvement	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

Our aim	Progress and outcome
	<p>this is taking place to improve our support to children and their families. In their December 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. During their third visit Ofsted noted the improved use of data and information, for example, they found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable and effective intelligence gathering processes have been developed to support the sharing of information on a daily basis. This has led to perpetrator disruption activities as well as prompt actions to prevent serious youth violence and other gang related activities escalating • A comprehensive data set is reviewed by the divisional director and this information is shared with the LSCB 'vulnerable children exploitation group'. • Child exploitation screening tools are used effectively to recognise risk. This informs the undertaking of timely risk assessments and the development of coherent safety plans • The communication between out of hours and day services is effective with the Emergency Duty Team 'footprint' visible on children's records. <p>High level findings continue to be reported to CLT and the Improvement Board via the monthly Improvement Summary report.</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. A deep dive exercise with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in June will enable us to re-focus and refresh our improvement plan to focus on key priorities relating to this final stage, to ensure that we continue on our trajectory to "good".

- 3.7 Our progress is being monitored by Ofsted through quarterly monitoring visits. The third of these visits took place on 1st and 2nd May 2018 and focused on our response to supporting young people who go missing and/or are at risk from involvement in gangs or sexual exploitation.
- 3.8 Feedback has been summarised at the start of the report. Expanding on this, it should be noted that, in their letter Ofsted commented that previously, the local authority's relationships with key safeguarding partners were underdeveloped with too many staff, working in silos. Senior leaders across all agencies have recognised that the complexity of issues in relation to exploited children requires a joint multi-agency approach. Consequently, the revised early help strategy is intended to address former weak practice for this group of children. This is now an important priority for the local authority and the safeguarding children's board.
- 3.9 The situation for missing children has improved. Arrangements for the completion of return home interviews (RHIs) have been streamlined and are effective. Data demonstrates that the service has improved the timeliness of interventions. Inspectors found that the quality of RHIs has improved. Overall decision making is better and more timely. The daily MASH meeting includes early help. Information sharing is much improved and there is a focus on younger siblings in cases where the older sibling is the focus of much of the intervention. The co-located Exploitation Team has an increased awareness of the multiple and overlapping risks to all children. Although very recently established (March 2018) these alternative methods of multi-agency interventions and engagement with young people are having a positive impact. The team has a good understanding of the Tower Hamlets gang's profile.
- 3.10 Ofsted were very positive about the changes in the Emergency Duty Team (EDT), noting that this team is now led by a committed and innovative manager and is delivering a much improved quality service to vulnerable adolescents providing a well-coordinated and timely response when children go missing. The communication between out of hours and day services is effective with the EDT 'footprint' visible on children's records. There is improved professional accountability and responsibility for vulnerable children. Work around Prevent and radicalisation was seen as positive. Strong partnership work to counter the risk to children from radicalisation is having a positive impact. The changing nature of potential threats in this highly complex and sensitive area, continues to be well understood. Work to reduce risk is suitably targeted through strong, effective intelligence sharing with relevant partner agencies and in particular improved communication with police.
- 3.11 In terms of challenges and next steps, Ofsted suggested that the key areas of focus were to continue to embed improvement. The need for a robust recruitment and retention offer is also clear and should be a key focus for the council.
- 3.12 The next monitoring visit will take place on 15th and 16th August 2018 and will focus on Public Law Outline and permanency planning. Early

intervention is a focus for Tower Hamlets and will be a theme in a forthcoming monitoring visit after August, but not until the new Early Help Strategy has been launched.

- 3.13 In addition to the Ofsted monitoring visits, in February we had a six month progress review by the DfE, which included focus groups with staff, managers and partners. Findings from this visit outlined a clear strategic approach to improvement, evidence of progress to improve workforce stability, commitment from partners to the improvement agenda and better confidence in leadership and use of data from staff groups. Some key areas for development were highlighted including around the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) grow your own model, and how to incentivise ASYEs to stay after their initial year. These suggestions all tally with activities in the improvement plan in stages 2 and 3, and will be reported back to the Improvement Board in the summer.
- 3.14 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.
- 3.15 Additional capacity was provided to the service to ensure that rapid progress could be made whilst maintaining day to day service provision. An experienced interim Divisional Director for Children's Social Care was appointed to implement operational improvements and provide leadership in our improvement journey. As we move into embedding the improvement agenda, recruitment has now been completed for a permanent Divisional Director of Children's Social Care and an appointment has been made.
- 3.16 In addition, 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.
- 3.17 £5.59m growth has been put into the children's budget for 2018/19 (this includes the Mayoral Priority Growth for Children's Services for the year is 0.447m). The total requirement to support children's services improvement over two years (2017/18 and 2018/19) was estimated at £4.5m, with an outturn for 2017/18 of £1.9m. 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.
- 3.18 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

- 3.19 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.

