

# Cabinet



Wednesday, 25 November 2020 at 5.30 p.m.

Online 'Virtual' Meeting - <https://towerhamlets.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

## Agenda

**Mayor John Biggs**

### Cabinet Members

Councillor Sirajul Islam	(Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing)
Councillor Rachel Blake	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing)
Councillor Asma Begum	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Youth and Equalities)
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	(Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit)
Councillor Danny Hassell	(Cabinet Member for Children and Schools )
Councillor Candida Ronald	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector)
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	(Cabinet Member for Work and Economic Growth)
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (Job Share) - Lead on Social Inclusion
Councillor Asma Islam	Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) - Lead on Environment
Councillor Eve McQuillan	Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (Job Share) - Lead on Planning
Councillor Dan Tomlinson	Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) - Lead on Public Realm

[The quorum for Cabinet is 3 Members]

### Further Information

Reports for consideration, meeting contact details, public participation and more information on Cabinet decision-making is available on the following pages.



## Public Information

### Viewing or Participating in Cabinet Meetings

The public are welcome to attend meetings of the Cabinet. Procedures relating to Public Engagement are set out in the 'Guide to Cabinet' attached to this agenda. Except where any exempt/restricted documents are being discussed, the public are welcome to view this meeting through the Council's webcast system.

Physical Attendance at the Town Hall is not possible at this time.

### Meeting Webcast

The meeting is being webcast for viewing through the Council's webcast system.

<http://towerhamlets.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

### Contact for further enquiries:

Matthew Mannion, Democratic Services,  
1st Floor, Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG

Tel: 020 7364 4651

E-mail: [matthew.mannion@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.mannion@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Web:<http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk>

### Electronic agendas reports and minutes.

Copies of agendas, reports and minutes for council meetings can also be found on our website from day of publication.

To access this, click [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/committee](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/committee) and search for the relevant committee and meeting date.

Agendas are available on the Modern.Gov, Windows, iPad and Android apps.

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## A Guide to CABINET

### Decision Making at Tower Hamlets

As Tower Hamlets operates the Directly Elected Mayor system, **Mayor John Biggs** holds Executive powers. The Mayor has appointed nine Councillors to advise and support him and they, with him, form the Cabinet. Their details are set out on the front of the agenda.

### Which decisions are taken by Cabinet?

Executive decisions are all decisions that aren't specifically reserved for other bodies (such as Development or Licensing Committees). In particular, Executive Key Decisions are taken by the Cabinet or by the Mayor as Individual Mayoral Decisions.

The constitution describes Key Decisions as an executive decision which is likely

- a) to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, above £1million; or
- b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the borough.

Upcoming Key Decisions are published on the website on the 'Forthcoming Decisions' page through [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/committee](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/committee)

### Published Decisions and Call-Ins

Once the meeting decisions have been published, any 5 Councillors may submit a Call-In to the Service Head, Democratic Services requesting that a decision be reviewed. This halts the decision until it has been reconsidered.

- The decisions will be published on: **Friday, 27 November 2020**
- The deadline for call-ins is: **Friday, 4 December 2020**

Any Call-Ins will be considered at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee can reject the call-in or they can agree it and refer the decision back to the Mayor, with their recommendations, for his final consideration.

### Public Engagement at Cabinet

The main focus of Cabinet is as a decision-making body. However there is an opportunity for the public to contribute through making submissions that specifically relate to the reports set out on the agenda.

Members of the public may make written submissions in any form (for example; Petitions, letters, written questions) to the Clerk to Cabinet (details on the previous page) by 5 pm the day before the meeting.

## Cabinet

Wednesday, 25 November 2020

5.30 p.m.

- |  | Pages          |
|--|----------------|
| <b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>  |                |
| <p>To receive any apologies for absence.</p>   |                |
| <b>2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS</b>  | <b>11 - 12</b> |
| <p>Members are reminded to consider the categories of interest, identified in the Code of Conduct for Members to determine; whether they have an interest in any agenda item and any action they should take. For further details, see the attached note from the Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>Members are also reminded to declare the nature of the interest at the earliest opportunity and the agenda item it relates to. Please note that ultimately it is the Members' responsibility to identify any interests and also update their register of interests form as required by the Code.</p> <p>If in doubt as to the nature of an interest, you are advised to seek advice prior to the meeting by contacting the Monitoring Officer or Democratic Services.</p> |                |
| <b>3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES</b>   | <b>13 - 22</b> |
| <p>The unrestricted minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 28 October 2020 are presented for approval.</p>   |                |
| <b>4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE MAYOR</b>  |                |
| <b>5. OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>  |                |
| <b>5.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions</b>   |                |
| <p>Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to report on any issues raised by the OSC in relation to unrestricted business to be considered.</p>   |                |
| <b>5.2 Any Unrestricted Decisions "Called in" by the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b>   |                |





## 6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6 .1 Liveable Streets Bow consultation outcome report	To follow
<p><b>Report Summary:</b> This item presents the results of the Bow Liveable Streets project which was taken to public consultation on Monday 29 June until Wednesday 29 July 2020.</p> <p>This item seeks a decision on the next stages of the Liveable Streets in Bow.</p> <p><b>Wards:</b> Bow East; Bow West <b>Lead Member:</b> Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) - Lead on Environment, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) - Lead on Public Realm <b>Corporate Priority:</b> A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in</p>	

6 .2 Planning for School Places 2020/21	23 - 54
<p><b>Report Summary:</b> This report is the annual review of planning for school places. It explains the current position, projected demand, and proposals to increase and reorganise school provision to ensure the right provision is in the right place at the right time.</p> <p><b>Wards:</b> All Wards <b>Lead Member:</b> Cabinet Member for Children and Schools <b>Corporate Priority:</b> TH Plan 1: A better deal for children and young people: aspiration, education and skills</p>	



**6 .3 Report on the outcome of the preliminary stakeholder consultation (pre-statutory) on the proposal to close St Matthias Primary School. 55 - 112**

**Report Summary:**

This report presents the outcome of the preliminary stakeholder consultation (pre-statutory) on the proposal to close St Matthias Primary School.

It explains the background and reasons for the first stage of the consultation; the responses received with the views of parents, pupils, staff and the general public. It recommends for the Mayor in cabinet to consider whether to proceed to the next stage of the process, which would be to issue a statutory notice.

The report includes an analysis of all representations received and any responses made; risk and opportunities; financial implications, officer's recommendations; decisions available to the Mayor in Cabinet.

**Wards:** All Wards  
**Lead Member:** Cabinet Member for Children and Schools  
**Corporate Priority:** TH Plan 1: A better deal for children and young people: aspiration, education and skills

**6 .4 Report on the outcome of the preliminary stakeholder consultation (pre-statutory) on the proposal to close Cherry Trees Special School 113 - 158**

**Report Summary:**

This report presents the outcome of the preliminary stakeholder consultation (pre-statutory) on the proposal to close Cherry Trees

It explains the background and reasons for the first stage of the consultation; the responses received with the views of parents, pupils, staff and the general public. It recommends for the Mayor in Cabinet to consider whether or not to proceed to the next stage of the process, which would be to issue a statutory notice.

The report includes an analysis of all representations received and any responses made; risk and opportunities; financial implications, officer's recommendations; decisions available to the Mayor in Cabinet.

**Wards:** All Wards  
**Lead Member:** Cabinet Member for Children and Schools  
**Corporate Priority:** TH Plan 1: A better deal for children and young people: aspiration, education and skills



**Report Summary:**

The Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020-23 builds on foundations of the current strategy due to expire in 2020. It is about the VCS in its broadest sense – including registered charities, faith groups, unregistered and informal community groups and social enterprises. It is a partnership strategy – developed as part of a joint effort between partners and will feed into all policy affecting the local sector. The strategy is informed through various engagement with stakeholders as well as learnings from the Covid-19 Pandemic.

**Wards:** All Wards  
**Lead Member:** Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector  
**Corporate Priority:** A dynamic outcomes-based Council using digital innovation and partnership working

**Report Summary:**

This report provides the Mayor in Cabinet with an update on the delivery and implementation of the council’s Strategic Plan.

**Wards:** All Wards  
**Lead Member:** Mayor  
**Corporate Priority:** A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in

**Report Summary:**

A Mayoral Decision is required to enable London Borough of Tower Hamlets to ‘directly award’ a contract to Look Ahead Care and Support for the provision of support services at the Hackney Road Homeless Hotel. LBTH has put in a bid to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) “Next Steps Accommodation Programme” for money to re-envision Hackney Road Homeless Project as a complex needs service for rough sleepers who have been brought off the streets through the ‘everyone in’ directive during the Covid-19 lockdown and who now need a stable period in supported accommodation. One of the conditions of the bid is that services start on 1st April 2021. To ensure that this happens we have been in negotiation with the contract provider - Look Ahead Care and Support - the current lower needs service at Hackney Road. The requirements and timescales as set out by MHCLG reduce the likelihood of a successful competitive process so for expediency we are therefore seeking formal agreement to the Direct Award of Contract to Look Ahead Care and Support for a four year period from 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2025.



<b>Wards:</b>	All Wards
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in

<b>6 .8</b>	<b>Approved Capital programme 20/2023 – additional projects</b>	<b>To follow</b>
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**Report Summary:**

Further to the approval of the £668.079m capital programme for 2020-2023 by the Mayor in Cabinet on 23rd September 2020, funding sources have been identified for additional projects for which approval is required. The additional projects have progressed through the capital governance, to ensure that they deliver value for money and agreed outcomes for our communities and require approval to enable delivery in 2020-21. Funding options for other priority programmes, for which funding sources have yet to be identified will also be included. This may include approvals for the disposal of identified assets to generate capital receipts required for the delivery of the capital programme.

This report seeks further approvals for fully funded projects to be added to the three-year capital programme.

<b>Wards:</b>	All Wards
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in

<b>6 .9</b>	<b>Community Information Panels – Concession contract update and recommendation</b>	<b>To follow</b>
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**Report Summary:**

A summary on the Community Information Panels tender process and recommendations on the concession contract with reference to the income being considered for Medium Term Financial Savings, and ensuring the councils broader strategic objectives are met. This was requested by members before contract award.

As part of this there is also an update with changes made to the proposed contract length previously signed off by cabinet, in order to the council to maximise benefits and supplier interest in response to changing market conditions in the advertising industry.

<b>Wards:</b>	All Wards
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Mayor
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	All Priorities

**7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**



**Tower Hamlets Council**  
Town Hall  
Mulberry Place  
5 Clove Crescent  
E14 2BG

## 8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Should the Mayor in Cabinet consider it necessary, it is recommended that the following motion be adopted to allow consideration of any exempt/restricted documents.

“That, under the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985, the Press and Public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting for the consideration of the Section Two business on the grounds that it contains information defined as Exempt in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government, Act 1972”.

### **EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL SECTION (PINK)**

The Exempt / Confidential (Pink) Committee papers in the Agenda will contain information, which is commercially, legally or personally sensitive and should not be divulged to third parties. If you do not wish to retain these papers after the meeting, please hand them to the Committee Officer present.

## 9. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items.

## 10. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### 10.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions in Relation to Exempt / Confidential Business

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to report on any issues raised by the OSC in relation to exempt/confidential business to be considered.

### 10.2 Any Exempt / Confidential Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

(Under provisions of Section 30, Rule 59 of the Constitution).

## 11. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

## 12. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

### **Next Meeting of the Committee:**

Wednesday, 16 December 2020 at 5.30 p.m. in C1, 1st Floor, Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG



**Tower Hamlets Council**  
Town Hall  
Mulberry Place  
5 Clove Crescent  
E14 2BG

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# Agenda Item 2

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AT MEETINGS– NOTE FROM THE MONITORING OFFICER**

This note is for guidance only. For further details please consult the Code of Conduct for Members at Part C, Section 31 of the Council's Constitution

### **(i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)**

You have a DPI in any item of business on the agenda where it relates to the categories listed in **Appendix A** to this guidance. Please note that a DPI includes: (i) Your own relevant interests; (ii) Those of your spouse or civil partner; (iii) A person with whom the Member is living as husband/wife/civil partners. Other individuals, e.g. Children, siblings and flatmates do not need to be considered. Failure to disclose or register a DPI (within 28 days) is a criminal offence.

Members with a DPI, (unless granted a dispensation) must not seek to improperly influence the decision, must declare the nature of the interest and leave the meeting room (including the public gallery) during the consideration and decision on the item – unless exercising their right to address the Committee.

**DPI Dispensations and Sensitive Interests.** In certain circumstances, Members may make a request to the Monitoring Officer for a dispensation or for an interest to be treated as sensitive.

### **(ii) Non - DPI Interests that the Council has decided should be registered – (Non - DPIs)**

You will have 'Non DPI Interest' in any item on the agenda, where it relates to (i) the offer of gifts or hospitality, (with an estimated value of at least £25) (ii) Council Appointments or nominations to bodies (iii) Membership of any body exercising a function of a public nature, a charitable purpose or aimed at influencing public opinion.

Members must declare the nature of the interest, but may stay in the meeting room and participate in the consideration of the matter and vote on it **unless:**

- A reasonable person would think that your interest is so significant that it would be likely to impair your judgement of the public interest. **If so, you must withdraw and take no part in the consideration or discussion of the matter.**

### **(iii) Declarations of Interests not included in the Register of Members' Interest.**

Occasions may arise where a matter under consideration would, or would be likely to, **affect the wellbeing of you, your family, or close associate(s) more than it would anyone else living in the local area** but which is not required to be included in the Register of Members' Interests. In such matters, Members must consider the information set out in paragraph (ii) above regarding Non DPI - interests and apply the test, set out in this paragraph.

### **Guidance on Predetermination and Bias**

Member's attention is drawn to the guidance on predetermination and bias, particularly the need to consider the merits of the case with an open mind, as set out in the Planning and Licensing Codes of Conduct, (Part C, Section 34 and 35 of the Constitution). For further advice on the possibility of bias or predetermination, you are advised to seek advice prior to the meeting.

### **Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992 - Declarations which restrict Members in Council Tax arrears, for at least a two months from voting**

In such circumstances the member may not vote on any reports and motions with respect to the matter.



**Further Advice** contact: Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer,  
Tel: 0207 364 4800.

## **APPENDIX A: Definition of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest**

(Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012, Reg 2 and Schedule)

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vacation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by the Member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of the Member. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority— (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the Member's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the relevant authority; and (b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where— (a) that body (to the Member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and (b) either—  (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or  (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET**

**HELD AT 5.35 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2020**

**ONLINE 'VIRTUAL' MEETING - [HTTPS://TOWERHAMLETS.PUBLIC-I.TV/CORE/PORTAL/HOME](https://towerhamlets.public-i.tv/core/portal/home)**

**Members Present:**

Mayor John Biggs	
Councillor Sirajul Islam	(Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing)
Councillor Rachel Blake	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing)
Councillor Asma Begum	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Youth and Equalities)
Councillor Sabina Akhtar	(Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit)
Councillor Danny Hassell	(Cabinet Member for Children and Schools )
Councillor Candida Ronald	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector)
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman	(Cabinet Member for Work and Economic Growth)
Councillor Mufeedah Bustin	Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (Job Share) - Lead on Social Inclusion
Councillor Asma Islam	Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) - Lead on Environment
Councillor Eve McQuillan	Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion (Job Share) - Lead on Planning
Councillor Dan Tomlinson	Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) - Lead on Public Realm

**Other Councillors Present:**

Councillor Peter Golds	(Leader of the Conservative Group)
Councillor Rabina Khan	
Councillor James King	

**Officers Present:**

Kevin Bartle	Interim Divisional Director of Finance, Procurement and Audit
Adam Boey	(Senior Strategy & Policy Manager - Corporate)
Stephen Bramah	(Deputy Head of the Mayor's office)
Claudia Brown	(Divisional Director of Adults Social Care)
Sharon Godman	(Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance)
Anthony Harris	Commissioning Manager
Asmat Hussain	(Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer)
Christine McInnes	(Divisional Director, Education and Partnerships)
Neville Murton	(Corporate Director, Resources)

Ann Sutcliffe	(Corporate Director, Place)
Warwick Tomsett	Joint Director, Integrated Commissioning
Will Tuckley	(Chief Executive)
Joanne Starkie	(Head of Strategy and Policy - Health Adults and Communities)
Teresa Heaney	(Interim Customer Services Programme Director)
Michael Darby	(Head of Parking & Mobility Services)
Matthew Mannion	(Head of Democratic Services, Governance)
Joel West	(Democratic Services Team Leader (Committee))

## **AGENDA ORDER**

At the meeting the **Mayor** agreed to change the order of business to take Agenda Item 6.3 (Revised Approach to Day Support in Adult Social Care) before the other reports for decision due to the presence of residents who wished to speak on this item.

For clarity the minutes are presented in the order the items appeared on the agenda.

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- James Thomas (Corporate Director, Children and Culture) for whom Christine McInnes (Divisional Director Education and Partnerships) was deputising.
- Denise Radley (Corporate Director, Health, Adults and Community) for whom Claudia Brown (Divisional Director, Adult Social Care) was deputising.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS**

There were no Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, but Councillor Rachel Blake noted there was a Pre-Decision Scrutiny Question on the Tower Project and the Council had appointed her to that body. She took part in the discussion of that item.

### **3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 21 October 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair as the correct record of proceedings.

#### 4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE MAYOR

The **Mayor** made the following announcements:

- That he had updated his Executive Scheme of Delegation so that at Cabinet meetings decision making would now be made collectively with all Cabinet Members involved.
- He provided an update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the borough and on residents. He also highlighted the importance of all Councillors showing community leadership during this time.
- He also highlighted the support being provided by the Council including to tackle holiday hunger during half-term.
- The Council's budget consultation exercise was launching for the budget proposals for the new year and he encouraged all residents to take part. The Council had significant budget challenges to meet.
- The Council had won an award for the Asthma Partnership led by the Public Health Team at the Local Government Chronicle awards. The Council had also had four shortlisted nominations in other categories.

#### 5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

##### 5.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions

Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses were tabled in relation to all the reports on the agenda. These were considered during discussion of the relevant agenda items.

In addition, Councillor James King, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), provided an update on their meeting held earlier in the week. The committee had discussed a number of issues including:

- A budget monitoring session looking at controlling spending and the impact of government announcements.
- Performance update on the waste service and the improved performance since the service had been brought in-house, although more improvements were still needed.
- Detailed review of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and he highlighted the recent scrutiny review report on this matter.
- The committee was examining its work planning to determine its future priorities.

The **Mayor** thanked Councillor James King for his update.

##### 5.2 Any Unrestricted Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The **Mayor** deferred consideration of the Call-In report of the Common Housing Register Allocations Scheme (Post Consultation) decision taken at the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 23 September 2020.

## 6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

### 6.1 Changes to Resident Parking Permit Terms & Conditions

Councillor Dan Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share) – Lead on Public Realm, introduced the report setting out proposed changes to the terms and conditions of resident parking permits. The proposal was to remove the ability to park all day across a ‘main zone’ and limit it to the specific ‘mini-zone’. However, he also highlighted that the Council was reviewing the scheme further as was looking to see if other changes would be useful for example around boundaries, buffer streets and similar. Consultations would be taking place soon and through that or otherwise, he encouraged residents to let the Council know if they were experiencing any issues.

It was particularly highlighted that changes in Wapping were being considered to change boundaries or deal with particular parking pressures in that area. Zones C2/C4 and C3/C4 were particularly being monitored.

The **Mayor** welcomed the report and supported that changes that were proposed. He noted that the intention was that these changes would make it easier for local residents to find parking places near their homes. He accepted a proposal to amend the recommendations to make it clearer that the parking permit schemes would remain under review as required with particular reference to the areas mentioned during the discussion.

The Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses were noted and the **Mayor** then proposed the amended recommendations to Cabinet. They were **agreed** without dissent and it was:

#### **RESOLVED**

1. To agree to implement the proposed changes to the terms and conditions within the residents parking permit as set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report.
2. To note that in addition, officers will continue to review the operation of the new terms and conditions, invite feedback from affected residents and explore mitigation options which could include reviewing the boundaries between Zones C2/C4 and between C3/C4, widening buffers or merging zones.

### 6.2 Revised approach to Ideas Stores & Library Service

Councillor Sabina Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Brexit, introduced the report proposing a consultation on potential changes to the Idea Store and Library services.

She noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had resulted in significant changes to how these services were being provided and given the Council's budget challenges and the changes in the way residents were accessing services, it was important to review the best way to deliver these services in the future.

It may be that online services were now preferred for many residents, but it was acknowledged that face-to-face methods were also desired by some people. The report set out a number of options for consultation. These could include reduced opening hours, closing some sites and/or reusing locations for other community uses. Staffing levels may also be reduced.

During discussion particular concerns were expressed around the impact on Watney Market and Cubitt Town sites.

The **Mayor** highlighted the various models that could be considered and encouraged everyone to participate in the consultation. The pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses were also noted. Finally, he proposed a slight amendment to the recommendations as Recommendation 2 was supposed to read 'To note...'.

The **Mayor** then proposed the amended recommendations to Cabinet. They were **agreed** without dissent and it was:

#### **RESOLVED**

1. To note the proposed programme of consultation and engagement on the Idea Store service, to commence in late November 2020,
2. To note the proposed future model for the Idea Store service, subject to refinement pending the outcome of the consultation. A future key decision on this issue will be returned to Cabinet in early 2021.

### **6.3 Revised approach to day support in adult social care**

Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, introduced the report on proposals to consult on a redesign of day support in adult social care by bringing services together in a community hub. She recognised that change was difficult for service users but that this engagement would help discuss options for the future with service users and their families. She took Cabinet through the proposals in the report and set out the plans for the consultation. She acknowledged the value service users placed on these services and she thanked all the staff who had worked so hard during the pandemic to continue to provide services.

The Cabinet then moved to discuss the report. They heard from a number of contributions from Members and residents.

Issues highlighted included:

- Concerns service users would have about changes to their services and how the consultation was intended to help design services with service users.
- Ensuing the equality impact assessment was fully considered and risks identified.
- It was highlighted that services would still be provided but that the consultation was about how services were provided and what the services looked like.
- The petitions and other submissions expressing concerns about changing the provision of services.
- The potential impact on providers.
- The financial challenges for the Council and the need to find better ways of providing services.

The **Mayor** concluded the discussion by thanking everyone for their contributions. He highlighted that the consultation was starting soon and he encouraged everyone to participate. He reminded everyone that the proposal was to retain services in a new setting. The Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses were noted. He then put the recommendations to the Cabinet and it was **agreed** with no dissent that:

#### **RESOLVED**

1. To note the proposed programme of consultation and engagement on day support services, to commence on 1st November 2020,
2. To note the proposed future model for day support services in adult social care, subject to refinement pending the outcome of the consultation. Any future key decisions on this issue will be returned to Cabinet in early 2021.

#### **6.4 Community Charging Consultation – Outcome Report**

Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, introduced the report presenting the outcomes of the consultation into proposed changes to adult social care community charging fees. The consultation had taken place over the last six months including a pause during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. She took Members through the proposed changes to the current arrangements. The proposals had been considered carefully and it was felt that Option 2 best spread out the impact of the costs. She also highlighted the responses provided to the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions.

During discussion a positive change to introduce free respite to all carers was welcomed. The **Mayor** indicated that he supported the proposed Option 2 recommendation.



The **Mayor** then proposed the recommendations to Cabinet. They were **agreed** without dissent and it was:

### **RESOLVED**

1. To agree Option 2 from the adult social care community charging consultation for implementation: Reducing the Standard Utilities Allowance from £15 per week to £5 per week, raising the maximum possible contribution from £250 per week to £1000 per week and providing respite and carer relief free of charge following a Carer Assessment.
2. To agree to implement the agreed option from December 2020. Note that this is three months' later than the date originally agreed in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy savings proposal, which is due to the consultation being paused then relaunched as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic

## **6.5 COVID-19 Adult Social Care Winter Plan**

Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing introduced the report on the Council's Covid-19 winter care plan. She highlighted how important this document was to the Council given the impact the pandemic was having on residents. She thanked all those who had helped put the plan together and everyone who was helping support residents and their services.

She took Cabinet through the different sections of the plan including covering issues such as discharging from hospital, care home action plans and local outbreak plans, providing support to care home staff who were self-isolating, provision of personal protection equipment and support for home visits, day services and respite provision. She also highlighted the training and support being provided to staff.

Finally, she also highlighted the work being undertaken to tackle issues of racism and inequalities and the support being provided to community volunteering.

The **Mayor** welcomed the report and he noted the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses. The **Mayor** proposed the recommendation to Cabinet and it was **agreed** without dissent. It was:

### **RESOLVED**

1. To endorse and approve the revised Travel Assistance Policy, which can then be implemented fully by the end of 2020.

## 6.6 London Borough of Tower Hamlets Travel Assistance Policy

Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Children and Schools, introduced the report on the Council's updated Travel Assistance Policy. The proposals set out a clear policy to ensure the Council met its statutory obligations and promoted inclusion, independence and choice.

He explained that the proposals had been out for consultation and the majority of responses had shown support for the options set out. He also noted the involvement of the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee in reviewing the proposals.

The **Mayor** welcomed the report and thanked the Lead Member and officers for their work on the proposals. He noted the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses and proposed the recommendations to Cabinet. The recommendations were **agreed** with no dissent and it was:

### RESOLVED

1. To endorse and approve the revised Travel Assistance Policy, which can then be implemented fully by the end of 2020.

## 6.7 Budget Monitor as at P5 for 2020/21

Councillor Candida Ronald, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector, introduced the report monitoring the Council's budget position at period 5. She highlighted the financial challenges the Council faced in particular due to the current pandemic and also the many underlying service pressures.

The report set out savings targets for the year including those which the Council was no longer expecting to make. A significant use of Council reserves was forecast.

The **Mayor** thanked Councillor Candida Ronald for her presentation and highlighted how vital it was for the Council to meet its budget challenges. Whilst he welcomed the further government grants recently announced he reported that the pandemic had also caused serious additional challenges beyond the level of support provided and in any case every effort needed to be made to control the Council's budgets.

The **Mayor** noted the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses. In particular, the request to be clear how far the pandemic was impacting on specific budgets. He proposed the recommendations to Cabinet, and they were **agreed** without dissent. It was:

**RESOLVED**

1. To note the Council's projected outturn position against General Fund, Dedicated Schools Budget, Housing Revenue Account and earmarked
  - a. reserves for 2020-21, based on forecasts as at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020;
2. To note the Council's projected outturn position on the capital programme;
3. To note that there are no equalities implications directly resulting from this report, as set out in Section 4 of the report.

**6.8 Billingsgate Market - Update on Joint Working with the City of London Corporation**

The **Mayor** introduced the report proposing to enter into an agreement with the City of London Corporation in relation to the future development of the Billingsgate Market site. He explained that at this stage it only provided initial agreement but eventually this could result in a long-term commitment. There was a significant amount of work that would need to be undertaken before final agreement.

This agreement would allow the City to consolidate its markets on a site elsewhere in East London and it was therefore important to see how the existing site should best be used including looking at the needs of the local area.

The exempt appendix setting out confidential financial information in relation to the proposals was noted as were the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Questions and officer responses.

The **Mayor** welcomed continuing conversations on this matter over the coming period as more detailed plans were developed. He proposed the recommendations to Cabinet, and they were **agreed** without dissent. It was:

**RESOLVED**

1. To note the position with respect to the future of Billingsgate Market and the joint working with the City of London Corporation (the City) in relation to its future redevelopment.
2. To approve the terms of a Cooperation Agreement between the Council and the City as outlined in paragraph 3.7 of the report, to be entered into on or before the laying of the draft Bill in Parliament by the City on the 27 November 2020, in accordance with the heads of terms included in the exempt Appendix 2 to the report.
3. To approve the statement of support for the future redevelopment of Billingsgate Market attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

4. To approve the Qualifying and Abortive Costs set out in the exempt Appendices 2 and 3 to the report.
5. To agree to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Governance to agree minor changes to the heads of terms as may be appropriate in the light of further negotiations, and to complete the Cooperation Agreement.
6. To note the financial risk to the Council set out in paragraph 6 of the report and in the exempt Appendix 3 to the report.

