

# Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Tuesday, 15 October 2024 at 6.30 p.m.  
Council Chamber - Town Hall, Whitechapel**

## Supplemental Agenda

4. **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG**
7. **PROPORTIONALITY AND ALLOCATION OF SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEES AND APPOINTMENT OF LEAD MEMBERS 2024/25**
9. **LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN DELIVERY UPDATE**
- 10 .1 **Update on Tackling Temporary Rent Arrears (Pages 55 - 62)**

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# Scrutiny Action Log

**Name of Committee:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Municipal Year:** 2024-25

Reference	Action	Assigned to	Scrutiny Lead	Due Date	Response
21 May 2024	<p>Parking Spotlight</p> <p>Committee members commented that this is a difficult stage in the customer journey and from experience, call centres are difficult to get through to and there are often long timescales in place for a replacement permit. As part of the new policy, Members would like the council to ensure the customer journey is simplified and there is no delays/inconveniences caused to a resident should they change a vehicle. The Committee feels that there seems to be a gap here and residents are not aware of this.</p>	Simon Baxter Corporate Director, Communities	Cllr Jahed Choudhury, OSC Chair	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2024	See Appendix 1 on response from the service on parking spotlight.
	Chief Executive to update Committee on Corporate Restructure	Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive	Cllr Jahed Choudhury, OSC Chair		Chief Exec attending in person to provide an update on 9 <sup>th</sup> July 2024
	Scrutiny Portfolio update		Cllr Jahed Choudhury, OSC Chair		Will be published for the 9th of July 2024

## Scrutiny Action Log

9 Jul 2024	OSC has requested for them to be provided with details of the new council structure. so that Members can understand which Services will be under each Directorate.	Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive	Cllr Jahed Choudhury, OSC Chair	23/07/2024	See attached Power Point slide deck titled scrutiny update on new structure
23 Jul 2024	OSC requested the summaries of the feedback from the proposed Target Operating Model	Ayesha Hakim Rahman, Head of Service, Corporate Strategy and Transformation	Cllr Jahed Choudhury, OSC Chair	30/08/2024	See attached Slides
Page 4	OSC requested a breakdown of the £5million pound investment to help improve recycling performance.	Simon Baxter, Corporate Directorate of Communities	Cllr Jahed Choudhury, OSC Chair	29/07/2024	See appendix 2 for details
10 Sep 2024					
15 Oct 2024					
26 Nov 2024					

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17 Dec 2024					
14 Jan 2025					
28 Jan 2025					
4 Feb 2025					
Reserve Budget Scrutiny					
18 Feb 2025					

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## Scrutiny Action Log

25 Mar 2025					
29 Apr 2025					

## Appendix 1: Parking Spotlight Response

Briefing title Swap Vehicle / Temporary cover Process Review  
Prepared for Overview and scrutiny  
Date 20/05/2024  
Author Michael Darby

### Key Points

As part of overview and scrutiny parking spotlight there were concerns raised on the customer journey when a resident permit holder obtains a new vehicle and is required to make changes to their permit details. Previously, there was a temporary cover option which would allow residents to cover their new vehicle temporarily. However, this could not be configured at the time to limit the number of covers per year. Therefore, it was removed due to the large scale of abuse, also there were no requirements for documents to be uploaded which was a concern from an audit perspective.

Currently, the resident permit holder is required to submit a swap vehicle application, however this must go through an authorisation process by an officer for the swap to take effect which can take up to 3 working days.

### Focus of the briefing

To improve the customer journey when a resident makes an application for a swap vehicle which can take up to 3 working days the customer will have the ability to apply for a free temporary cover whilst their application is being processed.

### Options or implications

To improve the customer journey, we are working with our supplier to reinstate the temporary cover to allow customers to apply for free of charge to immediately cover their new vehicle whilst their swap vehicle application is processed. Customers will be limited to maximum of 3 temporary cover permit per account per year. Each temporary cover will last a duration of 14 days.

### Background and Information

#### What is a swap vehicle?

This function allows resident permit holders the ability change their permit details if they have obtained a new vehicle via the customer portal.

#### What documents are required for a swap vehicle?

For a swap vehicle to be successful the resident must supply us one of the below –

- V5C logbook of new vehicle
- Insurance certificate and policy schedule with new vehicle details.

## How much does it cost?

For each swap vehicle application there is an administration charge of £20.

## How long does it take?

The application processing time can take up to 3 working days (in line with our customer charter) although our current processing time on average is within 4 hours Monday to Friday during core hours, as we treat all swap vehicle applications as a priority.

## Current issues raised.

Due to the process of application to be authorised by an officer this has an impact on the customers' ability to park their new vehicle. As they would need to make alternative arrangements until their application has been processed and authorised which could also have a cost implication to the customer.

Furthermore, if an application is made on the weekend the application would not be processed until next working day.

## Temporary cover

Previously the customers had an option to apply for a temporary cover free of charge, however due to configuration of the permit at that time, this allowed customers to apply for a temporary cover numerous times which covered their vehicle without payment. Due to this large scale abuse the decision was made to remove this function as the supplier at the time could not configure to limit the usage to 3 per year.

Due to the recent upgrade to our system the supplier can now configure the temp cover to limit the usage to 3 per year per account with a duration of 14 days for each temporary cover. This will in turn mitigate the possible abuse of this function.

## Plan to make improvements.

We are currently working with our system provider to reinstate the temporary cover with a limit of 3 per year per account and each temp cover will last a period of 14 days. This will allow customers to park their vehicles immediately whilst their application for a swap vehicle is being processed.

## Customer Contact/Enquiries

For any enquiries in relation to permits the customer has the below options -



## Scrutiny Action Log


- Call the Customer Contact Centre – the customer can call the CCC where the advisor will take the initial call and support the customer. If CCC advisor cannot deal with the call i.e. technical issues the call will be transferred to the permits team.
- Submit an online contact form – The customer can submit an online form whereby an officer will deal with the enquiry, if required the officer will call the customer.

We deal with all enquiries in a timely manner to ensure they are resolved.

## Scrutiny Action Log

The table below provides outline of how the £5m is project to spend. If you have any query do let me know.

<b>Workstream</b>	<b>Budget Allocated</b>	<b>Spend</b>	<b>Committed</b>	<b>Forecast</b>
Street Cleansing & Parks Enhancement	£3,105,000	£326,823	£412,255	£3,105,000
Introduction of Time-Bands	£350,000		£120,000	£200,000
Commercial Waste Review	£145,000		£100,000	£145,000
Waste Systems Review	£250,000			£200,000
Community Engagement & RRP	£50,000		£50,000	£50,000
Communication, Partnership & Consultation and RRP	£1,100,000		£50,000.00	£1,100,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£5,000,000</b>	<b>£326,823</b>	<b>£732,255</b>	<b>£4,800,000</b>

<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p><b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b></p> <p>15 October 2024</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> Linda Walker, Director Legal and Monitoring Officer</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Proportionality and allocation of Scrutiny Sub-Committees and Appointment of Lead Members 2024/25</b></p>	

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services Joel West, Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee)
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards

Reasons for urgency: Due to council membership changes on 2 October 2024, this report was drafted on short notice leading to being cleared late for Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However, it is a requirement that this report is considered as soon as possible by the Committee and Members have been engaged with in respect of its contents.

### Executive Summary

The Committee is asked to review the following, arising from a change to the political composition of the Council:

- Scrutiny Lead Member appointment.
- Scrutiny sub-committee political proportionality.
- Scrutiny sub-committee appointments.

### Recommendations:

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Appoint a member of the Committee to the vacant Lead Scrutiny Member role for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 1.
2. Consider the review of proportionality as at Section 3 of this report and the allocation of seats on Scrutiny Sub-Committees for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2024/25 as set out at paragraph 3.6.
3. Approve the membership of the three scrutiny sub committees for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2024/25 in accordance with the nominations set out in Appendix 2.

## 1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1. A change in the political composition of the Council has occurred (this was reported to the full Council on 2 October 2024). This requires the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the proportionality of its own Sub-Committees. Details of the new calculations are set out below.
- 1.2. The change to the proportionality of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also result in a Scrutiny Lead Member position becoming vacant. The Committee is asked to review and appoint to the vacant position.

## 2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The requirement for scrutiny sub committees to reflect political balance is a statutory requirement.

## 3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

### **Scrutiny lead member portfolios and nominations**

- 3.1. At its meeting in May 2024, the Committee established six Scrutiny Lead roles and appointed members to them as follows:

- Scrutiny Lead for Adults and Health Services (including Chairing the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee). **Councillor Bellal Uddin**
- Scrutiny Lead for Children & Education (including Chairing the Children & Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee). **Councillor Abdul Mannan**
- Scrutiny Lead for Housing and Regeneration (including Chairing the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee). **Councillor Bodrul Choudhury**
- Scrutiny Lead for Resources. **Councillor Ahmodur Rahman Khan**
- Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety. **Councillor Suluk Ahmed**
- Scrutiny Lead for Environment and the Climate Emergency. **Councillor Natalie Bienfait**

- 3.2. Following the review of proportionality of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, agreed by Council on 2 October, a member who held a Scrutiny Lead position is no longer a member of OSC. This role is therefore vacant. The Committee is recommended to appoint an OSC member to the vacant Scrutiny Lead role should any nominations be received before the meeting they will be published as Appendix 1 to this report.

### **Political proportionality of Scrutiny Sub Committees**

- 3.3. At its meeting in May 2024, the Committee established three scrutiny sub-committees and appointed members to serve on those scrutiny sub-committees in accordance with the political proportionality at the time and in accordance with the wishes of political groups. In May 2024, each sub-committee comprised of 4 seats allocated to the Aspire Group and 3 seats allocated to the Labour Group.

- 3.4. Following changes to the political composition, the Council meeting on Wednesday 2 October 2024 received a report setting out the new proportionality calculations and advising Members of expected changes to the calculations to the Scrutiny Sub-Committees. The Committee must now review the allocation of seats on sub-committees in line with those calculations.

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>SEATS (on Council)</b>	<b>PROPORTION ON COUNCIL</b>	<b>ENTITLEMENT (to seats on Committees)</b>
Aspire	21	46.67%	35.94 (36)
Labour	17	37.78%	29.09 (29)
Ungrouped	7	0*	12 (remainder)
	45		77

- 3.5. The new proportionality as applied to sub committees is as follows. Figures in brackets ( ) show the change to seat allocations since May 2024. The Committee is required to confirm the new proportionality of its sub committees.

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Aspire</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Ungrouped</b>
Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee	7	3 (-1)	3	1 (+1)
Children & Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee	7	3 (-1)	3	1 (+1)
Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee	7	3 (-1)	3	1 (+1)

#### **Nominations to sub committees**

- 3.6. The changes to Political proportionality of Scrutiny Sub Committees outlined above required changes to nominations to those bodies. In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, members of scrutiny sub committees can be drawn from all members of the Council, except members of the executive (i.e. Mayor and Cabinet). The Committee is recommended to consider the nominees for Scrutiny sub committees provided in Appendix 2 and any submitted at the meeting.
- 3.7. Where there are more applications from ungrouped Members than there are places, the Committee will be required to determine which application should be accepted.

3.8. In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the sub committees will be chaired by the relevant Lead Scrutiny Member.

#### **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The establishment of proper scrutiny arrangements helps ensure effective decision making by the authority which supports the Council's equalities aspirations.

#### **5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

5.2 No other statutory implications have been identified.

#### **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

#### **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

7.1 The principles of proportionality for allocation of places on committees are set out in Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. These principles require that that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of a relevant authority which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary committees of that authority as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority. Further detailed rules for the allocation of seats on committees are set out in the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

7.2 In relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in addition to the usual proportionality rules, the statutory guidance for overview and scrutiny committees published in May 2019 require consideration of the members' skills, experience and ability to act impartially.

7.3 The Council's Constitution requires full council to make appointments to committees, save where this power has been delegated.

- 7.4 The proposals set out in this report comply with the above legislation and guidance, and with the Council's Constitution.
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## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- None.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Nominations for scrutiny lead roles (to follow)
- Appendix 2 – Nominations to sub committees (to follow)

### **Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)**

#### **List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report**

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- None.

#### **Officer contact details for documents:**

Thomas French, Democratic Services Officer (Committee)

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<b>Cabinet</b>  16 October 2024	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Steve Halsey, Chief Executive Officer	<b>Classification:</b> [Unrestricted or Exempt]
<b>LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – position update</b>	

## Urgency Reasons

The urgency for this report to be published is to allow sufficient time for the report to be reviewed.

## Executive Summary

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has made significant strides in addressing the recommendations of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC), demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement and a proactive approach to change. The council has completed 84% of actions and is on track to reach 91% completion of actions aligned to the CPC recommendations by November 2024.

