

Cabinet 1 November 2016	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Melanie Clay, Corporate Director, Law, Probity and Governance	Classification: Unrestricted
Somali Task Force Report	

Lead Member	Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services Councillor Sirajul Islam, Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management & Performance
Originating Officer(s)	Sharon Godman, Service Head, Corporate Strategy and Equality
Wards affected	All Wards
Key Decision?	Yes
Community Plan Theme	One Tower Hamlets

Executive Summary

The Somali Task Force was set up, at the Mayor's request, to review the issues faced by a community group with comparatively high levels of need. The Task Force reviewed areas where outcomes for Somali residents are lower than for other groups to identify ways to improve.

This report details the process and work carried out by the Task Force and the recommendations that have emerged from the review. The report includes a draft action plan in response to the recommendations, which has been developed with services across the council and incorporating views of Task Force members.

The report includes twenty-three recommendations and many of the actions can be delivered within existing budgets by making changes to how services currently operate and engage with this community. However there are three overarching themes where progress is needed and which propose additional investment:

- access to services (a community hub with a particular focus on the Somali community);
- jobs and skills (two new programmes focussed on ESOL for adults and paid internships for young people);
- capacity-building and employment (specific initiatives to build skills and support people to access leadership roles in the council and community).

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Agree the Task Group's report
2. Consider and agree draft Action Plan, including additional budget requirements to be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan
3. Agree the monitoring arrangements as set out in paragraph 3.19

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 Outcomes for Somali residents are poorer than other groups across key areas of health and wellbeing, housing and employment. Despite a number of engagement and research projects to investigate and improve outcomes in the past, there remains a sense of frustration at a lack of progress and action to address the challenges amongst Somali residents.
- 1.2 The Mayor and Cabinet in Tower Hamlets identified a need to better understand the challenges in narrowing the gap in outcomes for Somali residents. In September 2015 the Mayor established the Somali Task Force to engage Somali residents and review areas of persistently poor outcomes.
- 1.3 The council is also facing the most significant financial reductions in modern history. A key approach to date has been to identify savings by rationalising and mainstreaming services whilst taking into account the impact on key equality groups and mitigating any adverse impacts; meaning that future provision should include the capacity and flexibility to meet diverse needs. This will be a key area of monitoring as savings continue to be realised. The Task Force provides a further opportunity to test issues relating to mainstreaming services for community groups who are often most in need and can face access barriers.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Mayor in Cabinet could choose not to agree the recommendations and action plan set out in this report. This is not recommended as the terms of reference for the Task Force were agreed as a Cabinet Commission to review and engage the Somali community to identify areas of improvement across local services to better meet community needs. The Task Force also fulfils a key manifesto commitment by the Mayor.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 The Task Force was chaired by Deputy Mayor Cllr Sirajul Islam, with Cllr Amina Ali as vice chair. Cllr Amy Whitelock Gibbs has responsibility for the delivery of the action plan. The Task Force included a steering group of Somali community members and supporting officers, and a wider reference group with an open membership approach enabling individuals to participate on the issues that they were most interested in.
- 3.2 Initial data analysis undertaken to develop a profile of the local Somali community suggested that the three most significant areas with the widest gap in outcomes were employment, health and housing need. The research findings were presented to the group to help develop a work programme, in consultation with the reference group, and the final themes that were agreed were:

- health and social care
- youth provision and community safety
- employment and educational attainment
- housing and welfare reform.

For each of these areas, services undertook further analysis and presented the evidence on needs and current approaches to meeting them. The reference group participated by considering the material presented, bringing community insight to the discussion and by suggesting areas for action and issues to take into consideration for future provision.

- 3.3 There were significant challenges in accurately profiling the needs of the Somali community because of the way Somali, as an ethnicity, is not included across key national data sets, including the Census. It is particularly difficult to evidence the differences between the needs of the older adult population that may have arrived as first generation migrants to the UK compared to UK-born second and third generation Somali residents. However the expectation was that there are significant differences; for example, in terms of language need, women's participation and barriers to employment. This was borne out by the views and evidence provided by the Task Force reference group.
- 3.4 Members of the Task Force were sceptical about the council's estimates of the Somali population in the borough and challenged some of the data that was presented to them. Many members of the group raised that their experiences were sometimes of isolation and exclusion from services. It was felt that Somali residents, at times, did not access services for a range of reasons, including a perception that they would not be welcome and a lack of provision for language support. The Task Force felt that many Somali residents are more reliant on word of mouth information for their understanding of what services are available and how to access them, and that caused a reliance on the members of the Somali community employed within public and third sector organisations.
- 3.5 The report makes twenty-three recommendations with a focus on three key priority areas of improving access to services through a 'service hub' approach, actions covering jobs and skills to improve employment levels and capacity-building and empowerment. The recommendations also cover improvements to data collection, health and social care, youth services, community safety, educational attainment, employment, housing and welfare reform. The recommendations include calls to improve representation of the Somali community within the workforce, assist young people into relevant careers, and to help support community resilience.
- 3.6 Most of the actions can be delivered within existing funding and budgets. However, there are some recommendations that require additional resources. The most significant of these is Recommendation 3: The council develops a hub approach to key services to improve access and target key areas where the gaps in outcomes are the greatest.