**7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

Nil items.

**8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Nil items.

**9. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

Nil items.

**10. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**10.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions in Relation to Exempt / Confidential Business**

A Pre-Decision Scrutiny Question and officer response to the exempt appendix to Agenda Item 6.8 (Billingsgate Market – Update on Joint Working with the City of London Corporation) was noted during discussion of that item.

**10.2 Any Exempt / Confidential Decisions "Called in" by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Nil items.

**11. EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

Nil items.

**12. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT**

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 8.27 p.m.

MAYOR JOHN BIGGS

<p><b>Cabinet</b></p> <p>25 November 2020</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> James Thomas, Corporate Director, Children’s and Culture</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Planning for School Places 2020/21 Annual Update</b></p>	

**Proposed Decision Path (indicate) – Delete Section Before Publication:**

	Step [Delete as applicable]	Date
DLT Level (Tier One)	DLT	12/10/2020
CLT Level (Tier Two)	CLT	20/10/2020
Member Level (Tier Three)	MAB	11/11/2020
Decision (Tier Four)	Cabinet	25/11/2020

**Proposed Decision Path (indicate) – Delete Section Before Publication:**

<b>Lead Member</b>	Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Children’s and Culture Services
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Terry Bryan, Service Head (Pupil Services and School Sufficiency), Ikwi Mkparu, School Organisation and Place Planning Manager
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	04/08/2020
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	To be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority.
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	Children and young people are protected so they get the best start in life and can realise their potential

**Executive Summary**

This report is the annual review of planning for school places. It updates cabinet on: the latest position with projected demand; actions being taken to reduce the numbers of primary school places in areas of surplus; plans to increase places in areas of current or projected increased demand; and the options to be considered for future school development sites.

**THIS SECTION TO BE DELETED BEFORE PUBLICATION**

**Decision Type**

<b>Key Decision?</b>	<b>Urgent Decision?</b>	<b>Exempt from Call-In?</b>	<b>Restricted Report or Partially Restricted (e.g. appendix)?</b>
Yes	No	No	No

\*If the answer is yes make sure the forthcoming decision on the website states this or else the decision cannot be taken.

**Guidance Documents**

Further details on the procedure for Urgent Decisions can be found in the [Intranet Library](#) and the Guide to Report Writing [guidance note](#).

**Specific Issues for Pre-Decision Meetings**

(Officers may use the following table to add points of note for internal meetings such as CLT, MAB or DMTs. Content can be deleted at any stage and, in any case, will be before publication for the decision making meeting.)

<b>Directorate Leadership Team</b>
<b>Corporate Leadership Team</b>
<b>Mayor's Advisory Board</b>
<b>Communications</b>

**THIS SECTION TO BE DELETED BEFORE PUBLICATION**

## Recommendations:

- A. This report summarises the list of activities the Council is undertaking or planning, through earlier cabinet decisions or cabinet decisions to be taken in future, to manage the supply of school places. The Mayor in cabinet is therefore recommended to NOTE the following:
1. the position on the current and projected demand for school places.
  2. the progress made in relation to:
    - the actions being taken to rationalise the primary school provision in the west of the borough where there is surplus;
    - the plans and options for future school developments to meet the anticipated need for additional primary places in the east of the borough, including the expansion of existing schools and the development of a new school at Wood Wharf on the Isle of Dogs;
    - the development of the new secondary school at London Dock;
    - the development of the new secondary school site at Westferry Printworks on the Isle of Dogs;
    - the rebuild/refurbish George Green's Secondary School;
    - the expansion of Phoenix Special School and the plan for the enlargement of Beatrice Tate Special School.
  3. the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 5.
  4. that this report sets out the council's plan to exercise its Education functions aligned with the functions of the council as a Local Planning Authority (LPA), and particularly concerning the approach to the current allocation of school sites in the Local Plan as adopted in January 2020. The council intends to initiate a review of the Local Plan over the course of the next year.
- B. The Mayor in Cabinet is also requested to make the decision to authorise the Corporate Director - Place to enter into the development agreement and the works funding agreement and all other related agreements (including leasing heads of terms if necessary) with the Department For Education in order to access the DFE contribution for the construction of a new secondary school on the London Dock Site.

## **1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 The council has a statutory duty to provide and plan for sufficient school places with an appropriate mix and number of high performing, financially sustainable schools. These places must be accessible to all children in the local community and available when they are needed.
- 1.2 Proposals to provide school places often require long-term planning to implement (e.g. opening a new school). Evidence about the projected need for places must be robust and reviewed regularly, so that decisions are fully informed and can be made in good time.



## **2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 In cases where the council is not able to ensure new schools are established when needed, short-term measures to provide additional places in the form of bulge classes at existing schools or expansions into temporary buildings may be required. Although these measures can address capacity issues in the short-term, they do not provide best value and should not be viewed as a sustainable approach to meeting an increased demand for school places.

## **3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

### **Context**

- 3.1 The demand for school places is driven by population growth, migration levels and the borough's housing development. Population growth in Tower Hamlets remains amongst the fastest in the country. However, this growth is no longer translating into the anticipated levels of increased demand for school places. This is due to falling birth rates, changing resident demographics, and increased levels migration out of the borough. A similar situation is being experienced in other London boroughs. The current round of pupil projections for Tower Hamlets is provided at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The Council has been dealing with a significant surplus of places at primary schools in some areas of the borough. The pupil census in January 2020 showed that primary schools carried a reasonable surplus of 10% across all age groups. However, in the reception year this is at 14% (536) and well above the benchmark of 5-10% for urban areas. Although some surplus is necessary to allow for parental choice, too much surplus can affect the resources available for expenditure on improving outcomes for pupils.
- 3.3 The situation with pupil place capacity is not uniform across the borough. There is a contrast between the surplus places at primary schools in the west and the increasing pressure to ensure there are enough school places in the east. Primary schools in the west are working to address the resource challenges of unfilled places, whilst the majority of schools in the east have maintained steady rolls or even seen increases in their pupil numbers. By 2026/27, the east of the borough is projected to require up to an additional 7FE or 211 places.
- 3.4 With these fluctuations in the pupil population it has been necessary for the Local Authority (LA) to plan, manage and support a series of school organisation changes and new building developments to ensure that the right numbers of school places are in the right parts of the borough at the right time. The planned approach and the progress being made is presented later in this report.
- 3.5 The pupil projections indicate that the demand for secondary school places is still increasing, if not at the rate that was projected in previous years. Demand for secondary school places is still expected to rise steadily over the next few years and peak in 2027. The earlier decision to establish at least one new secondary school at London Dock in Wapping will ensure there are enough places in the medium term and allow for any further school organisation changes. It will also enable the other development site at Westferry Printworks to be used to improve the facilities of an existing secondary school. The planned approach and progress to date is presented later in this report.

## Pupil Projections Methodology and Approach

- 3.6 Tower Hamlets Council commissions school roll projections through the Greater London Authority (GLA), like most other London boroughs. GLA have access to data on all pupils in London (via the National Pupil Database) which enables them to model movements across borough boundaries in a way that would be difficult for an individual authority.
- 3.7 Projections are run each year in March/April using information based on demographic trends (e.g. births, deaths, and migration); the borough's housing development trajectory; and the flow of pupils from their ward of residence (including those out of borough) to each school.
- 3.8 PAN London pupil projections are notoriously difficult to plan, given the growth experienced in recent years and all the factors contributing to current migration levels. The council uses six sets of pupil projections based on high, medium and low migration; and on a one year or four year historical reference. Historically, it considered the medium migration sets as the most reliable method as it produced a higher yield of pupil place projections consistent with the growth pattern at that time. However, recently, it was decided to change to a new model based on the high migration set, which has produced a more modest pupil growth projection in line with current trends. The council's most recent DfE return on School Capacity (SCAP) showed projections were 99.7% accurate for primary and 99.1% for secondary. This is well within the DfE's tolerances and therefore ensures confidence in the methodology and approach.
- 3.9 Within the Pan London context, Tower Hamlets is especially complex as a densely populated urban area with rapidly changing demographics and huge scale development, which increases the degrees of variability to its pupil projections work. The approach is therefore to develop and present a school place planning strategy with reasonable ambition, the necessary caution and flexibility to manage these significant challenges, as well as the expectations of the various stakeholders.

### Primary Schools

- 3.10 Primary place planning in Tower Hamlets is split into six planning areas referred to as school catchment areas.
- 3.11 Tower Hamlets has experienced a long run of incremental increases in the overall demand for primary school places. This peaked in 2016/17, dropped in the next three years before rising again in 2020/21, as shown in the table below. The position is likely to remain relatively stable throughout the next seven year planning period as the fall in demand in the west of the borough is counterbalanced by the rise in the east. The earlier volatility in demand has been experienced in a number of boroughs across London.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
No. of Applications Received for Reception	3405	3305	3329	3169	3347

- 3.12 Pupil numbers in four of the six school catchment areas should remain constant throughout the planning period. The exception being Poplar and the Isle of Dogs, where increases are expected from planned housing development. As explained earlier in this report, the projections need to be viewed with caution, in part, due to the levels of child yield from these new developments being below previous estimates and the challenges for the council in providing affordable housing. It is also not yet known how the environmental impact of Covid-19 will affect place planning in urban areas.
- 3.13 In 2018, the Council commenced a review of its primary school places. The aim of the review was to identify long-term solutions to reduce the significant number of surplus places in the west of the borough, whilst ensuring that schools remained financially sustainable and able to maintain high quality education. The process of the review has enabled school leaders to find their own solutions, including amalgamation, hard federation or closure, where this was necessary to safeguard children’s education.
- 3.14 The further findings from the review has identified that a number of schools face significant financial challenges due to a decline in their pupil roll. This has included some schools having to apply to the Council for a licensed deficit and, in the process, require the Council to establish whether or not a School would be able to recover to a financial position that would enable the LA to be confident of its long term viability.

**(a) Progress on Primary School Organisation Changes and Planned School Developments, including those as an outcome of the Primary Review**

- 3.15 Below is the current position within each school catchment area:

**Catchment Area 1 (Stepney)**

There are currently 720 Reception places available in Stepney. In January 2020 there were 240 (8FE) unfilled places. Action to reduce this surplus has been undertaken as follows:

<b>School organisation changes implemented/planned</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>PAN Reduction</b>
Smithy School merged with Redlands to form a single Primary School, <b>Stepney Park</b> .	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2020.	Reduction of 1FE (30 places) with potential to reinstate, if required.
Guardian Angels merged with St Anne’s Catholic Primary Schools to form a 2FE Catholic Primary School, <b>St Anne’s and Guardian Angels RC</b> .	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2020.	Reduction of 20 places.
PAN of Cayley School reduced from 3FE to 2FE	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2020	Reduction of 1FE (30 places) with potential to reinstate if necessary.

### Catchment Area 2 (Bow)

There are currently 465 Reception places available in the Bow catchment area. In January 2020 there were few unfilled places and the demand versus supply is expected to be consistent during this planning window, with limited spare capacity.

School organisation changes implemented/planned	Timescale	PAN Reduction
Reduction to the PAN of Malmesbury School from 2½ FE to 2FE	1st September 2020	Reduction of 0.5FE (15 places) with option to reinstate with 'bulge' classes in alternate years, when required.

### Catchment Area 3 (Poplar)

There are currently 890 Reception places available in the Poplar catchment area. In January 2020, there were 38 (1FE) unfilled places; but with anticipated growth in the pupil population, this area is expected to have a shortfall of 63 (2FE) places by 2026, without intervention. The current plans to address this potential shortfall are as follows:

School organisation changes implemented/planned	Timescale	PAN Increase
Increase to the PAN of one or more of the schools in the Poplar area by at least 1/2FE	The Council is currently working on plans to ensure the additional capacity can be available from as early 2022, even if this first needs to be as temporary measure.	An increase of 2FE
Establish a new 2FE at Reuters Ltd (Blackwall Yard)	The Council is currently working with the developer on plans for the new school to be delivered by 2026/27.	An increase of 2FE
Ailsa Street Site Allocation	The Council has identified this site for a new primary school that could be delivered within the Local Plan period up to 2031.	Up to 2FE (60 places).

### Catchment Area 4 (Isle of Dogs)

There are currently 441 Reception places available in the Isle of Dogs catchment area. In January 2020 there were 39 (1FE) unfilled places. However, with anticipated growth in the pupil population, this area is expected to have a shortfall of 148 places (5FE) by 2026, without intervention. The following is planned for the Isle of Dogs:

School organisation changes	Timescale	Pan Increase
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<b>implemented/planned</b>		
New School Building at Wood Wharf.	The Council has already agreed to open this new school from as early as September 2022. Plans are now in place to appoint the new school provider.	2FE (60 places)
New School Building at 3 Millharbour.	The Council has taken up the s106 option to develop a new 2FE school. The planned timescale for the school to open is September 2025/26.	2FE (60 places)

New School Building at Crossharbour Town Centre	The Council is working with the developer to enable the potential expansion of an existing school. No timescale as yet.	Up to 2FE (60 places).
New School Building at Limeharbour (Skylines Village)	The Council has secured permission for a new school, if required. No timescale as yet.	Up to 2FE (60 places).
Marsh Wall East Site Allocation	The Council has identified this site for a new primary school that could be delivered within the Local Plan period up to 2031.	Up to 2FE (60 places).
Millharbour South Site Allocation	The Council has identified this site for a new primary school that could be delivered within the Local Plan period up to 2031.	Up to 2FE (60 places).
Proposal to merge Cubitt Town Infants and Junior to form a 3FE Primary School.	The Council has issued a statutory notice for the school's amalgamation (merger) by April 2022.	No Increase

The Council is working on the development of further new school sites in the Isle of Dogs area and will decide with developers on the precise timescales for bringing these sites forward for 2027 and beyond. These timescales will be informed and determined by the levels of child yield resulting from the planned housing developments in this area.

### Catchment Area 5 (Wapping)

There are currently 465 Reception places available in the Wapping catchment area. In January 2020 there were 63 (2FE) unfilled places and planned school organisation changes will reduce the surplus to 1FE as follows:

School organisation changes implemented	Responsible Agency and Timescale	PAN Reduction/Increase
Reduction in the PAN of Canon Barnett School from 1½FE to 1FE	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2020	Reduction of 0.5FE (15 Places)
Proposed closure of Shapla Primary School	LA undertaking statutory consultation on School closure by 2021	Reduction of 1FE (30 places)
Planned Expansion of Hermitage Primary School from 1½FE to 2FE	Feasibility being undertaken for temporary expansion by 2021 and permanent expansion by 2023.	Increase of 0.5FE (15 Places)

### Catchment Area 6 (Bethnal Green)

There are currently 630 Reception places available in the Bethnal Green catchment area. In January 2020 there were 144 (5FE) unfilled places. Previous and further planned school organisation changes will reduce this surplus to 3FE as follows, but further measures may be required:

School organisation changes implemented	Responsible Agency and Timescale	PAN Reduction
Hague and Stewart Headlam Schools have Federated, this included a reduction to the PAN at Stewart Headlam from 2FE to 1FE.	1 <sup>st</sup> January 2020	Reduction of 1FE (30 places)
Reduction to the PAN of Bangabandhu Primary School from 2FE to 1FE.	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2020	Reduction of 1FE (30 Places)
Proposed closure of St Matthias CE (1FE) Primary School.	LA and LDBS currently consulting on closure for August 2021.	Reduction of 1FE (30 places).

### Secondary Schools

#### (a) Current position and projected need

- 3.16 Secondary school places in Tower Hamlets are planned for on a borough-wide basis, as it recognises that pupils will travel to schools across (and outside) the borough, according to their particular preferences.
- 3.17 Tower Hamlets has been experiencing a gradual increase in secondary applications in line with the previous growth, with a slight dip in 2020 (as expected) as follows:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
No of Applications Received for Year 7	2738	2878	2995	3069	2976

3.18 The current round of projections indicates that numbers will continue to increase until 2023 before remaining at a steady level through to 2027.

**(b) Progress on Secondary School Organisation Changes and Planned School Developments.**

London Dock

3.19 In November 2018 Cabinet agreed plans to establish a new 6FE secondary school at London Dock. As with any new school, this new provision must be established as a 'Free' School and the DfE has now appointed the Mulberry Schools Trust as its preferred provider. The Trust is therefore being invited to enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State, enabling the DfE to make a substantial payment of £47.025m to the council, for the development of the new School building. The routes for the Council to establish new schools in its area are set out in Appendix 2.

3.20 The increased capacity provided by the new school at London Dock will ensure that there will be sufficient secondary places, following the earlier determination of school organisation proposals that resulted in the closure of Raine's Foundation School and the small expansion of Oaklands School.

Westferry Printworks

3.21 The council had previously stated its intention to develop the site at Westferry Printworks on the Isle of Dogs for a new secondary school. It then became evident that there was no longer the need for a new school to provide additional places as there were already two secondary schools on the Isle of Dogs and a third school would result in over-supply. It was therefore agreed that the Westferry Printworks Site would be used to provide improved accommodation for one of the existing Isle of Dogs secondary schools, given that both Canary Wharf College Free School and George Green's School were in need of better facilities.

3.22 Following extensive negotiations with the DfE and both schools it has been agreed that the council will enable the DfE to develop and meet the full cost (circa £50m) for delivery of the Westferry Printworks site to provide permanent accommodation for Canary Wharf College, which is currently in temporary accommodation.

George Green's School

3.23 Feasibility Plans are now underway for the council to deliver improved school buildings for George Green's from as early as September 2023, if possible.

Canary Wharf College

3.24 The DfE will be seeking to work to a similar timescale in its plans for the development of Westferry Printworks as permanent accommodation for Canary Wharf College, subject to the Developer proceeding with the school site.



3.25 Additional secondary school sites have been identified in the Local Plan as follows:

Billingsgate Market Site Allocation	This site is co-owned by LBTH and the City of London Corporation. No indicative timescales for delivery on the site.	No decision required. Cabinet to note current position.
Bow Common Lane Site Allocation	The Council has identified this site for a new secondary provision that could be delivered within the Local Plan period up to 2031.	No decision required. Cabinet to note current position.
Leven Road	The Council secured an option to accept a school on this site by September 2028, through a CIL in-kind agreement.	No decision required. Cabinet to note current position.

### **(c) Post 16**

3.26 Last year it was reported that the LA was working with the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership in undertaking an assessment of Post 16 secondary school places, focusing on the sufficiency, suitability, supply and location. This was to inform discussions between the LA and schools to address identified issues and gaps. This work has not progressed further due to emerging service priorities in relation to the sustainability of SEND and Nursery School provision. The LA will establish a revised timetable for this work and will update cabinet in due course. In the meantime, some of the identified concerns in post 16 (e.g. the oversupply of places) are being addressed through the LA's work with individual schools on their school organisation and improvements to their existing accommodation.

### **(d) Nursery Schools**

3.27 The LA's maintained nursery schools are facing significant sustainability challenges, largely due to changes in Early Years funding and funding regulations, as well as a reduction in resources elsewhere in the education system that were previously used to provide a level of subsidy.

3.28 The LA is working with its maintained nursery schools to develop models for their future sustainability and school organisation options are currently being developed with the individual school leaders. Any proposed changes will be presented separately to cabinet, as these are developed and determined through consultation with key stakeholders and the wider public.

### **Specialist Provision (Special Schools, Resource Bases/Alternative Provision)**

#### **(a) Current Position**

3.29 Tower Hamlets has high demand for provision for children with special educational needs. In 2020, 5.1% of pupils in Tower Hamlets have an EHC Plan compared with an average of 4.2% in Inner London, 3.8% in Greater London, and 3.3% in England.

- 3.30 The proportion of pupils with EHC Plans in the borough has also risen over the past decade. In 2008, 3.3% of borough pupils had EHC Plans compared with 5.2% in 2020.
- 3.31 Earlier projections indicated that there is a potential for the numbers of pupils with EHC Plans in Tower Hamlets to increase from 2947 in 2019/20 to around 3346 in 2027 – an increase of 11.9%, requiring over 200 additional specialist places. However, a number of planned improvements in the SEND system to support the development of greater consistency in inclusive practice across all mainstream schools is expected to reduce demand over time. The LA will also be refreshing its detailed projections on the need for specialist places in the coming months in order to inform this improvement work.

### **(b) Plans to Increase Specialist Provision**

- 3.32 The LA is in the final stages of development for the new Phoenix Upper School, which will open by January 2021. This will provide up to 144 additional places for pupils in the borough with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
- 3.33 Plans are in place to expand Beatrice Tate School on its existing site increasing its capacity from 75 to up to 130 pupils. This will ensure there will be sufficient secondary and Post 16 places for pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), following the earlier expansion of the borough's primary provision at Stephen Hawking School.
- 3.34 Following a review of provision for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs the LA is currently in the process of a public consultation on its plan to close The Cherry Trees Primary SEMH School by August 2021. Replacing this with a range of alternative inclusive provision and beginning with the development of a Specialist SEMH provision at Ben Jonson Primary School, working in alliance with Bowden House Secondary SEMH school.
- 3.35 The LA is working on plans to improve the accommodation for the London East Alternative Provision (LEAP) to ensure that pupils with ill health, behaviour issues or other difficulties have access to high quality alternative provision.
- 3.36 Provision for SEND pupils requires input from a number of agencies, the LA is therefore working in partnership with health and social care colleagues and particularly the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to ensure that there is the necessary planning of services to support the increases in demand going forward. This includes providing sufficient nursing and speech and language therapy for pupils as they move in and through the various specialist provisions.

## **4. SCHOOL SITES PROVIDED THROUGH THE LOCAL PLAN**

### **Site Deliverability**

- 4.1 The Local Plan allocates a number of school sites, as presented in paragraphs 3.15 and 3.25, to meet projected need as well as improve the existing schools' estate. It provides the necessary options and flexibility required to manage risk relating to site deliverability and ensures the Council is confident it can meet its legal duty as an education provider, mainly in the medium to long term. The rationale for this is explained in Appendix 3. **School Development Funding Streams**

4.2 A summary of funding streams available for the development of new schools and improving the existing schools' estate is set out in Appendix 4.

#### **4A LONDON DOCK SITE – DFE CONTRIBUTION**

4A.1 An agreement in principle has been reached with the DFE regarding a contribution of £47m towards the construction of a secondary school on the London Dock Site

4A.2 The funding is subject to the council agreeing to follow the DFE's self delivery process that defines the terms and condition of the contribution to ensure compliance with the DFE's legal, commercial and technical standard requirement.

4A.3 The DFE's self delivery process requires the council to approve a development agreement, works funding agreement and heads of terms for lease. Officers in various departments are reviewing these documents to ensure that the council's interest is protected.

4A.4 After the review process, the council is required to confirm the approval of the relevant agreements to the DFE before the funding is released.

#### **5 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Access to good quality school places is essential to raising achievement and addressing poverty and inequality in the long term. The reorganisation of school provision and the development of new schools in areas of need will have a positive impact on all groups by improving accessibility, increasing parental choice and promoting inclusive education.

5.2 When the council undertakes its plans to consult on changes to its school organisation, or when it works with the DfE to appoint new school providers, it will seek to ensure that the offer is universally applicable to children and young people of school age and there is no unequal impact on different groups.

#### **6 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

(i) Best Value Implications

6.1 The report sets out proposals for meeting the need for school places. Proposals include making the best use of existing and future council assets as well as opportunities to secure maximum funding from central government.

6.2 Implementation of capital schemes will be subject to competitive procurement. Proposals will be subject to consultation as they are developed and before implementation.

(ii) Environmental (including air quality)

6.3 The proposals to provide additional school places to meet the needs of the population will be implemented taking account of sustainable design standards and materials. The planned organisational changes to school

provision is intended to ensure that children can access a local school place and so minimise impact on travel.

#### (iii) Risk Management

- 6.4 The council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. In order to plan to meet this need projections are obtained annually and reviewed each year against the known school capacity. It is clear that the projections indicate that a significant change in the need for places has to be planned for. There may be further variations in the projections, so the council has to retain some flexibility in its ability to respond to need.
- 6.5 The plans required to meet the need for school places can often require the balance of complex and competing considerations, for example for other social infrastructure requirements. Because of the long time that is required to implement projects, decisions need to be taken in sufficient time to plan the use of resources and to identify shortfalls.
- 6.6 The council has to manage the risk of failing to meet its statutory duties by having sufficient options available for implementation to meet need and by keeping the changing circumstances under review.

#### (iv) Safeguarding

- 6.7 The report deals with the Council's approach to providing school places for the local population. The supply of good quality school places contributes to the safeguarding of children by ensuring their early access to education.

#### (v) Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment

- 6.8 When implementing the plans presented in this document, the council will undertake full public consultation on the proposed school organisation changes. All comments received through these mechanisms or made directly to council officers or members will be collected to be included in the analysis of feedback received. Responses to the consultations will only be used to assess the community's view of the proposals and not for any other purpose.
- 6.9 Tower Hamlets Council will handle information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018 and is the data controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information the privacy notice for Pupil Services can be accessed [here](#).

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

- 7.1 Funding for the revenue implications of the schools reorganisations and growth will be managed through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and would therefore not generate any additional burden on Council resources.

The project capital costs detailed in this report for information would have been subject to prior agreement or future decision and are not for consideration as part of this report.

## **8 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 8.1 Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on local authorities to secure sufficient primary and secondary schools in their area. Schools will be regarded as sufficient if they are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education. Reasonable consideration must be given to parental representations regarding the provision of schools in the Council's area. This report sets out how the Council will comply with the sufficiency duty.
- 8.2 Under section 6A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and government guidance, there is a presumption that any new school being set up must be an academy or a free school. There is a set process for the identifying the need for a new school. A local authority may seek proposals for a new academy and must inform the Secretary of State of the outcome who will then choose one of the proposers. A competition will be run if that process produces no suitable proposer. Accordingly, normally a local authority will only be able to publish its own proposals for a new community or local authority foundation school if all other reasonable options are exhausted. The proposal in this report for a new school to open relates to a free school.

### School closure or amalgamation and consultation

- 8.3 Under section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 ("the 2006 Act"), a Local Authority can propose the closure of all categories of maintained school. The LA must follow a statutory process to close a school, including the amalgamation of two schools. As well as the provisions in the 2006 Act, the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 must be followed and the LA must have regard to the statutory guidance "Opening and closing maintained schools."
- 8.4 The LA or governing body of the school or schools may use the pre-publication consultation to consider a range of options, however, it is not a substitute for the statutory representation period which must follow within 12 months of the initial consultation, as set out in the legislation referred to above. Consultation should be carried out at a formative stage, when responses can be taken into account in the development or taking forward of the proposals and before the final decision has been taken. Members must conscientiously take the outcome of the consultation into account in taking a decision about whether to progress to statutory publication.
- 8.5 The LA can publish a proposal to close one school and enlarge or transfer site (following the statutory process) of an existing school to accommodate displaced pupils. The process detailed in the School Organisation (Prescribed Alteration Maintained Schools) Regulations 2013 must be followed for proposals including the expansion of a school, together with separate guidance "Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools".

### Employment considerations

- 8.6 A proposal for closure of a school may lead to the staff being made redundant. A dismissal for redundancy purposes is defined in section 139 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 as including circumstances where an

employee is dismissed for reasons wholly or mainly attributable to the fact that the employer has ceased or intends to cease to carry out the business for the purposes of which the employee was employed. By section 135 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 an employee is entitled to a redundancy payment if the employer dismisses the employee by reason of redundancy. Separate consultation with staff regarding any school closure, redundancy situation or amalgamation will be required, if the proposals are taken forward. The school should follow its redundancy and redeployment process (or any adopted diocese or LA process if none is in place).

- 8.7 The impact of TUPE provisions may need to be considered later depending upon the final proposals including any decisions about amalgamation.