Key progress with recommendations that have enabled immediate organisational impact include financial sustainability, governance and efficiency, and diversity and inclusion. These achievements demonstrate the council's commitment to improving its organisational performance and creating a more inclusive and equitable environment.

The council welcomes a progress review from the LGA to further validate the progress made and to identify any additional areas for improvement. We are urging the LGA to conduct this review as soon as possible to provide valuable feedback and support for our ongoing efforts. We believe that as 12 months has passed it would be appropriate for a full LGA CPC to be repeated.

It should be noted that whilst some actions are clearly defined with a start and finish, others represent actions that support improvement over time and are part of wider on-going action over a longer period or possibly continuously to ensure the Councils performance is as good as it can be. In such cases completion of the action does not infer that the problem it is addressing has been rectified but rather that a supporting action to improve the position has been completed.

Going forward, as the actions recommended by the LGA CPC are completed, progress against the 18 core recommendations will be evaluated and the supporting actions renewed. Councillors and their political groups have been, are and will

continue to be free at any time to bring forward suggestions for inclusion in the Plan. It may also be appropriate to consider the plan framework to accommodate specific improvement actions that emerge from the findings of the Best Value Report.

### **Recommendations:**

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the council's progress against the LGA CPC Action Plan
2. Suggest key areas of attention in advance of the upcoming LGA progress review

## **1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 This report provides a comprehensive overview of the progress made by the council in addressing the recommendations of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge. Noting this report is important due to:
- Ensuring the council is well-prepared for the upcoming LGA progress review or a renewed review
  - Noting that the report demonstrates the council's commitment to transparency and accountability
  - Highlighting areas where focused attention might be required

## **2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 The council could choose not to consider the update report. It is important for Members and the Executive to be kept informed of progress and have the opportunity to comment and make suggestions.

## **3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

### **LGA CPC Overview**

- 3.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) offers councils robust, strategic, and credible challenge and support through peer-to-peer engagement. Underpinned by the principles of Sector-Led Improvement (SLI), CPC facilitate continuous improvement and assurance across the local government sector.
- 3.2 The London Borough of Tower Hamlets underwent an LGA CPC in September 2023, resulting in a comprehensive report outlining key findings. The CPC

report acknowledged the council's many positive attributes and identified 18 core recommendations to address gaps and ensure continuous development, with 70 specific suggestions for improvement or review. These suggestions were consolidated into the council's LGA CPC Action Plan, a live document that is regularly updated. In alignment with the principles of openness and transparency, the council promptly published both the report and accompanying action plan to address the recommendations.

- 3.3 Approximately ten months following the initial CPC, the LGA conduct a progress review to assess the council's implementation of recommendations. This review involves reporting to the peer team, discussing early impact and learning, and receiving feedback on the action plan. The findings from this review are subsequently shared publicly.
- 3.4 While the council was initially anticipating an LGA progress review in August 2024, the LGA has recently informed the council of a delay, as some members for the review team were not available. The council has expressed its disappointment and has requested alternative dates for the review, emphasising the importance of conducting it promptly. 12 months have passed since the review was completed and a new review may now be appropriate.
- 3.5 In anticipation of the upcoming progress review, or a new review, this report provides a comprehensive update on the council's impact, position and progress against each recommendation, 12 months after the original LGA CPC took place.

### **Progress to Date**

- 3.6 Significant progress has been made in addressing the 18 LGA CPC recommendations. As of August 2024, **84% of all identified actions across recommendations have been completed**, with an anticipated **91% by the end of November** assuming no changes to the current outstanding actions.
- 3.7 Since July 2024, there has been substantial improvement in completion rates, with a total increase of 40 percentage points. This reflects the council's ongoing commitment to addressing the CPC recommendations.
- 3.8 In preparation of the upcoming LGA progress review, the council's CPC progress can be summarised as follows:
  - **No significant risks or issues:** The council's progress is currently on track, with no major obstacles identified.
  - **Quality assurance:** All CPC recommendations and associated action updates have been reviewed, approved, and signed off by the relevant Corporate Director.
  - **Dependencies:** Three actions (1.2, 2.2 and 4.1) are contingent on the Council's long-term strategic vision, which is scheduled for launch in February 2025 (tbc). If this timeline is met, the risks to the timeline for delivery associated with these dependencies are considered manageable.

- 3.9 Overall, the council is making steady progress towards completing all 18 CPC recommendations by March 2025, which represents 15 months from publication of the CPC Report and Action Plan. However, during this period the impact of those actions on the areas identified by the recommendations will be evaluated and where appropriate new actions will be added as part of the Council's commitment to continuous improvement. This report is the start of that process and brings forward some additional actions that may form part of the next iteration of the plan for discussion at Cabinet.

### **Positive Organisational Impact**

- 3.10 The progress made in addressing the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) recommendations has yielded immediate positive organisational benefits. This underscores the value of the LGA CPC as an effective improvement and assurance tool and reflects the dedication of Members and officers in actively embracing and implementing the recommendations. This section highlights three key examples of positive organisational impact.

### **Financial Sustainability**

- 3.11 In 2023 the Council inherited a deficit of £38.7 million and incomplete financial accounts since 2016 – 17. To alleviate this burden, the Council was forced to rely heavily on £13m reserves in the immediate term. However, in line with Recommendation 2 of the LGA CPC, the Council developed a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) that ensures financial stability and aligns with the Council's long-term strategic vision. This work was already well advanced at the point that the LGA's recommendation was made, but it endorsed the Council's approach to moving from an annual financial plan to three-year plan.
- 3.12 Through effective leadership, the Council successfully developed a comprehensive MTFS, encompassing both the general fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This plan, approved by Full Council on 28 February 2024, established a balanced position for the next three years and identified £43m in savings. Based on the 2023 Q4 report, the Council's general fund reserve exceeded the minimum recommended level of £20m, and the planned reliance on reserves at budget setting was not required in full, due to stronger financial grip and improved financial reporting. By reducing reliance on reserves, and not utilising the planned drawdown, the MTFS, and in-year budget management, has laid the groundwork for a more sustainable financial position over the medium term, with greater capacity and resilience moving forward.
- 3.13 A key achievement was the development of single, clear and consistent narrative for the MTFS, for audiences including Members, staff and the Transformation Advisory Board. This marked a significant milestone in financial discipline, resolving historical financial management challenges. At the same time, the Council undertook a major financial exercise to address historic

failures in producing auditable accounts. This enabled outstanding end of year accounts to be reviewed and signed-off by external auditors.

- 3.14 This improved financial planning has allowed for increased investment in frontline services, Council systems, and community support programmes for young people and vulnerable residents. To ensure continued fiscal discipline, the Council's new Target Operating Model (TOM) has embedded a design principle that focuses on the Council being value-driven. This, along with improved corporate arrangements for financial monitoring and accountability, has placed financial management and financial prudence at heart of the Council decision making.

### **Internal governance**

- 3.15 In Recommendation 6, the LGA CPC advised the Council to conduct a comprehensive review of its internal governance arrangements to streamline decision-making processes and enhance accountability. The Council has now achieved unprecedented stability in the senior leadership team. Tower Hamlets is one of a select number of Councils across the country with a permanent corporate leadership team in place. This provides the Council with stability, experience and the continuity necessary for sustained success. The Council has also leveraged new technologies, such as the use of Power BI, to analyse real-time financial data, enabling managers to make informed decisions pertaining to matters with financial implications.
- 3.16 The Council's Internal Audit department undertook an in-depth review of the Council's internal governance arrangements against the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan. As part of the review the Transformation Boards were examined. To ensure continuous alignment with the corporate ambitions, the decision was made to merge Efficiency Board with the Budget Board, and the People Resourcing Board was merged with the Reorganisation Board. The Council's People First transformation programme is now led by three core boards.
- 3.17 As part of further efforts to reduce the number of boards, there is a focus to improve the existing governance processes in place. The CEO has reviewed his own delegated authority and where appropriate, devolved decision-making authority to senior leadership. This has been supported by the new TOM, which has been developed to empower directorates to make decisions without the need for bureaucratic processes.
- 3.18 To expedite decision-making processes, the CEO has implemented a process at the Corporate Management Team (CMT) level to identify and address outstanding input from the Mayor's Office, thereby facilitating timely decision-making. Corporate Directors report that this has reduced the number of instances of delay when interfacing with the Mayor's Office.
- 3.19 The Council's Corporate Boards Rationalisation Programme reviewed all officer-led boards (chaired by a corporate director, director, or head of service),

reducing the number of boards from an initial baseline of over 250, to now only 47 live boards. Ongoing rationalisation efforts aim to further streamline governance and ensure effective decision-making.

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

- 3.20 Recommendation 13 of the LGA CPC highlighted the need for the Council to consider how the voices of women and individuals from diverse backgrounds are influencing policy. In response, the Council has taken significant steps to promote diversity and inclusion.
- 3.21 The Tower Hamlets Women's Commission has been established to amplify the voices of women within the community. This commission plays a crucial role in examining how women from different backgrounds can contribute to policy development. The Commission's first cornerstone focus area is addressing improving 'pathways to employment' for women in the Borough.
- 3.22 The Council's 'Be a Councillor' campaign, aligned with the LGA principles, aims to increase the representation of women and underrepresented groups in local government. This campaign links to and promotes the LGA campaign to increase the number of women choosing to become Councillors. The 'Be a Councillor Campaign' has now been launched and will be supported by a wider campaign strategy for promoting women in public life.
- 3.23 By proactively reviewing and adjusting committee composition, the Council have made tangible progress in ensuring that underrepresented groups, including women and individuals from diverse backgrounds, have a stronger voice in our decision-making processes.
- 3.24 The Council recognises that improving diversity is an ongoing commitment and has implemented continuous improvement plans to support this goal. For instance, the Council is planning in-person events in November and during Black History Month celebration in October to engage with women and underrepresented groups. Additionally, the Council has launched a feedback collection mechanism that will enable speakers at Council meetings to feedback on any negative experiences they may encounter at those meetings, to enable learning and provide a baseline for understanding the extent and nature of any issues.
- 3.25 These initiatives demonstrate the Council's dedication to creating a more inclusive and representative local government that reflects the diverse needs and perspectives of its community and staff. To support this commitment, the Council has completed a review and implemented a framework to enable staff-led group chairs to dedicate time away from their substantive duties to develop staff equalities networks. This further ensures these networks are less likely to disband due to time-commitment conflicts.

### **Progress by Recommendation**

3.26 The following progress update is as of 31 August 2024. It is important to note that a recommendation is considered complete only when all associated actions have been confirmed as completed by their respective owners.

3.27 **Recommendation 1: Strategic Vision**

*“Develop a more comprehensive long-term strategic vision for the borough and the Council which is co-produced with the community.”*

**Overall Completion:**   
**Status:** 57% Complete

**Council’s Extension of Recommendation**

- Determine the borough’s future by putting data-driven decisions at the heart.
- Embed regular community engagement throughout implementation of the strategic vision.
- Ensure the long-term strategic vision addresses key council challenges, such as Housing, with a focus on improving housing conditions and supply in the borough

The Council will leverage the council’s Partnership Plan (2023 – 2028) as the foundation for a comprehensive, long-term 2035 strategic vision for the borough in collaboration with the community. This utilisation of the Partnership Plan will streamline the strategy development process, while ensuring alignment with the community’s priorities and aspirations.

A dedicated Task and Finish Group, comprising key partners and council officers, will continue to meet monthly, until the long-term vision is agreed and launched in February 2025.

Comprehensive engagement will commence in November, comprising residents, partners, Members, the youth council, faith groups, targeted groups and equality networks. In fostering a co-productive approach, a thematic Partnership Congress, bringing together representatives from the council including partner organisations, businesses, community groups, and young people, is scheduled for December 2024, with a focus on developing a long-term strategic vision for the borough.

3.28 **Recommendation 2: Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)**

*“Develop a MTFS, including the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which can demonstrate the future financial sustainability of the Council, and which is aligned to the long-term strategic vision of the Council.”*

**Overall Completion:** 

**Status:** 100% Complete

**Council’s Extension of Recommendation**

- Embed community wealth-building into the council’s long-term financial strategy.
- Explore opportunities to collaborate with the private sector to secure additional funds.

The Council successfully implemented the MTFs, including the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), in February 2024. The HRA strategy was presented to Cabinet on 31 January, with an updated HRA budget incorporating input from Savills. This implementation has led to a sustainable position and an increase in the acquisition of homes.

The MTFs is the financial plan that underpins the effective resourcing of the delivery of the strategic plan, ensuring the needs of the community are met. The financial modelling reflects a four-year period and is updated annually. As such, it will always align to the most up to date long-term strategic vision for the borough.

