

Transformation & Improvement Board [26/03/2019]	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Sharon Godman, Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance	Classification: [Unrestricted]
Title: Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan 2018-2022	

Lead Member	Mayor John Biggs
Originating Officer(s)	Afazul Hoque Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy Daniel Kerr Strategy and Policy Manager, Corporate
Wards affected	All Wards
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	People are aspirational, independent and have equal access to opportunities. A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in. A dynamic outcomes-based Council using digital innovation and partnership working to respond to the changing needs of our borough

Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the delivery of the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan. The Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan was developed in response to the findings of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and captures the significant transformation and improvement activity currently undertaken in the Council.

- 1.2. The Council has continued to improve many of the actions outlined in action plan. The Council has worked closely with partners to deliver the priorities and themes in the Tower Hamlets Plan, and has held a number of partnership summits to strengthen its collaboration with key partners. Moreover, a number of high profile communication campaigns have been delivered to tackle negative perceptions about the borough and this includes significant engagement with the Partnership Executive Group to get their buy-in with the Place campaign. The Local Community fund has been developed and co-designed with the voluntary and community sector and bidding is set to

commence in mid-March. The Council has also made strides to increase the pace of decision making and become less bureaucratic through a revision of the constitution and a review of the number of strategies and boards in place. Furthermore, the Council has made improvements to its ICT system and deployed WiFi at key locations in the borough to modernise ICT systems. Finally, key transformation and improvement programmes are currently being delivered and are improving outcomes for residents, including the Customer Transformation Programme, and both the Adult Social Care and Children Services improvement programmes.

Recommendations:

The Transformation & Improvement Board is recommended to:

1. Consider and comment on the progress of the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan

1. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. In June 2018 the Council took part in a LGA Corporate Peer Challenge. The purpose of this review was to receive an independent review of the Council's achievement against its Best Value Improvement Plan and learn from best practice. The Peer Challenge represented a significant milestone in the Council's improvement journey and provided fresh insight into the Council's strengths, weaknesses, and ability to deliver the ongoing improvements required to improve services for residents.
- 1.2. The Corporate Peer Challenge identified a number of areas where the Council can continue to improve. There are still large areas in the Council in need of modernisation and some services are still traditional and paternalistic. The Council needs to increase the pace of change in the borough and is currently too risk averse as a result of past decision making. Furthermore, the Council needs to take a more proportionate risk based approach and empower officers to be less cautious and bureaucratic in order to drive through improvements at a faster rate. To ensure that the Council moves forward quickly, the Council needs to have an unrelenting focus on the areas of failure including those identified by Ofsted in Children's Services
- 1.3. This document captures the significant transformation and improvement activity being undertaken in order to become a modern and efficient Council, and meet the recommendations of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge.
- 1.4. This progress update of the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan represents the first quarterly submission of the plan to the Transformation and Improvement Board. The TIB will continue to have oversight of the plan.

2. Progress of the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan

The following captures the key achievements the Council have delivered against the recommendations of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, as outlined in the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan. A comprehensive update on the progress of the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan can be found at appendix 1.

2.1. Recommendation 1: The Council now needs to grasp opportunities and drive the pace of change to achieve the potential of the place. Recommendation 2: Be forward looking and learn the lessons of the past but not be fettered by them.

2.1.1. The Tower Hamlets Brexit Commission published its review into the impact of Brexit on Tower Hamlets in February 2019. The Commission made 24 recommendations which the Council is now working closely with partners to implement. The Council has been running a reassurance campaign to keep EU citizens informed about their rights under the EU Settlement Scheme. The 'this is your home too' campaign imagery continues to be displayed on poster sites across the borough and refuse vehicles and online promotion via social media channels. The Council has also developed a Brexit Resource Hub for partner agencies bringing together information from a range of Government Departments in an accessible format including the Brexit Commission report and campaign materials. This has been shared widely with partner agencies.

2.1.2. Communications have delivered a number of high profile positive communication campaigns about the borough in order to tackle negative perceptions and inner city stereotypes. This includes a presentation of the place narrative to the Partnership Executive Group to get buy-in to the place campaign from key partners.

2.2. Recommendation 3: Be confident and bold about the Council's ability to be normal and even strive for excellence, review its risk appetite and take account of the role of Internal Audit in managing this.

2.2.1. The Local Community Fund (LCF) programme has been co-designed with the voluntary and community sector from its inception at the end of 2017 through to the full draft prospectus of the programme. The draft prospectus for the LCF is due to be published shortly with the launch of the prospectus and the bidding process open mid-March. This project is currently on target for the assessment process to be completed in the summer, with awards made and services mobilised by 1 October 2019.

2.3. Recommendation 4: Increase the pace of decision making and implementation by removing bad bureaucracy whilst retaining good governance

2.3.1. A review of the Council's strategies and boards has been completed. Through engagement with services across the organisation 61 strategies were identified. Work is now underway to streamline this into 47 strategies which

will make the organisation more efficient, support service delivery and achieve the aims of the strategic plan.

2.3.2. The new Constitution is currently being prepared in four sections (Parts A – D) and will strengthen governance arrangements and improve its accessibility. Part A was reviewed by General Purposes Committee in December 2018. Part B was considered in February 2019. Parts C and D will be considered in April 2019. The revised Scheme of Management will be combined with the full Constitution and be considered by Council in July 2019.

2.4. **Recommendation 5: Address the barriers to sustainable change such as the over use of interims and agency staff, some of the practices of the Human Resources department and the problems with the ICT systems**

2.4.1. A HR Policy Working group has been established to review existing and develop new policies and procedures, and ensure HR is at the forefront of delivering change. A policy working group meets monthly with trade unions and managers to discuss policy reviews and amendments. To date, the Grievance Policy and Draft Market supplement policy has been completed, and a review of the Council's sickness policy is underway.