#### Property Considerations

- 8.8 In the event that a school is declared surplus to requirements the LA will need to secure the Secretary of State to release the site from educational use.
- 8.9 The process for securing the Secretary of State's consent is set out in Schedule 1 to the Academies Act 2010. This provides that consent is obtained prior to dispose of any community school land which includes all land in which a freehold or leasehold interest is held by the LA and which has been used for any school (including any Academy) in the last 8 years.
- 8.10 Government guidance specifies that it is important that LA's are fully aware that there should be no expectation that applications for consent will be approved, irrespective of previous decisions and should not commence any works on the site or anticipate any future proceeds of sale in anticipation of Secretary of State consent being secured.
- 8.11 Further, the disposal and/or change of use of a school site containing any open space land used as a school playing field, by a maintained school, in the last 10 years will require the consent of the Secretary of State's consent in accordance with section 77 of the Schools Standards Frameworks Act 1998. Playing field land is defined as being "land in the open air which is provided for the purposes of physical education or recreation, other than any prescribed description of land".
- 8.12 Section 77(6) of the SSFA provides that the general powers of LA's to dispose of land, for best value, contained in sections 123 of the Local Government Act Act 1972 cannot override the s77 prohibition subject to changes of use covered by general Consent Order (No5) 2014.

#### Equality considerations

- 8.13 When deciding whether or not to proceed with these decisions the Council must also have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristics and those who do not (the public sector duty). An Equality Impact Analysis must be carried out and considered in detail by Members before taking decisions to progress proposals in respect of the opening, closure or amalgamation of schools.

## DFE Funding – London Dock Site

- 8.14 The Council has the legal power to enter into an agreement with the DFE in order to receive a contribution in the manner of a grant towards the construction cost of a school at the London Dock site
- 8.15 The value of the grant from the DFE is greater than £1m. Whilst the Corporate Director – Place has the delegated authority to apply for grant funding on behalf of the Council, the value is such that this decision is a Key Decision under the law and the Council’s constitution. Key decisions are reserved to the Mayor under the same law.
- 8.16 The Council is ensuring that all other agreements that relate to the use of the funds matches the DFE’s requirements as set out in the relevant works funding and development agreements to ensure that the risk of withdrawal of the funding part way through the scheme is minimised.
- 

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

### **Linked Report**

- None

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 - School roll projections and summary of methodology
- Appendix 2 - Commissioning new school places
- Appendix 3 - The Local Plan’s approach to allocating school sites
- Appendix 4 - Summary of funding streams available

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

- 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.

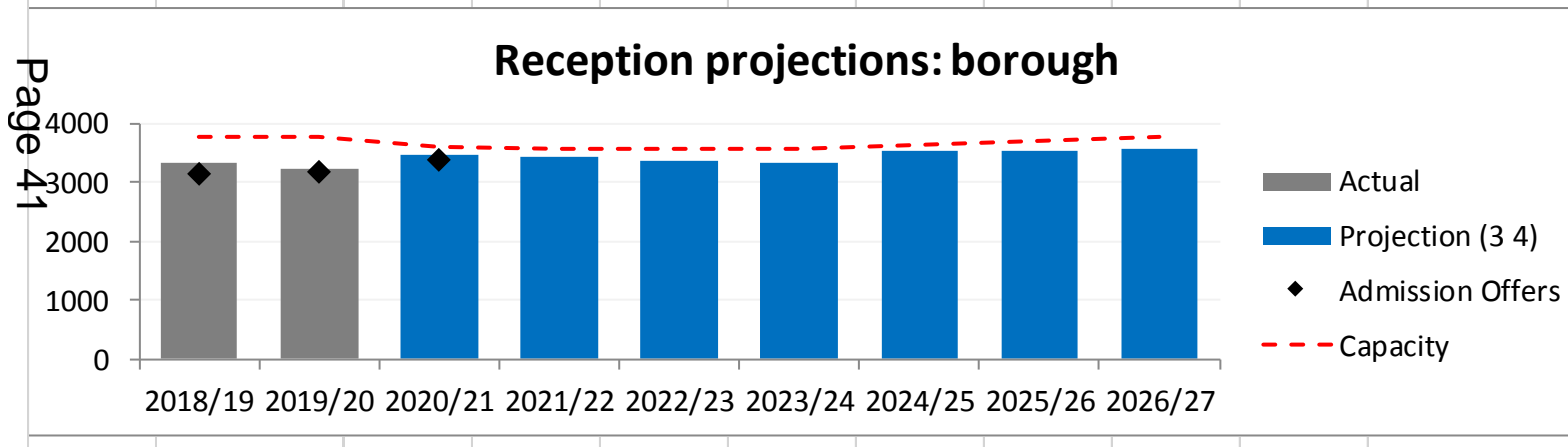
### **Officer contact details for documents:**

Or state N/A

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<b>School roll projections for Reception</b>									
<i>Produced June 20 using: Jan 2020 school rolls, GLA 2018-based population projection model (UPC), and Local Plan + LLDC development trajectory, High Migration 3 4 option, January 2020 Capacity</i>									
<b>Borough</b>	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
<b>Actual</b>	3,230								
<b>Projection (3 4)</b>		3,460	3,425	3,356	3,333	3,519	3,534	3,553	
<b>Admission Offers</b>	3,168	3,348							
<b>Capacity</b>	3,766	3,601	3,566	3,596	3,596	3,656	3,716	3,776	
<b>Variance (3 4)</b>	<b>Pupils</b>	536	141	141	240	263	137	182	223
	<b>FE</b>	17.9	4.7	4.7	8.0	8.8	4.6	6.1	7.4
	<b>%</b>	14%	4%	4%	7%	7%	4%	5%	6%



<b>Catchment 1 - Stepney</b>		<b>(INCLUDES BOTH BONNER SITES)</b>							
		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Actual		600							
Projection			734	702	682	692	723	711	704
Admission Offers		630	644						
Capacity		840	720	720	720	720	750	750	750
Variance	Pupils	240	- 14	18	38	28	27	39	46
	FE	8.0	- 0.5	0.6	1.3	0.9	0.9	1.3	1.5
	%	29%	-2%	3%	5%	4%	4%	5%	6%

<b>Catchment 2 - Bow</b>									
		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Actual		453							
Projection			406	415	375	368	380	371	361
Admission Offers		398	425						
Capacity		450	465	435	405	405	405	405	405
Variance	Pupils	- 3	59	20	30	37	25	34	44
	FE	- 0.1	2.0	0.7	1.0	1.2	0.8	1.1	1.5
	%	-1%	13%	5%	7%	9%	6%	8%	11%

<b>Catchment 3 - Poplar</b>									
		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Actual		852							
Projection			879	867	879	886	936	943	953
Admission Offers		840	875						
Capacity		890	890	890	920	920	950	950	1,010
Variance	Pupils	38	11	23	41	34	14	7	57
	FE	1.3	0.4	0.8	1.4	1.1	0.5	0.2	1.9
	%	4%	1%	3%	4%	4%	1%	1%	6%

Catchment 4 - Isle of Dogs									
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
Actual	402								
Projection		484	493	498	483	528	561	589	
Admission Offers	390	434							
Capacity	441	441	441	501	501	501	561	561	
Variance	Pupils	39	- 43	- 52	3	18	- 27	- -	28
	FE	1.3	- 1.4	- 1.7	0.1	0.6	- 0.9	- -	0.9
	%	9%	-10%	-12%	1%	4%	-5%	0%	-5%

Catchment 5 - Wapping									
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
Actual	417								
Projection		432	437	427	412	435	435	434	
Admission Offers	409	440							
Capacity	480	465	450	450	450	450	450	450	
Variance	Pupils	63	33	13	23	38	15	15	16
	FE	2.1	1.1	0.4	0.8	1.3	0.5	0.5	0.5
	%	13%	7%	3%	5%	8%	3%	3%	4%

Catchment 6 - Bethnal Green									
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
Actual	506								
Projection		525	511	495	492	517	513	512	
Admission Offers	501	506							
Capacity	650	630	630	600	600	600	600	600	
Variance	Pupils	144	105	119	105	108	83	87	88
	FE	4.8	3.5	4.0	3.5	3.6	2.8	2.9	2.9
	%	22%	17%	19%	18%	18%	14%	15%	15%

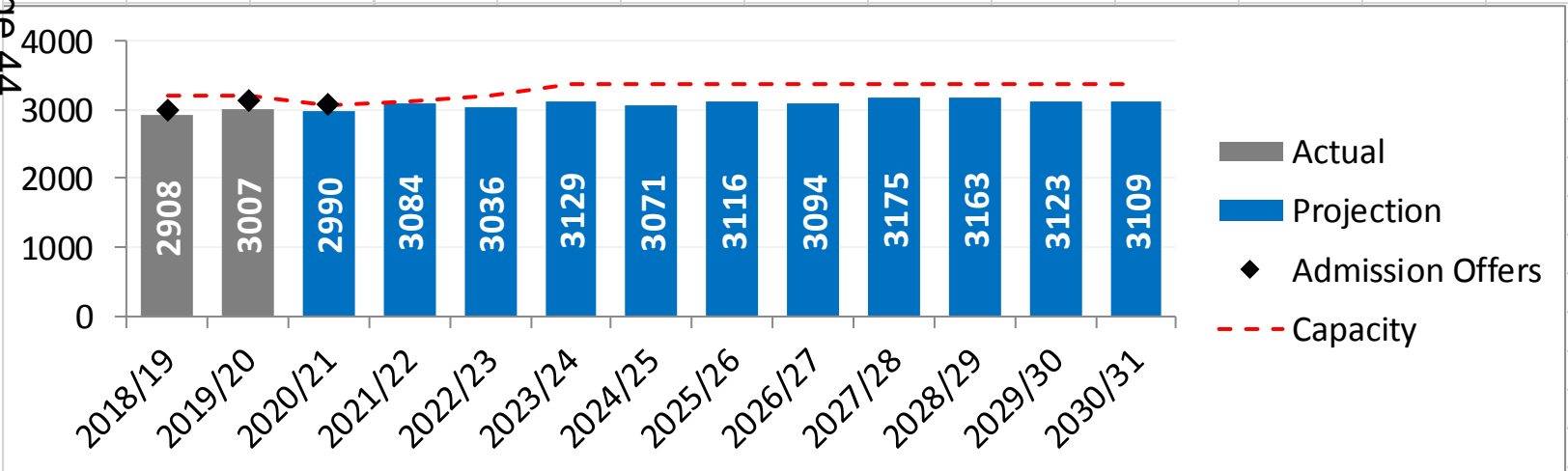
### School roll projections for Year 7

Produced June 20 using: Jan 2020 school rolls, GLA 2018-based population projection model (UPC), and Local Plan + LLDC development trajectory, High Migration 3 4 option, January 2020 Capacity

**Borough** Capacity includes London Dock and increased capacity at Canary Wharf College from 2023

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
<b>Actual</b>	3,007							
<b>Projection</b>	3,051	2,990	3,084	3,036	3,129	3,071	3,116	3,094
<b>Admission Offers</b>	3,147	3,098						
<b>Capacity</b>	3,213	3,170	3,170	3,170	3,374	3,374	3,374	3,374
<b>Variance</b>								
Pupils	66	72	86	134	245	303	258	280
FE	2.2	2.4	2.9	4.5	8.2	10.1	8.6	9.3
%	2%	2%	3%	4%	7%	9%	8%	8%

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## Summary of the School Roll Projection Methodology

Tower Hamlets Council commissions school roll projections through the Greater London Authority (GLA), like most other London boroughs. GLA have access to data on all pupils in London (via the National Pupil Database) which enables them to model movements across borough boundaries in a way that would be difficult for an individual authority.

Projections are run each year in March/April using the following methodology:

- Step 1.** The borough's population is projected based on demographic trends (e.g. births, deaths, and migration) and the borough's housing development trajectory using planning data submitted by the council.
- Step 2.** The flow of pupils from their ward of residence (including those out of borough) to each mainstream state school is determined, based on the Spring School Census and estimates of the number of children living in each ward. These are turned into ratios, for example, one in five Year 1 pupils living in XYZ Ward go to ABC Primary School. These existing ratios are not available for new children entering school in Reception, so these ratios are determined based on previous years.
- Step 3.** The number of pupils in each school is projected by multiplying the flow ratios by the populations in each ward. For example, if one in five Year 1 pupils in XYZ Ward go to ABC Primary School, and it is projected that there will be 100 Year 1 pupils in the ward, then 20 pupils from this ward are expected to go to ABC Primary. The number of pupils from each ward is then added up for each school.
- Step 4.** Projections are aggregated to catchment area and borough-level to improve reliability.
- Step 5.** Validation of pupil numbers and local intelligence checks are made against GLA projections.

Projections are run each year in March/April using information based on demographic trends (e.g. births, deaths, and migration); the borough's housing development trajectory; and the flow of pupils from their ward of residence (including those out of borough) to each school.

PAN London pupil projections are notoriously difficult to plan, given the growth experienced in recent years and all the factors contributing to current migration levels. The council uses six sets of pupil projections based on high, medium and low migration; and on a one year or four year historical reference. Historically, it considered the medium migration sets as the most reliable method as it produced a higher yield of pupil place projections consistent with the growth pattern at that time. However, recently, it was decided to change to a new model based on the high migration set, which has produced a more modest pupil growth projections in line with current trends. The council's most recent DfE return on School Capacity (SCAP) showed projections were 99.7% accurate for primary and 99.1% for secondary. This is well within the DfE's tolerances and therefore ensures confidence in the methodology and approach. Within the Pan London context, Tower Hamlets is especially complex as a densely populated urban area with rapidly changing demographics and huge scale development, which increases the degrees of variability to its pupil projections work. The approach is therefore to develop and present a school place planning strategy with reasonable ambition, the necessary caution and flexibility to manage these significant challenges, as well as the expectations of the various stakeholders.

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## Commissioning New School Places

There are essentially three routes for the LA to establish new schools in its area as follows:

### (a) Free School Presumption Process

Changes to the law in recent years have emphasised the role of the LA as the commissioner of school places rather than the provider. The option for the LA to open a new community school will be the last alternative after others have been exhausted. Where the LA identifies the need for a new school, it should seek proposals to establish the school and appoint the provider via the 'free school presumption' process (NB. free schools and academies are legally the same type of school).

Under the 'free school presumption' process the LA is responsible for providing the site for the new school. It is the expectation that the site will be made available to the appointed provider free or on a peppercorn basis. The LA will also be responsible for meeting the associated capital and pre/post-opening revenue costs.

The LA seeks proposals (expressions of interest) from approved free school or academy providers, following a procedure set out by the DfE. As part of this process the LA will first set its specification for the new school through consultation with the community. This specification is a key document to enable the proposer to understand the LA's requirements for the new school. The specification will set some key matters in addition to the basic details, such as phase of education, size of the school and planned opening date. It will include the need for a strong education vision, engagement with the local community, providing inclusive education and support for all children and operating as the local school for the community. The Tower Hamlets specification will also include a commitment to support the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership, which has been set up by schools to meet the challenge of ensuring that all children and young people in Tower Hamlets achieve the best possible outcomes through effective partnership working. One of its core values is to promote a system of equality and inclusion, supporting the needs of the most vulnerable children and families. It is important that any new school proposer is committed to the aims and ethos of the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership.

The LA will then evaluate the bids from the providers in consultation with the Regional Schools Commissioner and submit its recommendation to the Secretary of State. The decision on the appointment of a provider is taken by the Secretary of State, delegated to the Regional Schools Commissioner, who will then enter into a funding agreement with the appointed provider. Only those academies or free schools they have obtained approved provider status from the DfE are able to bid to operate new schools.

When deciding on the appointment of the school provider the Secretary of State will consider the LA's recommendation on the choice of a proposer. However, in some cases the Secretary of State may consider additional information held by the DfE about:

- the capacity, capability or the academic track record of a proposer;
- the quality and the diversity of the existing local provision; and
- the ability of the proposed sponsor to redress social disadvantage, as well as to improve educational standards in an area.

The Secretary of State reserves the right to agree a sponsor of his own on the basis that he may have further evidence about an academy sponsor that means none of the options put forward by the LA are considered suitable.

If the local authority decides, prior to proposals being submitted, that circumstances have changed such that it is no longer satisfied that there is any need for a new school (for example, where a housing project has been cancelled or where a proposed central route free school will meet the identified need), then the local authority can halt the presumption process and withdraw the specification on these grounds.

### **(b) Free School Applications Approved by Central Government**

Separate from the free school presumption process is the establishment of a new school through the central government's free schools programme. This is where an academy sponsor applies directly to central government to set up a new free school and the application is approved by the Secretary of State. The government will then provide the capital for the land and the construction of the school and will seek to supplement this funding with other contributions. This includes the provision of a site from the Local Authority or contributions from local housing developers.

As stated previously, it is unlikely that central government will approve any new applications for schools to be established in Tower Hamlets. However, there is one academy sponsor that has previously been given approval to open a new school in the Tower Hamlets area. This academy sponsor has indicated its interest in one of the sites allocated for a new secondary school in the borough. Given that the council has identified a need for additional secondary schools and is considering ways to provide them, it is advised to work with both the Regional Schools Commissioner and any academy sponsor that has already been approved to open a new school in Tower Hamlets through the central government route. This ensures that there is a common understanding and co-ordinated approach to the action being taken to meet basic need and improve the quality of school places in the borough.

### **(c) Transferring an existing maintained school to a new site**

Under the statutory provision of 'making prescribed alterations to maintained schools' there is the facility for an LA or governing body of a maintained school to propose the transfer of an existing school to a new site. This is where the main entrance of the proposed new site for a school would be more than two miles from the main entrance of the current school site.

The LA is therefore considering this option for primary schools in areas of the borough where there is a significant surplus of places (Bethnal Green and Wapping catchment areas) to relocate to a new site in the Isle of Dogs catchment area in order to address the increasing demand for additional primary school places in the East of the borough. The aim would be to ensure the continuity of existing high quality provision and for additional places to be provided quickly. This would also limit the potential for a number of permanent school closures.



In practical terms, this would mean a school relocating from its current location in the west to a new location in the east of the borough, serving a new community but retaining its staff and other key resources. The relocation of a school can be timed in such a way that it does not significantly disrupt the education of existing pupils as they move between the Key Stages. There would also be the opportunity for existing pupils to continue at the school in its new location with the LA providing travel assistance within the requirements of its statutory obligations.

The LA will determine the appropriate route for appointing a school provider in consultation with the Regional Schools Commissioner (DfE) It will keep stakeholders and council members informed of its progress through various channels, including the council website, committee reports, and the Members Bulletin.

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## The Local Plan's approach to allocating primary and secondary school sites

The Local Plan for Tower Hamlets allocates nine sites for primary schools and five sites for secondary schools. This is informed by the evidence base which supported the Local Plan i.e. *Site Allocations Methodology* and *Spatial Assessment Needs for Schools*. The plan allocates more school sites than required to meet the projected need for the following reasons:

- a) School sites are generally located on land in private ownership, and are part of a larger scheme which also includes housing, commercial and open space. The delivery and timing of the school is linked to the delivery and timing of the overall scheme, and therefore not within the control of the Local Authority (LA).
- b) Ideally, new primary school sites will deliver a minimum of 2 form of entry (FE) for a primary school and 6 form of entry (FE) for a secondary school. However, site constraints may mean that only a smaller school can be delivered. While smaller schools may not financially be the best model to operate, these may be considered if additional school places are required. There would also be an option to deliver expanded school provision where a site is adjacent or in close proximity to an existing school.
- c) There may not be sufficient demand in the area to support the development of a new school when a site comes forward. For example, if there was a need for one additional school in an area and two sites came forward at the same time, the LA may only take forward one of these sites.
- d) Other issues, such as air quality, may make an allocated site challenging for the delivery of a school when it comes forward for delivery. There are several site allocations with known constraints, however it may be possible that these can be addressed through design and the school's location within the site allocation, but could incur higher costs.
- e) Pupil projections are a useful tool in planning for future needs, but they can be volatile, particularly in the medium to long term (e.g. after 5 years). Projections rely heavily on information about historical trends (e.g. births, migration), which makes them less reliable in times of significant demographic change. Brexit will undoubtedly impact the economy and migration patterns, making this a particularly uncertain time for population projections in Tower Hamlets, and indeed the rest of London and the UK.
- f) Tower Hamlets is relatively small in terms of land area. The borough will continue to experience fast paced changes in terms of its built development, with the highest housing target in the adopted London Plan and the second highest in the emerging London Plan. At the same time, the borough has a number of areas with limited development potential due to design and heritage factors. It is unlikely that sites large enough to accommodate schools, particularly secondary schools, can be identified in future Local Plans.

This approach ensures that the LA is able to effectively plan for school places and meet its statutory duty. The alternative approach would be to allocate the exact number of sites to meet the projected **Page 51** point in time, but this would put the LA at serious risk of not meeting its legal duty to provide sufficient schools if,

for example, sites were not delivered or the projected need increased during the plan period.

## Summary of Funding Streams Available for the Development of New Schools and Improving the Existing Schools Estate

The principal source of capital funding for providing additional school places is the DfE Basic Need capital grant. The funding is allocated each year on a rolling basis, usually three years in advance. It is formula-based and does not reflect post-16 need or specific growth in numbers of pupils with high needs. For 2021/22 the funding allocated by the DfE is £2.4m. It is not yet clear what funding will be allocated, if any, for 2022/23 and beyond.

The capital programme for new school capacity is also supported by use of s106 receipts which have been secured to mitigate the impact of new housing developments. Approximately £10m has been collected for new schools, with approximately a further £10.6m for schools agreed but not yet collected. However, there is no certainty about receiving the full value of the agreed sums as this will depend on the developers' programmes so this presents some difficulties in planning the use of these receipts.

The Council adopted its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule from April 2015, increasing the rates in January 2020. This replaces s106 payments for the mitigation of the impact of new developments on school provision. CIL supports a range of infrastructure provision and is allocated alongside S106 through the Councils Capital Programme. The Council's Annual Infrastructure Statement sets out the Mayor's overall approach for investing CIL. 16% of CIL funding is allocated towards 'community, education and employment' which includes schools. £5m of CIL funding is expected to be available (£8m collected less £3m already allocated to projects). 25% of CIL funding (£12m) is also allocated toward the Local Infrastructure Fund (LIF) which must be spent in the neighbourhood area where it was collected and in consultation with local residents. A proportion of LIF funding could be put towards schools, depending on the location.

In 2017, the Government committed £215 million of capital funding nationally to help local authorities create new SEND school places and improve existing facilities for children and young people with SEN and disabilities. In Tower Hamlets this funding amounts to £6m and was allocated over 3 years(2018-2021).

In addition to these funding streams that are specific to education, the Council also has the option to use its reserves, capital receipts, and/or borrow to ensure that it can deliver on its strategic priorities and statutory duties.


When the funding strategies for new school projects are being developed, these funding sources are considered and the funding allocated through the relevant governance and decision making arrangements. Funding has been allocated to the following new school projects:

Project	Estimated cost
Wood Wharf (2FE primary) – fit out of shell and core provided by developer	£5,200,000. School due to open in September 2022 Works to fit-out the building are programmed to start in June 2021.

Stepney Park Primary (amalgamation)	£1,200,000. Works to adapt Redlands and Smithy Street schools for amalgamation.
St Anne's Catholic Primary (0.5FE expansion for 15 places per year)	£1,300,000. Closure of Guardian Angels and expansion of St Anne's schools for September 2020.
Increase primary provision in Poplar catchment (1FE)	£4,000,000. Proposal to expand a school in the Poplar catchment area to provide an additional 30 places per year.
London Dock (6FE secondary and sixth form) – full development of the school	£52,000,000*. The DfE have agreed to contribute £47m towards the cost of the project. The Mulberry Schools Trust will be the school provider.
Beatrice Tate Special School (48 to 60 expansion of existing school)	£4,051,000. Works being developed for new accommodation to be available in spring 2022.
LEAP (additional places for Key Stage 4)	£2,500,000. Scheme tendered and works due to start in December 2020 and completion summer 2021.
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>£70,251,000*</b>

Further proposals that will require funding:

Oaklands School (expansion by 2FE providing 60 additional places per year)	£16,000,000. Purchase of Raine's Lower site and adaptations to provide additional teaching and other accommodation.
George Green's School (rebuild)	£50,000,000. Rebuild and adaptations to improve accommodation.
Hermitage Primary (1FE expansion providing 15 places per year)	£5,000,000. Works to provide additional accommodation and ASD unit. Proposed new accommodation for September 2022.

<p><b>Cabinet</b></p> <p>25 November 2020</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> James Thomas, Corporate Director Children’s and Culture</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Outcome of the consultation on the proposal for the closure of St Matthias CofE Primary School</b></p>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Children’s and Culture Services</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Terry Bryan, Service Head for Pupil Access and School Sufficiency and Ikwi Mkpuru, School Organisation Manager.
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2020
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	Impact on Wards
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	<b>A better deal for children and young people: aspiration, education and skills</b>

**Executive Summary**

Formal consultation has been carried out on the proposal to close St Matthias CofE Primary School, with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021. The stage one consultation process was carried out during the period 8<sup>th</sup> June to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and a Consultation Report, which describes the findings, is attached as Appendix 1 and has also been published on the Council website. It makes recommendation to move to the publication of a statutory notice in respect of the proposal to close St Matthias CofE Primary School. During that statutory notice period, legal objections can be set by any consultee, which would need to be considered before any final determination is taken.

**Recommendations:**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. The recommendation is to move to the publication of a statutory notice for 28 days, in respect of the proposal to close St Matthias CofE Primary School. This will take effect from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021, with the displaced pupils admitted to other nearby schools, including a nearby Church of England Primary School.
2. To note the Equalities Assessment set out in Section 4 and attached as Appendix 2.

## **1 REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

- 1.1 The recommendation is made in order to determine the Council's response to the proposal for the closure of St Matthias CofE Primary School.
- 1.2 The decision to propose the closure of St Matthias CofE Primary School has reluctantly been taken due to a significant decline in its pupil numbers. Pupil numbers in Tower Hamlets schools are currently falling, particularly in the West of the borough where St Matthias is situated. This means that St Matthias, along with other schools, has not had sufficient children to fill its classes. All year groups are now operating at classes well below their planned capacity of 30.
- 1.3 The fall in pupil numbers has adversely affected this small school's budget, which is now at significant risk. This has required St Matthias to take a number of measures to protect the quality of education, including considering whether it would be necessary to apply to the Local Authority for a licensed deficit. However, it is clear that should a licensed deficit be required, the School would not be able to repay this within the required three-year timeframe, in accordance with the school funding regulations. Where a deficit cannot be repaid it is therefore incumbent upon the School and the Local Authority to consider options for the School's future viability, including school closure.
- 1.4 Having considered the School's position and the limited options available it was necessary for the Governing Body to consult on a proposal for St Matthias to close, whilst ensuring that the displaced children can be accommodated in other nearby schools.
- 1.5 The proposal is for the closure to take effect from the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 and the process is therefore being undertaken in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) Guidance on 'Opening and Closing Maintained Schools'. So far, an initial public consultation has been undertaken, and a report on the outcome of the consultation has been published on the Council and School website.
- 1.6 This Consultation Report, at Appendix 1, includes feedback on the representations received following the first publication of the proposals on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020.



## **2 OPTIONS AVAILABLE**

- 2.1 **Option 1:** to move to the publication of a statutory notice for 28 days, which is the next stage in the statutory consultation process. This will provide further opportunity for consultees to have their say and set legal objections against the proposal.
- 2.2 **Option 2:** not to move to the publication of a statutory notice, but to cease the proposal after stage one of the consultation period, this would mean not concluding the full statutory consultation process in order to take the decision to close the School.
- 2.3 Option 1 is preferred as it takes the proposal to the next stage of the statutory consultation process. It provides all consultees with further opportunity to fully consider the proposal for the School to close, during an additional 28 day period and before the Mayor/Cabinet is required to make a final determination in March of next year.