**3.29 Recommendation 3: Performance Management**

*“To assist with the focus on delivery of the council’s priorities, measures should be taken to enhance the existing performance framework, making better use of data to inform decision making and policy development. Consideration should be given to how the impact of decisions and priority areas is captured.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 67% Complete



**Council’s Extension of Recommendation**

- Enhance the Council’s performance management capability to ensure a holistic approach.
- Embed performance-based budgeting for the Council through Power BI.
- Implement the use of AI for comprehensive data analysis to enable informed decision-making and improved efficiency

To enhance focus on delivering its priorities, the council has made substantial progress in improving the existing performance management framework. The development of the Annual Delivery Plan, which has been approved by Cabinet, has embedded improvements in measures, benchmarking, and accountability.



A Power BI platform linking spend and performance is being implemented across directorates to facilitate a more effective performance management. This tool provides managers with an in-depth, real-time analysis of spend data. A review of the Council's current strategy and policy landscape to identify opportunities for simplification is currently underway and the completion is projected for December 2024.

### 3.30 Recommendation 4: Workforce Strategy

*“Develop a refreshed workforce strategy to address recruitment and retention challenges. This is particularly important given the current vacancies in key senior management positions and the Mayor’s stated priority of the workforce representing the community.*

*The Overview & Scrutiny Committee should be given responsibility for overseeing performance against the council’s aim to ensure that its workforce and service provision reflects the diversity of the borough.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 83% Complete



#### **Council’s Extension of Recommendation**

- Commission market research to determine average pay for senior management positions and adjust accordingly.
- Provide a range of learning and development opportunities that are designed to support staff to progress their career as well as seek promotion to internal senior roles.
- Continue to support and, where possible, expand the range of apprenticeship qualifications to upskill the workforce.

The Council has initiated a significant amount of work to develop a refreshed workforce strategy that addresses recruitment and retention challenges. A new HR capacity team was established and trained in June to reduce the backlog related to recruitment, retention and workforce matters. As part of the action to develop a coordinated workforce strategy (4.1), a new Workforce to Reflect the Community Strategy is now complete, and an independent review is planned to provide assurance. This will be linked to the Council’s long term strategic vision.

A review of the Council’s pay policy for hard-to-recruit and senior positions resulted in the development of a new pay policy, which was approved by the HR Committee and Full Council in March 2024. This new policy has facilitated progress in the recruitment programme for Corporate Directors and Directors. Interviews for Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer positions were conducted on 9 July 2024, resulting in an offer being made and accepted. Interviews for the Corporate Director of Housing & Regeneration position took place on 23

July 2024, resulting in an offer being made. The permanent Director joined the council on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

These efforts have yielded positive outcomes for the Council, which has now achieved unprecedented stability in the senior leadership team, making it one of the few Councils across the country with a permanent corporate leadership team in place.

Furthermore, in optimising the equality, diversity, and inclusion agenda, the corporate equalities' function has transferred from the Strategy Improvement and Transformation (SIT) division to Resources, where it can leverage a stronger relationship with Human Resources.

It was agreed that in place of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, HR Committee is best placed to oversee performance against the Council's aim, to ensure that its workforce and service provision reflects the diversity of the borough.

### 3.31 Recommendation 5: Mayor's Office

*“Review the roles, functions and deployment of officers within the Mayor's Office. This should be done to ensure streamlined decision making, removing barriers and duplication elsewhere in the council. The council should also ensure that colleagues remaining in the Mayor's Office are given training and development opportunities to ensure a wider understanding of the roles and requirements of different services areas.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 100% Complete



#### **Council's Extension of Recommendation**

- Implement council restructure, including review the roles and functions within the Mayor's Office with a view to mainstreaming it across the council.
- Develop a cross-training programme between Mayor's Office and Directorates to broaden the technical knowledge base within the downsized office and foster joint learning.
- Continue to support new systems and processes that streamline and speed up decision making.

The Council has fully completed this recommendation by conducting a comprehensive review of the roles, functions, and deployment of officers within the Mayor's Office. The review was undertaken as part of the Phase 1 restructure.

To ensure streamlined decision-making and eliminate barriers and duplication, the council has taken steps to optimise the structure and operations of the Mayor's Office. Additionally, the Council has provided targeted training and development opportunities to key members of the Mayor's Office to enhance their understanding of the roles and requirements of different service areas and the broader operational environment. Structural changes are in the process of being implemented that will mainstream several Mayor's Office posts into relevant directorates. Consequently, the Mayor's office will reduce in size to that comparable with many other directly elected Mayoral Offices.

**3.32 Recommendation 6: Internal Governance**

*“Conduct an urgent review of the internal governance arrangements including the board structures to ensure focus on the delivery of priorities, clarity of reporting and clear lines of accountability. This should seek to speed-up decision making, and delegate business-as-usual decisions to an appropriate level.”*

**Overall Completion:**  **Status:** 100% Complete

- Council's Extension of Recommendation**
- Develop a comprehensive decision-making control framework codifying decision pathways.
  - Introduce a monitoring system for time taken to make BAU decisions delegated to officers.
  - Create a performance dashboard that will serve as real-time insights to enable informed decisions.

The Council has made significant progress in streamlining its internal governance arrangements, including board structures. A rationalisation exercise of all officer-led boards resulted in a substantial reduction in the number of boards, from an initial return of approximately 250 to now 47. Additionally, the Transformation and Governance Board framework was streamlined from six to three boards to further enhance the governance processes.

To improve efficiency and expedite decision-making, the Chief Executive is continuing to implement new controls to address late reports submitted to the Mayor's Advisory Board (MAB) or Cabinet, ensuring more consistent reporting dates. These measures aim to streamline the planning process and facilitate timely decision-making. Work to improve this area of performance will be ongoing and progress incrementally. In part improvement will be driven by a culture change programme that focuses on corporate responsibility carried forward by the People First Campaign.

**3.33 Recommendation 7: Working with Partners**

*“To ensure more effective partnership working, the council should consider reviewing current partnership governance arrangements.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 100% Complete



#### **Council’s Extension of Recommendation**

- Establish a framework for regularly evaluating the partnerships and their effectiveness from both the partner and council perspective.
- Create a best practice forum for partners to share experiences and learning.
- Embed continuous review of the borough’s landscape to ensure the membership of existing partnership networks are reflective.

Embed continuous review of the borough's landscape to ensure the membership of existing partnership networks are reflective.

The Council has fully implemented this recommendation by establishing a Partnership Task and Finish Group in October 2023 to conduct a strategic review of partnership arrangements.

The Growth and Economic Development (GED) Partnership has been reviewed using the King’s Fund Reflective Learning Framework, as part of the Council’s Partnership Plan 2023-28. The key findings of this review will be implemented by April 2025.

GED has successfully organised themed business breakfast events to engage local businesses, including SMEs, corporates and third-sector organisations. These events attracted over 270 SMEs and third-sector representatives, as well as 63 corporate representatives. Given the success of this programme, GED is seeking additional s106 funding to deliver a new series of events in 2024 – 2025, with themes based on feedback from local businesses.

The Housing & Regeneration directorate has made significant progress in partnerships by organising a Developers Forum. Several commitments to collaborate with developers and partners were made and incorporated into the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP), which was approved by Cabinet in May. Social Housing Partners continue to work with the Council through the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum Development sub-group to deliver more affordable homes.

Within the Health and Social Care directorate, a review of health partnerships within the Tower Hamlets Together Board was completed, leading to a vision for integrating the Health & Wellbeing Board.

### **3.34 Recommendation 8: Grant Allocation**

*“Build on the framework for the Mayor’s Community Grant scheme and introduce a robust process for the Small Grants Fund and the Emergency Grants Fund, demonstrating links to the corporate priorities, ensuring openness*

and transparency, and reset relationships with the VCS/third sector. Monitoring of the grants programmes should be undertaken in partnership with the VCS/third sector and overseen by Overview and Scrutiny.”

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 67% Complete



**Council’s Extension of Recommendation**

- Develop a capacity building and external funding plan with partners, which supports the sustainability of the voluntary and community sector.
- Develop and implement a grants framework across the organisation which improves standards and transparency on grants management
- Develop an annual grants monitoring and impact report, which details the outcomes delivered by grants programmes

The Council has implemented a Corporate Grants Register to improve the grants data capture process and now provides quarterly performance reports to the Grants Determination Sub Committee. Additionally, introduction of a Member as the Finance and Resources Lead facilitates the integration of questions and comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to committee meetings.

The only outstanding action to complete this recommendation is the refresh of the VCS Strategy and Voluntary Sector Compact, which outlines the Council’s partnership with the voluntary sector. A draft vision and objectives have been agreed upon, and workshops were delivered with eight internal services to gather feedback on their ideas for the strategy. Furthermore, three consultation events are planned to take place in September. The final strategy is scheduled for presentation to Cabinet in March 2025.

**3.35 Recommendation 9: Transfer of Property to Third Parties**

*“Record and formalise Mayoral/member involvement in decision making relating to the transfer of property to third parties; reflecting Mayoral/member oversight in the property and assets policy and procedures document (and developing overarching strategy) Also report decisions in this area to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 75% Complete



Action 9.3 currently references land and property disposals up to £250k and the letting of property to VCS organisations. However, the standing policy position of this Council is not to dispose of land and property, making the purpose of

much of the action redundant. The wording of the action is being reviewed in the light of this.

The Council has successfully implemented its new property and asset management strategy, which was approved by Cabinet. Additionally, property and asset management has been incorporated into the member induction and learning programme.

Mayoral oversight of decision-making pathways is being exercised through regular updates on key projects, which are recorded in a central tracking spreadsheet and shared with the Mayor's Office.

### 3.36 Recommendation 10: Cabinet Member Responsibilities

*“To speed up the pace of decision-making consideration should be given, as part of the constitutional review, to reviewing the delegated responsibilities from the Mayor to both Cabinet Members and officers.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 100% Complete



#### **Council's Extension of Recommendation**

- Implement a tiered decision-making model based on the significance, complexity and impact of decisions.
- Gather regular feedback from cabinet members and officers on revised decision-making framework and review accordingly.
- Introduce enhanced accountability mechanisms for delegated decisions to ensure transparency.

The Council has successfully implemented this recommendation. As part of the LBTH Constitution Review, the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) was commissioned to review the constitutions of London Mayoral Authorities and other relevant authorities. ADSO's report, submitted in January, provided minor recommendations for consideration by the Constitution Working Group (CWG). The Council's approach was found to be consistent with other similar authorities.

To facilitate the sharing of best practices, the CEO is leading a new group of CEOs working in directly elected mayoral models across the UK. This group aims to identify and disseminate best practices among its members.

### 3.37 Recommendation 11: Membership of Committees

*“The council should consider best practice in relation to the chairing, membership and cross party working in and of key committees such as Full*

*Council, Overview and Scrutiny and Audit. External training for these committees should also be arranged.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 70% Complete



**Council’s Extension of Recommendation**

- Develop a repository of best practice in relation to the chairing, membership and cross-party working in key committees.
- Develop a framework to review committee performance and evaluate its effectiveness.
- Rotate committee chairs to ensure diversity and shared responsibility among the members.

The Council is actively working to define best practices for chairing, membership, and cross-party working within key committees, such as Full Council, Overview and Scrutiny, and Audit. An initial review of Committee Terms of Reference compared to other authorities and the Scrutiny Improvement Plan is underway. The Constitution Working Group (CWG) has generally agreed with the approach outlined in the Terms of Reference report. The Council has received the Association of Democratic Officers (ADSO) recommendations report due to be reviewed at the next CWG meeting, which was rescheduled from September to November to accommodate wider priorities of the legal team, such as Best Value Inspection.

The Council provides training for almost all Council Committees, both during the Member Induction following elections and throughout the year. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny has been committed to deliver training for scrutiny chairs, including one-on-one sessions and group sessions. A skills audit of scrutiny members has also been conducted to inform the training plan.

**3.38 Recommendation 12: Member Development**

*“The existing member training and development offer should be strengthened with support initially focussed on Cabinet members and committee chairs.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 100% Complete



**Council’s Extension of Recommendation**

- Build tailored learning and development programmes for members and chairs focused on addressing individual’s needs.
- Implement an exchange programme for cabinet members and committee chairs to collaborate with colleagues across the country.

- Develop group training programmes focused on emerging trends that are relevant to the local authority.

The Council has strengthened its existing Member training and development offer, with an initial focus on Cabinet members and committee chairs. By leveraging the expertise of the Association of Democratic Service Officers (ADSO) and North West Employers, the Council has developed a mentoring programme tailored to senior members.

Individual member training budgets have been introduced to encourage members to actively engage in developing personal development plans and identifying suitable mentors. This initiative aims to enhance the skills and capabilities of council members.