- 3.20 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, Cabinet Member, Chief Executive and Corporate Director, alternately attended by the independent Improvement Board Chair. The Mayor and Cabinet Member have also benefitted from training and mentoring organised by the Local Government Association.
- 3.21 Given that the elections on May 3 have brought in a number of new Members, including a new Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People, we are clear that in order to ensure political leadership and knowledge of Children's Social Care is sustained, the activities described above will need to be replicated for all new political members, with an enhanced programme of induction and support offered to the new Cabinet Member and any potential new appointments in relation to Scrutiny committees.
- 3.22 Staff recruitment remains a challenge, and senior leaders have recognised that this is a risk to the improvement journey. As at the end of March 2018, 33% 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.

- 3.23 We have now successfully recruited to all four vacant service manager posts (the final post holder started in April). This completes our permanent recruitment to the third tier leadership team in Children's Social Care. A new vacancy at this level is anticipated through normal turnover. Recruitment to social worker, advanced practitioner and team manager posts continues- as at the end of March, we have 137 posts to fill, with 25 at offer stage. This comprises 21 Social Worker posts and 4 Team Manager posts. Proposals on recruitment options were presented to the Corporate Leadership Team in February and the preferred option is to adopt a grow-your-own model appointing ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) social workers and offering an enhanced programme of support and development. Further work is needed to fully develop the proposal to ensure adequate resources are specified to support the cohort during their first year to ensure that caseloads are appropriate, and to provide appropriate managerial and professional development support and also to develop the offer to retain staff once the ASYE year has been completed. The Principal Children's Social Worker is now working closely with HR to develop these proposals over the next quarter including the development of a social work academy.
- 3.24 Proposals for the development of a social work academy were considered by the Council's Corporate Leadership Team in March. The scope of an options appraisal has been agreed within the context of the Council's overall approach and this will be commissioned in April. Following the launch of our new Learning Management System (LMS) in January, all training is now advertised, booked and monitored through the system. This includes 9 new training courses delivered in March.
- 3.25 Our sufficiency strategy is driving forward change and children coming into care are a much younger age than previously. This does not negate us from supporting older children and young people but we are responding to their care needs in a more inclusive manner. We are seeing fewer children and young people moving into residential care instead there has been an increase in our internal foster placements. This will start to show a reduction in our overspend.
- 3.26 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.

- 3.27 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.

- 3.28 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.
- 3.29 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.
- 3.30 Activity in the fourth quarter has focused 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 coordinator to oversee activity in this area. The initial focus was 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. Significantly, since January 2018 there has been a vast reduction in 'reasons unknown' category with only 5.1% recorded in this way. Importantly we have been able to establish major reasons for children running away. To have contact with family and friends was recorded as the primary reason in 46.7% of cases in January, the risk of CSE was quoted in a further 34.3% of cases and because of gang affiliation in a further 6.6%. Each statistic underlines powerfully the reasons why we are focusing with persistent rigor in these areas.
- 3.31 In recent months significant improvements have been made in identifying children who are at risk of exploitation. All types of exploitation are currently being considered when assessing young people. For example we are making good progress in beginning to identify patterns and trends in relation to children at risk of crossing "county lines", criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation and children who are regularly missing.
- 3.32 Management oversight across the service has continued to improve and at the end of March 95.7% of cases had management oversight recorded in the last 8 weeks (up from 87.9% at the end of December). This is now above the upper target of 95%. March saw a further reduction in numbers for children in need, children subject to child protection plans and children in care. This is in line with targeting resources effectively. Rates per 10,000 are considerably below comparators.
- 3.33 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, and further again to 86.1% at the end of March. Performance has been consistently improving month on month, with 93.8% of these plans being reviewed within 6 months.
- This remains a priority to ensure that all children in need have an up to date plan to provide assurance that their needs are being met. Because of the way that our case management system treats cases that are being stepped down from child protection plans, this figure will never show as

100%. At the same time, there has been an improving trend in the proportion of children being regularly visited by social workers.

