

<p>Cabinet</p> <p>28 November 2017</p>	 <p>TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of: Will Tuckley, Chief Executive Officer</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Cohesion Scrutiny Challenge Report Action Plan</p>	

Lead Member	Councillor Asma Begum Cabinet Member for Community Safety
Originating Officer(s)	Afazul Hoque, Interim Service Manager Strategy, Policy & Performance & Emily Fieran-Reed, Service Manager Community Engagement, Cohesion & Commissioning
Wards affected	All Wards
Key Decision?	No
Community Plan Themes	A Safe & Cohesive Community

Executive Summary

This report submits *A More Cohesive Borough: A Scrutiny Challenge Report*, by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), and an action plan for implementation. The Scrutiny Challenge Session is an initial discussion on elements of the Casey Report. As detailed in the action plan, the Council will develop a more comprehensive Cohesion Strategy responding to the Casey Report more widely following publication of the Government's response to the Casey Review.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Consider this report of the OSC, and agree to the action plan in response to the report's recommendations.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The Council's constitution requires the Executive to respond to recommendations from the OSC. The action plan within this report outlines the Executive response to the six recommendations arising from the review.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet may decide not to agree the action plan. This is not recommended as the report outlines work undertaken by Councillors, officers and external partners to identify areas of improvement and the Council's response which identifies actions it will take to implement these recommendations.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 This report submits the report and recommendations of the scrutiny review of a more cohesive borough, undertaken by the OSC, and the action plan responding to the recommendations.
- 3.2 Tower Hamlets has always had a rich history of diversity, with over 130 languages spoken in our schools. However modern day challenges, including the increase in terrorism and hate crime, mean it is imperative that the community is less divided and more cohesive.
- 3.3 In 2015, Dame Louise Casey was asked to undertake a major review of integration in Britain to consider what could be done to boost opportunity and integration in our most isolated and deprived communities. In 2016, the Casey Review into opportunity and integration was published. As part of this work programme for 2016/17, the Scrutiny Lead for Governance agreed to hold a challenge session as an initial discussion on elements of the Casey Report. As detailed in the action plan, the Council will develop a more comprehensive Cohesion Strategy responding to the Casey Report more widely following publication of the Government's response to the Casey Review
- 3.4 This scrutiny challenge session looked at:
- The definition of community cohesion;
 - National reviews related to cohesion;
 - The key findings from the Casey Review and to establish to what extent those findings were prevalent in Tower Hamlets by considering and comparing factual and statistical evidence;
 - The Council's Cohesion Programme which included a prima facie review of existing projects and funding;
 - The Council's approach to grants and the associated impact on improving cohesion outcomes;
 - Language as driver of cohesion, including a consideration of the effectiveness of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision;
 - The impact of council policies on cohesion such as the school admissions, housing and planning policies;
 - A consideration of the social and economic data and trends and the consequential impact on the gentrification of the borough; and

- The context of the Equalities Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equalities Duty on the Council to foster good relations between people and the Council's leadership role on cohesion.
- 3.5 The report with recommendations is attached as Appendix 1. There are six recommendations arising from the challenge session held on April 12th 2017. It is useful to note that the report reflects the discussion from a two hour challenge session. The report recognises the limited amount of time that was available to cover such a wide ranging topic as cohesion. The report therefore focusses on the particular aspects of cohesion that the challenge session felt was important for Tower Hamlets. A recommendation has been made to consider setting up a taskforce that looks at cohesion in more detail to address this.
- 3.6 The report also highlights that the Council is leading on best practice in this area, as an example its role and involvement with London Councils to help develop the future approaches is noted and recognised. The report also recognises the range and scale of projects being undertaken by the Council, addressing cohesion in Tower hamlets. The report makes recommendations which aim to further enhance cohesion outcomes for the borough.
- 3.7 Findings from the challenge session discussion, which included qualitative evidence from professionals both internally and external to the Council and Councillors' practical experience in the field, have been supplemented by additional secondary sources. These include review of population statistics and trends, ward data, as well as consideration of the impact of legislation and findings from national reviews. The recommendations arising from this range of evidence sources are outlined below:

Recommendation 1: The Council develops an approach and action plan to: mainstream cohesion across Council services and activities, explore external funding opportunities and develop a robust evaluation, review and reporting process for all cohesion activities and initiatives

Recommendation 2: Idea Store Learning should explore a common assessment process between internal and external providers of ESOL in the borough to ensure appropriate analysis of user needs and better matching to course places.

Recommendation 3: The Council should commission more projects which tackle isolation and encourage strong positive relations and friendship between different groups in the borough.

Recommendation 4: The Council reviews the Grant and Commissioning Policies to ensure that there is a stronger focus on cohesion.

Recommendation 5: Explore how leadership on cohesion can be developed by the Council through the delivery of specialised training for Councillors, senior officers and community leaders.

Recommendation 6: Explore setting up a taskforce to consider the impact of gentrification on cohesion in the borough.

- 3.8 A comprehensive action plan has been developed (Appendix 2) responding to the six recommendations set out in the scrutiny challenge session report in Appendix 1, this includes a number of actions the relevant services have agreed to undertake to meet the recommendations.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 The Council's constitution requires the Executive to respond to recommendations from the OSC. The action plan within this report outlines the Executive response to the six recommendations arising from the review. This report seeks agreement to develop an action plan to address the issues identified.
- 4.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, however, if the development of the action plan results in the need for additional financial resources, officer will be obliged to seek appropriate approval through the Councils financial approval process.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Council is required by section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to have executive arrangements that ensure the committee has specified powers. Consistent with this obligation, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants. The Committee may also make reports and recommendations to Council or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions for them to consider.
- 5.2 The report makes 6 specific recommendations following the scrutiny review in respect of a more cohesive borough and all these recommendations are capable of being undertaken within the Council's powers. The proposed Action Plan has been produced in response to the report's recommendation and all these actions are capable of being undertaken within the Council's powers. There are therefore no direct legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.3 When considering its approach to this report and its recommendations, 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. Information relevant to this is contained in the One Tower Hamlets section below.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 This challenge session report carries out an assessment of cohesion in the borough and makes a set of recommendations for the Council and its VCS partners to enhance cohesion. The Council and its partners are under a public sector equalities duty to foster good relations between those with a protected characteristics and the wider community. This report makes a number of recommendations which ensure that the Council achieves a number of positive cohesion related outcomes. The recommendations seek collaborative working across the organisation, with local partners, stakeholders and residents which ensure and foster good relations between residents from different backgrounds.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The recommendations in this report are made as part of the OSC's role in helping to secure continuous improvement for the council, as required under its Best Value duty. The Action Plan details the actions Council services will take to implement the recommendations outlined in Appendix 1, thereby demonstrating continuous improvement and compliance with the Council's Best Value Duty.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 There are no direct greener environment implications arising from the report or recommendations.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising from the report or recommendations.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The report considers recommendations which enhance cohesion in the borough which support efforts to foster good relations between people of different backgrounds in the community, as well as those with a protected characteristic and those with not, thereby having a positive impact on reducing hate crime in the borough.

11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no direct safeguarding implications arising from this report. The development of the Council's approach to cohesion as detailed in the action plan will consider safeguarding implications particularly to radicalisation. Also work with Public Health and Adults Services on tackling social isolation will support keeping vulnerable residents safe.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – *A More Cohesive Borough: A Scrutiny Challenge Report*
- Appendix 2 – Cohesion Scrutiny Challenge Session Action Plan

Officer contact details for documents:

- N/A