### 3.39 Recommendation 13: Diversity

*“Given the composition of the ruling administration, consideration should be given to how the voices of women and those from different backgrounds are directly influencing policy through their lived experience. It is recommended that the council actively promote the LGA’s ‘Be a Councillor Campaign’ to promote the opportunity for women and people from underrepresented groups across the borough.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 87% Complete



#### **Council’s Extension of Recommendation**

- Develop youth outreach programmes focused on local government to encourage early engagement.
- Initiate an improvement programme based on findings and recommendations of the Women’s Commission.
- Annually promote the LGA’s Be a Councillor campaign

Set up an improvement programme based upon the findings and recommendations of the Women’s commission. Continue to promote the LGA’s be a councillor campaign annually

The Council has made great strides in improving diversity. Following the successful recruitment of commissioners for the Women’s Commission initiative, the council is actively working to amplify the voices of women and individuals from diverse backgrounds.

By proactively reviewing and adjusting committee composition and launching a feedback mechanism to capture unfair treatment during committee meetings, the Council has made tangible progress in ensuring that underrepresented groups, including women and individuals from diverse backgrounds, have a stronger voice in our decision-making processes.



The Council acknowledges the importance of ongoing efforts to enhance diversity and has implemented continuous improvement plans to support these goals. For example, the council is planning in-person events in November and during Black History Month celebration in October to engage with women and underrepresented groups.

The only outstanding action is the review of staff and member awareness programme which is linked to 'Be a Councillor' event, which was moved to November due to by-election.

### 3.40 Recommendation 14: Annual Governance Statement

*“The Council will secure the necessary outstanding internal approvals and publish the outstanding Annual Governance Statements.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 100% Complete



The Council successfully completed this recommendation by securing the necessary internal approvals and publishing the outstanding Annual Governance Statement on the Council Website on 19 October 2023. The statement was approved by the Audit Committee.

### 3.41 Recommendation 15: Outstanding Accounts

*“Outstanding financial accounts going back to 2018/19 need to be resolved with the external auditors as a priority.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 100% Complete



The Council has successfully resolved all outstanding financial accounts dating back to 2018/19, addressing a longstanding issue with external auditors.

### 3.42 Recommendation 16: Organisational Capacity

*“Develop the corporate centre so that it is genuinely a strategic enabler and provides the appropriate accurate management data and information to support the transformation of the organisation.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 83% Complete



**Council’s Extension of Recommendation**

- Build a research hub to develop new and deeper insights into our population, leveraging new technologies and methodologies.
- Audit and create catalogue of data assets to facilitate future linkage, data quality improvement and standardisation.
- Develop new technologies to visualise and share quantitative data and build foundations of qualitative data integration.

The Council is enhancing the role of corporate centre as a strategic enabler by providing accurate management data and information to support organisational transformation. The Council has commenced using Power BI platform to easily interrogate real time spend and financial performance and has developed a performance dashboard to keep an eye on the Council’s performance against 12 core indicators.

A strategic resource needs assessment has been completed for Human Resources, Procurement & Finance and IT, and will be presented at CELT for approval in October 2024. Proposals for Facilities and Communications & Marketing have been prepared.

The council is committed to transform the Procurement function into a model of best practice. A Procurement Transformation paper was approved by Cabinet on 10 July 2024, and work is progressing on all four workstreams with allocated resources to accelerate delivery. The Council has also commissioned a strategic review of the corporate centre that will be looking to align corporate enabling services to the Council’s new Target Operating Model.

There are significant developments in relationship with the Trade Unions who have now made requests for various considerations regarding current arrangements, e.g. dedicated schools facilities time, general facilities time, representation. In the light of this, a meeting is being planned to agree on above points and reset relationships with impact on employee relations and grievances reduction.

**3.43 Recommendation 17: Responsiveness**

*“Review the council wide approach to handling member enquiries, complaints and freedom of information (FOI) requests to ensure less duplication, faster responses and greater efficiency.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 100% Complete



**Council’s Extension of Recommendation**

- Create a centralised performance dashboard for all member enquiries, complaints and FOI requests.
- Develop a clear standards to govern response timelines and performance.
- Build a plan around the required FY 26/27 implementation of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman new Complaints Handling Code which will ensure more efficient council response times

The Council has successfully implemented a comprehensive plan to enhance its approach to handling member inquiries, complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. This plan aims to reduce duplication, improve response times, and increase efficiency.

A review of the complaints process has been completed, resulting in a targeted improvement plan. The implementation of Power BI and the addition of performance metrics to the corporate dashboard will further support these efforts. The improvement plan also addresses the reduction of the existing backlog.

### 3.44 Recommendation 18: People First

*“The Council will develop a clear, single narrative around transformation and improvement using the people first initiative to do so. The Council will develop a communications / wider culture change programme to promote a wider council staff identity and help break down silo’s and support senior staff visibility.”*

**Overall Completion:**

**Status:** 100% Complete



#### Council’s Extension of Recommendation

##### Council’s Extension of Recommendation

- Embed People First Transformation success stories and milestones across all comms channels.
- Encourage employees to share feedback about each iteration of the People First Transformation.
- Embed the People First Transformation programme, including its stages, aims and values in the Council’s corporate induction.

The Council has successfully implemented this recommendation by developing a clear, unified narrative around transformation and improvement through the People First initiative. This narrative, focused on culture change, was launched at the Staff Conference on 11 July 2024 and is being integrated throughout the organisation.

#### **4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Council's efforts to implement the CPC recommendations have resulted in several positive outcomes related to equality and diversity including increased representation, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and inclusive governance.
- 4.2 While progress is being made, the Council will continue to monitor and evaluate its progress in this area and take steps to address any remaining barriers to equality and diversity.

#### **5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Council's efforts to implement the CPC recommendations have resulted to several positive outcomes related to best value, including improved efficiency, enhanced performance management, financial sustainability and community engagement.

#### **6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications of noting the progress against the Peer Review recommendations. Implementation of the recommendations is being carried out within existing resources, should additional resources be required these will need to be requested through the appropriate governance process.

#### **7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 An early revisit from the LGA peer review team would assist the Council in meeting its Best Value obligations under the Local Government Act 1999 and hopefully provide objective endorsement that the Council has taken appropriate action to secure the overriding duty to secure continuous improvement

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#### **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

##### **Linked Report**

- NONE

##### **Appendices**

- Appendix A: LGA CPC Action Plan – progress table

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

- None

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## Appendix A: CPC Update Progress Table

Recommendation	No.	Action	Senior Responsible Officer	Target Date for Completion	Progress Update	RAG
<b>Recommendation 1: Strategic Vision</b> Develop a more comprehensive long-term strategic vision for the borough and the council which is co-produced with the community.	1.1	The Mayor will set out, agree and publish a long-term Strategic Vision developed with the input and engagement of the community. The Strategic Vision will inform a Strategic Plan refresh, the Workforce Strategy and the Council will revisit the MTFS to ensure alignment.	Acting Director SIT	Mar-25	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> A Task and Finish Group is established with the Mayor's Office to develop a new strategic vision to 2035. An updated engagement plan comprising a two-phased approach is being finalised and will include visioning workshops with communities and stakeholders and a partnership congress in October 2024. The new vision document will be completed in October 2025.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The council will leverage the council's Partnership Plan (2023 – 2028) as the foundation for a comprehensive, long-term 2035 strategic vision for the borough in collaboration with the community. This utilisation of the Partnership Plan will streamline the strategy development process, while ensuring alignment with the community's priorities and aspirations. Comprehensive engagement will commence in November, comprising residents, partners, Members, the youth council, faith groups, targeted groups and equality networks. In fostering a co-productive approach, a thematic Partnership Congress, bringing together representatives from the council including partner organisations, businesses, community groups, and young people, is scheduled for December 2024, with a focus on developing a long-term strategic vision for the borough.</p>	Green
	1.2	The Council will ensure that its strategic plan and subsequent delivery plans are aligned to the long term strategic vision building in regular monitoring and reporting arrangements, and reports that are available to the public	Acting Director SIT	Apr-25	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> The alignment of the strategic plan to the long-term vision remains a dependent action on the work to produce that vision. See previous update. The presentation of performance reporting has been reviewed and improved.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> A new long-term strategic vision will not only reinforce the council's commitment to partnership working and community engagement, but will also play a crucial role in aligning our existing branding, underpinned by the Partnership Plan and the Strategic Plan. Subsequently, all strategic and delivery plans will be aligned, with a robust review and monitoring framework embedded.</p>	
<b>Recommendation 2: Medium Term Financial Strategy</b> Develop a MTFS, including the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which can demonstrate the future financial sustainability of the council, and which is aligned to the long-term strategic	2.1	The Council will complete the development of the new Medium Term Financial Strategy	Corporate Director Resources	Jan-24	Complete - On the 28 <sup>th</sup> of February the MTFS including the budget and HRA was agreed at Full Council. The plan provides for a sustainable position over the medium term removing previous levels of reliance on reserves to fund recurring costs.	Completed
	2.2	The Council will review its MTFS at the point that the long-term strategic vision statement for the Borough is completed to ensure that it is fully aligned to it.	Corporate Director Resources	Apr-25	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> MTFS will be reviewed once the Strategic vision is developed to ensure alignment, any changes would need to happen through the budget setting process.</p> <p>The MTFS is directly linked to mayoral and corporate priorities and to adopt financial planning and modelling across a longer-term period would dilute the accuracy of and agility within the financial modelling. The longer the term of the forecast figures the less reliance can be placed on them. MTFS will be reviewed once the Strategic vision is developed to ensure alignment, any changes would need to happen through the budget setting process.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b></p>	Completed

vision of the council.					<p>The MTFS is the financial plan that underpins the effective resourcing of the delivery of the current corporate plan which in turn supports the delivery of Mayoral priorities and meeting wider Borough needs. The financial modelling reflect a 4 year period ( years 0 - 3). The HRA plans across a 30-year period. Both are updated annually and will always align to the most current long term strategic vision for the Borough.</p> <p>This action is marked as complete for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) MTFS is reviewed annually so the document will always align to the latest long-term plan</li> <li>b) Currently RSG from government is only awarded annually so any long-term revenue planning is at risk given the short-term government funding cycle</li> <li>c) The HRA is already a 30-year plan that is reviewed by full council annually and will flex to accommodate changes to any long-term strategic vision</li> <li>d) The current MTFS is aligned with the latest strategic vision for the borough</li> </ul> <p>Any long-term financial planning is likely to be restricted to capital investment as is the industry norm</p>	
	<b>2.3</b>	The Council shall revisit its scenario planning and modelling for business rate reform impacts to ensure that they are fit for purpose and up to date.	Corporate Director Resources	Mar-24	Analyse Local has been engaged to assist with forecasting the appeals provisions. LG Futures has provided updated modelling based on the final local government settlement and the Council's draft NNDR1 return. The Autumn Statement, 22nd November 2024, is now being considered in our updated MTFS	<b>Completed</b>
	<b>2.4</b>	The Council will develop a single narrative about the financial position of the Council which clearly explains to members, officers and partners the rationale for the savings requirement and investments required in services. This will communicate the imperative of delivery for the future financial sustainability of the council	Corporate Director Resources	Mar-24	Complete, there is a clear single narrative in place for the MTFS. Slide decks have been produced all aligning the same messages targeted to different audiences, For example Back Bench Councillors, All staff, Transformation Advisory Board.	<b>Completed</b>
	<b>2.5</b>	The Council will carry out a comprehensive assessment of the impact of insourcing on service capacity that will feed into the MTFS.	Corporate Director Resources	Mar-24	Growth for leisure insourcing has been included in the MTFS following work on costings.	<b>Completed</b>
	<b>2.6</b>	The Council will complete a HRA review which will explore all financial assumptions against the affordability constraints and will also consider the assumed HRA rent increase.	Corporate Director Resources	Mar-24	The HRA strategy has been to Cabinet on 31st January with an updated HRA budget following input from Savills. This has a sustainable position and an increase in the number of homes being acquired.	<b>Completed</b>