2.4.2. In Children's Social Care, the service has reduced the vacancy gap from 35% to 26%. They have converted 10 agency staff as well as recruiting 16 permanent social workers. Additionally they have recruited 35 Newly Qualified Social Workers and launched the Social Worker Academy. Sickness has decreased and workforce stability has improved with turnover decreasing by 11%. Caseloads are close to or at target levels.

2.4.3. ICT systems continue to be improved with the entire LBTH LAN network replaced and upgraded. This has improved system speed, productivity and convenience for users. Additionally, the Council has deployed secure, stable, fast WiFi to corporate and public users at 51 Council locations.

2.5. **Recommendation 6: There needs to be an unrelenting focus on the previous areas of failure including Children's Services.**

2.5.1. Children's Services Improvement continues to be given the highest priority both corporately and politically. The Children's Services Improvement Board continues to meet every other month and there is strong engagement from senior corporate and political leaders as well across the wider partnership. There continues to be regular contact with Ofsted including quarterly monitoring visits. Our most recent monitoring visit in December 2018 had a similar focus to the visit in August. The August visit was more challenging than our previous visits and highlighted a number of areas that we needed to focus on in order to improve our services for looked after children. It was very positive therefore that in the December visit, Ofsted highlighted significant improvement in this area. They also spent some time in our Leaving Care Service where they observed positive practice and examples of innovative and creative work with some of the most vulnerable young people in our care.

2.5.2. A programme of service reviews has been agreed for 2019/20. These reviews will focus on improving the pace and effectiveness of service delivery and will build on existing activity and transformation programmes. In 2019, reviews will cover areas of Markets, Community Safety, SEND and HR.

2.6. Recommendation 7: Reform the services that are still traditional and paternalistic

2.6.1. A programme of reviews has been scheduled in the Transformation & Improvement Board's 2019/20 work programme. These will focus on cleaner Streets and our local environment, new vision for regeneration, Safer communities and ASB, Work and greater prosperity, Housing and capital delivery.

2.6.2. The Adult Social Care Improvement Programme has resulted in real and measurable benefits for the social care workforce and for the people who use social care services. The Improvement Programme has significantly improved workforce culture, practice and stability, strengthened integration of health and adult social care, and improved the experience of adult social care users and carers.

2.6.3. The Customer Services Transformation Programme is currently being implemented to empower residents to use accessible online services and improve the Council's approach to customer services. Capital improvements to the 5 Idea Stores have been approved and configuration has commenced. Additionally work has been completed to centralise customer access, this includes Parking Permits, Registrars, Bulky Waste, Pest Control, Housing Options, Benefits and Council Tax.

2.7. Recommendation 8: Maximise the potential, ability and enthusiasm of all members

2.7.1. The Council is currently in the process of completing personal development plans (PDP) for Members which are tailored to the specific needs of the Councillors and the Council. To date, 36.6% of Councillors have completed and returned their PDP, 6.7% have attended a 1:1 meeting to discuss their personal development, and more than 1/3 of Councillors have actively contributed to the programme of L&D that is being developed for 2019/2020.

2.7.2. Additionally Members have been supported in their role at Scrutiny through the delivery of formal and informal training. The Council have worked closely with the Centre for Public Scrutiny to provide training covering budget scrutiny, effective questioning, and children services. The Council has also consulted the Chair of the independent Children's Safeguarding Board to develop Members understanding and ability to scrutinise Children Services as this was identified as a priority area for Scrutiny.

2.8. Recommendation 9: Further break down silos and embed cross organisational working.

Recommendation 10: Continue to promote, cascade and embed the behavioural and cultural change by engaging the whole organisation

- 2.8.1. The Organisational Culture Programme Board continues to drive behavioural and cultural change and improvement. The Board has overseen the development of a new outcomes framework which underpins the Council's strategic plan and ensures plans are more outcomes focussed. The Board have also supported the development of a new Target Operating Model for the organisation to help develop people, processes and structures and enable the Council to meet the needs of the borough. Furthermore, the Board implemented a cultural change plan to align organisational culture to the TOWER values. This included improving communication and engagement of staff, better visibility of senior leaders and implementation of the TOWER behaviours framework. The achievement of the Investors in People silver status in January 2019 provided positive evidence of the effectiveness of the Council's organisational culture change plan.
- 2.8.2. In addition to breaking down internal silos, the Council is also strengthening its collaboration and integration with key partners through the Partnership Executive Group. Partnership summits have been held to focus on improving priority areas of children and young people, early years and community safety. This provided the opportunity to consult with a wide range stakeholders on key issues and collect valuable feedback and plot a path for further improvement. A further partnership summit focusing on good jobs and skills is currently being organised for the summer of 2019.
- 2.9. **Recommendation 11: Maximise the advantages of the Council's financial standing whilst instilling more robust financial discipline and delivery of efficiency and value for money.**
- 2.9.1. Work is underway to strengthen the organisation's financial discipline in terms of the delivery of savings targets and balanced budgets, with a focus on budget holders accountability. A new structure is currently being implemented to deliver cultural change, and the financial system is being upgraded with additional reporting functionality that will support stronger discipline and self-service along with a revision to the financial regulations. The 2019/20 budgets will be signed off by each budget manager to ensure accountability is understood and clear at the outset, and financial training has been organised for May to strengthen the discipline needed.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 The reports forms part of the Tower hamlets improvement plan and recommends number of proposals to increase the pace of change in the borough and empower officers to be less cautious and bureaucratic in order to drive through improvements at a faster rate.

6.2 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 The schemes identified in the report have been subject to separate legal advice and are all within the Council's legal powers to undertake.

7.2 The nature of the report is an update and therefore there are no further legal issues arising from the report.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

Or state N/A