## **3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 Following the stage one consultation period from the 8<sup>th</sup> June to the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020, it was appropriate to publish a Consultation Report on the findings and after full consideration to take a decision whether to move to stage two of the school organisation process, which is to publish a statutory notice (Appendix 5). A copy of the Consultation Report is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Due to coronavirus it was not possible to hold the preferred method of public and parents' meetings regarding the consultation. However, several alternative methods were offered (in line with the Tower Hamlets consultation processes during coronavirus guidance for schools' consultations) and these methods along with the type of responses are explained in the Consultation Report.
- 3.3 The Consultation Report provides a detailed analysis of the responses and opinions expressed. It is evident that the respondents understood the proposal and its impact and the reason why the closure is being considered. Parents have been responsive and understand the position. They love St Matthias, but recognise that the pupil numbers are just not sufficient for the School's sustainability. The staff and governors at the School have taken on this difficult situation with a high level of professionalism. Whilst they are very sad at the School's possible closure they do understand that, were St Matthias to remain open, the financial challenges would adversely impact the quality of education going forward.
- 3.4 Based on the feedback and whilst acknowledging the reluctant views expressed during the stage one consultation, it is recommended for the Council to move to stage two of the process by issuing a statutory notice, with the support of the School's Governing Body. This will enable a further opportunity to obtain the views of the public and other interested parties before a decision can be reached.

## **4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 When making decisions the Council must act reasonably and rationally. It must consider only the relevant information and consult those affected, taking into account their views, before final decisions are made. It must also comply with its legal duties, including relating to equalities.
- 4.2 The Equality Act 2010 requires the LA, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not (“the Public Sector Equality Duty”).
- 4.3 An Equalities Assessment has been conducted by the LA and is attached at Appendix 2. It will continue to be updated in view of the responses to the statutory notice and its representations. This assessment must be considered in detail when the Cabinet considers the matters above, as part of its decision on whether St Matthias CofE Primary School should close.
- 4.4 Governors and LA officers have considered carefully whether changes may affect groups disproportionately. They will continue to work with Trade Unions to ensure that planning for any staff changes are fair and equitable and in line with agreed policies, including the Council’s School Organisational Change Procedure attached as Appendix 4.
- 4.5 Based on the findings of the Equalities Assessment there are no significant reasons to prevent moving to the stage two of the formal consultation, which is the issuing of the statutory notice. This will provide further opportunity for parents, pupils, staff and the wider community to give their views and raise any objections.
- 4.6 This proposal will require further analysis of the equalities data on staff who are at risk of redundancy, should the proposal to close the School move forward.

## **5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

### (i) Managing the Impact of Proposed Closure on School Staff

- 5.1 The LA, School Governing Body and London Diocesan Board are working together to support the School staff through this change. A formal staff consultation will only take place once the final decision has been made on the School’s closure. If the final decision is for the School to close staff will be supported through further training, coaching and workshops to find redeployment opportunities at other local schools.

### (ii) Best Value Implications

- 5.2 The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that schools are fulfilling their duties and that value for public money is achieved, whilst standards are maintained. They must ensure that they do not fall into financial deficit so that they are unable to sustain an offer of quality education for children. This proposal is

being considered in view of concerns over the School's viability and therefore its ability to sustain high quality education for its children.

5.3 The proposal presents significant mainstream revenue and capital implications for the Council. When a school closes its finances (and any surplus or deficit) is returned to the LA. In the case of this proposal, the Statutory Notice will make clear that the deficit balance will transfer to the Council.

5.4 Closure of St Matthias CofE School will remove the requirement for additional funding from the Dedicated School's Grant, (DSG). This money reduces the pressure on the DSG that is caused by having a number of schools requiring licensed deficits and ensures a more efficient use of resources across the school estate.

(iii) Environmental (including air quality)

5.5 There are no environmental issues arising from this proposal.

(iv) Risk Management

#### 5.6 School Closure Proposal

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Failure to move to statutory notice	H (see revenue implications below)	L	This risk is low as it will be mitigated by ensuring that a full and public statutory consultation is being undertaken, including the earlier 14 week consultation before moving to publication of a statutory notice for 28 days	Director of Children and Culture (Service Head for Pupil Access and School Sufficiency)

5.7 If this recommendation is agreed, continuation of the statutory consultation process will be carefully managed and evaluated in line with statutory guidance, taking account of the further views of stakeholders and thoroughly addressing the findings from the Equalities Assessment.

5.8 It is proposed to close the School for September 2021. This timescale will allow further opportunity to ensure that children, parents and staff are aware of the proposal and its implications and are supported through the change process over the course of the remainder of the current school year.

(v) Safeguarding

- 5.9 The report deals with the Council's approach to managing the supply of school places for the local population. The efficient supply of school places contributes to the safeguarding of children by ensuring their early access to 'good quality' and sustainable education provision.

(vi) Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment

- 5.10 The proposals presented in this report have followed an initial and formal public consultation using a variety of mechanisms. All responses received through these mechanisms or made directly to Council officers or members have been included in the analysis of the feedback received. These responses have only been used to assess the community's view of the proposals and not for any other purpose.
- 5.11 The Council handles information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018 and is the data controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information, the privacy notice for Pupil Services can be accessed [here](#).

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

- 6.1 There would be no direct capital or revenue cost pressure to the council's general fund on the closing of the School. Schools are funded through a national funding formula paid to the Council for distribution to their Schools, much of which is based on individual school pupil numbers. As identified in the body of the report the current pupil numbers in the school mean a balanced budget is no longer viable. The schools receiving the transferred pupils will have an increased budget allocation to reflect their increased numbers and will in turn be better resourced.

## **7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 The process for closure (discontinuance) of a maintained school is set out in Part 4 of the statutory guidance 'Opening and Closing Maintained Schools' (November 2019), in sections 15 and 16 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and in the School Organisation (establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulation 2013.
- 7.2 This report gives information on the outcome of the pre-publication consultation, which is the first stage of the statutory process for closure of a maintained school, and sets out its proposals for the next stage, which is the publication of a statutory proposal for the discontinuance of the school.
- 7.3 When carrying out its functions a local authority must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not. This duty is set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the 'public sector equality duty'). An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out.
- 7.4 The local authority is required under the Local Government Act 1999 to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

7.5 The matters set out in this report comply with the above legislation and guidance.

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

### **Linked Report**

None

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 Stage One Consultation Report on the Responses to the Proposal for the Closure of St Matthias CofE Primary School
- Appendix 2 Equalities Assessment
- Appendix 3 Consultation Document on the Proposal for the closure of St Matthias CofE Primary School
- Appendix 4 Council's HR Organisational Change Procedure
- Appendix 5 Draft Statutory Notice for the closure of St Matthias School

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

None

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

N/A

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### Stage One Consultation Feedback Report St Matthias School

October 20<sup>th</sup> 2020

Report compiled by Dr Helen Jenner, Independent Consultant, Tower Hamlets Primary Review.

#### Introduction

This report summarises the planning undertaken to lead to a public stage one consultation, and the responses to that consultation, on whether or not St Matthias Church of England Primary School Governing Body should support the Local Authority to formally consult on the closure of St Matthias School, through the publication of a Statutory Notice (stage two). An earlier version of the report was sent to governors to support them to reach an informed decision at their meeting on October 8<sup>th</sup> 2020.

#### Background

St Matthias School Governing Body and the London Diocesan Board for Schools (LDBS) were prompted by the Tower Hamlets Primary Review<sup>1</sup> to consider the sustainability of St Matthias C of E Primary School, given its vulnerability to falling rolls. The Governing Body reluctantly reached the conclusion that to close the school and relocate children to other nearby schools would be the best solution to optimising educational provision in the area.

The Tower Hamlets Primary Review commissioned an Independent Consultant, Dr Helen Jenner, to work with schools they had identified as being at risk due to demographic change in the Borough. As well as working with the schools, Dr Jenner was asked to produce a public report “Future Ambitions”<sup>2</sup> setting out principles for developing school relationships for resilience and excellence. This document was shared with the Diocese, all Headteachers, Unions and Governors in March 2019. Regular updates on the Primary Review have been included in the termly Director’s Report for Governors, and discussed by the Primary Review Action Group (PRAG), on which the Diocese and Headteachers are represented.

#### Governors Planning

The governing body have met on several occasions, including directly with the Local Authority, LDBS and with the Lead Member for Children’s Services to consider the future of the school. They also sought the advice of an independent finance consultant, to explore

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<sup>1</sup> Tower Hamlets Primary Review

[https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/education\\_and\\_learning/schools/Primary\\_Review\\_for\\_parents.aspx](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/education_and_learning/schools/Primary_Review_for_parents.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> The Future Ambitions Report is available on the Tower Hamlets Primary Review Website.

options. They have been supported by LDBS, the Independent Consultant and Local Authority staff to review the implications for the school, and to undertake a pre-publication consultation.

Governors and the Headteacher have met, in various groupings, regularly since the Local Authority first identified the school as being “in scope” for review, in July 2018. There have been several changes in Chair of Governors since that time, and three Headteachers. In June 2020 it was agreed that Julian Morant, the Headteacher at Christchurch would be Executive Headteacher at St Matthias, when the Acting Headteacher left to take up a post in another school.

A Governing Body meeting with governors was held on 26<sup>th</sup> May to discuss the Primary Review, the Future Ambitions Report, and the best responses for the school. The governing body agreed arrangements for informal (pre-publication) consultation on the possible closure of the school, to run from 8th June – 30<sup>th</sup> September.

### Summer Term Activities

A consultation document<sup>3</sup> was prepared, and agreed, with the Local Authority and the London Diocesan Board for Schools. This was given in paper copy to all parents, circulated to Tower Hamlets Headteachers, through the Headteacher’s Bulletin; emailed to Trade Unions, and the Secretary of State has been notified of potential changes.

Information about the consultation was also placed on the church website, because the school website was not working in the Summer Term. The link was sent to all parents. The website included a letter to parents and staff from the Chair of Governors, a copy of the consultation document, and 3 short videos explaining the situation.

Because of coronavirus open meetings were not held in the Summer Term, however a range of ways to feed into the consultation were organized:

1. A box was set up in the playground at the entrance to the school, where people could leave comments, response forms and any questions.
2. A response form (or any other written format) at the end of the consultation document to record views was able to be emailed, posted, or handed to the school.
3. A special email address was set up for comments
4. Personal phone calls were offered.
5. The Local Authority consultant was available for 1 to1 socially distanced questions/feedback on July 8<sup>th</sup>
6. Virtual “Zoom” meetings were also set up for staff and parents on July 8th

An update report was provided for the LA, Governors and LDBS on July 22<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>4</sup> It also made recommendations for further consultation activities.

### Autumn Term Activities.

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<sup>3</sup> Available on request to the school

<sup>4</sup> Available on request to the school



Julian Morant took over as Headteacher at the start of the Autumn Term 2020.

In meetings with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors it was agreed that there should be more face to face opportunities for parents to feed into the consultation.

The following opportunities have taken place during September

1. To actively engage the parents on 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> September parents were spoken to at the school gate.

This led to discussions, questions and comments engaging 24 parents on Tuesday and 26 on Thursday. These have been included in the attached Frequently Asked Questions summary.

2. A further opportunity to attend a zoom meeting (14<sup>th</sup> September) was taken up by 4 parents.
3. Staff were offered the opportunity to attend a further zoom meeting, no-one chose to do so
4. A playground briefing meeting for parents was held Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September, at 9.15 am, attended by 14 parents and 4 staff members, and a second briefing was held on September 28<sup>th</sup>, at 2.45 pm, which was attended by 13 parents.

Questions raised in these meetings have been addressed in the attached Frequently Asked Questions summary.

5. The Headteacher has also had regular discussions with staff, and all staff have had a 1-1 meeting, with the Headteacher, to discuss their individual concerns and plans. An optional staff meeting will also be arranged for staff to hear the feedback from the pre-publication consultation.
6. Groups of parents have also visited nearby local schools.
7. SENCOs and Headteachers from the 3 closest schools have had meetings to discuss transition.
8. Parents and staff were reminded that they do have the opportunity to submit written responses.

In addition, a large number of individual queries have been addressed by Pupil Services, the Parent and Family Support Team and the Independent Consultant about admissions processes. These are not detailed in this report because they are not questions pertaining to St Matthias School. They are, however, an indicator of the anxiety that parents are feeling, despite messages of re-assurance and the guarantee of a good local school place in September 2021, if the decision is taken to close the school.

Written Responses Received

5 forms were received, all from parents, in the Summer Term.  
A further 20 were received in the Autumn Term (1 parent submitted 2 forms)  
8 from staff members  
8 from parents  
2 from members of staff who are also parents  
1 Other (not specified)

5 responses accepted, or partially accepted the proposal; 1 was unsure and 18 did not accept the proposal. One parent submitted 2 forms but this has been counted as 1 response.

Of those who said no, they did not accept the proposal, reasons given were:

Children doing well/ Good school 13  
Other schools too far away 4  
Affect on education 7  
Wasn't expected 2  
Too short notice 4  
Upsetting for child 5  
Don't like the idea of partnership 2  
Will SEN needs be met 3  
Accessibility of building 3  
Concern that decision is being taken because "money talks" 1  
Job concerns 2  
Strength of staff team 2

Across responses a number of other specific points were made:

2 said Christchurch partnership is appropriate for location reasons and because its C of E  
3 felt the partnership with Christchurch is quite limited  
3 asked that good support be given if children have to move school  
1 asked for the proposal to be reconsidered  
2 felt the decision had already been taken  
1 suggested that William Davis should be closed rather than St Matthias  
I felt that communication with parents has not been clear enough over last 2 years  
3 were concerned that visits to local schools may have created anxiety, rather than reduced it.

In one to one discussions and meetings with parents strong support for the school has been voiced.

Parents and staff are sad that the school may close, and parents appreciate the quality of education their children have received.

Parents understood that numbers of children attending St Matthias had fallen, and have heard rumours about the future of the school, for many years. Some parents felt that communication has not been transparent, and wondered whether more could have been done in the past, although they do recognise that other schools in Tower Hamlets and across London are facing similar challenges.

Some parents wondered whether it would be possible to close other schools, rather than St Matthias, or to amalgamate schools.

Parents sought clarification on whether they should move their children now. Re-assurance was given that there are sufficient places across the 3 closest schools (William Davis, St Anne's and Christchurch) for all the children and that the Local Authority recommends that children stay at St Matthias as a decision has not yet been made. If the decision is taken to close the school children will be fully supported with a transition programme, in the Summer Term, so that they are well prepared for new schools.

Overall there is a strong commitment to the school, and sadness that it may close, however, there is also an understanding that this may happen and a desire to ensure children have the best possible year at St Matthias, and are well supported to transition to new schools, if that is required.

### Feedback to stakeholders

It is recommended that this Consultation Summary and the Frequently Asked Questions document (attached) be posted on the school website and be emailed to parents, staff and other stakeholders.

Parents and staff would like to be regularly updated on next steps.

### Governing Body next steps

St Matthias governing body met on September 28<sup>th</sup> to consider the feedback so far, and to raise any points they wish to include. In the consultation. In this meeting they considered the key messages from parents and staff, and the range of opportunities that have been given for feedback. They were re-assured that sufficient feedback opportunities had been given and felt that the level of response was acceptable, but this was partly because many parents were resigned to the idea, and because of the impact of coronavirus. They recognised that rumours over some time may have impacted on parents' views. They also reflected on the work they had put into considering various options over time, to make sure there was no sustainable alternative plan for the school's future.

At their quorate governing body meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> October they considered an earlier draft of this report and whether they are recommending that the Local Authority move to publish statutory notices. They unanimously concluded that they *'reluctantly agree to the LA statutory notice of closure' of St Matthias.* *"They were clear that whilst they are not in favour of closing the school, they understand that it is no longer viable and there is no alternative.*

This report will be shared with governors, the LDBS and the Local Authority.

It is recommended that it is also available for staff and parents and St Matthias to read.

A decision will be made regarding whether to the progress to statutory notices (stage two consultation) at the Council Cabinet meeting in November 2020. Parents, staff and the LDBS should be kept up to date as matters progress.

If a statutory notice is published the decisions regarding the closure of the school would be made at the Council Cabinet meeting on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021. The statutory notice would recommend a closure date of 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

## **St Matthias Frequently Asked Questions**

### **20<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

The questions below reflect the range of issues raised by parents, staff and other stakeholders over the period of pre-publication consultation regarding a proposal to close St Matthias School from August 31<sup>st</sup> 2021.

The consultation was open from June 8<sup>th</sup> – September 30<sup>th</sup> 3 pm.

#### 1. Why is the proposal to close St Matthias being made?

There are too few children in the West of Tower Hamlets to fill local schools. The numbers of families choosing St Matthias has fallen so that there are now not enough children to fund the school so that it can continue to provide the quality of education and care that we have all come to experience and expect. There are other Church of England Schools close to the school so that parental choice to receive a faith education can still be met. There are also sufficient places in nearby schools for all the children to transition in Summer 2021 to schools that have higher numbers and can offer a wider range of activities and resources.

St Matthias School is not large enough to accommodate children from another school, if another school were to close.

#### 2. When will the decision be taken?

Deciding to close a school is taken very seriously, and the decision has to be made by the Council following a statutory consultation process.

The final decision will not be taken until March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021.

The school cannot close before August 31<sup>st</sup> 2021. It will only close then if the Council Cabinet reaches a decision to do so after it has considered all the feedback from stakeholders.

#### 3. What arrangements will be made for our children to move schools?

If the decision is taken to close the school parents will be supported to name the schools they would prefer their children move to in the Summer Term 2021. There will be plans in place to help children transition to their new schools. The Pupil Services Team will work with parents to help them with this process, if the decision is taken to close the school.

#### 4. Can I move my child to another school now?

Parents have the right to move their children to other schools at the end of every term. If you are considering this you need to talk to the Pupil Services Team at Mulberry Place. The Local Authority recommends allowing your children to finish this year at St Matthias, so that they can be part of a well planned transition to their new schools, and can celebrate the education they have enjoyed at St Matthias.

5. Which schools can my children go to if the school closes?

The Pupil Services Team know which schools have vacancies and in which year groups. There are sufficient spaces for all the children currently attending in St Matthias across the 3 nearest schools – Christchurch, William Davis and St Anne’s.

6. What happens if there are no spaces at the school I want my child to go to?

Just like applying for Primary or Secondary School you are able to name more than 1 school. The admissions criteria will be applied. If your child does not get a place at one of your preferred schools Pupil Services will talk to you about your options.

7. Can I visit schools to see which I like?

Yes. Open days were arranged at the 3 nearest schools. It is a good idea to go along to see what the school is like. We suggest that you go to these rather than listen to other people’s opinions.

The dates for these were:

William Davis Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September

St Anne’s Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September

Christ Church Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September

There will be further opportunities for visits later in the school year. These visits were planned to be early so that parents could see the quality of the places available and would hopefully be re-assured that there is no need to panic. A good local school place is available for every child.

These visits have been set up so that you can see there is no need to worry about moving your child now – the schools are good schools and there will be sufficient places across the schools for you to make a choice if the decision is taken to close St Matthias.

8. Will St Matthias children get priority?

Children can only move into schools where there are vacancies, but Pupil Services are prioritising their support for children from schools that may be closing. They will help make sure that siblings are able to stay together.

9. Do I have to go to one of the nearest schools?

No. Parents can apply to any school where there are vacancies. If the decision is taken to close the school the Pupil Services Team will meet with parents to support them to name school preferences in the Summer Term. If parents wish to find out about options before then they will need to contact Pupil Services, themselves.

10. Do you have to be Church of England to go to Christchurch, or Catholic to go to St Anne's?

No. Both St Anne's and Christchurch have large numbers of children from a range of faith backgrounds. Applications are welcome at all 3 nearby schools whatever your faith/background.

11. Will there be particular support for children with Special Educational Needs?

Yes. If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan there will be an annual review meeting during the year where you can discuss with the SENCO where would be the best school to meet your child's needs, if there is a decision to close St Matthias. For each child with a plan a specific transition plan will be put in place, if needed.

12. What will happen to staff?

There will be an HR process to support staff during the closure period. Tower Hamlets and the London Diocesan Board work hard to reduce compulsory redundancy so will talk with staff, and their unions, about voluntary redundancy and redeployment opportunities.

13. When will staff know whether they have jobs from Sept 2021?

The decision on whether to close the school or not will not be taken until March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021. The School Reorganisation Process will be put in place so that all staff will have confirmation about their future from May 31<sup>st</sup> 2021, at the latest.

14. Is the population data robust?

The data used to predict future needs comes from the Greater London Authority, but is also informed by local knowledge. We know that there have been too few children to fill school in the West of Tower Hamlets for more than 5 years, and that the birth rate in the area is not expected to go up. St Matthias has not been full in all year groups for several years, and has less than 20 children in lots of classes. Although this can seem lovely, it means the school would not be able to run individual year groups because it does not have enough children to pay for the staff needed.

The reasons for population change are complex but they include – reduction in birth rate, the impact of housing benefit caps, increasing housing costs so that families cannot afford local rents and mortgages, Brexit meaning families are not able to move to the UK easily and most recently, some families wishing to return home because they would rather be close to family during coronavirus.

It is difficult to predict exactly what the future will bring but there have always been too many spare places in the Bethnal Green area.

15. Have all funding avenues been explored?

The funding rates for schools are set by national government. They include a set amount for each school, an amount for each pupil and some additional grants to support need. The rate of the grant means that unless there are about 25 children in a class schools struggle to have enough money to provide everything they should. The Local Authority no longer has its own funding to support schools, and is not allowed to do so for more than 3 years. Governors have looked carefully at finances and brought in external help to see if there are other alternatives. The sad fact is there are not enough children in the local school for St Matthias costs to be met.

#### 16. Is Home Schooling an option?

Parents are able to choose to home school their children if they wish. Once children return to school fully you must put in a formal notification that this is your intention and should expect that, at some point, you will receive a visit to make sure the quality and range of provision is meeting your children's needs. The school will no longer have capacity to support you with this because their role is to teach the children attending school. More information can be found at:

[https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/education\\_and\\_learning/parental\\_support/home\\_schooling/home\\_schooling.aspx](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/education_and_learning/parental_support/home_schooling/home_schooling.aspx)

Most children love going to school and if you are considering this option we would advise you to research the implications very thoroughly.

#### 17. Will there be further meetings for parents?

Yes. The Parent and Family Support Team will support the school to arrange meetings (within coronavirus restrictions) to keep parents updated, and there will be regular updates in the school newsletter.

#### 18. Will there be further meetings for staff?

Staff will be kept informed through staff meetings. The independent consultant will attend at least one of these each term so that staff are kept updated and have the opportunity to ask questions if they wish.





# Equality Impact Analysis: (EIA)

## Section 1: Introduction

Name of Proposal

*For the purpose of this document, 'proposal' refers to a policy, function, strategy or project)*

Service area & Directorate responsible

Name of completing officer

Approved by Director/Head of Service

Date of approval

### **Conclusion - To be completed at the end of the Equality Impact Assessment process**

This summary will provide an update on the findings of the EIA and what the outcome is. *For example, based on the findings of the EIA, the proposal was rejected as the impact on a particular group was disproportionate and the appropriate mitigations in place. Or, based on the EIA, the proposal was amended and alternative steps taken)*

Based on the findings of this EIA, there are no significant issues to prevent moving to the next stage of formal consultation, which is to proceed to the issuing of the statutory notice. This will provide further opportunity for parents, pupils, staff and wider community to give their views and raise any objections.

This proposal will require further analysis of the equalities data on staff who are at risk of redundancy, should the proposal to close the School move forward.

**The Equality Act 2010 places a 'General Duty' on all public bodies to have 'due regard' to:**

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advancing equality of opportunity between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them
- Fostering good relations between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them



**Where a proposal is being taken to a Committee, please append the completed equality analysis to the cover report.**

This Equality Impact Assessment provides evidence for meeting the Council's commitment to equality and the responsibilities outlined above, for more information about the Council's commitment to equality; please visit the Council's website.

## **Section 2 – General information about the proposal**

*Provide a description of the proposal including the relevance of proposal to the general equality duties and protected characteristic pursuant to Equality Act 2010.*

This Equality Impact Assessment concerns the proposal to close St. Matthias Church of England Primary School at the end of the 2020/21 academic year. The Local Authority has identified sufficient vacancies at other local schools within close proximity to St. Matthias, and within a reasonable distance of all current pupils who will require to transfer to a different primary school if St Matthias closes. Across the west of Tower Hamlets there are also vacancies in many other schools, giving families a reasonable degree of choice. The neighbouring schools are in a stronger financial position. St. Matthias is currently rated “Good” by the regulatory body, OFSTED, but there is a risk that the quality of education and the continued access for pupils and their families to extended services and facilities might begin to fall at St. Matthias, despite the best efforts made by the previous and current Headteacher, staff and governors.

Tower Hamlets has a great tradition of excellent education; it values the important role that schools have in increasing the life chances of its children. However, the borough is now in a position where there is the need for longer term planning to maintain the success and future sustainability of its schools. The LA's strategic approach in ensuring the sufficiency and quality of its primary school provision on a locality basis, across the borough, is therefore designed to provide Tower Hamlets with an appropriate mix and number of high performing, financially sustainable schools.

Demand for school places is driven by population growth and housing development. Although population growth in Tower Hamlets is amongst the fastest in the country, it has not translated into the expected increased demand for primary school places across the borough. Falling birth rates, changing resident demographics and young families migrating out of the borough have resulted in a significant surplus of primary school places in some areas of the borough. As of January 2019, there was a 6.5% surplus in primary school places (1656 were unfilled). This is over the recommended 5% surplus that urban local authorities are recommended to operate with. The 5% surplus is designed to allow local authorities to meet their statutory duty to provide sufficient school places, yet still enable parents to have some choice of schools.

The impact of falling rolls in certain areas of the borough, reductions in education funding and schools in financial deficit, present a number of challenges. The significant pupil population changes are affecting schools across the Borough and have resulted in additional pressures for schools in the West. These pressures are not only a reflection of a reduction in their pupil numbers, but also a combination of cash flat Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations over several years and the national school funding formula changes affecting Tower Hamlets and other London Boroughs. The national funding formula changes came into effect back in 2018-19, but it is evident that the impact in Tower Hamlets will really begin to be felt by schools from this point onwards, as minimum funding guarantees reduce and end.

It has therefore been necessary to consider making changes that will ensure we have the right provision in the right place at the right time going forward. Provision that can be well resourced and is of high quality will enable schools to continue to thrive and offer the opportunities that children deserve: a strong curriculum with excellent teaching, enriching activities and a joyful experience at primary school.



As of September 2020, there were 630 reception places available and 121 unfilled places in the Bethnal Green catchment area, where St. Matthias is located. This equates to four FTE classes. St. Matthias has 16 of these vacancies, equating to 0.5 FTE. Projections indicate this will continue to rise. The review aims to safeguard the high-quality provision that exists within our schools and is being developed in collaboration with school leaders and other key stakeholders.

The work is being planned and supported through the LA’s work with the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership (THEP), which plays a key role in enabling schools to meet the challenge of ensuring that all children and young people in Tower Hamlets achieve the best possible outcomes and can flourish if schools are working in effective partnerships. Ultimately, the guiding principle for this work is that whatever is done should be in children’s interests, looking at a range of achievable options that will enable proper opportunity to decide how best to deliver a high quality and sustainable provision. Access to good quality school places is essential to raising achievement and addressing poverty and inequality in the long term.

The reorganisation of school provision and the development of new schools in certain areas of the borough should have a positive impact on all groups by improving accessibility, increasing parental choice and promoting inclusive education.

An Independent Consultant has also been commissioned by LBTH to work with schools, such as St. Matthias, which were identified as being at risk due to demographic change in the Borough. As well as working with schools, Dr Jenner was asked to produce a public report “Future Ambitions”<sup>1</sup> setting out principles for developing school relationships for resilience and excellence. This document was shared with all Headteachers, Unions and Governors in March 2019. Regular updates on the Primary Review have been included in the termly Director’s Report for Governors.