<b>Recommendation 3: Performance Management</b> To assist with the focus on delivery of the council's priorities, measures should be taken to enhance the existing performance framework, making better use of data to inform decision making and policy development. Consideration should be given to how the impact of decisions and priority areas is captured.	<b>3.2</b>	The Council shall complete a review of existing performance management arrangements in place at the Council to ensure clearer, more consistent processes, scrutiny at service level and by CMT and the development of a system which is understood and can be effectively challenged by members.	Acting Director SIT	May-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> Improvements to presentation of performance data complete</p> <p>Processes and scrutiny strengthened, including additional scrutiny at MAB and Lead Member 121s (complete). Additional review of scrutiny member mentoring underway.</p> <p>EDITH, a place-based tool to understand distribution of health and health determinants, enabling comparisons within the borough will be deployed in July.</p> <p>Further improvements to measures, benchmarking, process and accountability planned through Annual Delivery Plan for 24/25 (Cabinet sign off May 24)</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The Annual Delivery Plan has now secured Cabinet approval incorporating measures that capture the impact of decisions on priority areas.</p> <p>A Scrutiny improvement plan has been noted and endorsed by Cabinet and suggested actions in it will be the subject of discussion with Overview and Scrutiny as part of their improvement review process.</p> <p>The Corporate Board arrangements have been rationalised.</p> <p>A Power BI platform linking spend and performance has been designed and is being rolled out to Directorates.</p>	<b>Completed</b>
	<b>3.3</b>	The Council will bring forward new project plans for the development of a data lake and will prioritise progress of data tools to enable easier interrogation of health and societal data bases by council staff.	Corporate Director Resources	Jun-24	<p><b>Latest Update:</b> A corporate project has been set up to develop the Council's data platforms, data strategy and corporate approach to data analytics.</p> <p>A Power BI tool providing in-depth analysis of real time spend has been developed for managers and is in the process of being linked to performance data.</p> <p>Go-live for the finance dashboard is June 2024.</p>	<b>Completed</b>
	<b>3.4</b>	The Council will review the Council's current strategy and policy landscape to explore the opportunities to simplify it	Acting Director SIT	Dec-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> A completion of this review has been delayed because of the best value inspection process. This will now be expected to be completed by Sept-24.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The Council's current strategy and policy landscape to identify opportunities for simplification is currently underway and the completion is projected for December 2024</p>	
<b>Recommendation 4: Workforce Strategy</b> Develop a refreshed workforce strategy to address recruitment and retention challenges. This is particularly important given the current vacancies in	<b>4.1</b>	The Council will develop a coordinated workforce strategy with a clear plan for recruitment, retention and workforce development with a more consistent approach being adopted across the organisation and linked to the Council's long term strategic vision.	Corporate Director Resources	Apr-25	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> The new members of the Recruitment Team are now fully trained and making strong progress in addressing the recruitment backlog and improving service levels for recruiting managers and candidates.</p> <p>A pay review process has been put in place to ensure that the borough remains competitive and can continue to attract excellent candidates and staff in fields where there is limited supply and strong competition from other authorities.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The council has implemented a comprehensive senior pay review covering all posts across the top 3 tiers of the organisation. This has resulted in competitive market tested salary</p>	



<p>key senior management positions and the Mayor's stated priority of the workforce representing the community.</p> <p>The Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee should be given responsibility for overseeing performance against the council's aim to ensure that its workforce and service provision reflects the diversity of the borough.</p>					<p>packages and introduced more contemporary practice with the integration of the London weighting and the removal of outdated hierarchical allowances.</p> <p>The Chief Executive has reviewed the council's overview and scrutiny function and allocated additional senior resources as part of his restructure process. A dedicated resources lead has been allocated within the committee who meets regularly with the Corporate Director of Resources who is the operational lead for the workforce strategy to agree relevant work programmes and spotlight sessions to ensure the committee is sighted upon progress and areas of greatest risk.</p> <p>Across the wider organisation a new resourcing team has been established with dedicated senior expertise leading the review of all processes and the introduction of technology. The backlog in case work has been analysed and allocated to the newly resourced team.</p>	
	4.2	The Council will complete the recruitment programme for Corporate Directors and Directors	Corporate Director Resources	Aug-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> Interviews for the post of Director of Legal and MO took place on 09.07.24. An offer was made to the successful candidate and was accepted. Interviews for the post of Corporate Director of Housing &amp; Regeneration took place on 23.07.24 and an offer is pending.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The council now has in place a fully resourced permanently appointed corporate leadership team .</p>	Completed
	4.3	The Council will continue to develop the new 'workforce to reflect the community' strategy and embed it into the refreshed workforce strategy	Corporate Director Resources	Aug-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> The Strategy will now be launched in August. An independent external review of the draft strategy is being finalised.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The Strategy is complete and awaiting 3rd party assurance via an independent external specialist review prior to the relevant member decision making processes for formal adoption by the council .</p>	Completed
	4.4	The Council will review the current governance arrangements for the councils Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda. As part of this exercise the Mayor will consider the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee specific to the delivery of this agenda.	Acting Director SIT	Sept-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> Arrangements are being made for the corporate equalities function to transfer from SIT to Resources where its relationship with Human Resources can be fully exploited and its profile within the organisation further enhanced.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The corporate equalities function has been transferred to Resources</p>	Completed
	4.5	Carry out a review of the Council's Pay Policy for hard to recruit and senior positions.	Corporate Director Resources	Mar-24	<p>The Pay Policy has been produced and was considered at HR Committee and was approved by Full Council in March.</p> <p>A salary review of senior roles in the organisation has been commissioned a draft report has been received. Consideration is now being given to the implications of the recommendations.</p>	Completed
	4.6	LOCD to complete a review of the Council's current talent management and associated support programme	Corporate Director Resources	Sept-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> Review has been completed. Further report to be delivered to CMT in September.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b></p>	Completed

		and establish what more can be done to support staff development.			Review has been completed, recommendations arising will be presented to the relevant decision making processes in due course for formal adoption by the council	
<b>Recommendation 5: Mayor's Office</b> Review the roles, functions and deployment of officers within the Mayor's Office. This should be done to ensure streamlined decision making, removing barriers and duplication elsewhere in the council. The council should also ensure that colleagues remaining in the Mayor's Office are given training and development opportunities to ensure a wider understanding of the roles and requirements of different services areas.	5.1	The Council will undertake a review of the roles, functions and deployment of officers within the Mayor's Office with particular focus upon speeding up decision making and removing duplication of function where this is provided elsewhere in the Council.	CEO	Jan-24	A review has been undertaken and Phase 1 of the restructure complete, savings included in MTFS. Further rationalisation is planned as Phase 2.  Additional training and development has been identified and provided to key members of the Mayor's Office specific to enabling a wider understanding the roles and requirements of different service areas and the operational environment more generally.	Completed
<b>Recommendation 6: Internal Governance</b> Conduct an urgent review of the internal governance arrangements including the board structures to ensure focus on the delivery of priorities, clarity of reporting and clear lines of accountability. This should seek to speed-up decision making, and	6.1	The Council will complete a review of the Council's internal governance arrangements, board structures and forward planning process to ensure focus on delivery of priorities, clarity of reporting, and clear lines of accountability.	Acting Director SIT	Sept-24	<b>Previous Update:</b> CMT have now considered the mapping exercise for the boards rationalisation and are in the process of exploring further board rationalisation opportunities.  The internal forward planning processes have been reviewed. The guidance and training for this have been further refined (and circulated on TH Now).  <b>Latest Update:</b> The Council has completed its review of internal governance arrangements and board structures. This rationalisation ensures a stronger focus on delivering priorities, improved clarity of reporting, and clear lines of accountability. The streamlined structure, with a reduced number of boards, supports more efficient decision-making and enhances governance.	Complete
	6.2	Review of Transformation Board structure to ensure Boards have	Deputy CEO	Feb-24	Complete – Transformation Boards have been rationalised from 6 boards to 3 to streamline the Council's governance.	Completed

delegate business-as-usual decisions to an appropriate level.		delegated authority to oversee and support directorates with budget and restructure delivery				
	6.3	Have in place arrangements to avoid delays in the short-term	CEO	Feb-24	Complete - The Chief Executive over recent months has introduced new controls on services attempting to bring late reports to MAB/Cabinet or changing reporting dates to ensure a smoother planning process. A process has been introduced at CMT to identify outstanding input from the Mayor's Office to speed up decision making.	Completed
	6.4	The Council will review and clarify the Council's processes for decision making. This will include the review and rationalisation of transaction processes for HR	Corporate Director Resources	Aug-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> Three new interim HR experts are in place and are working on HR transformation and improvement programme.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The council's new operating model drives a transformational change in the transactional processing of HR issues across the council. All operational service delivery area changes are now being finalised and these in turn will drive the final design and resourcing of the relevant transaction processes, much of which will be integrated into the council's new power BI dashboard.</p> <p>The proposals for the redesigned HR function aligned to the new target operating model will be considered by corporate directors on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024.</p> <p>Board rationalisation has already been completed The HR committee TOR have already been updated.</p> <p>The transactional processes for HR will be re designed to support the new structure described in paragraph above</p>	Completed
	6.5	Comprehensive review of financial regulations and delegations to inform a revised framework on internal controls	Corporate Director Resources	Aug-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> Thresholds of the Procurements regulations have been reviewed, this will now go to CMT in August.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> Thresholds of the Procurements regulations have been reviewed in line with the new procurement act which was due to be implemented from October 2024. The government decision to delay implementation of the new procurement regulations will naturally have an impact on implementation timescales.</p>	Completed
	6.6	The Council will ensure that the new external auditors agree to regular meetings between the Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer and the External Auditor.	Corporate Director Resources	Mar-24	Meeting between existing external auditors (Deloitte) S151 Officer, and CEO took place on 5th October 2023. New Auditor Ernst & Young currently in process of exchanging disclosures needed to then enable all regular (quarterly) meetings to be scheduled for the coming financial year	Completed
	6.7	The Council will ensure the Head of Audit attends meetings between the three statutory officers.	CEO	Dec-23	Head of Audit now meeting regularly with Chief Executive, S151 Officer, and Monitoring Officer	Completed

	6.8	The Council will report progress on the delivery of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan to the Transformation Advisory Board on a regular basis	Acting Director SIT	Ongoing	Regular engagement taking place with TAB	Completed
<b>Recommendation 7: Working with Partners</b> To ensure more effective partnership working, the council should consider reviewing current partnership governance arrangements.	7.1	Create a Partnership Task and Finish Group to review partnership arrangements to ensure a more strategic approach to partnership working, that streamlines governance arrangements and improves accountability. Ensure the Terms of Reference of the Partnership Task and Finish Group specifically develop actions to support these outcomes.	Acting Director SIT	Apr-24	A partnership Task and Finish Group has been established in October 2023 to take forward strategic review of partnership arrangements. Findings from the review have been presented back to the Partnership Executive Group Final report and recommendations coming to CMT by end of March.	Completed
	7.2	Continue to strengthen the Integrated Care partnership to deliver our core priorities and engage with the Integrated Care Board and wider North East London system on what responsibilities and resources can be further devolved to the local level.	Corporate Director Health and Social Care		Review underway for Tower Hamlets Together Board arrangements and look to integrate with Health & Wellbeing Board incorporating if possible the formal place-based Committee for the ICB Review of the Better Care Fund underway, will implement any changes for the 2025/26 financial year.	Completed
	7.3	The Council will further improve the opportunity for strategic conversations with business partnerships and will ensure that the Growth and Economic Development Partnership reviews existing opportunities with a view to enhancing them.	Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration	Review Complete, implementation on April	The GED Partnership has been reviewed using the King's Fund Reflective Learning Framework, as part of the Council's Partnership Plan 2023-28. The key findings of this review will be implemented by April 25. GED has delivered a series of 4 themed business breakfast events to engage local businesses, both SME's and Corporates. Through these events, we have engaged with over 270 SMEs and third sector organisations along with 63 corporate representatives. Due to the success of the programme, GED are seeking further s106 funds to deliver a new programme of events in 24/25, the themes of which will be based on feedback from local businesses.	Completed
	7.4	There are a number of commitments to work with developers and partners to deliver on housing supply ambitions in the ADP including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An operational fast track planning service using dedicated resources for Major housing schemes to accelerated housing delivery</li> <li>Go out to market on the second and third phase of Development Agreement sites in order to deliver new homes in priority locations</li> <li>Work with the GLA to complete first round of unit acquisitions to increase housing supply</li> </ul>	Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration	Jun- 24	<b>Previous Update:</b> Underway as part of ADP process. ADP sign off May Cabinet  <b>Latest Update:</b> The principle of a Fast Track Premium Planning Service for specific proposals has been agreed and established with a pilot operational model put in place. Supporting this, recruitment to three principal and/or senior planning roles, to be funded from within P&BC resources, has begun. Initial pilot schemes for the fast track have been identified and one is now active at pre-app stage.  All 3 tranches of the Developer Agreement sites (11 sites in all) have been released to the market and the Selection Questionnaire date for return is the 24th May 2024.  Progress has also been made on the acquisitions programme. An indicative bid has been made to the GLA for the invited amount of 200 homes over two years. The confirmation of funding is expected in June.	Completed