3.7 *Recommendation 3: A Hub Approach*

A consistent theme identified by the Task Force members was that many Somali residents experience difficulties in accessing council services. The council more broadly is seeking to provide community hubs across the borough and the recommendation is for one of the hubs to include services with a particular focus on the Somali community. Whilst this hub would also be open to use by the wider community (such as residents on the surrounding estate or community groups wishing to hire space), the intention is that it could be an important focus of services for Somali residents, and used in the longer term to encourage Somali residents to access Council services more widely.

3.8 The new service model of community hubs is still being developed and the hubs will be established flexibly across the borough, depending on current users and local need. As such, a community hub which is still open access but would have a particular focus on the Somali community can fit with this new model while meeting the needs raised by the Task Force. This hub would still be open access and would maximise use of the building, as per the broader community buildings proposals. Making the hub inclusive in this way will bring wider benefits for cohesion and community relations.

3.9 The idea of a hub, as outlined in the community buildings report, is primarily to provide space for existing community groups displaced from underutilised premises – along with new community groups – to have somewhere to meet and carry out their activities. However, it is also possible for hubs to provide a base for Council or partners services – either directly delivered or commissioned.

3.10 A potential site for the hub has been identified at Granby Hall (St Matthews Row, E2 6DT) which is currently underutilised. It has been identified as a possible community hub following the recent property review. As a hub, Granby Hall could operate as a building offering both Council services and space for local community groups to hire. The Community Buildings Report is to be considered at the November Cabinet also.

3.11 Granby Hall currently has two main tenants: the Somali Senior Citizens Club (main building) and Bentworth Pensioners Group (secondary building) who will be part of the discussions and development work for the hub.

3.12 The development of a hub at Granby Hall could also help facilitate the saving proposal relating to Mayfield House which is in close proximity. Mayfield House is a Somali day centre attended by a small number of eligible social care users (men only); currently it also operates as an informal drop-in for other Somali men without social care needs. The Mayfield House premises is in a poor state of repair and also does not enable women to access to service. The main needs met by Mayfield House are social interaction and health activities, which could be met by the lunch club and drop-in currently at Granby Hall, supported by the health activities by diverting them from Mayfield House to Granby Hall. The development of Granby Hall as a hub could support some of the service users who have previously utilised Mayfield

House, as well providing a space for a broader group of older residents, including Somali women.

- 3.13 Discussions with Directorates indicate that a range of other existing Council and commissioned services could also operate from a hub at Granby Hall on a sessional or drop-in basis. The lead service undertaking the development of the Hub is the Third Sector Service. The services provided from the hub could include: health and wellbeing sessions, information and advice services including on housing, benefits and the Care Act, and integrated employment services. The action plan attached to this report provides further detail of potential services.
- 3.14 Whilst there is clearly potential for a hub approach to Granby Hall there are some risks and implementation issues to resolve. These include:
- *Governance and community relations:* The existing tenant groups highlighted above will need to be engaged in the discussion to develop the hub. There is also a demand from local tenant groups to access to building. Currently, the Somali Senior Citizens Club use the main part of the building but discussions have already begun in relation to how this space could be used in future. They have indicated they are supportive and keen to assist with considering how the building could incorporate a wider offer for older people (including women) and other services for adults across health, information, advice and employment. However, further work needs to be done to clarify governance and tenancy arrangements in the short and long-term, to enable current users to access the building alongside council services and other potential users who may wish to lease space, to help meet the rent contributions. The other part of the building is also under-utilised so discussions need to be held with the Bentworth Pensioners Group.
 - *Developing and managing the Council's service offer from the hub:* whilst a range of services have provisionally indicated that they could operate from Granby Hall, further work is needed to develop this offer, including finalisation of financial implications and ongoing revenue budget. The use, demand and effectiveness of the hub will need to be managed and monitored carefully.
 - *Asset management:* the building is approximately 6,500 sq. ft of space, including the area used by Bentworth Pensioners Group, and would require refurbishment to develop it into a multi-use facility; there would be costs related to this and asset management have confirmed there are capital funds available as part of the community buildings strategy to undertake building works for community hubs.
- 3.15 If the Mayor agrees to develop a Hub at Granby Hall, its implementation could be phased i.e. widening use of the hub to Mayfield House and other Somali elders more quickly, then incremental build-up both of Council services and licensing of space to the community. For example, additional community organisations could be using Granby Hall on a pilot basis within the calendar year.

