

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

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

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

2 Summary of key achievements

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

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

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

Best Value Improvement Plan Summary

COMMUNICATIONS: Progress Summary

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

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

PROPERTY: Progress Summary

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

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

ELECTIONS: Progress Summary

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

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

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

GRANTS: Progress Summary

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

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

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE : Progress Summary

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

The key outcomes we are looking to achieve are:

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

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

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