	7.5	In addition to the above mechanisms continue to enhance work with developers and housing providers.	Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration	Aug- 24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b></p> <p><b>Planning</b> A Developers Forum date has been identified for the 2 July 2024. Attendance is being confirmed but will include a range of development and housing industry representatives active or with ambitions to be active in the borough. The Mayor, the Lead Member and senior management team is also looking to attend.</p> <p><b>Affordable Housing</b> The Affordable Housing team continues to speak to developers and RPs to enable the progression of stalled sites or those experiencing viability issues. This has enabled progress a number of sites across a range of challenges.</p> <p><b>THHF</b> Social Housing Partners continue to work with the Council through THHF Development sub-group to deliver more affordable homes. Representatives from the Planning Team are regular attendees at quarterly sub-group meetings and have been liaising with the forum on the workings of the newly implemented fast track “in principle” pre app process. Consultations continue on the new Local Plan and possible challenges arising. Members have also been looking at how to improve the speed/cost of delivery incorporating sustainability options.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b></p> <p><b>Planning</b> A Developers Forum date has been confirmed for the 2 July 2024.. Invites have been sent and confirmation received from at least 35 developers/agents/housing industry representatives active or with ambitions to be active in the borough. The Mayor, the Lead Member and senior management will be in attendance.</p> <p><b>Affordable Housing</b> The Affordable Housing team continues to speak to developers and RPs to enable the progression of stalled sites or those experiencing viability issues. This is embedded into business-as-usual processes for the team.</p> <p><b>THHF</b> The development sub-group continues to meet regarding avenues to continue the delivery of affordable housing. As housing partnerships are now in place regarding planning, affordable supply and through the THHF mechanism,</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b> It is proposed that this recommendation is now closed, with the action falling into business-as-usual processes for the partnerships.</p>	Completed
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<b>Recommendation 8: Grant Allocation</b> Build on the framework for the Mayor's Community Grant scheme and introduce a robust process for the Small Grants Fund and the Emergency Grants Fund, demonstrating links to the corporate priorities, ensuring openness and transparency, and reset relationships with the VCS/third sector. Monitoring of the grants programmes should be undertaken in partnership with the VCS/third sector and overseen by Overview and Scrutiny.	8.1	The council will review all council administered grant regimes to ensure that they have robust frameworks in place and will introduce a central grants register.	Acting Director SIT	Apr-24	<b>Previous Update:</b> The Corporate Grants Register data capture process has been completed subject to verification from CD's. Assurance mechanisms are being checked. The register will go live by the end of April.  <b>Latest Update:</b> The Corporate Grants Register has gone live.	Completed
	8.2	The Council will work with the VCS to refresh the VCS Strategy and Voluntary Sector Compact which sets out how the Council will work with the sector and will use these to build on and improve existing relationships with the sector.	Acting Director SIT	Mar-25	<b>Previous Update:</b> 2 consultation events took place with staff, 2 with members and 2 with VCS organisations.  A further 3 more workshops have been scheduled to follow with VCS groups in September.  The strategy remains on track to go to Cabinet in March 2025.  <b>Latest Update:</b> In August 2024, workshops were delivered with 8 internal services to gather feedback on their ideas for the Strategy.  In September 2024, 3 consultation events will be held with the VCS and partners. Information gathered from the consultation will inform the development of the Strategy.	
	8.3	Quarterly performance reports to Grants Determination Sub Committee and pre-decision scrutiny by OSC.	Acting Director SIT	Ongoing – Jul-24	<b>Previous Update:</b> The Executive has been invited to and has now considered current arrangements for pre-decision scrutiny.  <b>Latest Update:</b> Quarterly performance reports are being provided to Grants Determination Sub Committee. Arrangements for pre decision scrutiny have been reviewed. The Council now has a Member Finance and Resources Lead who will feed in questions / comments from OSC in advance of Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan has been reviewed and updated and includes action to improve pre-decision scrutiny activity.	Completed
<b>Recommendation 9: Transfer of Property to Third Parties</b> Record and formalise Mayoral/member involvement in decision making relating to the transfer of property to third parties; reflecting Mayoral/member oversight in the property and assets policy and procedures	9.1	Complete the Council's new property and asset management strategy to bring together all of the different elements relating to policy and procedure into one document.	Corporate Director Housing & Regeneration	Jul-24	<b>Previous Update:</b> A date is being confirmed for when the Strategic Asset Management Plan will be taken to MAB.  <b>Latest Update:</b> The Strategic Asset Management Plan went to Cabinet and was approved.	Completed
	9.2	Property and Asset Management will be added to the member induction and learning programme.	CEO	Jan-24	Property and Asset Management has been added to the member induction and learning programme	Completed
	9.3	The Mayor will review the need for existing levels of pre decision oversight of delegated decision-making authority to officers regarding decisions relating to land and property disposals (up to £250k) and the letting of property to VCS organisations.	Head of Mayor's Office/ Corporate Director Housing & Regen	TBC-24	<b>Previous Update:</b> Dialogue has commenced with the Mayor's Office and involving colleagues in governance in relation to the scheme of delegation as appropriate.  <b>Latest Update:</b> The standing policy position of this Council is not to dispose of land and property, making the purpose of much of the action redundant. The wording of the action is being reviewed in the light of this.	

document (and developing overarching strategy) Also report decisions in this area to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	9.4	All mayoral oversight on decision making pathways will be formalised in the form of written process notes. All feedback by the Mayor to Officers will be recorded as part of these processes.	Corporate Director Housing & Regen	TBC-24	<b>Latest Update:</b> Updates on key projects are recorded in a central tracking spreadsheet which is shared with the Mayor's Office on a regular basis.	Completed
<b>Recommendation 10: Cabinet Member Responsibilities</b> To speed up the pace of decision-making consideration should be given, as part of the constitutional review, to reviewing the delegated responsibilities from the Mayor to both Cabinet Members and officers.	10.1	The Mayor will keep delegation of decision-making authority under constant review.	CEO/Monitoring Officer	Ongoing	As has been common in Elected Mayoral authorities, the Mayor has not delegated decision making to Cabinet Members. Cabinet Members though are involved in all relevant decisions and service challenges as they have regular service meetings and they have to be consulted on all relevant cabinet decision making reports. The Mayor will keep this under constant review. New processes are in place to reduce the incidence of delays in the Mayor's Office.	Completed
	10.2	The Council will undertake a review of Local Authorities with directly elected Mayors, with a view to establishing both common practice and best practice regarding delegation of authority.	CEO/Monitoring Officer	Apr-24	The Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) has been commissioned as part of the LBTH Constitution Review to review the constitutions of the other London Mayoral Authorities and a couple of other authorities of interest to see what they had which was different/useful. ADSO reported back at the end of January and made some minor recommendations for consideration that will be considered by the Constitution working group. The Council was not found to be an outlier in terms of its approach. In addition The CEO is leading a project to bring together CEO's working in a Directly elected mayoral models across the UK in a new group to better enable best practice to be identified and shared.	Completed
	10.3	The role and responsibilities of cabinet members under existing arrangements will be the subject of further staff communication bulletins and included more specifically in staff inductions.	CEO/Monitoring Officer	Jan-24	The staff induction programme has been reviewed and we have improved the information we provided around the roles and responsibilities of cabinet members.	Completed
<b>Recommendation 11: Membership of Committees</b> The council should consider best practice in relation to the charring, membership and cross party working in and of key committees such as Full Council, Overview and Scrutiny and Audit. External training for these committees should also be arranged.	11.1	The Council will define current best practice in relation to charring, membership, and cross party working in and of committees. It will conduct a review of current terms of reference for committees based on best practice including the appointment of women to lead senior political positions within the council. The Mayor will receive recommendations from that review and agree any necessary actions. The Mayor's conclusions will be published.	Head of Democratic Services	Nov-24	<b>Previous Update:</b> The CWG did consider the Terms of Reference report and were generally in agreement with how information was presented (no significant outliers).  The next step is to work through the ADSO recommendations to ensure any identified issues are captured.  The first review of the ADSO report section on Part B of the Constitution is due at the next CWG meeting in September  <b>Latest Update:</b> The CWG meeting has been moved to 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2024 due to other urgent priorities on the Best Value Inspection. Therefore, key members of the Legal team (such as the Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer) have not been able to review the Constitution work over the last few weeks.	
	11.2	The Council will continue to deliver the current development programme for scrutiny members, and undertake skills audit in order to develop and deliver an improved development	CEO	Apr-24	Training is arranged in relation to almost all Council Committees, both during the Member Induction following the election and then either at the start of the year and/or through the year. The Council commissioned Centre for Governance and Scrutiny to provide training for scrutiny chairs. This has included three 1-2-1 sessions, two group sessions. A skills audit of scrutiny members has also has been undertaken which informs training plan.	Completed

		programme for scrutiny and for Cabinet members				
	11.3	Introduce a cross party working improvement programme in order to encourage cross party working.	Acting Director SIT	Jul-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> The Scrutiny Improvement Plan was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and was accepted.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The Scrutiny Improvement Plan was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and was accepted. This included improved arrangements for cross-party working.</p>	Complete
	11.4	The Constitution Working Group to consider a report on the workings of Cabinet decision making processes that will include the scrutiny process and present a briefing note to the Mayor in relation to their findings.	Head of Democratic Services	Nov-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> Considered as part of ADSO review report. The constitution working group will be further considering this at the next meeting in September 24.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The CWG meeting has been moved to 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2024 due to other urgent priorities on the Best Value Inspection. Therefore, key members of the Legal team (such as the Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer) have not been able to review the Constitution work over the last few weeks.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 12: Member Development</b> The existing member training and development offer should be strengthened with support initially focussed on Cabinet members and committee chairs.</p>	12.1	The existing member development programme for those in senior positions will be further developed to include opportunities of external mentoring.	Head of Democratic Services	Jun-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> ASDO and North West Employers have confirmed their ability to support a mentoring programme.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> Individual member training budgets have now been launched and members are being encouraged to engage to develop a personal plan and identify a suitable mentor.</p>	Completed
<p><b>Recommendation 13: Diversity</b> Given the composition of the ruling administration, consideration should be given to how the voices of women and those from different backgrounds are directly influencing policy through their lived experience. It is recommended that the council actively promote the LGA's 'Be a Councillor Campaign' to</p>	13.1	The Council will undertake a review of how the voices of women and those from different backgrounds are and are not directly influencing policy through their lived experiences and develop a plan for removing barriers to this happening.	Head of Mayor's Office	Sept-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> Following the successful recruitment of commissioners for the Women's Commission initiative, it has become clear that the Commissioners needed additional time to come together as a cohesive group before embarking on this critical work.</p> <p>To facilitate this, a Commissioners' away day was held at Canary Wharf. This event provided an excellent opportunity for the Commissioners to bond, develop ideas, and strategize for the important tasks ahead. The day was facilitated by a representative from Action for Race Equality, who expertly guided the discussions and ensured our continued focus on improving access, opportunity and outcomes for women within the borough.</p> <p>The Commission had to reschedule its first planned evidence-gathering session with stakeholders due to many Commissioners and stakeholders being unable to attend during the school summer holidays. The Commission will now commence evidence gathering in the first week of September 2024. The initial focus area will be "pathways to employment" for women in our borough. We aim to understand the current situation, evaluate the services provided and identify any gaps that need addressed, in order to improve employment rate of women and girls in TH.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b></p>	Completed