ESOL and Employment

- 3.16 In addition to the above, there are two recommendations where additional activity could be undertaken at a further (one-off) cost. Recommendation 16 relates to increasing the take up of English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) from within the Somali Community. This could be included in the work plan for the Community Engagement team in Idea Stores to undertake outreach with Somali organisations and could be achieved within existing resources. With an additional £19k per annum for two years, the Community Engagement team would be able to recruit a specialist community engagement officer (0.5 FTE) to undertake 40 one to one assessments targeting the Somali community.
- 3.17 Recommendation 17 relates to support to help Somali young people into jobs. Within existing resources the careers services will work with 16 – 19 year olds who are not in work to access jobs, training and / or further education opportunities. This would include referrals to careers guidance to help them develop and deliver individual action plans. This might include assistance with CVs, developing employability skills, interview techniques or brokerage on to opportunities, such as apprenticeships or traineeships. With additional funding, the Economic Development service could procure a work taster / work experience programme for school leavers and new graduates. This would offer 6 month paid internships for 24 – 30 (12 – 15 per year) young people within Canary Wharf and other companies and include provision of coaching and mentoring support to this group. This would require additional resources of £45k per annum for two years to target groups with the lowest employment rates in the younger population.
- 3.18 Draft recommendations were shared with members of the Task Force in April 2016. A further meeting with the community was held in October 2016 to review the full action plan. Comments have been incorporated into the body of the report where appropriate. Some additional areas of activity have been identified by the community and these are set out in paragraph 1.10 of the report. There is a commitment by the Mayor and the Members leading the review that there will be ongoing community engagement on the delivery of the action plan and that would provide the scope for looking further at the issues identified.
- 3.19 This will be taken forward through the development of terms of reference for a reference group with a view to quarterly monitoring and review meetings, which would report directly back to the Mayor. In addition, there would be a wider community event to report back on the progress of the Task Force action plan one year after publication, chaired by the Mayor.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 The report makes 23 recommendations and the draft action plan attached to the report sets out the proposed actions.
- 4.2 Whilst the action plan makes reference to actions being delivered within existing resources or requiring additional resources, these resources are not fully quantified or as yet identified. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the resource implications of the action plan are clearly set out before the recommendations are progressed, so that the actions being taken achieve the intended outcomes, are cost effective and represent value for money. Any additional resources required to deliver the recommendations will need to be considered as part of the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 The public sector equality duty ("PSED") pursuant to section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 applies to all decisions made by public authorities, whether those decisions have individual or general effect.
- 5.2 The aim of PSED is to embed equality considerations into the day to day work of public bodies, so that they tackle discrimination and inequality and contribute to making society fairer. The duty is to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination; and (b) advance equality of opportunity, and (c) foster good relations, between people between people who share those protected characteristics and those who do not.
- 5.3 The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 5.4 The term 'due regard' means consciously thinking about the three (3) aims of the general duty as part of the decision-making process. This means that consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by public bodies and which includes how they design, deliver and evaluate services.
- 5.5 The Somali Task Force was set up by Cabinet to review the issues faced by a community group with high levels of need re is no duty to carry out an equality analysis. This is fully compatible with the PSED and the Task Force recommendations assist the Council to:
- eliminate discrimination;
 - tackle inequality;
 - develop a better understanding of the community it serves;
 - target resources efficiently;
 - adhere to the transparency and accountability element of the Public Sector; and
 - meet legal compliance and the duty.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 This report focuses specifically on the Somali community. The Task Force reviewed areas where outcomes for Somali residents are comparatively lower than for other groups to identify ways to improve. In this respect, tackling inequality was a key focus of the group. The Task Force also considered the importance of community leadership, capacity building and fostering good relations between groups. The recommendation for a community hub specifies that it should have a focus on meeting the needs of the Somali community but that it would also be open to the wider community.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The recommendations in this report aim to secure continuous improvement for the council, as required under its Best Value duty. Reviewing provision with a focus on a community group with high levels of need and who face challenges in accessing council services will contribute to increased effectiveness and delivery of the Councils objectives, including discharging its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 There are no direct sustainable actions for a greener environment arising from this report.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no immediate risk management implications arising from this report.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.2 There are no immediate crime and disorder reduction implications arising from this report. The recommendations that relate to improving representation from the Somali community within the Community Safety workforce should help to meet Community Safety objectives.

11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no immediate safeguarding implications arising from this report.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- NONE

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

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

Or state N/A