### **Section 3 – Evidence (Consideration of Data and Information)**

*What evidence do we have which may help us think about the impacts or likely impacts on service users or staff?*

St. Matthias is a small school so, as pupil numbers have fallen (Chart 1), the budget has been greatly impacted. For example, in the academic year 2019/20, Reception, Yr1, Yr2 and Yr. 4 had below 20 children (Chart 2). The numbers have decreased again for this academic year (Chart 3), with only one year group containing more than 20 children, Yr. 6.

The two largest classes in the academic year 19/20 (Year 5 and 6) will have left St Matthias by September 2021, which will further reduce the budget. This will mean that the school would have to significantly reduce staffing and resources in order to remain within their budget. This may then have an impact on the quality of education they are able to provide. If the school fell into deficit, the Local Authority are not allowed to continue to fund schools that are not financially viable, especially when you consider the further impact of the changes to the National Funding Formula.

**Chart 1: Reception Applications 2017-2020 by preference (LBTH School Admissions)**

Schools	PAN	Total 20/21	Total 19/20	Total 18/19	Total 17/18
Christchurch CofE School	30	44	49	53	36
Columbia Primary School	60	104	108	150	124

<sup>1</sup> The Future Ambitions Report is available on the Tower Hamlets Primary Review Website.



Elizabeth Selby Infants School	60	73	67	85	82
Hague Primary School	30	58	59	64	60
Kobi Nazrul Primary School	30	58	54	65	63
Mowlem Primary School	30	53	49	48	43
Osmani Primary School	60	99	93	98	96
St Anne's Catholic Primary School (now St Anne's and Guardian Angels)	60	38	57	57	49
St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School	60	63	54	66	73
St John's CofE Primary School	30	23	27	41	56
<b>St Matthias CofE Primary School</b>	30	24	15	30	33
Stewart Headlam Primary School	30*	39	44	58	65
Thomas Buxton Primary School	60	91	99	95	95
Virginia Primary School	30	51	65	78	78
William Davis Primary School	30	36	32	40	53
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>872</b>	<b>1028</b>	<b>1006</b>

**Chart 2: St Matthias Year Groups (Spring Census 2020)**

School	Year Groups								Total
	N1	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	
St Matthias	20	14	17	15	20	14	26	22	176

**Chart 3: St Matthias Year Groups (September 2020)**

School	Year Groups								Total
	N1	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	
St Matthias	0	11	12	16	9	19	13	26	106

### Implications for children

The children will be able to stay at St. Matthias until the end of the Summer Term 2021, when the current Yr. 6 will then transition to secondary school. Families will be supported to move to neighbouring schools during the Summer Term, if the decision to close is agreed. There are enough vacancies available at neighbouring schools to accommodate all children attending St Matthias (Chart 4). This includes other Church of England schools, and a Catholic school, so that parental choice to receive a faith education can still be met.

The Local Authority has recommended that the group of schools that children transition to is small, to reduce travel distances, but also to support children to transition with other children that they know. However, families who wish to consider other schools closer to their homes will also be supported to do so.

Parents will be able to apply to those schools, and places will be allocated using the Tower Hamlets Arranged Admissions criteria in the Summer Term 2021. Priority will be given to pupils who will be applying owing to a school closure.



#### Chart 4: Vacancies at neighbouring schools per year group (Sept 2020 LBTH data)

Please note: Yr. 6 is not included in this graph as the 6 pupils in Yr. 6 at the time of this data will have transitioned onto secondary school in Sept 2021. Therefore, the children in this age group are unaffected by this proposal.

School	PAN	Reception	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Christ Church	30	4	0	9	6	9	6
St. Anne's & Guardian Angels	90	37	25	25	23	24	13
William Davis	30	10	15	10	7	9	9
<b>Vacancies</b>		<b>51</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>28</b>

A full programme to support children through this difficult period will be put in place, with the aim of helping them to recognise that moving school presents new opportunities as well as acknowledging how they have benefitted from their education at St. Matthias.

Open days at nearby schools have already been held so that parents were able to visit now that schools have reopened:

William Davis: 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September

St Anne’s and Guardian Angels: Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September

Christ Church: 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September

There will be further opportunities for visits later in the school year. These visits were planned to be at the start of the academic year so that parents could see the quality of the places available and feel reassured that a quality local school place is available for every child.

Parents will also be given the opportunity to apply for their children to move to other schools before August 2021 through the in-year admissions process, although the Local Authority would recommend allowing children to finish the academic year at St Matthias, so that they can be part of a well-planned transition to their new schools.

#### Consultation

The governing body of St Matthias School was prompted by the Tower Hamlets Primary Review<sup>2</sup> to consider the sustainability of St Matthias C of E Primary School, given its vulnerability to falling rolls which in turn has financial implications. It reached the conclusion that to close the school and relocate children to other nearby schools may be the best solution to optimise educational provision in the area.

Governors and the Headteacher have met regularly in various groupings since July 2018, when the school was first identified as being “in scope” for review. During this time, there have been several changes in Chair of Governors, and three Headteachers. In June 2020 it was agreed that Julian Morant, the Headteacher at Christchurch would be Executive Headteacher at St Matthias, when the Acting Headteacher left to take up a post in another school.

<sup>2</sup> Tower Hamlets Primary Review

[https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgn/education\\_and\\_learning/schools/Primary\\_Review\\_for\\_parents.aspx](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgn/education_and_learning/schools/Primary_Review_for_parents.aspx)



The governing body has also met on several occasions, including directly with the Local Authority, to consider the future of the school. They have been supported by the Independent Consultant and Local Authority staff to review the implications for the school.

A Governing Body meeting was held on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to discuss the Primary Review, the Future Ambitions Report, and the best responses for the school. The governing body agreed arrangements for an informal (pre-publication) consultation on the possible closure of the school, to run from 8<sup>th</sup> June – 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2020.

### Summer Term Activities

A consultation document was prepared and agreed with the Local Authority. This was given in paper copy to all parents, circulated to headteachers in Tower Hamlets through the Headteacher's Bulletin; emailed to staffing unions, and the Secretary of State was notified of potential changes.

Information about the consultation was also placed on the website <http://st-matthews.org.uk/st-matthias-consultation>. This included a letter to parents and staff from the Chair of Governors, a copy of the consultation document, and 3 short videos explaining the situation.

Due to the limitations imposed on public gatherings by COVID-19, it was not possible to hold face to face meetings for larger groups at the school or elsewhere. In order to ensure that pupils, parents, staff and the wider community were able to engage with and respond to consultation a range of opportunities were organised as follows:

- A response form (or any other written format) at the end of the consultation document to record views to be emailed, posted, or handed to the school.
- A special email address was set up for comments
- A box was set up in the playground at the entrance to the school, where people could leave comments, response forms and any questions.
- The independent consultant was available for 1 to1 socially distanced questions/feedback on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.
- Virtual meetings were also set up on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (one at 9 am, one at 6pm) with the independent consultant to hear about reasons for the proposal.
- Parents were given the opportunity to feed into virtual meetings with the Parental Engagement Team on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> July
- Staff were given the opportunity to attend socially distanced or virtual meetings to discuss the proposal with Helen Jenner.
- Everyone was offered the opportunity to request a socially distanced face to face meeting, or a personal phone call.

An update report was provided for the LA, Governors and LDBS on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020 which made recommendations for further consultation activities.

### Autumn Term Activities

Julian Morant took over as Headteacher at the start of the Autumn Term 2020.

In meetings with the Chair of Governors it was agreed that more face to face opportunities should be available for parents to actively engage with the process. Therefore,

- On 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020, parents were spoken to at the school gate.
- There was a further opportunity to attend a virtual meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> September for parents
- A playground briefing meeting for parents was held on 18<sup>th</sup> September



In addition,

- The Headteacher has also had regular discussions with staff, and all staff have had a 1-1 meeting with the Headteacher to discuss their individual concerns and plans.
- Groups of parents have also visited nearby local schools.
- SENCOs and Headteachers from the 3 closest schools have had meetings to discuss transition.

#### Governing Body next steps

St Matthias governing body then met on September 28<sup>th</sup> 2020 to review feedback. At their governing body meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 they considered the report on the informal consultation which was provided by the independent consultant and used it to make a response to the council, on whether or not to recommend proceeding with the school merger proposal. A report summarizing the feedback on the consultation will be available for staff and parents during the first half of the Autumn Term 2020.

#### **Other Evidence**

Financial position of St. Matthias

Ofsted reports

Pupil projections

School census data of St. Matthias and neighbouring schools

Demographic data held on current staff and pupils at St. Matthias and neighbouring schools

Equality Act 2010

Minutes of meetings where the future of St. Matthias has been discussed

Consultation Document

Consultation Feedback Report

School Policies (Equalities, SEND and Inclusion)

School Admissions Code

**Name of officer completing the EIA:**

**Service area:**

**EIA signed off by:**

**Date signed off:**



## Section 4 – Assessing the impacts on residents and service delivery

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Considering the above information and evidence, describe the impact this proposal will have on the following groups?																												
Age (All age groups)			X	<p>A change to schools during any phase of education can be viewed as possibly disruptive. However, year 6 children who left in Summer 2020 will not be impacted, nor will the current year 5 who will also have transitioned to secondary school if this proposal is implemented in September 2021. There are currently 106 pupils at St Matthias School, the lowest number of pupils in any Church of England school in the borough. This is also the lowest number of pupils in any school in the Bethnal Green catchment area.</p> <p>In addition, the change is proposed to take place between academic years and therefore allow a new start at an appropriate time in each pupil's yearly academic progression, minimising disruption.</p> <p>Children moving from reception to year 1 may be particularly vulnerable, as may those moving from year 1 to year 2, the year in which children take their SATs. However, the numbers at St Matthias for these year groups will be relatively low at 23 pupils. In addition, the educational outcomes for these children should not be adversely impacted by the move to a new school and could be improved. This is because the Ofsted standard is either 'good' or 'outstanding' for all primary schools.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th></th> <th colspan="3">Progress Score</th> <th>LA Average 72%</th> <th>LA Average 14%</th> </tr> <tr> <th>School</th> <th>Ofsted Grade</th> <th>Reading</th> <th>Writing</th> <th>Maths</th> <th>Pupils meeting expected standard in reading, writing and maths</th> <th>Pupils achieving at a higher standard in reading, writing and maths</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>St Matthias</td> <td>Good</td> <td>Average</td> <td>Average</td> <td>Average</td> <td>59%</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Christ Church</td> <td>Good</td> <td>Well above average</td> <td>Well above average</td> <td>Well above average</td> <td>84%</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Progress Score			LA Average 72%	LA Average 14%	School	Ofsted Grade	Reading	Writing	Maths	Pupils meeting expected standard in reading, writing and maths	Pupils achieving at a higher standard in reading, writing and maths	St Matthias	Good	Average	Average	Average	59%	4%	Christ Church	Good	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average	84%	4%
		Progress Score			LA Average 72%	LA Average 14%																										
School	Ofsted Grade	Reading	Writing	Maths	Pupils meeting expected standard in reading, writing and maths	Pupils achieving at a higher standard in reading, writing and maths																										
St Matthias	Good	Average	Average	Average	59%	4%																										
Christ Church	Good	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average	84%	4%																										





St Anne's and Guardian Angels	Good	Average	Above average	Average	74%	18%
William Davis	Good	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average	66%	17%

The St. Matthias financial position is such that it is recognised that, were it remain open, a reduced budget would require a reduction in staff and resources. This would eventually adversely affect the quality of education that the school has been able to provide, thereby impacting on children of all ages. Currently, staff have had to teach mixed age classes, which is not ideal as the National Curriculum is designed to be taught in single age classes. Fewer staff could also mean the loss of a range of expertise which would begin to affect the learning experience of pupils.

In response to parents expressing concerns during the informal consultation period about the impact on their children should St Matthias close, staff and governors are committed to a final year together to celebrate the contribution St. Matthias CofE School has made to education and the local community, whatever decision is reached in March 2021.

**Staff**

There will also be an impact on staff at the school, who could be made redundant under the proposal. The spread of staff across the age bands is fairly even, with those under 30 and above 60 less affected than those aged 30-59. Staff in their 40s will be more affected than other age groups.

	% Staff in each age group				
School	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s
St. Matthias	4	8	10	5	5

Further interrogation of the data needs to be done in order to assess what job roles are currently allocated at St. Matthias to each age range. This will help to determine whether staff in those age ranges will be disproportionately affected or not. Appropriate support and training will be provided to staff to ensure that they are able identify and access job opportunities. Support will be provided to the school's senior leaders and governing body to ensure that they are to fulfil their role effectively supporting staff



				throughout the process.
<b>Disability</b> (Physical, learning difficulties, mental health and medical conditions)			X	<p>At St. Matthias, of the children who will not have transitioned to secondary school at the proposed time of the school closing, less than 5 have an EHCP and 20 receive SEND support. As a percentage of the current school population, 23% of children with additional needs would suggest this cohort may be impacted more than others.</p> <p>However, the current financial situation of St. Matthias, and the anticipated need to reduce staff and resources in order not to fall into deficit, could impact this cohort the most if the school were to stay open.</p> <p>Neighbouring schools that have been identified in this EqIA as having capacity to accommodate pupils from St. Matthias are robust in their provision for children with SEND. For example, St Anne's (before it was amalgamated with Guardian Angels) was inspected in January 2020, and Ofsted identified, <i>"Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. Staff understand pupils' needs and their individual barriers to learning. They provide pupils with effective personalised support. This ensures that pupils with SEND learn successfully alongside their peers. Ofsted stated in November 2019 at William Davis, "Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn alongside their peers in all subjects. They receive the help they need to learn in smaller, more manageable steps".</i></p> <p>For children with an Education, Health and Care Plan there will be an annual review meeting during the academic year 2020/21 where they will be able to discuss with the SENCO where would be the best school to meet their child's needs, if the decision to close St Matthias is taken. For each of these children, a specific transition plan will be put in place to ensure any move is seamless and the new provision has the appropriate support and resources in place. St. Matthias staff, through the informal consultation period, expressed their commitment to supporting these children. These pupils will be given priority consideration for their preferred choice of school.</p> <p><b><u>Staff</u></b></p> <p>No staff are identified as having a disability, although several refused to say. It would be prudent to ask staff again, in order to ensure that any who may need additional support, or are more vulnerable when looking for new jobs, are able to access appropriate help and advice and are not disadvantaged by the process.</p>
			X	The gender breakdown for pupils at St. Matthias is split fairly evenly – 47% are female and 53% are male.



<b>Sex</b>				<p>This does not represent a disproportionate impact. Indeed, as stated above, if St. Matthias were to remain open, there is the real risk that the financial difficulties would start to adversely affect the quality of education that the school has been able to provide, thereby impacting on children of all sexes.</p> <p><b>Staff</b></p> <p>The staff gender breakdown is weighted heavily towards women at St Matthias, with 90% identifying as female. This is the case across most primary school provision in the borough and elsewhere. As teaching roles are not gender specific, this should not have a disproportionate impact on future employment for female staff.</p>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>			X	<p>No impact - We do not have any data available on this protected characteristic for pupils or staff.</p>
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>			X	<p>No impact - We do not have any data available on this protected characteristic for pupils or staff.</p>
<b>Religion or philosophical belief</b>			X	<p>Data on religious beliefs is not collected for staff or pupils. However, as St. Matthias is a Church of England school, the closure of a faith school can impact on this protected characteristic.</p> <p>The Local Authority has a responsibility to ensure that there are the right number of school places to meet local need, and that parents' choice of community or faith schools is maintained. They work with the London Diocesan Board in order to maintain a proportion of CofE places (this has been around 8% for the last 10 years) across the Borough, so that parents are able to choose a place at a nearby CofE school, if they wish. Demand for faith school places in the Bethnal Green catchment area, as evidenced in Chart 1, has been decreasing over the last few years. Therefore, the proportion of places available needs to be reduced to reflect this.</p> <p>There are 3 other faith schools in Bethnal Green. Two are close neighbours of St. Matthias: Christ Church is CofE, St. Anne's and Guardian Angels is Roman Catholic. St. John's is a mile away and is CofE. There are also other faith schools across the borough that would be accessible to families who wish to consider other options. Children who applied for CofE school places for the academic year 20/21 could be accommodated in two CofE schools. This would maintain the balance of children attending CofE schools,</p>



whilst also significantly reducing the number of vacant places, as well as the premises and leadership costs. The result should strengthen the remaining faith provision by increasing numbers and therefore ensure it is sustainable for the future.

Both St Anne's and Guardian Angels and Christ Church have pupils from a range of faith backgrounds. William Davis is non-denominational. This allows parents with children at St. Matthias to have the choice whether to continue to send their children to a faith school or not. Children of all faiths are welcome at all three schools.

**Race**

X

The main ethnicity of children at St. Matthias, which corresponds to the main ethnicity in LBTH (as per the Schools Spring 2020 census) is Bangladeshi. Therefore, this group will be impacted the most but is it not a disproportionate impact; more will be impacted owing to more children of that ethnicity attending.

Ethnicity	%
Any Other Asian Background	1
Any Other Ethnic Group	1
Any Other Mixed Background	3
Any Other White Background	7
Bangladeshi	56
Black - Any Other Black African Background	9
Black Caribbean	1
Indian	1
Information Not Yet Obtained	1
Pakistani	3
White - British	10
White and Asian	3
White and Black African	1
White and Black Caribbean	1

The neighbouring schools that parents are likely to apply to, owing to travel distance and vacancies, have a similar demographic make-up as St. Matthias, bar one: St. Anne's and Guardian Angels. As this school is Roman Catholic, predictably there are more White children attending of British, Irish or Other backgrounds.

The local authority does advise that multi-cultural schools are likely to be beneficial to fostering good relations between individuals in different ethnic and/or racial groups, as children will have the opportunity to make friends with children from different races at a formative stage of their personal development. However, there is also an awareness that some parents appreciate the option to choose a school where their child has representation on an ethnic level. Therefore, there is the possibility of this owing to vacancies in St. Anne's and Guardian Angels.

**Staff**

The breakdown of staff at St. Matthias evidences that no one ethnic group of will be disproportionately impacted, although White British and Bangladeshi will be impacted most as more staff of those ethnicities are employed. The job profiles of these staff, however, indicate that Bangladeshi staff may be further impacted. This is because they are generally working in non-teaching roles, of which there are fewer opportunities to transition into across the borough. Therefore, although support and guidance will be given to all displaced staff to seek further employment if they so desire, there may be the need to ensure additional support into employment or other opportunities is provided for Bangladeshi staff.

Ethnicity of staff	%
Any Other Ethnic Group	10
Bangladeshi	31
Black Caribbean	7
Indian	3
Information Not Yet Obtained	14
White - British	24
White - Irish	7
White and Black Caribbean	3

**Sexual orientation**

X

No impact - We do not have any data available on this protected characteristic for pupils or staff.

X

No impact - We do not have any data available on this protected characteristic for pupils or staff.

<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>				
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**Other**

<b>Socio-economic</b>				<p>The percentage of children receiving FSM does vary across the neighbouring schools, with St. Matthias being one of the highest. However, as vacancies at neighbouring schools are not dependent on a parent’s financial status, we do not anticipate this will have a negative impact on children. Indeed, the speed and agility at which schools in LBTH moved to support parents with food vouchers and food parcels during the closure of schools owing to COVID 19 suggests that any children with FSM eligibility will be well supported at school in LBTH.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>School</th> <th>% Students on FSM</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>St. Matthias</td> <td>52.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Christ Church</td> <td>41.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>St. Anne’s and Guardian Angels</td> <td>46.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>William Davis</td> <td>58.7</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The Council may wish to consider whether uniform grants will be provided for parents to purchase a new school uniform if this is required. The uniform grant could resemble the current school clothing grant that is provided for children when they transfer from primary to secondary school.</p>	School	% Students on FSM	St. Matthias	52.6	Christ Church	41.8	St. Anne’s and Guardian Angels	46.7	William Davis	58.7
School	% Students on FSM													
St. Matthias	52.6													
Christ Church	41.8													
St. Anne’s and Guardian Angels	46.7													
William Davis	58.7													

<b>Parents/Carers</b>				<p>During the informal consultation period, parents raised several questions. Although they understood the reasons for the proposal, they would prefer St. Matthias not to close. Parents highlighted the quality of the staff and how happy their children were at the school. They requested information about moving to other schools and how the admissions process would work. Pupil Services and the Parent and Family Support Service should be available, as they are currently, to support parents through this process.</p> <p>It is our experience that as soon as consultation starts, parents and staff begin to consider their future and some move on. Waiting for numbers to increase or staggering the closure would not result in a positive</p>
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				<p>experience for the remaining staff or children. Parents did consider the Christ Church partnership to be beneficial, especially as it is also a Church of England school.</p> <p>Parents and carers should continue to be heavily involved in the consultation process and beyond, should the proposal progress. We are cognizant that this change, after an already stressful few months of lockdown, can be difficult and support should be offered to support parents throughout this process, should the proposal progress.</p>
<p>People with different <b>Gender Identities</b> e.g. Gender fluid, Non-Binary etc</p>				<p>No impact - we do not have any data available on gender identity for pupils or staff.</p>
<p><b>AOB</b></p>				

Recommendation	Key activity	Progress milestones including target dates for either completion or progress	Officer responsible	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further analysis of workforce data needs to occur</li> <li>Bring Annual Reviews for pupils with SEND at St Matthias forward</li> <li>Provide support for parents/carers</li> <li>Review October census data for St Matthias and neighbouring schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request current workforce data from St Matthias</li> <li>Assess whether any additional resources or support would be needed if the child was to transition to a new school</li> <li>Parent and Family Support Service to offer targeted support</li> <li>IPP to provide submission</li> </ul>	<p>By end of statutory consultation period, if the proposal progresses to that stage</p> <p>By end of statutory consultation period, if the proposal progresses to that stage</p> <p>Ongoing throughout academic year</p> <p>By end of statutory consultation period, if the proposal progresses to that stage</p>	<p>HR</p> <p>J'OS</p> <p>JM</p> <p>VB</p>	<p>Data requested</p>





## **Section 6 – Monitoring**

Have monitoring processes been put in place to check the delivery of the above action plan and impact on equality groups?





Yes?

No?

Describe how this will be undertaken:

**Appendix A**

**Equality Impact Assessment Decision Rating**

<b>Decision</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Risk</b>
<p>As a result of performing the EIA, it is evident that a disproportionately negative impact (direct, indirect, unintentional or otherwise) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a Protected Characteristic under the Equality Act. It is recommended that this proposal be suspended until further work is undertaken.</p>	<p><b>Suspend – Further Work Required</b></p>	<p><b>Red</b></p> 
<p>As a result of performing the EIA, it is evident that there is a risk that a disproportionately negative impact (direct, indirect, unintentional or otherwise) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is a genuine determining reason that could legitimise or justify the use of this policy.</p>	<p><b>Further (specialist) advice should be taken</b></p>	<p><b>Red Amber</b></p> 
<p>As a result of performing the EIA, it is evident that there is a risk that a disproportionately negatively impact (as described above) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, this risk may be removed or reduced by implementing the actions detailed within the <i>Action Planning</i> section of this document.</p>	<p><b>Proceed pending agreement of mitigating action</b></p>	<p><b>Amber</b></p> 
<p>As a result of performing the EIA, the proposal does not appear to have any disproportionate impact on people who share a protected characteristic and no further actions are recommended at this stage.</p>	<p><b>Proceed with implementation</b></p>	<p><b>Green:</b></p> 

## **Stage One Consultation on the proposal to close St Matthias School**

### **The Proposal**

Following advice from Tower Hamlets Local Authority, and with the support of the London Diocesan Board for Schools, the governors of St Matthias School, wish to consult on a proposal to close St Matthias School, in partnership with Christ Church School, from September 2021.

### **Why are we proposing this change?**

St. Matthias Church of England Primary School is a voluntary aided mainstream school for children aged 3 to 11 and is part of the educational provision of the London Diocesan Board for Schools (LDBS) and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH). The school is located at Bacon Street, London E2 6DY

St. Matthias' Governing Board, in consultation with Tower Hamlets Council and the London Diocesan Board for Schools have agreed to commence the statutory process for proposed closure of the school in August 2021.

In line with the Department for Education's (DFE) guidance *Opening and Closing Maintained Schools* (2018), the council will support us with a pre-publication consultation. The Council may proceed to a formal consultation. After the formal consultation, a decision will be made by the Council with regards to closure.

Pupil numbers in Tower Hamlets schools are currently falling, particularly in the West of the borough where our school is situated. This means that St Matthias School has not had sufficient numbers to fill our classes and only Year 5 and 6 have year groups above 20. St Matthias School is a one form entry primary school with a capacity of 210 statutory age places.

As our pupil numbers fell, this affected our budget and has placed St Matthias at financial risk, this has necessitated the governing body taking difficult decisions to ensure a balanced budget and sustain educational quality. There is no capacity to request financial support from the Local Authority because they are not allowed to continue to fund schools that are not financially viable. The lower numbers each year place continual strain on the budget, and further cuts would be needed next year, and the year after. We think that it would be very sad to see St Matthias move into a decline in quality of provision or reach the stage where the Local Authority has to withdraw funding because we cannot fill our classes.

Our school already works closely with neighbouring schools, and there are sufficient vacancies within 0.5 mile from St Matthias to accommodate all the children currently attending St Matthias.

To support St Matthias through this difficult period a Partnership has been agreed between Christ Church and St Matthias School.

## **What would happen to our Headteacher?**

As parents from St Matthias will know, Keeley Warren has decided to move to a new role at the end of the 2019/2020 school year after doing a sterling role as Acting Headteacher for St Matthias, since September 2019. Julian Morant, the current Head Teacher at Christ Church is an experienced Headteacher and has agreed on the role of Executive Headteacher across the two schools, from September 2020, for a year, in the first instance.

Both St Matthias and Christ Church Schools will maintain separate governing bodies until, at least, August 31st 2021.

## **Why close St Matthias?**

It is important to stress that the proposed closure is not a judgement on the quality of education at St Matthias. It is the sad fact that there are fewer children in Bethnal Green and several one form entry schools, that are not full, are facing low numbers and financial difficulties.

Unfortunately, St Matthias School is facing financial challenge and is not able to afford to staff the school to ensure single year groups or the curriculum range and pupil support that is expected from schools. St Matthias has had mixed age classes in KS2 for two years now, although our amazing staff have managed this extremely well the National Curriculum is now organized on a year group basis, which is far harder to deliver in mixed age classes.

Neighbouring schools have capacity for all of the St Matthias children to be accommodated within schools that are in a stronger financial position. Sustaining the quality of education offered by our current wonderful staff team, and the continued access for pupils and their families to extended services and facilities will be increasingly difficult as budgets fall at St Matthias.

Between now and Summer 2021 there will be 20 fewer children in our school as the larger classes in Year 5 and 6 leave, and much smaller classes join us. This means the school budget will fall by at least £91,962.40 (at least 20 pupils fewer, each bringing £4598.12 a year to the school budget). This will mean significant further staff and resources reductions in future.

## **What will it mean for the children?**

Families will be supported to move to neighbouring schools. The Local Authority recommends that the group of schools is small, to reduce distances, but also to support children to transition with other children that they know.

A full programme to support children through this difficult period will be put in place, with the aim of helping them to recognise that moving school presents new opportunities as well as celebrating how they have benefitted from their education at St Matthias. This will include open days at the nearby schools so that parents are able to visit once schools have returned after the Coronavirus epidemic.

Christ Church School governors have agreed to work in partnership to support St

Matthias School. If a decision is taken, in March 2021, to close St Matthias from the end of the Summer Term 2021, as many children as possible will be accommodated at Christ Church School, although there will not be space for all children to transfer.

The three closest schools, William Davis, St Anne's and Christ Church all have excellent reputations and the care and importance given to each individual child, is a strength of both all three schools.

Their most recent OFSTED reports can be found at

Christ Church : <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/100944>

St Anne's : <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/100950>

William Davis : <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/100943>

Parents who wish to are able to apply for places in any Tower Hamlets School. The second closest Church of England School to St Matthias, is St John's, Bethnal Green.