<p>promote the opportunity for women and people from underrepresented groups across the borough.</p>					<p>The Women's Commission is now established and meeting on a monthly basis. The Women's Commission is a major priority program at The Council. This initiative is a direct action in empowering women and girls, while challenging the inequalities and barriers many women and girls face in multiple areas of their life.</p> <p>The purpose of this deep dive focus on women in Tower Hamlets is to work as a partnership to identify the key issues for women in the borough and to produce an agreed Women's Strategy for Tower Hamlets, with a specific, time limited and practical action plan for its delivery which will ensure women feel empowered to fulfil their potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To develop a comprehensive understanding of how the lived experience and chances for female residents in Tower Hamlets differ significantly and detrimentally from those of their male counterparts.</li> <li>- To tackle barriers to equality faced by women and girls in every area of their lives, particularly in areas of health, community safety, community leadership and employment.</li> <li>- To progress the equal treatment of women and girls at a national and local level.</li> <li>- To work towards the balanced participation of women and men in decision making in Tower Hamlets</li> <li>- To empower women and girls across sectors, institutions, and organisations.</li> </ul> <p>A work plan has been agreed and we are in discussions and widening the representation of the Commission even more. The work plan will cover the following priority areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pathway to Employment</li> <li>2. Health and wellbeing</li> <li>3. Leadership and Representation</li> <li>4. Women's Safety</li> </ol> <p>The Commission is being invited to give feedback on current council projects, as well as other projects that could be beneficial for women and girls in the borough.</p>	
	13.2	The Council will run a major promotion campaign targeting women in the community linked to the LGA's 'Be a Councillor' Campaign. All political parties will be encouraged to run their own campaign within their parties to encourage women candidates.	Acting Director SIT	Apr-24	The 'Be a Councillor Campaign' has now been launched and will be supported by a wider campaign strategy for promoting women in public life.	Completed
	13.3	The Council shall review make up of the Council Committees.	Head of Democratic Services/ CEO	Apr-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> Additional guidance is being prepared that strengthens the need for gender representation to be considered when deciding upon Committee membership and roles.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The council has reviewed the makeup of its committees. The result has been that a female councillor has been appointed to a scrutiny lead position. An LGBTQ+</p>	Completed

					member has been appointed to a key chair position. Five female councillors have taken positions on Overview & Scrutiny (joining a female co-optee).	
	13.4	It will consider the feasibility of introducing a Monitored Feedback system for speakers at Council meetings allowing feedback / comment on speaking time fairness and respect. If feasible the Council will introduce it.	Acting Director SIT	Sept-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> The consultation period has ended. Queries from councillors have been addressed.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The initiative launched on 28th August. The questionnaires continue to be available in paper-based and digital formats for members at every committee meeting. The launch was prefaced with consultations/information dissemination efforts, including publishing the note in the members' bulletin to raise awareness about the initiative and call on the members to actively engage with it.</p> <p>The next steps are to monitor the survey uptake monthly and analyse the results of submitted responses at the three-month mark to establish the baseline.</p>	Complete
	13.5	The Council will develop a policy setting out clearly how much time staff led group chairs can take from their substantive duties to develop staff equalities networks.	Corporate Director Resources	Dec-24	<p><b>Latest Update:</b> Review has been completed. A framework is now in place which addresses how much time staff-led group chairs can take from their substantive duties.</p>	Completed
	13.6	<p>The Council will ensure all network groups have a senior management sponsor.</p> <p>Establish a regular programme of meetings with sponsors to discuss progress and relevant cross cutting issues.</p> <p>Establish a feedback system for Staff Chairs of networks to comment on the performance of the Senior Management Sponsor.</p>	Corporate Director Resources / Acting Director SIT	Dec-24	Complete – new network sponsors confirmed, meeting cycle established and feedback system in place.	Completed
	13.7	Review and rerun staff and member awareness programme.	Head of Democratic Services	Nov-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> The planned 'Be a councillor' events in the summer will likely be pushed back as they now fall within the Pre-Election period for the upcoming by-election.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The 'Be a Councillor' event linked to Black History Month is scheduled to take place on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2024. The event targeted at women is now likely to take place in November (after it was moved due to the by-election).</p>	
	13.8	To contribute to the LGA call for evidence for Supporting Women and girls to be active.	Corporate Director Communities	Apr-24	The LBTH submission has been completed.	Completed
<b>Recommendation 14: Annual governance Statement</b>	14.1	The Council will secure the necessary outstanding internal approvals and publish the outstanding Annual Governance Statements	Corporate Director Resources	Dec-23	Completed. Outstanding Annual Governance Statement approved by the Audit Committee on Thursday 19th October 2023. Published on the Council web site.	Completed

Prepare and publish the Annual Governance Statement.						
<b>Recommendation 15: Outstanding Accounts</b> Outstanding financial accounts going back to 2018/19 need to be resolved with the external auditors as a priority.	15.1	The Council will take action to resolve all of the historic outstanding financial accounts going back to 2018/19	Corporate Director Resources	Jan-24	Complete	Completed
<b>Recommendation 16: Organisational Capacity</b> Develop the corporate centre so that it is genuinely a strategic enabler and provides the appropriate accurate management data and information to support the transformation of the organisation.	16.1	The Council will complete a strategic resource needs assessment covering HR, Procurement, Facilities, Communications, IT addressing additional demand resulting from insourcing.	Corporate Director Resources	Oct-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> The strategic resource needs assessment for HR and Procurement has been agreed, plan being developed for Facilities, Communications, and IT.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> HR, ICT, Procurement, and Finance will be presented at CELT for approval on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024.</p> <p>Facilities: a proposal has been prepared by the team</p> <p>Comms: a proposal has been presented to the CEO and Deputy CEO, both will go forwards to a dedicated away day with the mayor regarding corporate restructure for CEO and Resources at the end of October 2024</p>	
	16.2	The Council will produce a revised set of Organisational Health reports/dashboards that will; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect performance against regulatory targets</li> <li>• Bring together performance across the Council that is aligned with up-to-date priorities and strategies</li> <li>• Report from line of business systems or automated reports that does not require substantial manual intervention</li> <li>• Allow CMT members to interrogate the dashboard outside of the meeting cycle</li> </ul>	Acting Director SIT	Jul-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> Requirement gathering starting Feb, expect first presentation of data in July 24</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The Power BI platform has been developed by the Resources Directorate for senior managers to easily interrogate real time spend and financial performance. Work is underway to link this to key performance indicators.</p> <p>The delivery plan has been completed which includes the revision of KPIs to ensure alignment with priorities and strategies.</p> <p>A performance dashboard has been developed for the Transformation Advisory Board (TAB)</p>	Completed
	16.3	The Council will conduct a strategic review of the Procurement function to make it a model of best practice.	Corporate Director Resources	Jul-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> Interim Programme director is working on the new processes. TOM agreed at HR Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024.</p> <p>Procurement Paper going to cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> July.</p>	Completed

					<p><b>Latest Update:</b> Procurement Transformation Paper was approved at Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024.</p> <p>Work is progressing on all 4 workstreams and resources are being allocated to accelerate delivery.</p>	
	16.4	The Procurement function of the Council will introduce a standard set of terms and conditions for contract awards.	Corporate Director Resources	Sept-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> This work is progressing with an update scheduled for 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> Procurement Transformation Paper was approved at Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024.</p> <p>Work is progressing on all 4 workstreams and resources are being allocated to accelerate delivery.</p> <p>A standard set of terms and conditions for contract awards have been developed</p>	Completed
	16.5	The Council will review and resolve the issue of the Councils Wi-Fi at the Town Hall	Corporate Director Resources	Jun-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> A review of the Wi-fi in the building has been completed and no significant issues identified. However, problems with mobile phone connectivity has been confirmed. A programme of remedial action is now in hand.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> The Wi-Fi service is being regularly monitored and is reporting consistently good service.</p> <p>A project to remediate mobile signal issue has engaged a supplier to install signal booster to provide mobile coverage. Supplier is engaging with FM to conduct Heritage Building survey and plan implementation.</p>	Completed
	16.6	CEO and CMT to consider current relationship standing with the trade unions and agree actions that might further promote better working relationships.	Deputy CEO	Aug-24	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> A Meeting is scheduled with the Deputy CEO and trade unions in August 2024. This specifically relates to issues around effective employee relations and engagement with trade union.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b></p> <p>CEO and CMT have agreed the priorities. Trade unions have now all made requests for various considerations regarding current arrangements, e.g. dedicated schools facilities time, general facilities time, representation on pension committee within the timescale. A meeting with all unions local and regional reps will take place to agree all, in the context of a reset of our relationship that has the specific objective of improving employee relations and reducing grievances</p>	Completed
<b>Recommendation 17: Responsiveness</b> Review the council wide approach to handling member enquiries, complaints and freedom of information (FOI) requests to ensure less duplication,	17.1	The Council will complete a resource review of the Councils FOI, Members Enquiries and Complaints functions. The Council will complete a process review for member enquiries, complaints and FOI requests with a view to improving speed and efficiency.	Deputy CEO	TBC	<p><b>Previous Update:</b> Full improvement plan has been developed. Complaints process review is now completed.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> Review was completed, Improvement plan is in place, PBI to be rolled out and performance metrics added to corporate dashboard. Improvement plan in place to reduce backlogs.</p>	Completed

faster responses and greater efficiency.						
<b>Recommendation 18: 'People First'</b> Accelerate the 'People First' transformation programme and develop a clear narrative ensure a common understanding. (This should be entwined with the development of the strategic vision)	<b>18.1</b>	The Council will develop a clear, single narrative around transformation and improvement using the people first initiative to do so. The Council will develop a communications / wider culture change programme to promote a wider council staff identity and help break down silo's and support senior staff visibility.	Director of Communications	Apr-24	<b>Previous Update:</b> Communications are developing the People First Campaign linking to culture change. Complete by April 24  <b>Latest Update:</b> This action has now been completed. The Communications team has developed a clear, single narrative around transformation and improvement through the People First initiative and linking to culture change. This will be launched at the Staff Conference on 11 <sup>th</sup> July 2024 and embedded through the organisation (via Communications).	<b>Completed</b>

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<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p><b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b></p> <p>15 October 2024</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> Mohamed Hussein, Interim Director of Housing Options &amp; Homelessness</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b></p>
<p><b>Update on Tackling Temporary Accommodation Rent Arrears</b></p>	

## Urgency Reasons

The urgency for this report to be published is to allow sufficient time for the report to be reviewed.

## Executive Summary

The audit of the ‘management and monitoring of rent arrears,’ was agreed by the Audit Committee in May 2023. The service welcomed the audit to better understand the controls and escalation measures and if these were robust enough.

The audit gave a ‘limited’ assurance’ Recommendations were made to improve rent arrears management which were agreed by the service, these included actions for current TA tenant arrears and former tenant arrears.

## Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note and comment on the actions taken on tackling temporary accommodation rent arrears

### 1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 This update is following the recommendations made by internal audit following the auditing of the management and monitoring rent arrears.

### 2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 N/A

### 3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 At the time that the audit commenced, the current tenant rent arrears was £8,878,982 and the former tenant arrears was £11,948,753.

3.2 Following the audit recommendations, significant changes and improvements have been made to the current tenant rent arrears policy, procedures and processes which has improved officer efficiency, has increased income collection, and has reduced rent arrears. Below are the areas identified where improvements were required;

- Policy, Procedures, filing of key documents
- Creation of tenancies and TA rent accounts
- Housing Benefit
- Arrears management – current tenant arrears
- Arrears management – former tenant arrears
- Staff declaration of interest

3.3 Below are the recommendations that were made that are on our delivery plan with target dates, most of which have already started or have been completed

Activity	Start Date	Start Qtr	Target Completion Date	Completion Qtr	RAG Status
Undertake a review of the TA rent policy, procedure and processes	May-24	Qtr4	Oct-24	Qtr1	Green
Set performance standards to ensure tenancies are set up immediately after a tenant has moved into TA	May-24	Qtr4	Oct-24	Qtr1	Green
Improve the process for HB forms to be issued and collected from residents placed into TA	May-24	Qtr4	Oct-24	Qtr1	Green
Arrears management, review current tenant arrears	May-24	Qtr4	Mar-25	Qtr3	Green
Arrears management, review former tenant arrears	Nov-24	Qtr1	Mar-25	Qtr3	Green
Staff declaration of interest - ensure staff members are completing DOI's on an annual basis	May-24	Qtr4	Oct-24	Qtr1	Complete

3.4 In April 24, the current and former TA Rent Team moved temporarily to Revenues and Benefits to get benefit from wider income collection control and escalation methods



3.5 The following are the updates on the activities that have taken place since the audit;

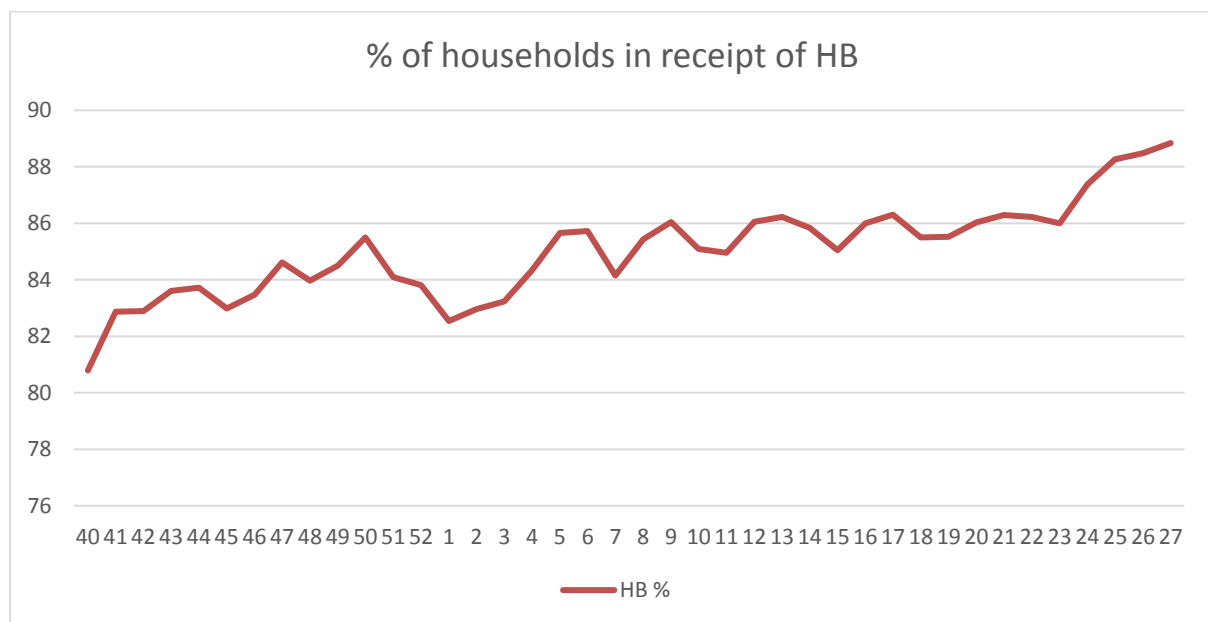
**Policy, procedures, filing key documents and arrears management, current and former tenant arrears**

The temporary accommodation arrears policy, strategy, procedures, and processes have been reviewed, which includes changes to the IT system. The final sign off on the review will take place by the end of November 24.