- 3.34 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 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 is due to start in July 2018.
- 3.35 In light of concerns about our local thresholds for social care intervention, in particular the extent to which these are were understood by partner agencies, a decision was taken through the Local Safeguarding Children Board to adopt the Pan London child protection thresholds and bring us in line with most other London boroughs and help to ensure consistency. A new thresholds document was drafted and consulted on in the autumn of 2017, and over 600 staff (including from partner agencies) attended training sessions and gave feedback on the draft thresholds model. The agreed new Thresholds document went live on 5 February 2018. The increasing proportion of children receiving assessments and services as an outcome from referrals indicates that thresholds are becoming better understood by referring agencies, and there has been positive feedback on the model from staff, although it is noted that there is more work to do with some partners to ensure that they are engaged with the new model.
- 3.36 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. Following positive feedback from the introductory sessions, a decision has been taken to accept the recommendation of the Task and Finish Group to proceed with the implementation of Restorative Practice as our social work model. Restorative Practice has a strong international and national evidence base underlining its value. A number of high performing local authorities in the UK have embedded the approach to best effect including Leeds which became a good authority following an inadequate judgement alongside other local authorities such as Wolverhampton & West Berkshire.
- 3.37 On the 19th April, Tower Hamlets held the "Big Restorative Practice Discussion". This was attended by 300 staff from Children's Services as well as a number of representatives of partner agencies. This was an important step on the journey and included a commitment from senior staff including the Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services to attend the Restorative Practice Training. Training started in early May with 11 cohorts planned. The aim will be to upskill our own staff to deliver this training on an ongoing basis. Partners from within and outside of the council are invited to attend these training courses and there is currently consideration of whether to arrange specific training sessions for partners.
- 3.38 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, including some exceptional performance, some performance is not yet at the level that would be expected from a 'good' service. The focus of our work over the next quarter and indeed for the rest of the year, as articulated in our improvement plan, is to ensure that the processes put in place during stages 1 and 2 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

3.39 This theme focuses 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.

3.40 Since the last report, Management oversight has improved again, and at the end of March 2018, 95.7% of cases had received management oversight in the past 8 weeks (up from, 87.9% in December 17). This is a significant improvement from 60% in April 2017 and, following management action focused on teams which were impacting on the overall performance, we have now met our 95% target. Training for managers was 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.

3.41 To ensure that our services identify and respond to all children who go missing and those at risk of sexual exploitation we have developed, with the police, health and education colleagues, a co-located team based within Mulberry place. The team comprises 1 Sergeant, 7 constables, the CSE coordinator, the missing coordinator, a health nurse and an education worker and the police missing persons (MISPER) unit. The referral pathway and information sharing protocol are currently being developed between agencies.

Theme 4- Quality Assurance and audit

3.42 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.

- 3.43 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.
- 3.44 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 takes place on a quarterly cycle, with 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. This includes attending social work visits, meeting student social workers, spending time with social work teams and observing professional meetings about children. These observations are informing our improvement activity going forward. The next Practice Week is planned for the week of 11th- 15th June, and will be completed with our Improvement Partner, LB Islington.
- 3.45 The council has embarked on a complete replacement and upgrade of its ageing 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 continues to be reported to the Children’s Services Improvement Board and will continue to be monitored at the highest level.
- 3.46 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 dropped slightly from 96% in January to 93% in March, and the cohort has increased, we are still within the target range. There remains concern about the quality of pathway planning and a review of our support to care leavers is now in progress. The results of this review and recommended next steps were presented to DLT in May 2018, following consultation with Leaving Care and Children Looked After Teams. 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

- 3.47 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:

- Supporting the permanent Divisional Director, the new Cabinet Member and newly elected members with relevant induction and training
- Continuing work on our recruitment and workforce development strategy;
- Developing our training and development offer, including consideration of a social work academy;
- Completing the implementation of phase 1 of the new model for Early Help services;
- Embedding the sufficiency strategy;
- Consolidating and building on the improvements we have made in performance and quality across the social care service;
- Implementing 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'). Tower Hamlets was

inspected in January 2017 under 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'), which 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. Ofsted introduced a new "Framework, evaluation criteria and inspector guidance for the inspections of local authority children's services" in November 2017 ("the ILACS"). This is a more flexible regime and uses information held about each local authority to inform decisions about how best to inspect that authority. This sets out that Ofsted will usually re-inspect an inadequate local authority using the same framework under which they were judged inadequate. However, Ofsted may also take a decision to re-inspect under the ILACS framework.
- 5.3. Local authorities previously found to be inadequate will be subject to quarterly monitoring visits. These visits will be followed by a re-inspection under the framework that their inadequate judgement was made. The duration of the fieldwork and the size of the team will be informed by the progress evidenced in these visits - the full SIF is four weeks as before and the post-monitoring SIF is two weeks in length. This truncated version will be deployed in local authorities that have made significant progress during monitoring. Ofsted will inform inadequate authorities if they no longer plan to undertake monitoring visits meaning a re-inspection should take place within six months. If the outcome of the subsequent re-inspection is better than inadequate, that authority will then begin to follow the pathway for local authorities which either require improvement or are graded good.
- 5.4. 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.
- 5.5. 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.
- 5.6. Changes to the organisational structure are carried out in line with the Council's procedure. If changes are required as part of the restructuring to the employees' roles or terms and conditions, as well as creating new

opportunities this may also create redundancy situations if suitable alternative work is not available for these employees.

- 5.7. 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.

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