### **What will it mean for the staff?**

Staff at St Matthias School will be supported to find redeployment opportunities at other local schools, they may also have the opportunity to consider voluntary redundancy. Wherever possible Tower Hamlets tries to avoid compulsory redundancy. If the proposal does go ahead staff, and their unions, will be involved in a School Re-organisation staffing process consultation, and will receive support to help them through this transition, such as additional training.

### **What will happen to the school building?**

At this stage of the proposal there are no specific plans for the building. These will be considered if the proposal progresses to statutory notice later this year.

### **Procedure to achieve the closure**

It is proposed that there will be no further admissions to St Matthias School from September 2021.

All responses to this consultation will be put together in a report to governors and the Local Authority. The Local Authority will then decide, at its November 2020 meeting, whether to move to statutory notice - a formal publication of a document explaining the closure and its impact. Stakeholders are then able to make representations to the Local Authority before a final decision is reached early in March 2021.

If the proposal goes ahead and the Local Authority Cabinet does decide to close the school all the children at St Matthias will transition to new schools by September 2021, when St Matthias will formally close.

## **Admissions**

Children will continue to be able to go to St Matthias School until July 2021. During the Summer Term 2021 the Local Authority Admissions Team will work with the school to allocate places using a parental preference system, including offering as many places as possible at Christ Church, which is the nearest Church of England School with vacancies. Places will be allocated applying the existing Primary Admission criteria.

If parents are interested in moving their children to a different school before July 2021, they can apply using the Tower Hamlets In-Year Admissions process.

[https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/education\\_and\\_learning/schools/school\\_admissions/in-year\\_admissions.aspx](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/education_and_learning/schools/school_admissions/in-year_admissions.aspx)

Children should not move school, other than at the end of the school term.

## **Why are we consulting you?**

We want to consult you to gather your views because you are part of the school community. The governing body of the schools, the London Diocesan Board and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets cannot simply decide to make changes to schools without first seeking the views of parents and others. There is a legal process which must be followed before changes can be made, and it is important that the Governing Body, the Diocese and the Council hear your views before deciding whether to proceed.

We have organised the following opportunities for staff, parents and carers to share their views.

1. You can use the response form (or any other written format) at the end of this document to record your views. It can be posted to the schools, or emailed to

[consult@st-matthias.towerhamlets.sch.uk](mailto:consult@st-matthias.towerhamlets.sch.uk)

2. There will be a box in the playground and EYFS at St Matthias School where you can leave your comments, response forms and any questions.

3. The Tower Hamlets Parental Engagement Team will set up virtual “Time to Talk” meetings towards the end of June for parents.

4. The Local Authority consultant, who is supporting the schools with the consultation process will be available for 1 to1 socially distanced questions/feedback on Wednesday 8th July from 10.15 - 2.30. You can contact St Matthias School to book a 15-minute slot.

5. Virtual meetings will be set up on July 8th:

Staff 4pm

Parents 9am and 6pm

To join them please contact the school and provide your email address so that you can be invited.

6. If you would like someone to phone you so you can discuss your views please let the school office know and provide your phone number and some times that would suit you.

7. School staff will create age appropriate ways of consulting with our children on their views as part of their on-line teaching.

At the start of the Autumn Term governors will review the feedback received so far, and any changes in social distancing rules, so that they can decide on any further activities to take place in September. The consultation will close on September 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **What happens next?**

The stage one consultation period starts on 8th June and ends on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 – the last page of this document can be used for you to feedback your view to governors and the Diocese and Local Authority. It should be returned to the school office. Following the consultation process, the Governors' Steering Group will review your feedback and use it to make a response to the council, on whether to recommend proceeding with the school closure proposal.

The Governing Body and LDBS will consider your feedback in their representations following the publication of the formal statutory notice, if the Council decide to move to this stage, at their Cabinet meeting in November 2020.

If the Council decides to proceed, a public notice (the statutory notice) will specify details of the final proposal and there will be a period of at least four weeks when representations can be made. This will be the final opportunity to make any comments on the proposal. It is then anticipated that a final decision on whether to merge the schools will be made by the council on March 3rd 2020.

### **How can I get more information on the proposal?**

The LA will publish the feedback from this pre-publication consultation on the council's website during October 2020.

If permission is granted to publish a public notice, further details of this proposal will also be available in the Consultation sections of the Council's website

This document is also available on the school website

<https://www.stmatthiasschool.org.uk/Welcome.html>

Some short videos will be added to the website in the next few weeks, which you may find helpful for explaining the consultation, and the admissions process that will take place in the Summer Term 2021 if the Council do reach a decision to close the school.

If you have any questions at all please do either send them to the email address, or put them in the consultation box, or join one of the virtual meetings that are being set up. Please do complete the response form attached and return it to the school. The consultation will run until September 30<sup>th</sup> 2020, but we would like to receive

responses before then so that we can answer as many queries and concerns as possible before the summer holidays.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our proposal, we look forward to hearing your views. We appreciate that this is a difficult time for parents, and want to hear from you, how we might be able to reduce the stress and ensure our families are able to celebrate their time at St Matthias, and be supported to move to new schools, if that is necessary, from September 2021.

St Matthias Chair of Governors



## Proposal to close St Matthias School – Response Form

Our proposal is to close St Matthias School, from August 31st, 2021, to build a strong partnership, with Christ Church C of E School, and to support all St Matthias children to relocate to other schools.

We welcome your views on this proposal. Please fill in this response form and return it to the address below no later than September 2020, 3.30pm.

- 1) Do you accept the need for the proposal to close St Matthias School, and relocate children to nearby schools?

Please tick as applicable

Yes		No	
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- 2) If you like the proposal to partner with Christ Church School, please say why you think it is a good idea?

- 3) If you dislike either proposal, please tell us why you are concerned?

- 4) Any other comments, suggestions for how we can support staff, children and families or questions? Please feel free to use the other side of this paper for your comments.

- 5) Please indicate which of these bests describes your link to St Matthias School

Parent		Staff Member		Governor		Other – please specify
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(Children's views will be ascertained through age appropriate methods)

Your Name (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to St Matthias School by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Feedback from question one will be summarised numerically. Comments will be typed-up and anonymised. This information will be made available to the public (via the school website), but all respondents' comments and information will be anonymised.

If you would like the opportunity to have a telephone conversation about your concerns, please add your phone number and dates and times that would suit you to this form. You will then be contacted by someone from the Local Authority consultation support teams.

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**Schools Organisational Change Procedure**  
**Children Schools and Families Directorate**

**1. General Scope of the Procedure**

- 1.1 This procedure should be applied whenever there is a proposal to make reductions in permanent teaching/support staff and fixed term staff with more than one years service who are employed in schools under the control of Governing Bodies (even though the right to receive a redundancy payment is not acquired until after 2 years continuous service).
- 1.2 This is an agreed procedure, which also applies in the case of voluntary redundancies for the above staff.
- 1.3 Schools should note that this procedure cannot be implemented until approval for any potential redundancies has been given by the Local Authority (LA) School Restructuring Panel. Please refer to School Reorganisations - Governance Arrangements, attached to this procedure.

**2. Aims of the Procedure**

- 2.1 School requirements for staff are liable to vary from time to time. It is therefore essential that the best use is made of the resources available to schools in order to meet the needs of the pupils.
- 2.2 This procedure is intended:
  - To take account of the school's statutory duty to provide for the educational needs of all pupils in line with the National Curriculum;
  - To minimise the impact of situations involving re-organisations and or staff reductions;
  - To ensure that organisational change takes place as effectively as possible and avoids unnecessary disruption;
  - To ensure staff reductions are reached fairly and in accordance with employment law and statutory entitlements; and
  - To ensure that consultation with staff and the trade unions is commenced at the earliest possible opportunity.

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**3. Equal Opportunities Considerations**

- 3.1 There are equalities implications involved when any employment procedure is applied. Application of the Organisational Change Procedure has particular implications for the multi-cultured workforce employed by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 3.2 Headteachers should ensure that they assess the situation across the group of employees likely to be affected before they embark upon any action relating to staff reductions.
- 3.3 In order to establish whether any single person or group of employees is being treated less favourably than others under this procedure it is important that all action taken is monitored. If details are not already available, employees may be asked to provide information (e.g. about their ethnic origin) to enable the Local Authority to review the impact of this procedure.

**4. The Procedure (prior to consultation)**

- 4.1 The Headteacher completes the school development plan and budgetary information with proposals to reduce staffing costs and submits this to the school's governing body.
- 4.2 If the proposals are approved in principle, the governing body will agree a:
- Organisational Change Panel (usually consisting of the headteacher and one governor)
  - Appeals Panel (consisting of 3 governors – excluding the governor that was on the Organisational Change Panel)
- 4.3 At this point, the lead member of the Schools' Organisational Change Panel is required to submit the outline business case [template OBC/FBC], with indicative financial implications in terms of savings and cost of severance, to the School Restructuring Panel (SRP) for initial discussion, challenge and consideration by the Panel, supported by their School Improvement Officer and HR Provider. A decision in principle by the Panel must be received before consultation with staff and trade unions can commence. Wherever possible, the Headteacher should informally tell the trade unions of the proposed restructure, before any written documentation is sent. This will avoid surprise and potentially could avoid industrial relations issues. The earlier that you can consult with trade unions the better as this could avoid the need for serious consideration of redundancies.
- 4.4 The LA will consider business cases for reorganisations when the school has to reduce or reorganise its staffing establishment:
- for budgetary reasons; or

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- to respond to organisational or curricular changes.
- 4.5 It is the current practice of the LA to seek the agreement of the school to cover the full costs of the “enhanced” severance element of the redundancy payment.
- 4.6 If the costs are less than the salary savings generated by the reorganisation, the expectation would be that the school meets those costs in year (bearing in mind that this is a on-off cost and the school would be in a position to obtain full advantage of the savings in the following year).
- 4.7 If the above is not the case, the LA will introduce a facility to allow schools to obtain a free loan from the LA to pay for the one-off costs over a maximum of a three year period (in line with the deficit recovery plan arrangements). This would usually be the case when the reorganisation is taking place for budgetary reasons.
- 4.8 Costs arising from the “statutory” element will be funded from a centrally managed budget as long as the school has obtained the approval of the SRP, and has acted reasonably and has followed the School’s redundancy policy.
- 4.9 Termination costs in respect of closing or merging school will continue to be met centrally. In addition, the LA will maintain a discretion in respect of meeting the costs of any termination required as a consequence of LA intervention for schools causing concern.
- 4.10 Reorganisations are not a substitute for performance management and when the Panel considers that the reorganisation has been proposed for that reason, the LA will seek to recover the full costs it has incurred in relation to any statutory redundancy and/or severance payments.
- 4.11 In conjunction with the new governance arrangements, the LA will implement closer monitoring of redundancies against advertised vacancies. Where a school makes redundancies and the LA judges that subsequently the post has been filled within 24 months, the LA will seek to recover the full cost of the redundancy from the schools’ delegated budget.

**5. The Procedure (the consultation)**

- 5.1 The Organisational Change Panel will be responsible for consulting with staff and trade unions on methods for making reductions, and for selecting posts for redundancy following full consultation. In the event of a disagreement between members of the Organisational Change Panel the Headteacher will have the casting vote.
- 5.2 Provided that a decision in principle has been given by the SRP (as per paragraph 4.3), the School’s Organisational Change Panel will consult with staff and trade

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unions on methods for avoiding compulsory redundancies (template letter 1), e.g. voluntary redundancy/early retirement, bumped redundancies, natural wastage, alternative internal redeployment, reductions in hours, agency staff. Where staff are redeployed into a post and the salary is lower they shall be entitled to salary protection in accordance with the school teachers pay and conditions document and for support staff any salary protection will be for 2 years.

- 5.3 This consultation will initially be in the form of a written document to the trade unions and relevant staff and will include the following information:
- The reason for the proposal
  - The number and description of employees at risk
  - The total numbers at the establishment (current and proposed structure)
  - Steps that will be taken as a means of trying to avoid compulsory redundancies, such as voluntary redundancies
  - The proposed method for selecting for compulsory redundancies, in the event that this is necessary
  - Confirmation of the procedure that will be used to make the proposed redundancies
  - The proposed method of calculating any redundancy payments.
- 5.4 This written document should be sent to the trade unions and relevant staff as soon as is reasonably practical and where possible at least 3 months before the first dismissal is envisaged to take place. Voluntary redundancies may still take place prior to this providing all parties agree.
- 5.5 Invitations may be sought at this point for volunteers for redundancy. The Organisational Change Panel will take into account curriculum requirements when deciding whether to accept an application for voluntary redundancy.
- 5.6 Where sufficient staffing reductions cannot be met through the above methods, the Organisational Change Panel will be responsible for identifying the numbers and types of posts for compulsory redundancy.
- 5.7 The Panel will continue to consult with staff and trade unions regarding the proposals and on the proposed selection criteria for making compulsory redundancies.
- 5.8 The Organisational Change Panel will then apply the agreed selection criteria and identify specific posts for redundancy. At this point, they will write to those staff whose posts have been identified and offer to meet with them in order that they may make individual representations (template letter 2).

**Schools Organisational Change Procedure**  
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- 5.9 Following this meeting the Panel, if applicable will write to the relevant individuals confirming their decision to make a determination to dismiss on the grounds of redundancy (or in cases of non-teaching staff, to dismiss on the grounds of redundancy) and advise them of their right to appeal (template letter 3).
- 5.10 At this point, the Schools' Organisational Panel must submit the Final Business Case (template OBC/FBC) to the SRP for final approval for the funding of the redundancy costs.
- 5.11 At this point suitable alternative employment will be sought for those individuals selected for redundancy. Where this search for alternative employment is unsuccessful, the determination to dismiss will proceed. The search for redeployment will be co-ordinated by the LA Schools HR Team.

## **6. Appeals**

- 6.1 Upon receipt of appeals, the Appeals Panel will meet with the appellant and their representative to consider the grounds for appeal.
- 6.2 A representative from the LA Schools HR Team will attend this meeting to advise on procedural matters and matters of precedent.
- 6.3 The Appeals Panel will write to the individual concerned informing them of their decision, which will be final.
- NB. Where no appeal is made, or where the individual's appeal is unsuccessful, Community Schools must inform the Corporate Director (Children, Schools and Families) in writing of the determination to dismiss on grounds of redundancy, in order that a dismissal may be made.

## **7. Suggested Report Format to the SRP**

### **7.1 Executive Summary**

This should include the reasons for the proposal, i.e. is the proposal due to financial constraints or restructuring. Also include action taken to mitigate redundancies

### **7.2 Restructuring Proposals**

This section should give details of number and the posts that will be at risk. The current and proposed structures should also be included as appendices.

### **7.3 Financial Implications**

**Schools Organisational Change Procedure**  
**Children Schools and Families Directorate**

The financial situation should be outlined in this section, including the savings made, if any, as a consequence of the proposed reorganisation, indicative costs of redundancy and budgetary information included as appendices.

7.4 Outline Timetable

Relevant dates should be shown in table format – see Indicative timetable at Section 8

7.5 Any Additional Notes

Any information that you feel may be useful for the SRP can be included in this section of the report

7.6 Appendices

- The Current Structure
- The Proposed Structure
- The Proposed Job Descriptions
- The Draft Job Matching List

**8. Indicative Timetable**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>INDICATIVE TIMESCALE</b>
Notify LA of intention to reorganise by submission of Outline Business Case (OBC)	Week 1
Schools Reorganisation Panel - Consideration of OBC	Week 1
Submission of Revised OBC (if required)	Week 4
Panel makes decision in principle to support the consultation	Week 5
Commencement of Consultation  Meeting with staff (& Human Resources) Meeting with TU (& Human Resources) (Consultation papers to be issued at this meeting if it hasn't already been issued)	Week 5/6



**Schools Organisational Change Procedure**  
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<b>ACTION</b>	<b>INDICATIVE TIMESCALE</b>
Surgeries one to one meetings with staff	Weeks 7/8
Meeting midway through consultation period	
Meeting with staff (& Human Resources) Meeting with TU (& Human Resources)	Week 9
Consultation period ends	Week 10
Responses to consultation process and final structure determined	Week 11
Applications for staff who have volunteered for redundancy or early retirement to be considered against selection criteria and staff notified of the decision	Week 11
Job Descriptions to be determined and verified (if any)	Week 11
Apply Selection Criteria	Week 12
Appeals to be heard by OC Panel and OC Appeals Panel	Week 13/14
Submission of Final Business Case (FBC)	Week 15
Schools Reorganisation Panel - Approval of funding	Week16

**9. Templates**

- 9.1 Letter 1                      Appendix A
- 9.2 Letter 2                      Appendix B
- 9.3 Letter 3                      Appendix C
- 9.4 OBC/FBC                      Appendix D

**Schools Organisational Change Procedure**  
**Children Schools and Families Directorate**

**10. LA Governance Arrangements**

- 10.1 On 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011, the School Forum agreed new governance arrangements for the approval of school reorganisations and associated funding, effective immediately. Please see attached Appendix E for those arrangements and scheduled meeting dates for the LA School Reorganisation Panel.

## Consultation information:

# Statutory Notice on the Proposal for the Closure of St Matthias Church of England Primary School

XX Month XXXX



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## Introduction

Notice is given in accordance with section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 that Tower Hamlets Local Authority intends to discontinue St Matthias CofE Primary School with effect from 31 August 2021.

## Contact Details

### **Name and address of Local Authority publishing the proposal:**

Tower Hamlets Council, Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG

### **Name, address and category of school proposed to be closed:**

St Matthias Church of England Primary School, Bacon St, Shoreditch, London E2 6DY

## Implementation

### **Date on which it is proposed to close the school:**

31<sup>st</sup> August 2021

### **It is proposed to implement the closure as follows:**

Following the closure of St Matthias Primary School it is proposed for the remaining pupils on roll at that time to transfer to other primary schools in the local area. The Local Authority has identified sufficient vacancies at local 'good' or 'outstanding' primary schools within 0.2 miles from St Matthias, and including places at nearby Christchurch, Church of England Primary School in Brick Lane, E1 (0.9 mile).

There are also vacancies at other schools in the areas to the west of borough, providing St Matthias families with a range of options to secure a suitable school for their child. The Local Authority will endeavour to meet parental preferences for school places, where possible.

The Local Authority is already undertaking preliminary work with St Matthias, Christchurch and other schools in the area on the necessary transition planning for children and families, should the Council decide for the School to close on the date proposed.

## Reason for Closure

The Local Authority, in partnership with the governing body of St Matthias has reluctantly determined that School should now close due to a substantial decline in its pupil numbers over an extended period and the associated impact on its educational and financial viability.

Pupil numbers in Tower Hamlets schools are currently falling in the West of the borough where St Matthias School is situated. This means that St Matthias, along

with other schools, has not had enough pupil numbers to fill its classes. The School is now well below its capacity in all of its year groups and this is causing increasing difficulty in maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum with enhanced extra-curricular activities.

The fall in pupil numbers has adversely affected this the school's budget, which is now at significant risk. This has required St Matthias to take a number of measures to protect the quality of education, including considering whether it would be necessary to apply to the Local Authority for a licensed deficit. However, it is clear that should a licensed deficit be required the School would not be able to repay this within the required three-year timeframe, in accordance with the school funding regulations. The Local Authority is not allowed to continue to fund schools that are not financially viable and, after considering the alternative options available, it was determined that it would be necessary to propose for St Matthias School to close.

## **Pupil Numbers and Admissions**

The numbers for whom provision is currently made at the school:

St Matthias Church of England School is a co-educational mainstream Primary School for pupils aged three to eleven. The School has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 30 for each year group, giving a total of 240 places (including nursery places). As at September 2020, the school had 106 pupils on roll.

## **Displaced Pupils**

From Wednesday 1st September 2021, the pupils remaining on roll at St Matthias School will have the offer of places at other local schools. There will also be opportunity for parents to secure places at schools within the surrounding areas, including the nearby Christchurch Church of England School.

Current projections for school places indicate that there are enough places for future cohorts following the closure of St Matthias. The Local Authority will continue to monitor the projected need for future school places and propose changes, if required, to ensure sufficient places are available.

## **Impact on the Community**

St Matthias does not currently provide additional services or use of its facilities for the wider community and there are a number of alternative facilities available for hire at other nearby locations. There will therefore be no loss of any enrichment clubs or programmes for local families in the community.

## Rural Primary Schools

Not applicable

## Balance of Denominational Provision

The local authority is under an obligation to consider the impact on the balance of denominational provision in the area before it determines the outcome of school closure proposals. St Matthias is a CofE school. Were St Matthias to close, then CofE primary school options would continue to be available in Tower Hamlets at nearby Christchurch and St John's schools. There are also other faith school places accessible in neighbouring catchment areas.

As there are other CofE schools as well as other faith schools locally and surrounding areas, the proposed closure will have minimal impact on the balance of denominational school provision in Tower Hamlets.

## Nursery Provision

Children currently attending the nursery provision at St Matthias School will be able to continue to do so until end of the current school year (July 2021). They will then be able to transfer to the nursery provisions at other local schools in the area or to the reception year at these schools, if they have reached school age.

## Sixth Form Provision

Not applicable

## Special Educational Needs Provision

St Matthias School does not provide educational provision recognised by the Local Authority as being reserved for children with special educational needs. There are xx pupils on roll (September 2020) who have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN support) and xx pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

## Travel

The approximate distances for home to school travel for pupils from Nursery to Year 6 currently attending St Matthias ranges from 0.09 to 3.5 miles.

There are enough places at other nearby schools to ensure that the maximum distance any child would travel to school would be no more than 3.5 miles from their home address, unless the families decide to secure places at alternative schools with vacancies further away.

It is anticipated that pupils will walk or use other sustainable modes of travel to alternative schools in the local area and therefore any impact on road traffic would be minimal. There is also sufficient local transport provision to cover the routes from home to school of current pupils.

## Finances

When a school closes its finances (any surplus or deficit) is returned to the Council. St Matthias' deficit balance will transfer to the Council on the School's last business day, Tuesday 31st August 2021.

## Procedure for Making Representations (objections and comments)

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by:

**Email:** [school.organisation@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@towerhamlets.gov.uk)


**Post:** School Organisation and Place Planning Manager  
Pupil Services and School Sufficiency  
Tower Hamlets Children's Services  
Town Hall  
Mulberry Place  
5 Clove Crescent  
E14 5BG

**Closing date for responses is 5pm Monday 4 January 2021**

We will not be able to consider any responses received after this date. All responses received during the representation period will be published on the Council's website in late January 2021. The website address is:

<https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Home.aspx>



<p><b>Cabinet</b></p> <p>25 November 2020</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> James Thomas, Corporate Director, Children and Culture</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Report on the Outcome of the Preliminary Stakeholder Consultation (pre-statutory notice) on the Proposal to close The Cherry Trees Special School</b></p>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Children’s and Culture Services</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Terry Bryan, Service Head for Pupil Access and School Sufficiency and Ikwi Mkparu, School Organisation Manager.
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> September 2020
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	Impact on Wards
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	<b>A better deal for children and young people: aspiration, education and skills</b>

**Executive Summary**

Formal consultation has been carried out on the proposal to close The Cherry Trees Special School, with effect from 31st August 2021. The consultation process was carried out during the period 14<sup>th</sup> September to 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and a Consultation Report, which describes the findings, is attached as Appendix 1. The Report has been published on the Council website and it makes recommendation to move to the publication of a statutory notice in respect of the proposal. During the statutory notice period, legal objections can be set by any consultee, which would need to be considered before any final determination on school closure is taken.

**Recommendations:**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Move to the publication of a statutory notice for 28 days, in respect of the proposal to close Cherry Trees School. This will take effect from 31st August 2021, with the displaced pupils admitted to other specialist provision appropriate to their needs.
2. Note the Equalities Assessment set out in Section 4 and attached as Appendix 2.

**1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 The Local Authority is seeking the cabinet’s approval to issue a statutory notice proposing the closure of The Cherry Trees Special School. This follows a review of the Local Authority Special Educational Needs Strategy,

recommending moving to a different model of provision that better supports academic attainment and the inclusion of children in mainstream provision, whenever possible.

- 1.2 The statutory notice will therefore seek further views on the proposal to close Cherry Trees, placing the current students in alternate and more suitable provision.
- 1.3 The proposal is for the closure to take effect from the 31st August 2021 and the process is therefore being undertaken in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) Guidance on 'Opening and Closing Maintained Schools'. So far, an initial public consultation has been undertaken, and a report on the outcome of the consultation has been published on the Council and School website.
- 1.4 This Consultation Report, at Appendix 1, includes feedback on the representations received following the first publication of the proposals on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

## **2 OPTIONS AVAILABLE**

- 2.1 **Option 1:** to move to the publication of a statutory notice for 28 days, which is the next stage in the statutory consultation process. This will provide further opportunity for consultees to have their say and set legal objections against the proposal.
- 2.2 **Option 2:** not to move to the publication of a statutory notice, but to cease the proposal after the formal consultation period, this would mean not concluding the full statutory consultation process in order to take the decision to close the School.
- 2.3 Option 1 is preferred as it takes the proposal to the next stage in the full statutory consultation process. It allows all consultees to fully consider the proposal for the School to close during an additional 28 day period and before the Mayor/cabinet is required to make a final determination in March of next year.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Cherry Trees Special School, in Campbell Road, Bow, E3, is one of six special schools in Tower Hamlets. It is a local authority maintained school which provides places for up to 26 primary school age boys (currently 10 on roll) with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties.
- 3.2 Cherry Trees has been operational since 1997 and was mostly successful over a long period. However, in recent years, the School has encountered a number of challenges, culminating in an 'inadequate' Ofsted Inspection of an education setting that is deemed no longer effective or fit for purpose.
- 3.3 The School faces various challenges, and although following the Ofsted Inspection the Local Authority has been proactively working with Cherry Trees to intervene and improve, it is now necessary to consider the option of issuing a statutory notice on a proposal for the School to close.
- 3.4 The main reasons why the School is no longer deemed effective or fit for

purpose are as follows:

- a) The school has been through a turbulent period, with interim staff being put in place by the LA to improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership in the short term;
- b) The progress and attainment of pupils does not meet the Local Authority's standards or expectations;
- c) The School does not prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education;
- d) In recent years, no pupils have been able to transition back into a mainstream school setting;
- e) The setting is no longer meeting the needs of the pupils' Education Health and Care Plans;
- f) The School site and its accommodation was not designed to meet the needs of pupils with SEMH (i.e. it was not purpose built to meet the educational needs of the cohort)
- g) The School has now become very small and is not financially viable without significant transitional protection from the Local Authority. In the current financial year, its core school budget of £734k includes £200k of subsidy. This subsidy is not sustainable and is not an effective use of resources.

3.5 The Local Authority has recently commissioned a comprehensive review of its SEMH provision and sufficiency, as part of its overarching SEND Strategy. The anticipated benefits from this review are:

- Increased SEND capacity to meet children's needs locally;
- Improved and developed inclusive practice for vulnerable learners with SEMH, which better supports their independence and re-integration;
- Better support for schools to develop provision to meet the needs of pupils with SEMH and other complex needs and also those presenting with challenging behaviour;
- Developing existing alternative provision to enable pupils to stay in their locality, reducing the distance pupils would travel to receive additional support;
- Enhanced data modelling and intuitive performance intelligence to support decision making and forecasting;
- Improved parental satisfaction of Education, Health and Care Plans;
- Improved outcomes, including attainment, for young people presenting with challenging behaviour and those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.

3.6 The Tower Hamlets SEND Strategy outlines alternative provisions which would be better for children and would cost less, allowing SEND resources to be used efficiently with more effective results.

3.7 If the option to close is determined, the current pupils at The Cherry Trees School can be better accommodated at alternative specialist provisions

(using a combination of other local authority schools and out-borough settings). The Local Authority is already working with parents and providers to ensure the most suitable settings to best meet the individual needs of the pupils, in accordance with their Education, Health and Care Plans. Placing the pupils at other schools would allow for the closure of Cherry Trees whilst the Local Authority develops its future more inclusive provision. The proposal to close the School at the end of the current school year (August 2021) will allow sufficient time for the necessary school consultation and transition planning.