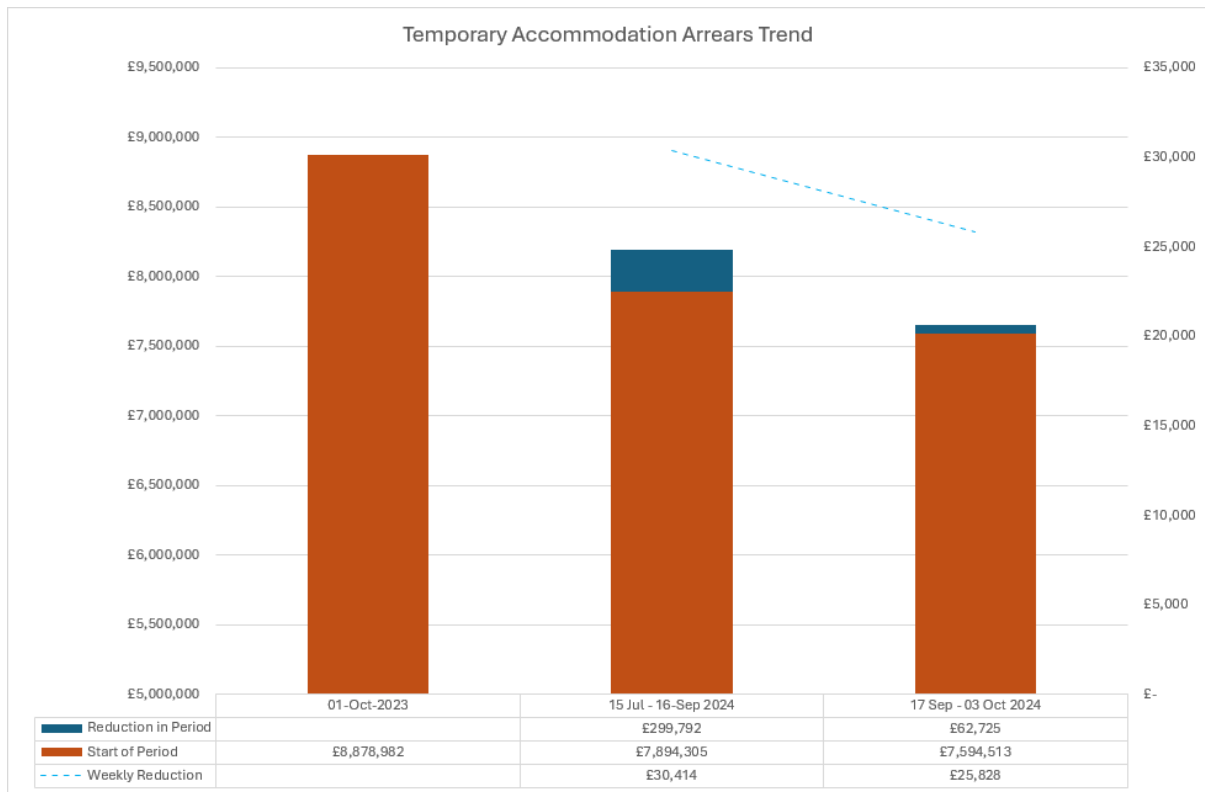
Further changes and enhancements are still in progress, which includes changes to the IT system for former tenant arrears and the deployment of Mobysoft for rents analytics, for both current and former tenant arrears.

The relocation of the rents teams to Revenues and Benefits has had a positive impact as dedicated HB resources were allocated to assist with ensuring HB claims were made at the time that a household was placed into TA and also, where a household already in TA was not in receipt of HB or had gaps in their benefits, this was looked at jointly and claims were put into payment and backdated payments were made.

In January 2024, **81%** of households in TA were in receipt of HB, this has now increased to **89%**, an **8%** increase, since additional resources were allocated from the HB team and because of the revision of the rent policy, processes, and procedures. The chart below captures the movement in the HB % from week 40 2023/24 to week 27 2024/25.



The overall rent arrears for current tenants as of 3 October have reduced to **£7,531,788** since the audit took place in October 2023, a reduction in current tenant rent arrears of just over **£1.3m**.

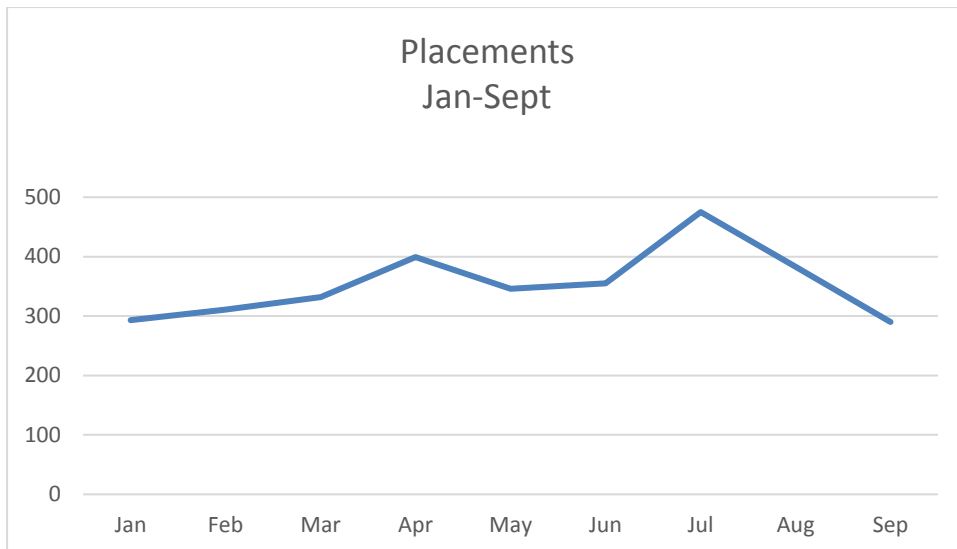


A soft launch of the new processes and IT systems for current tenant arrears took place on 15 July, since then, we have seen a significant improvement in the reduction of rent arrears and an increase in income. On average, there has been a £28k per week reduction in rent arrears.

Date	Total Arrears	Reduction in arrears	% decrease in arrears	Per Week
09-Jul (week of soft launch)	£ 7,894,305	Baseline		
16-Sep	£ 7,594,513	£ 299,792	4%	£ 30,414
03-Oct	<b>£ 7,531,788</b>	£ 62,725	1%	£ 25,828
	<b>Reduction</b>	<b>£362,517</b>	<b>5%</b>	

### Housing benefit

The delay with getting HB claims made and processed was due to an increase in homelessness, and the logistics of getting completed housing benefit forms back from homeless households for processing. The table below shows the number of temporary accommodation placements from January-September 2024.



This has greatly improved with a more streamlined process has been put into place so that HB forms are handed to all residents that attend the hub for a new placement, or for when they are being transferred from one TA to another. Where a remote booking has taken place, a process has been put into place so that the resident is contacted to make a new claim or complete a change of circumstances form. Whilst the bulk of the backlog has been cleared and there are clearer, more robust processes in place,

In May 2024, two new posts within the Bookings Team were agreed and appointments have been made to these and to three vacancies. The team will be at full capacity from this month, and with training taking place over the next 2 months.

### **Arrears Management – current tenant rent arrears**

The rent arrears policy, procedures and processes have been reviewed and significant changes to the NEC current arrears escalations policy have been made, which is already achieving on average a £30k per week in arrears reduction. We are also going to add automated SMS messages which will be implemented in December, which will increase income and reduce rent arrears.

In addition, we are exploring Mobysoft analytics for current tenant rent arrears and work to procure and implement this is currently underway. This work is being led by the Director of Finance, Deputy s.151 Officer and the implementation of this is being fast tracked.

Mobysoft have assessed the benefits of using analytics based on our current tenant rent arrears, and these are the benefits that they can deliver;

- 36% immediate officer productivity gains from removal of waste-work, equivalent to 5.4 FTE officer capacity gains across HRA and TA rent collection)

- Additional 8% officer productivity gains from increased usage of intelligent omni-channel assisted automation, increasing tenant digital self-serve (Further 1.2 FTE capacity gains)
- 54% improvement in arrears data accuracy
- £523,554 reduction in arrears debt across Temporary Accommodation
- Continued reduction in volume of unmanaged arrears caseload as more individuals maintain more successful payment profiles, resulting in approximate 12% lower caseload within 12 months, meaning more tenants alleviated from the burden of debt

The analytics software will support a review of the bad debt policy, which in turn, can enable a reduction in the bad debt provision

### **Arrears Management – former tenant rent arrears**

In relation to the former tenant arrears, a deep dive into all accounts is still required, including reviewing the current IT processes on NEC.

There are around 5,500 former tenant arrears accounts, with the former arrears totalling £11,555m. The former debt includes a number of different types of debts, these are listed below;

- Statute barred
- Absconded
- Not liable eg benefit cap, rough sleeper, NRPF arrears
- Bankruptcy/Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA)
- Deceased
- Uneconomical to collect

Around 1,900 former accounts are over 6 years old, so potentially statute barred and valued at around **£4.4m**. Write-offs are being done but not at the speed that we would like given resource pressures.

There is a 100% provision for bad debt for TA arrears. The provision on 1 April 24, was £18.8m broken down as follows;

- Current arrears - £7.6m
- Former arrears - £11.2m

This will increase or decrease based on our in year bad debt position.

3.6 Current tenant arrears have been the key focus of the teams activities in the last 10 months. With resources now in place and a review of the current tenant rent arrears, the number of claims being put in on time the has increased, albeit, still with some delays which the team are working on.

- 3.7 The improved rents policy, procedures and processes is reducing rent arrears and has increased income.
- 3.8 We are now able to focus our efforts on former tenant rent arrears processes, with a deep dive of all former rent accounts.

#### **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 BME and single parent households are disproportionately represented amongst homeless applicants. The rents policy will therefore have a positive impact on poorer, BME and single parent households in the Borough and will contribute to overarching strategies designed to improve social inclusion and eradicate poverty

#### **5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
- Best Value Implications,
  - Safeguarding.
  - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

#### **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 6.1 A number of recommendations were made as a result of an audit of Temporary Accommodation rent arrears. As a result of implementing these recommendations around policy, process and procedures, including utilising a wider resource for income collection, the outstanding debt relating to current tenants has reduced by £1.3m since last year. This has a positive impact on the General Fund revenue for the service, with greater income and a reduction in the bad debt provision required as 100% of any debt is provided for.
- 6.2 The improved processes have increased the percentage of T.A. clients in receipt of housing benefit from 81% to 89%. This again has a positive impact on the income position within T.A. as rent payments are guaranteed to be paid through housing benefit, without arrears being built up. However, the increase in the amount of housing benefit paid out will result in a greater subsidy loss where rents are higher than 90% January 2011 LHA rate. Two new posts have been created within the bookings team to ensure tenants are processed onto Housing Benefits efficiently. These posts are unbudgeted and contribute to the current T.A. forecast overspend in year.
- 6.3 To date the focus has been on current tenants. However, there is a further £11.9m of former tenant arrears. £4.4m of this debt is over six years old and

therefore statute barred for collection. This debt has been 100% provided for and should be written off. These write offs will not impact the General Fund revenue position negatively.

- 6.4 This former tenant debt will be harder to collect with these tenants being harder to trace. Decisions will need to be taken as to what of this debt is economically viable to pursue and the remainder written off. This debt has been 100% provided for. The Council could consider other options such as selling the debt to specialist debt collection companies, particularly if it does not have the resources in house to pursue this former tenant debt.

## **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 This is a noting report setting out the actions taken on tackling temporary accommodation rent arrears. It is important that the Council maximises its income by improvements to the arrears collection processes. There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report other than to note that there are time limits for collecting debts which may prevent the Council from pursuing the debtors to recover money owed if prompt action is not taken to recover the debts owed.

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## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- None

### **Appendices**

- **None**

#### **Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)**

#### **List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report**

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- These must be sent to Democratic Services with the report
- State NONE if none. None

#### **Officer contact details for documents:**