- 3.8 The development of the Local Authority SEND Strategy and the recommendations from the SEMH review will inform future provision and sufficiency of places for all special educational needs, social, emotional and mental health needs, of children (including pupils at Cherry Trees). This work is already creating opportunities to provide more purposeful and better quality co-educational facilities in the borough, through the soon to be established SEMH Resource Base within Ben Jonson Primary School in alliance with Bowden House Secondary SEMH school is the first of a number of long term solutions and will be in place in the borough from as early as September 2021. This new specialist facility will provide more inclusive provision which, although not a direct replacement for that provided at Cherry Trees, will extend the range of options to meet the diverse needs of vulnerable children who academically are able to access a mainstream curriculum, albeit with significant modification, support and intervention. This supports the core principles of the SEND review.
- 3.9 All decisions related to school closures must be taken by the Local Authority, following an extensive process of engagement to ensure those directly affected by the proposals are able to input into the decision making.

#### **4 STAGE ONE CONSULTATION, FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1 Following a formal consultation period from the 14<sup>th</sup> September to 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020, it was appropriate to publish a Consultation Report on the findings and now ask the Mayor to take a decision on whether to move to the next stage of the school organisation process, which is to publish a statutory notice (Appendix 5).
- 4.2 Due to coronavirus it was not possible to hold the preferred method of public and parents' meetings regarding the consultation. However, several alternative methods were offered (in line with the Tower Hamlets consultation processes during coronavirus guidance for schools' consultations) and these methods along with the type of responses are explained in the Consultation Report at Appendix 1.
- 4.3 The Consultation Report provides a detailed analysis of the responses and opinions expressed. Responses show that there are still a number of key concerns from all groups in relation to:
- Needing to have a better understanding of the SEND strategy and its SEMH implementation plan;
  - the quality of the planned new SEMH provision(s);
  - the transition arrangements for pupils at Cherry Trees who will be moving to new schools;

- the sufficiency of SEMH Primary provision in the Borough.
- 4.4 These concerns identify the need for more work be done with parents to help them gain a better understanding of the SEND strategy and the range of options available, including ensuring that the planned provision at Ben Jonson, supported by Bowden House, is widely communicated and discussed with the parents of the children for whom it would be appropriate.
- 4.5 Based on the feedback and whilst acknowledging the views expressed during the initial consultation, it is recommended for the Council to move to the next stage of the process by issuing a statutory notice, with the support of the School's Governing Body. This will enable a further opportunity to fully engage with stakeholders and obtain their views, before a decision can be reached.

## **5 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 When making decisions the Council must act reasonably and rationally. It must consider only the relevant information and consult those affected, taking into account their views, before final decisions are made. It must also comply with its legal duties, including relating to equalities.
- 5.2 The Equality Act 2010 requires the LA, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not ("the Public Sector Equality Duty").
- 5.3 An Equalities Assessment has been conducted by the LA and is attached at Appendix 2. It will continue to be updated in view of the responses to the statutory notice and its representations. This assessment must be considered in detail when the Cabinet considers the matters above, as part of its decision on whether The Cherry Trees School should close.
- 5.4 Governors and LA officers have considered carefully whether changes may affect groups disproportionately. They will continue to work with Trade Unions to ensure that planning for any staff changes are fair and equitable and in line with agreed policies, including the Council's School Organisational Change Procedure attached as Appendix 4.
- 5.5 The equalities assessment to date has not found that there is a risk that a disproportionately negative impact could exist to one or more groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, the school closure would adversely impact on staff who could be subject to redundancy. The further iteration of the equalities assessment will provide additional analysis of staff data, to ensure that the risk identified can be removed or reduced through the implementation of the actions detailed within the 'Action Planning' section.

## **6 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

(i) Managing the Impact of the Proposed Closure on School Staff

- 6.1 The LA and School Governing Body is working together to support the School staff through this change. A formal staff consultation will only take place once the final decision has been made on the School's closure. If the final decision is for the School to close, staff will be supported through further training, coaching and workshops to find redeployment opportunities at other local schools.

(ii) Best Value Implications

- 6.2 The Local Authority should ensure that schools are fulfilling their duties and that value for public money is achieved, whilst standards are maintained. They must ensure that they do not fall into financial deficit so that they are unable to sustain an offer of quality education for children. This proposal is therefore being considered in view of concerns over the School's ability to improve its standards and financial viability, in order to provide high quality education for its children.
- 6.3 This proposal presents significant mainstream revenue and capital implications for the Council. When a school closes its finances (and any surplus or deficit) is returned to the LA. In the case, any deficit balance will transfer to the Council.

(iii) Environmental (including air quality)

- 6.4 There are no environmental issues arising from this proposal.

(iv) Risk Management

6.5 **School Closure Proposal**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)</b>	<b>Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)</b>	<b>What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect</b>	<b>Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?</b>
Failure to move to statutory notice	H (see revenue implications below)	L	This risk is low as it will be mitigated by ensuring that a full and public statutory consultation is being undertaken, including the earlier 35 day informal consultation before moving to publication of a statutory notice for 28 days	Director of Children and Culture (Service Head for Pupil Access and School Sufficiency)

6.6 If this recommendation is agreed, continuation of the statutory consultation process will be carefully managed and evaluated in line with statutory guidance, taking account of the further views of stakeholders and thoroughly addressing the findings from the Equalities Assessment.

6.7 It is proposed to close the School for September 2021. This timescale will allow further opportunity to ensure that children, parents and staff are aware of the proposal and its implications and are supported through the change process over the course of the remainder of the current school year.

(v) Safeguarding

6.8 The report deals with the Council's approach to managing the supply of special school places for the local population. The efficient supply of special school places contributes to the safeguarding of children, especially those most vulnerable, by ensuring access to 'good quality' and sustainable education provision appropriate to their special educational needs.

(vi) Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment

6.9 The proposals presented in this report have followed an initial and formal public consultation using a variety of mechanisms. All responses received through these mechanisms or made directly to Council officers or members have been included in the analysis of the feedback received. These responses have only been used to assess the community's view of the proposals and not for any other purpose.

6.10 The Council handles information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018 and is the data controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information, the privacy notice for Pupil Services can be accessed here.

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

7.1 There would be no direct capital or revenue cost pressure to the council's general fund on the closing of the School. As a Special School Cherry trees is funded entirely from the high needs block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG) which is under significant pressure. The current size of the school means that the cost per pupil are significantly higher than at a larger school as the school overheads are being met as part of the individual pupils top up. Moving to an alternative model of a resource based linked to an existing school would significantly reduce that cost and reduce a pressure on the high needs funding block.

## **8 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

8.1 The process for closure (discontinuance) of a maintained school is set out in Part 4 of the statutory guidance 'Opening and Closing Maintained Schools' (November 2019), in sections 15 and 16 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and in the School Organisation (establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulation 2013.

8.2 This report gives information on the outcome of the pre-publication consultation, which is the first stage of the statutory process for closure of a maintained school, and sets out its proposals for the next stage, which is the publication of a statutory proposal for the discontinuance of the school.

- 8.3 When carrying out its functions a local authority must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not. This duty is set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the 'public sector equality duty'). An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out.
- 8.4 The local authority is required under the Local Government Act 1999 to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 8.5 The matters set out in this report comply with the above legislation and guidance.
- 

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

### **Linked Report**

- List any linked reports
- State NONE if none.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 Consultation Report on the Responses to the Proposal for the Closure of The Cherry Trees School
- Appendix 2 Equalities Assessment
- Appendix 3 Consultation Document on the Proposal for the closure of The Cherry Trees School
- Appendix 4 Council's HR Organisational Change Procedure
- Appendix 5 Draft Statutory Notice for the closure of The Cherry Trees School (to follow)

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

- None.

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

N/A



### **Stage One Consultation Summary – Feedback on a proposal to close Cherry Trees School**

**20<sup>th</sup> October**

#### **The Proposal**

Following advice from Tower Hamlets Local Authority, the governors of Cherry Trees School, have been pre-publication consulting on a proposal to close Cherry Trees School, from September 2021.

A review, and full consultation of, the Local Authority Special Educational Needs Strategy, recommended moving to different models of provision, which would better support academic attainment, and the inclusion of children in mainstream provision, whenever possible. In the Summer Term 2020 a primary SEMH implementation plan was shared with schools and they were invited to comment and to put forward expressions of interest for proposed new provision. The strategy particularly recommends improvements in links to quality mainstream provision, access to the full primary curriculum and a strategy approach which fully includes girls with SEMH needs.

Cherry Trees School is a special school, catering for primary age boys with social, emotional and mental health needs aged 3 to 11 and is part of the educational provision of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The school is located at 68, Campbell Road, London E3 4EA.

In September 2019 OFSTED considered the school to be inadequate in its provision of suitable education. The school is also in financial difficulty, despite receiving an income (2018/19) of £54,000 per pupil.

Cherry Trees School is an SEMH Primary Boys School. All the pupils have EHC Plans and because of this, individual work to discuss the children's needs as part of their Annual Reviews has been underway over the last year. The families of children attending Cherry Trees School have received individual support to consider how best to improve educational provision for their children. Including support for their children's transition to better provision, through reviews of Education, Health and Care Plans. Christine McInnes, Divisional Director Education and Partnership, met with parents and staff in March 2020, to ensure they were aware of the proposals.

As well as this individualised support, Cherry Trees Governing Board, in consultation with Tower Hamlets Children's Services agreed to commence the statutory pre-consultation process for the school to close by the end of August 2021.

This report provides a summary of the stage one consultation responses. It has been compiled by Dr Helen Jenner, an independent consultant. As well as summarising responses the report also makes suggestions on next steps for the school staff, governors and Local Authority to consider, to ensure they are responding to any concerns, issues and ideas raised by respondents.

Frequently Asked Questions produced from the responses is below. Copies of written responses are available at the school, and should be retained for 12 months.

## **Pre-Consultation activities**

A formal consultation document was produced and shared with staff, parents and other stakeholders. Comments and feedback were invited, on the document, between 14<sup>th</sup> September and 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

The document detailed the following opportunities for staff, parents and carers to share their views.

1. A response form (or any other written format) to record their views which could be posted to the school, hand delivered or emailed to

office@cherrytrees.org

2. A box was provided in the reception of Cherry Trees School where anyone could leave comments, response forms and any questions.

3. Individual meetings were held with parents. Additionally, some parents were also contacted by the Home-School liaison team, who checked whether they wanted to meet to discuss the consultation document.

4. A meeting for staff was held on September 30<sup>th</sup> with zoom access for staff who could not attend in person. There was also the opportunity for staff to feedback to Helen Jenner via zoom, on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

5. Two open zoom sessions were available for any stakeholder (parents, staff community, other schools etc.) on October 1<sup>st</sup> at 3pm and 6pm.

6. School staff created appropriate ways of consulting with children on their views as part of their ongoing teaching.

## **Written responses**

11 written responses were received

3 responses did not indicate the background of the respondent

3 were from parents/foster carers

1 current staff member

2 were from ex-staff members

1 ex – carer

1 local resident

All written respondents were not in support of the proposal to close the school and to relocate children to schools that will better meet their needs.

5 respondents confirmed they had seen the SEN Strategy, and 2 further responses

indicated familiarity with the document. 4 respondents stated they had not seen the SEN Strategy. Whilst there is recognition of some of the issues identified in the strategy, some people felt it was written by people who did not understand children's needs, or recognize the work of Cherry Trees School and that it may not have been sufficiently widely consulted on. Some people were concerned that no alternative SEMH provision had been established, which could potentially lead to high cost placements in independent provision. The need to meet the needs of girls and provide a continuum of provision was recognised. Some people felt that a Primary PRU would be the answer.

Respondents raised a number of individual questions which are addressed in the attached Frequently asked Questions Document.

Governors, staff and the Local Authority should consider and respond to these questions and then make the document available to all stakeholders along with this Feedback Summary.

### **Key Issues raised during the consultation.**

The FAQ document gives a more detailed summary of the issues and concerns of respondents, this section seeks to highlight the key aspects from the responses.

Several respondents expressed their appreciation for Cherry Trees staff and recommended that they be closely involved with transition plans, including the potential of moving to new provisions alongside the children.

Most respondents were keen to ensure the best possible transition for children currently attending Cherry Trees, and to secure new provision that was at least as good as the support they currently receive. It will be important for everyone to work together to ensure EHC Plans are fully able to be delivered at new provisions.

Staff and parents are concerned that new provision for each child has not yet been established. The school leadership has been working with parents, local authorities, and other providers to ensure strong placements are available. The recent announcement of provision at Ben Jonson, supported by Bowden House needs to be widely communicated and discussed with the parents of all children for whom it would be appropriate. Some respondents remain concerned that there may not be sufficient SEMH Primary provision in the Borough.

Parents and staff are not fully aware of the progress in expressions of interest for an integrated, higher-functioning, ASD provision in the Borough, linked to a mainstream primary school. Further communication with staff and parents about this would be helpful.

A number of respondents raised concern about leadership, management and governance of the school over the last couple of years and whether an alternative route might have been possible. Circulating the SEN Strategy and SEMH implementation plan may help stakeholders to recognize that the decision is part of a strategic plan, not simply a reaction to an OFSTED report, although this would undoubtedly have exacerbated the challenges. At this stage in the Local Authority strategy and the school's history it does not seem appropriate or helpful to re-examine the past, I understand that the matters raised have been discussed previously.

Staff are clearly anxious to support the children during transition but also concerned about their position, and exactly what the redundancy offer is. This should be fully explained in the FAQ response.

This section is a summary of the issues raised. The range of issues have been collated using a standard coding methodology. More detailed issues are discussed in the FAQ.

### **Overall Recommendation**

Responses show that there are still a number of concerns from all groups. None of the issues raised would present a reason not to progress to statutory notice, but further communication with all stakeholders will be important to aid understanding of strategy and ensure that parents, staff and children feel well supported.

Early visits to potential new provision would greatly re-assure families.

Each young person should have a clear transition plan before the Local Authority is able to take a final decision on whether, and when Cherry Trees School should close. This will be essential for ensuring the LA meets its statutory SEN duties.

A formal school re-organisation staffing consultation process should be put in place, in preparation for consultation from March 10<sup>th</sup> if the decision is taken to close the school. In the meantime, staff should continue to be offered opportunities for training and secondment or redeployment, where appropriate. Management decisions to support these opportunities must continue to prioritise the needs of the boys and support for their transition.

Given that alternative provision will be available within the Tower Hamlets Primary SEMH provision I can see no reason why statutory notices should not be posted.



## Equality Impact Analysis: (EIA)

### Section 1: Introduction

Name of Proposal

*For the purpose of this document, 'proposal' refers to a policy, function, strategy or project)*

Service area & Directorate responsible

Name of completing officer

Approved by Director/Head of Service

Date of approval

### **Conclusion - To be completed at the end of the Equality Impact Assessment process**

This summary will provide an update on the findings of the EIA and what the outcome is. *For example, based on the findings of the EIA, the proposal was rejected as the impact on a particular group was disproportionate and the appropriate mitigations in place. Or, based on the EIA, the proposal was amended and alternative steps taken)*

Based on the findings of this EIA, there are no significant issues to prevent moving to the next stage of formal consultation, which is to proceed to the issuing of the statutory notice.

The equalities assessment to date has not found that there is a risk that a disproportionately negative impact could exist to one or more groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, the school closure would adversely impact on staff who could be subject to redundancy. The further iteration of the equalities assessment will provide additional analysis of staff data, to ensure that the risk identified can be removed or reduced through the implementation of the actions detailed within the 'Action Planning' section.

### **The Equality Act 2010 places a 'General Duty' on all public bodies to have 'due regard' to:**

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advancing equality of opportunity between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them
- Fostering good relations between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them



**Where a proposal is being taken to a Committee, please append the completed equality analysis to the cover report.**

This Equality Impact Assessment provides evidence for meeting the Council's commitment to equality and the responsibilities outlined above, for more information about the Council's commitment to equality; please visit the Council's website.

## **Section 2 – General information about the proposal**

*Provide a description of the proposal including the relevance of proposal to the general equality duties and protected characteristic pursuant to Equality Act 2010.*

The Cherry Trees School is a special school, catering for primary age boys aged 5 to 11 with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs and is part of the educational provision of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

In September 2019 OFSTED considered the school to be [inadequate](#) in its provision of suitable education. The school is also experiencing financial difficulties, even though it is in receipt of an income (2018/19) of £54,000 per pupil. Improvements in provision since the inspection have been made to ensure the school effectively supports its current children, but these changes are not financially sustainable in the long term.

Once a special school provision is judged to be inadequate it is no longer appropriate for EHC Plans to name the school as a suitable provision for meeting a child's needs. Therefore, there can be no further admissions to Cherry Trees School. This puts an additional pressure on the school financially. In addition, "inadequate" schools are usually re-inspected within 6 months of receiving that judgement. This was unable to take place as Ofsted, the regulatory body, had to put all inspections on hold as a result of the pandemic and lockdown caused by Covid-19.

Therefore, the option to issue a statutory notice on a proposal for the School's closure is now being recommended.

In addition to the financial difficulties, and the challenges that arise from an Inadequate inspection judgement, Tower Hamlets' Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy recommends moving to different models of provision. This is considered to support better academic attainment with the inclusion of children in mainstream provision, whenever possible. The SEND Strategy outlines alternative provisions which would be more conducive to high quality learning for children, and also more cost effective, thereby allowing more of the budget to be used in other ways through the High Needs Funding block.

Following the recommendations made by the SEND Strategy, Tower Hamlets are moving forward with commissioning school-based primary resource provision for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. This aims to address the level of need, and the increasing number of pupils requiring additional support, and enhance the inclusive practice already demonstrated by primary schools in LBTH. This provision is designed:

- To offer time limited placements for pupils at risk of exclusion from LBTH primary schools and to successfully reintegrate them back into the referring school;
- To reduce the level of fixed term exclusions from LBTH primary schools;
- To prepare pupils with SEMH to successfully transfer to LBTH mainstream secondary school provision;
- To improve parental confidence in the continuum of provision available within LBTH and thus increase parental choice;
- To empower parents to have greater involvement in their children's education and to develop their capacity to support their child's development and progress;
- To support pupils to become more emotionally literate, more self-aware and to be able to self-regulate;



It is an innovative model that will challenge traditional ways of working and push the boundaries with regards to intervention and support for pupils with SEMH. It will include: a personalised curriculum with a range of interventions to support pupils to develop strategies which enable their inclusion in mainstream lessons; a parallel programme of support for families to ensure that they are able to support the strategies being implemented in school and improve their confidence in managing their child's needs; and will provide, in collaboration with a range of voluntary and statutory agencies, a range of effective support strategies for families of pupils attending the provision, including high-class, evidence based therapeutic inputs to improve the capacity of families to support their children in being successful. Any provision commissioned to provide this model will have an Ofsted rating of "Good" or "Outstanding".

This new model will lead to the development of an evidence and research-based source of expertise in relation to behaviour and emotional difficulties in terms of effective teaching approaches and management, in collaboration with the relevant LA services e.g. Behaviour Support Team, Educational Psychology Service and CAMHS.

Therefore, The Cherry Trees Governing Board, in consultation with Tower Hamlets, agreed to commence the process for the proposed closure of the school in August 2021, beginning with an informal consultation.

This is in line with the Department for Education's (DFE) guidance *Opening and Closing Maintained Schools* (2018). The Cherry Trees School has been supported with a pre-publication consultation by the local authority. Following this, the Council may proceed to a formal consultation. After formal consultation, a decision will be made by the Council with regards to closure.

The dedicated staff at Cherry Trees will be supported to find redeployment opportunities at local schools and will also have the opportunity to consider voluntary redundancy. Wherever possible, Tower Hamlets tries to avoid compulsory redundancy. If the proposal does go ahead, staff and their unions will be involved in a school re-organisation staffing process consultation. Unfortunately, because numbers have fallen, there will need to be significant reductions in staffing whether or not the proposed closure moves forward because the current structures are not affordable in the long term with so few children.

### **Section 3 – Evidence (Consideration of Data and Information)**

*What evidence do we have which may help us think about the impacts or likely impacts on service users or staff?*

As the numbers of pupils attending the school are so low, we are not able to provide demographic breakdowns so as not to allow for the possible identification of pupils.

Of the 10 children currently attending The Cherry Trees School, seven are residents of Tower Hamlets and three are from out of borough. Support for families and the children to consider transition is already in place, because there are concerns about whether Cherry Trees is the most appropriate placement for them. These families have also received individual support to consider how best to improve educational provision for their children, and to support their children's transition to better provision, through reviews of Education, Health and Care Plans.

As a result of these considerations, most pupils are in the process of moving to new provision or have requested a move. Two children will be transitioning to secondary school in September 2021 as they are currently in year 6. This will leave only four pupils to be placed prior to the proposed school closure at the end of August 2021, three who reside in the borough and one from outside of Tower Hamlets.

The School has undergone a turbulent period. The progress and attainment of pupils does not meet the Local Authority's standards or expectations, nor does it prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education. As a

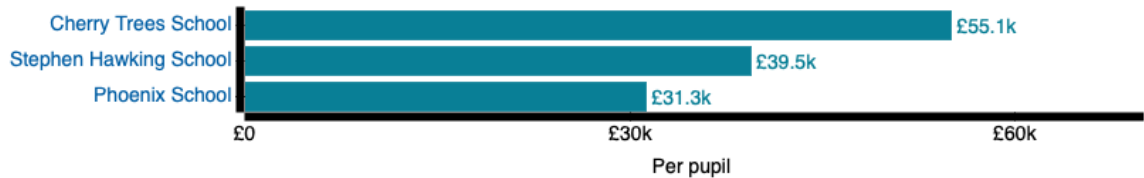


result, no pupils have been able to transition back into a mainstream school setting. In addition, the School site and its accommodation was not designed, or purpose built, in order to meet the needs of pupils with SEMH.

Financial benchmarking against other special schools in LBTH (Chart 1), and other primary SEMH special schools outside of LBTH (Chart 2) demonstrates the best value considerations for Cherry Trees School.

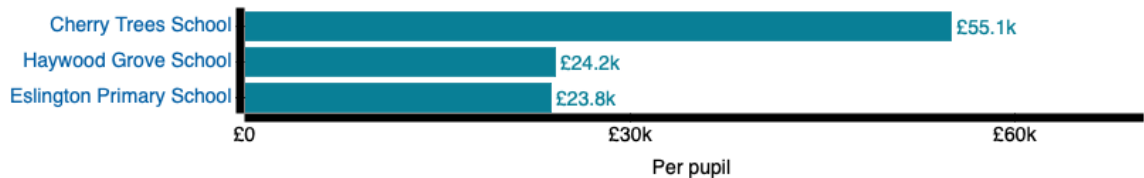
**Chart 1 Cherry Trees expenditure per pupil vs other LBTH special schools**

**Total expenditure**



**Chart 2 Cherry Trees financial benchmarking against other SEMH primary schools**

**Total expenditure**



**Consultation**

A consultation document was prepared and agreed with the Local Authority. This was given in paper copy to all parents, circulated to headteachers in Tower Hamlets through the Headteacher’s Bulletin; emailed to staffing unions, and the Secretary of State was notified of potential changes.

Information about the consultation was also placed on the website <https://www.thecherrytreesschool.co.uk/Consultation-18092020123235>

Due to the limitations imposed on public gatherings by COVID-19, it was not possible to hold face to face meetings for larger groups at the school or elsewhere. In order to ensure that pupils, parents, staff and the wider community were able to engage with and respond to consultation a range of opportunities were organised as follows:

- A response form (or any other written format) at the end of the consultation document to record views to be emailed, posted, or handed to the school.
- A special email address was set up for comments
- A box was set up in the school reception, where people could leave comments, response forms and any questions.
- 1 to1 meetings with parents were held
- Virtual meetings were also set up with the independent consultant to hear about reasons for the proposal.
- Staff were given the opportunity to attend a socially distanced or virtual meeting to discuss the proposal with Helen Jenner.
- There were two governing body meetings

An update report was provided for the LA and Governors on October 20<sup>th</sup> 2020 which made recommendations for further consultation activities.





### **Other Evidence**

Financial position of The Cherry Trees School  
Ofsted reports  
Pupil projections  
School census data  
Demographic data held on current staff and pupils  
Equality Act 2010  
Minutes of meetings where the future of The Cherry Trees School has been discussed  
Consultation Document  
Consultation Feedback Report  
School Policies (Equalities, SEND and Inclusion)  
SEMH Review  
LBTH SEND Strategy

**Name of officer completing the EIA: Elizabeth Freer**

**Service area: C&C SPP**

**EIA signed off by:**

**Date signed off:**



## Section 4 – Assessing the impacts on residents and service delivery

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Considering the above information and evidence, describe the impact this proposal will have on the following groups?
Age (All age groups)			X	<p>The small number of pupils attending does not allow for data on age to be included here as it would allow for possible identification. They are all of primary school age. However, the financial position at the school is such that it is recognised that were it to remain open, the quality of education, which has already been judged to be inadequate, could continue to decline. This would thereby impact adversely on the four pupils who may still be attending at the time of the proposed closure. Instead, they will be transitioned into higher quality provision that is better suited to meet their needs and provide increased support for their parents and families.</p> <p>In regard to the closure of The Cherry Trees School meaning there will be no specialist SEMH provision for primary aged boys in LBTH, this has been mitigated through the development of the Local Authority SEND Strategy and the recommendations from the SEMH review.</p> <p>Opportunities are being created to provide more purposeful and better-quality co-educational facilities in the borough, through the soon to be established SEMH Resource Base within Ben Jonson Primary school in alliance with Bowden House Secondary SEMH school. Not only will this be able to provide places for the pupils who will be at The Cherry Trees School at the end of this academic year, it will be able to accommodate more children as it will not be limited by an inadequate judgement. This is the first of a number of long-term solutions and will be in place in the borough from early as September 2021.</p> <p><b>Staff</b></p> <p>There will also be an impact on staff at the school, who could be made redundant under the proposal. The spread of staff across the age bands is even, with those under 30 and above 60 less affected than those aged 30-59. It does not appear there will be a disproportionate impact on any one age</p>

				<p>group.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age</th> <th>% of staff</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>20-29</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30-39</td> <td>29%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>40-49</td> <td>24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>50-59</td> <td>29%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>60+</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Further interrogation of the data needs to be done in order to assess what job roles are currently allocated to each age range. This will help to determine whether staff in those age ranges will be disproportionately affected or not. Appropriate support and training will be provided to staff to ensure that they are able identify and access job opportunities. Support will be provided to the school’s senior leaders and governing body to ensure that they are to fulfil their role effectively supporting staff throughout the process.</p>	Age	% of staff	20-29	10%	30-39	29%	40-49	24%	50-59	29%	60+	10%
Age	% of staff															
20-29	10%															
30-39	29%															
40-49	24%															
50-59	29%															
60+	10%															
<p><b>Disability</b> (Physical, learning difficulties, mental health and medical conditions)</p>			<p>X</p>	<p>The small number of pupils attending does not allow for data on age to be included here as it would allow for possible identification. All pupils attending The Cherry Trees School have a Social, Emotional or Mental Health Need. However, the financial position is such that it is recognised that were it to remain open, the quality of education, which has already been judged to be inadequate, could continue to decline. This would thereby impact adversely on the four pupils who may still be attending at the time of the proposed closure. Instead, they will be transitioned into alternative provision that will have the resource and expertise to ensure that their needs can be met and provide increased support for their parents and families.</p> <p>In regard to the closure of The Cherry Trees School meaning there will be no specialist SEMH provision for primary aged boys in LBTH, this has been mitigated through the development of the Local Authority SEND Strategy and</p>												

				<p>the recommendations from the SEMH review.</p> <p>Opportunities are being created to provide more purposeful and better-quality co-educational facilities in the borough, through the soon to be established SEMH Resource Base within Ben Jonson Primary school in alliance with Bowden House Secondary SEMH school. This is the first of a number of long-term solutions and will be in place in the borough from early as September 2021.</p> <p><b>Staff</b></p> <p>Fewer than 5 members of staff indicated they have a disability. Whilst this does not represent a disproportionate impact, LBTH should ensure that any staff members who may need additional support, or are more vulnerable when looking for new jobs, are able to access appropriate help and advice and are not disadvantaged by the process.</p>
<b>Sex</b>			X	<p>Only males will be affected as The Cherry Trees School is a boys school. These boys will have an opportunity to continue their education in alternative settings, including the new coeducational provision being established at Ben Jonson Primary School and supported by Bowden House residential SEMH boys secondary school. This provide more purposeful and better-quality facilities in the borough that will not only benefit boys, but also girls, for whom there is currently no SEMH primary provision. Therefore, moving to a model of co-educational facilities will increase equality of opportunity for both sexes.</p> <p><b>Staff</b></p> <p>The staff gender breakdown is weighted heavily towards women at The Cherry Trees School, with 71% identifying as female. This is the case across most primary school provision in the borough and elsewhere. As teaching roles are not gender specific, this should not have a disproportionate impact on future employment for female staff.</p>



<b>Gender reassignment</b>			X	No impact - we do not collect data on this protected characteristic												
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>			X	No impact - we do not collect data on this protected characteristic												
<b>Religion or philosophical belief</b>			X	No impact - we do not collect data on this protected characteristic												
<b>Race</b>			X	<p>The small number of pupils attending does not allow for data on race to be included here as it would allow for possible identification. However, the financial position is such that it is recognised that were it to remain open, the quality of education, which has already been judged to be inadequate, could continue to decline. This would thereby impact adversely on the four pupils who may still be attending at the time of the proposed closure, irrespective of their ethnicity. Instead, they will be transitioned into higher quality provision that is better suited to meet their needs and provide increased support for their parents and families.</p> <p><b>Staff</b></p> <p>There will be more of an impact on White British staff, as more staff of this ethnicity are employed at the school. However, as roles in education are not race-specific, should not be a disproportionate impact on staff ethnicity.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ethnicity</th> <th>% of staff</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Asian - Bangladeshi</td> <td>19%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Black - Caribbean</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Black - Other</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White - Other</td> <td>19%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White - British</td> <td>43%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Ethnicity	% of staff	Asian - Bangladeshi	19%	Black - Caribbean	10%	Black - Other	10%	White - Other	19%	White - British	43%
Ethnicity	% of staff															
Asian - Bangladeshi	19%															
Black - Caribbean	10%															
Black - Other	10%															
White - Other	19%															
White - British	43%															
<b>Sexual orientation</b>			X	No impact - we do not collect data on this protected characteristic												



<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>			X	No impact - we do not collect data on this protected characteristic
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<b>Other</b>				
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<b>Socio-economic</b>			X	Although we do not collect data on the socio-economic background of pupils, there has always been a high proportion of pupils in receipt of Free School Meals at the school. This reflects the reality of LBTH having one of the highest child poverty rates in London and is comparable to other primary schools in the borough. As places at other provision are not means-tested, we do not anticipate this being a barrier to the proposal.
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<b>Parents/Carers</b>		X		<p>Written responses received from the stage one consultation were identified as being from parents (3), none of them supported the decision to close the school. Parents were concerned whether a new provision would be good enough and whether the transition would be robust.</p> <p>As the majority of parents at the school have chosen to move, or are discussing transitioning their child to other provision, this feedback suggests these concerns are limited to a few. Further reassurance needs to be provided to all parents as to future plans and the benefits to their children. The SEND Strategy looks to securing better outcomes through closer links to mainstream education, thereby supporting children to transition back into mainstream education, if suitable. This has not been a successful outcome for children at The Cherry Trees School in recent years.</p> <p>As previously stated, the new model of resource based provision not only aims to improve parental confidence in the continuum of provision available within LBTH and thus increase parental choice, it would empower parents to have greater involvement in their children's education and to develop their capacity to support their child's development and progress. There will be a parallel programme of support for families to ensure that they can contribute to the strategy being implemented in the school and improve</p>
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				their confidence in managing their child's needs. It should also provide, in collaboration with a range of voluntary and statutory agencies, a range of effective support strategies for families of pupils attending the provision, including therapeutic services.
People with different <b>Gender Identities</b> e.g. Gender fluid, Non-Binary etc			X	No impact - we do not collect data on this protected characteristic
<b>AOB</b>				

## Section 5 – Impact Analysis and Action Plan

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Recommendation	Key activity	Progress milestones including target dates for either completion or progress	Officer responsible	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further analysis of workforce data needs to occur</li> <li>Provide continued support for parents/carers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore whether new roles will be created in resource bases for staff to apply for</li> <li>Parent and Family Support Service to offer targeted support</li> <li>SENCOs and parents to continue discussing the benefits of transitioning</li> <li>Provide updated information to</li> </ul>	<p>By end of statutory consultation period, if the proposal progresses to that stage</p> <p>By end of statutory consultation period, if the proposal progresses to that stage</p>	<p>Human Resources</p> <p>Head of Parent and Family support</p> <p>Head of SEN</p>	



	parents about the new resource base provision at Ben Jonson			
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## **Section 6 – Monitoring**

Have monitoring processes been put in place to check the delivery of the above action plan and impact on equality groups?





Yes?

No?

Describe how this will be undertaken:

## Appendix A

### Equality Impact Assessment Decision Rating

Decision	Action	Risk
<p>As a result of performing the EIA, it is evident that a disproportionately negative impact (direct, indirect, unintentional or otherwise) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a Protected Characteristic under the Equality Act. It is recommended that this proposal be suspended until further work is undertaken.</p>	<p><b>Suspend – Further Work Required</b></p>	<p><b>Red</b></p> 
<p>As a result of performing the EIA, it is evident that there is a risk that a disproportionately negative impact (direct, indirect, unintentional or otherwise) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is a genuine determining reason that could legitimise or justify the use of this policy.</p>	<p><b>Further (specialist) advice should be taken</b></p>	<p><b>Red Amber</b></p> 
<p>As a result of performing the EIA, it is evident that there is a risk that a disproportionately negatively impact (as described above) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, this risk may be removed or reduced by implementing the actions detailed within the <i>Action Planning</i> section of this document.</p>	<p><b>Proceed pending agreement of mitigating action</b></p>	<p><b>Amber</b></p> 
<p>As a result of performing the EIA, the proposal does not appear to have any disproportionate impact on people who share a protected characteristic and no further actions are recommended at this stage.</p>	<p><b>Proceed with implementation</b></p>	<p><b>Green:</b></p> 

## **Stage One Consultation on the proposal to close Cherry Trees School**

**14<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

### **The Proposal**

Following advice from Tower Hamlets Local Authority, the governors of Cherry Trees School, wish to consult on a proposal to close Cherry Trees School, from September 2021.

#### **Why are we proposing this change?**

A review of the Local Authority Special Educational Needs Strategy recommends moving to a different model of provision, which better supports academic attainment, and the inclusion of children in mainstream provision, whenever possible.

Cherry Trees School is a special school, catering for primary age boys with social, emotional and mental health needs aged 3 to 11 and is part of the educational provision of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The school is located at 68, Campbell Road, London E3 4EA. Cherry Trees

In September 2019 OFSTED considered the school to be inadequate in its provision of suitable education. The school is also in financial difficulty, despite receiving an income (2018/19) of £54,000 per pupil.

The families of children attending Cherry Trees School have received individual support to consider how best to improve educational provision for their children, and to support their children's transition to better provision, through reviews of Education, Health and Care Plans.

Cherry Trees Governing Board, in consultation with Tower Hamlets Children's Services, have agreed to commence the statutory process for proposed closure of the school in August 2021.

In line with the Department for Education's (DFE) guidance *Opening and Closing Maintained Schools* (2018), the council will support us with a pre-publication consultation. The Council may proceed to a formal consultation. After formal consultation, a decision will be made by the Council with regards to closure.

#### **What would happen to our Headteachers?**

The Interim Headteachers were employed on fixed term contracts and were not expecting to remain at the school long term.

#### **Why close Cherry Trees?**

Unfortunately, the provision at Cherry Trees is no longer effective or fit for purpose. It is extremely expensive and even with high staff levels (which are not affordable now, or in the future) it is falling to deliver quality education. The Tower Hamlets SEN Strategy outlines alternative provisions which would be better for children, and would cost less, allowing more funds to be used in other ways through the High Needs Funding block.

### **What will it mean for the children?**

Support for families and the children to consider transition is already in place, because we are concerned about whether Cherry Trees is an adequate placement for them. At most, there will be 11 children in the school this year. The solutions to what would be a better provision are being considered individually for each child, linked to their Education, Health and Care Plans, and include transition planning.

### **How will transition for the children be managed?**

Children will continue to be able to go to Cherry Trees School until better provision is found for them, up to the end of the Summer Term 2021. During the year individual transition plans will determine when each child moves to their new provision.

### **What will it mean for the staff?**

Staff at Cherry Trees will be supported to find redeployment opportunities at other local schools, they will also have the opportunity to consider voluntary redundancy. Wherever possible Tower Hamlets tries to avoid compulsory redundancy. If the proposal does go ahead staff, and their unions, will be involved in a School Re-organisation staffing process consultation. Unfortunately, because numbers have fallen, there will need to be significant reductions in staffing, whether or not the school closes, because the current structures are not affordable with so few children.

### **What will happen to the school building?**

At this stage of the proposal there are no specific plans for the building. These will be considered if the proposal progresses to statutory notice later this year.

### **Procedure to achieve the closure**

There will be no further admissions to Cherry Trees School. Once a special school provision is judged to be inadequate it is no longer appropriate for EHC Plans to name the school as a suitable provision for meeting a child's needs.

### **What is the point of consultation?**

We are consulting with you to make sure we put in place the right things to make a transition as smooth as possible. We also need to make sure that people understand how these fits with the Tower Hamlets SEN Strategy, and why the Council and governors are considering this very difficult decision.

All responses to this consultation will be put together in a report to governors and the Local Authority. The Local Authority will then decide, at its November 2020 meeting,

whether to move to statutory notice - a formal publication of a document explaining the closure and its impact. Stakeholders are then able to make representations to the Local Authority before a final decision is reached early in March 2021.

If the proposal goes ahead and the Local Authority Cabinet does decide to close the school all the children at Cherry Trees will transition to new schools by September 2021, when Cherry Trees will formally close.

We want to consult you to gather your views because you are part of the school community. The governing body of the school and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets cannot simply decide to make changes to schools without first seeking the views of parents, staff and others. There is a legal process which must be followed before changes can be made, and it is important that the Governing Body and the Council hear your views before deciding whether to proceed.

### **How do we feed in our ideas and views?**

We have organised the following opportunities for staff, parents and carers to share their views.

1. You can use the response form (or any other written format) at the end of this document to record your views. It can be posted to the schools, or emailed to

**office@cherrytrees.org**

2. There is a box in the reception of Cherry Trees School where you can leave your comments, response forms and any questions.

3. Individual meetings have been held with parents. You will also be contacted by Caz who will check whether you would like to meet with her to discuss the consultation document.

4. A meeting for staff will be held on September 30th at 3.30, there will be zoom access if staff cannot attend. There will also be the opportunity to feed back to Helen Jenner via zoom, on October 1st at 4pm

5. Two open zoom sessions will be available for any stakeholder (parents, staff community, other schools etc.) on October 1st at 3pm and 6pm.

6. School staff will create appropriate ways of consulting with our children on their views as part of their ongoing teaching.

## **What happens next?**

The consultation period starts on 14<sup>th</sup> September and ends on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020 – the last page of this document can be used for you to feedback your view to governors and the Local Authority. It should be returned to the school office. Following the consultation process, the Governors' Steering Group will review your feedback and use it to make a response to the council, on whether or not to recommend proceeding with the school closure proposal.

The Governing Body and) will consider your feedback in their representations following the publication of the formal statutory notice, if the Council decide to move to this stage, at their Cabinet meeting in November 2020.

If the Council decides to proceed, a public notice (the statutory notice) will specify details of the final proposal and there will be a period of at least four weeks when representations can be made. This will be the final opportunity to make any comments on the proposal. It is then anticipated that a final decision on whether to close the schools will be made by the council on March 3rd, 2020.

## **How can I get more information on the proposal?**

The LA will publish the feedback from this pre-publication consultation on the council's website during the Autumn Term.

If permission is granted to publish a public notice, further details of this proposal will also be available in the Consultation sections of the Council's website

This document is also available on the school website

Thank you for taking the time to consider our proposal, we look forward to hearing your views.

Cherry Trees Chair of Governors

## Proposal to close Cherry Trees School – Response Form

Our proposal is to close Cherry Trees School, from August 31st 2021 and to support all Cherry Trees children to relocate to other schools.

We welcome your views on this proposal. Please fill in this response form and return it to the address below no later than 21<sup>st</sup> October 3.30pm.

- 1) Do you accept the need for the proposal to close Cherry Trees School, and relocate children to schools that will better meet their needs?

Please tick as applicable

Yes		No	
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- 2) Have you heard of the Tower Hamlets SEND Strategy? Do you think it will help better meet children's needs?

- 3) Do you have any ideas/worries about how we can best help children, staff and families to move to possible new arrangements?

- 4) Any other comments? Please feel free to use the other side of this paper for your comments.

- 5) Please indicate which of these best describes your link to Cherry Trees School

Parent		Staff Member		Governor		Other – please specify
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(Children's views will be ascertained through age appropriate methods)

Your Name (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to Cherry Trees School by 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020. Feedback from question one will be summarised numerically. Comments will be typed-up and anonymised. This information will be made available to the public (via the school website), but all respondents' comments and information will be anonymised.

If you would like the opportunity to have a telephone conversation about your concerns, please add your phone number and dates and times that would suit you to this form. You will then be contacted by someone from the Local Authority consultation support teams.

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**Schools Organisational Change Procedure**  
**Children Schools and Families Directorate**

**1. General Scope of the Procedure**

- 1.1 This procedure should be applied whenever there is a proposal to make reductions in permanent teaching/support staff and fixed term staff with more than one years service who are employed in schools under the control of Governing Bodies (even though the right to receive a redundancy payment is not acquired until after 2 years continuous service).
- 1.2 This is an agreed procedure, which also applies in the case of voluntary redundancies for the above staff.
- 1.3 Schools should note that this procedure cannot be implemented until approval for any potential redundancies has been given by the Local Authority (LA) School Restructuring Panel. Please refer to School Reorganisations - Governance Arrangements, attached to this procedure.

**2. Aims of the Procedure**

- 2.1 School requirements for staff are liable to vary from time to time. It is therefore essential that the best use is made of the resources available to schools in order to meet the needs of the pupils.
- 2.2 This procedure is intended:
  - To take account of the school's statutory duty to provide for the educational needs of all pupils in line with the National Curriculum;
  - To minimise the impact of situations involving re-organisations and or staff reductions;
  - To ensure that organisational change takes place as effectively as possible and avoids unnecessary disruption;
  - To ensure staff reductions are reached fairly and in accordance with employment law and statutory entitlements; and
  - To ensure that consultation with staff and the trade unions is commenced at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Schools Organisational Change Procedure**  
**Children Schools and Families Directorate**

**3. Equal Opportunities Considerations**

- 3.1 There are equalities implications involved when any employment procedure is applied. Application of the Organisational Change Procedure has particular implications for the multi-cultured workforce employed by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 3.2 Headteachers should ensure that they assess the situation across the group of employees likely to be affected before they embark upon any action relating to staff reductions.
- 3.3 In order to establish whether any single person or group of employees is being treated less favourably than others under this procedure it is important that all action taken is monitored. If details are not already available, employees may be asked to provide information (e.g. about their ethnic origin) to enable the Local Authority to review the impact of this procedure.

**4. The Procedure (prior to consultation)**

- 4.1 The Headteacher completes the school development plan and budgetary information with proposals to reduce staffing costs and submits this to the school's governing body.
- 4.2 If the proposals are approved in principle, the governing body will agree a:
- Organisational Change Panel (usually consisting of the headteacher and one governor)
  - Appeals Panel (consisting of 3 governors – excluding the governor that was on the Organisational Change Panel)
- 4.3 At this point, the lead member of the Schools' Organisational Change Panel is required to submit the outline business case [template OBC/FBC], with indicative financial implications in terms of savings and cost of severance, to the School Restructuring Panel (SRP) for initial discussion, challenge and consideration by the Panel, supported by their School Improvement Officer and HR Provider. A decision in principle by the Panel must be received before consultation with staff and trade unions can commence. Wherever possible, the Headteacher should informally tell the trade unions of the proposed restructure, before any written documentation is sent. This will avoid surprise and potentially could avoid industrial relations issues. The earlier that you can consult with trade unions the better as this could avoid the need for serious consideration of redundancies.
- 4.4 The LA will consider business cases for reorganisations when the school has to reduce or reorganise its staffing establishment:
- for budgetary reasons; or

**Schools Organisational Change Procedure**  
**Children Schools and Families Directorate**

- to respond to organisational or curricular changes.
- 4.5 It is the current practice of the LA to seek the agreement of the school to cover the full costs of the “enhanced” severance element of the redundancy payment.
- 4.6 If the costs are less than the salary savings generated by the reorganisation, the expectation would be that the school meets those costs in year (bearing in mind that this is a on-off cost and the school would be in a position to obtain full advantage of the savings in the following year).
- 4.7 If the above is not the case, the LA will introduce a facility to allow schools to obtain a free loan from the LA to pay for the one-off costs over a maximum of a three year period (in line with the deficit recovery plan arrangements). This would usually be the case when the reorganisation is taking place for budgetary reasons.
- 4.8 Costs arising from the “statutory” element will be funded from a centrally managed budget as long as the school has obtained the approval of the SRP, and has acted reasonably and has followed the School’s redundancy policy.
- 4.9 Termination costs in respect of closing or merging school will continue to be met centrally. In addition, the LA will maintain a discretion in respect of meeting the costs of any termination required as a consequence of LA intervention for schools causing concern.
- 4.10 Reorganisations are not a substitute for performance management and when the Panel considers that the reorganisation has been proposed for that reason, the LA will seek to recover the full costs it has incurred in relation to any statutory redundancy and/or severance payments.
- 4.11 In conjunction with the new governance arrangements, the LA will implement closer monitoring of redundancies against advertised vacancies. Where a school makes redundancies and the LA judges that subsequently the post has been filled within 24 months, the LA will seek to recover the full cost of the redundancy from the schools’ delegated budget.

**5. The Procedure (the consultation)**

- 5.1 The Organisational Change Panel will be responsible for consulting with staff and trade unions on methods for making reductions, and for selecting posts for redundancy following full consultation. In the event of a disagreement between members of the Organisational Change Panel the Headteacher will have the casting vote.
- 5.2 Provided that a decision in principle has been given by the SRP (as per paragraph 4.3), the School’s Organisational Change Panel will consult with staff and trade

**Schools Organisational Change Procedure**  
**Children Schools and Families Directorate**

unions on methods for avoiding compulsory redundancies (template letter 1), e.g. voluntary redundancy/early retirement, bumped redundancies, natural wastage, alternative internal redeployment, reductions in hours, agency staff. Where staff are redeployed into a post and the salary is lower they shall be entitled to salary protection in accordance with the school teachers pay and conditions document and for support staff any salary protection will be for 2 years.

- 5.3 This consultation will initially be in the form of a written document to the trade unions and relevant staff and will include the following information:
- The reason for the proposal
  - The number and description of employees at risk
  - The total numbers at the establishment (current and proposed structure)
  - Steps that will be taken as a means of trying to avoid compulsory redundancies, such as voluntary redundancies
  - The proposed method for selecting for compulsory redundancies, in the event that this is necessary
  - Confirmation of the procedure that will be used to make the proposed redundancies
  - The proposed method of calculating any redundancy payments.
- 5.4 This written document should be sent to the trade unions and relevant staff as soon as is reasonably practical and where possible at least 3 months before the first dismissal is envisaged to take place. Voluntary redundancies may still take place prior to this providing all parties agree.
- 5.5 Invitations may be sought at this point for volunteers for redundancy. The Organisational Change Panel will take into account curriculum requirements when deciding whether to accept an application for voluntary redundancy.
- 5.6 Where sufficient staffing reductions cannot be met through the above methods, the Organisational Change Panel will be responsible for identifying the numbers and types of posts for compulsory redundancy.
- 5.7 The Panel will continue to consult with staff and trade unions regarding the proposals and on the proposed selection criteria for making compulsory redundancies.
- 5.8 The Organisational Change Panel will then apply the agreed selection criteria and identify specific posts for redundancy. At this point, they will write to those staff whose posts have been identified and offer to meet with them in order that they may make individual representations (template letter 2).

**Schools Organisational Change Procedure**  
**Children Schools and Families Directorate**

- 5.9 Following this meeting the Panel, if applicable will write to the relevant individuals confirming their decision to make a determination to dismiss on the grounds of redundancy (or in cases of non-teaching staff, to dismiss on the grounds of redundancy) and advise them of their right to appeal (template letter 3).
- 5.10 At this point, the Schools' Organisational Panel must submit the Final Business Case (template OBC/FBC) to the SRP for final approval for the funding of the redundancy costs.
- 5.11 At this point suitable alternative employment will be sought for those individuals selected for redundancy. Where this search for alternative employment is unsuccessful, the determination to dismiss will proceed. The search for redeployment will be co-ordinated by the LA Schools HR Team.

**6. Appeals**

- 6.1 Upon receipt of appeals, the Appeals Panel will meet with the appellant and their representative to consider the grounds for appeal.
- 6.2 A representative from the LA Schools HR Team will attend this meeting to advise on procedural matters and matters of precedent.
- 6.3 The Appeals Panel will write to the individual concerned informing them of their decision, which will be final.
- NB. Where no appeal is made, or where the individual's appeal is unsuccessful, Community Schools must inform the Corporate Director (Children, Schools and Families) in writing of the determination to dismiss on grounds of redundancy, in order that a dismissal may be made.

**7. Suggested Report Format to the SRP**

7.1 Executive Summary

This should include the reasons for the proposal, i.e. is the proposal due to financial constraints or restructuring. Also include action taken to mitigate redundancies

7.2 Restructuring Proposals

This section should give details of number and the posts that will be at risk. The current and proposed structures should also be included as appendices.

7.3 Financial Implications

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The financial situation should be outlined in this section, including the savings made, if any, as a consequence of the proposed reorganisation, indicative costs of redundancy and budgetary information included as appendices.

**7.4 Outline Timetable**

Relevant dates should be shown in table format – see Indicative timetable at Section 8

**7.5 Any Additional Notes**

Any information that you feel may be useful for the SRP can be included in this section of the report

**7.6 Appendices**

- The Current Structure
- The Proposed Structure
- The Proposed Job Descriptions
- The Draft Job Matching List

**8. Indicative Timetable**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>INDICATIVE TIMESCALE</b>
Notify LA of intention to reorganise by submission of Outline Business Case (OBC)	Week 1
Schools Reorganisation Panel - Consideration of OBC	Week 1
Submission of Revised OBC (if required)	Week 4
Panel makes decision in principle to support the consultation	Week 5
Commencement of Consultation  Meeting with staff (& Human Resources) Meeting with TU (& Human Resources) (Consultation papers to be issued at this meeting if it hasn't already been issued)	Week 5/6

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<b>ACTION</b>	<b>INDICATIVE TIMESCALE</b>
Surgeries one to one meetings with staff	Weeks 7/8
Meeting midway through consultation period	
Meeting with staff (& Human Resources) Meeting with TU (& Human Resources)	Week 9
Consultation period ends	Week 10
Responses to consultation process and final structure determined	Week 11
Applications for staff who have volunteered for redundancy or early retirement to be considered against selection criteria and staff notified of the decision	Week 11
Job Descriptions to be determined and verified (if any)	Week 11
Apply Selection Criteria	Week 12
Appeals to be heard by OC Panel and OC Appeals Panel	Week 13/14
Submission of Final Business Case (FBC)	Week 15
Schools Reorganisation Panel - Approval of funding	Week16

**9. Templates**

- 9.1 Letter 1                      Appendix A
- 9.2 Letter 2                      Appendix B
- 9.3 Letter 3                      Appendix C
- 9.4 OBC/FBC                    Appendix D

**Schools Organisational Change Procedure**  
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**10. LA Governance Arrangements**

- 10.1 On 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011, the School Forum agreed new governance arrangements for the approval of school reorganisations and associated funding, effective immediately. Please see attached Appendix E for those arrangements and scheduled meeting dates for the LA School Reorganisation Panel.



## Consultation information:

# Statutory Notice on the Proposal for the Closure of The Cherry Trees Special School

XX Month XXXX



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# Introduction

Notice is given in accordance with section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 that Tower Hamlets Local Authority intends to discontinue The Cherry Trees Special School with effect from 31 August 2021.

## Contact Details

### **Name and address of Local Authority publishing the proposal:**

Tower Hamlets Council, Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG

### **Name, address and category of school proposed to be closed:**

The Cherry Trees Special School, 68 Campbell Rd, London, E3 4EA.

The Cherry Trees is a registered community special school that currently makes day provision for up to 26 boys age 5 – 11 with social emotional and mental health needs.

## Implementation

### **Date on which it is proposed to close the school:**

It is proposed to close The Cherry Trees School on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

### **It is proposed to implement the closure as follows:**

By the time the School is proposed to close, all but seven of the pupils will have completed their primary education and moved onto secondary school. Discussions are being held with the parent/carers of the seven remaining pupils to plan their transfer to alternative provision at a time appropriate to their needs and taking into account parental preference.

## Reason for Closure

The Cherry Trees is one of six special schools in Tower Hamlets. It makes provision for primary aged pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Needs. All pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Pupils come from across Tower Hamlets and neighbouring boroughs. It occupies a small site in the Bow area.

The Cherry Trees School has in the past been a valued asset to the borough's provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It has previously been rated as outstanding by OFSTED. However, in recent times the school has underperformed and was placed in special measures following its most recent OFSTED Inspection in September 2019. In the period following the inspection, through the process of the Borough's SEND review and the development of its SEND Strategy, it has become evident that the specialist provision offered by Cherry Trees is no longer effective or fit for purpose. In addition, its number of pupils on roll has reduced to the extent that this already small School is no longer financially viable.

The Local Authority's ambition is to create a better, more inclusive, and sustainable education service for the future. It must therefore ensure that it has the right provision in the right place at the right time for all of the borough's children. This is particularly relevant to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The Local Authority is therefore now in the process of developing a new specialist and more inclusive provision, through the establishment of an SEMH Resource Base within Ben Jonson Primary School, in alliance with Bowden House Secondary SEMH School. This new provision, although not a direct replacement for Cherry Trees, will extend the range of options to meet the diverse needs of vulnerable children who academically are able to access a mainstream curriculum, albeit with significant modification, support and intervention. This supports the key principles of the SEND Strategy.

The Local Authority also needs to make best use of its finances. The Cherry Trees School is now very small and is not financially viable without significant transitional protection from the Local Authority. In the last year the Local Authority has had to allocate an additional £200,000 of transitional protection to the school to enable it to balance its budget. This subsidy is not sustainable and is not an effective use of resources.

Children with highly complex needs in specialist provision need additional help from professionals in health and social care. This is best provided where staff can work better together in a more integrated way. To be able to achieve this, Tower Hamlets needs to create economies of scale and this is not possible at a school with so few pupils.

## Pupil Numbers and Admissions

There are currently ten pupils on roll at the School. This number has steadily declined over recent years as follows:

School Year	Commissioned Places	Actual Pupil Numbers
2015/16	26	22
2016/17	26	24
2017/18	26	24
2018/19	26	21
2019/20	26	19
2020/21 (current)	14	10

## Displaced Pupils

The proposed timeframe of closure in August 2021 will mean that all except seven pupils will have completed their primary education. For the seven pupils who may remain on the school roll in July 2021, alternative suitable placements will be arranged as part of a personalised pathway, determined in full consultation with the families and over a carefully managed timescale. The Local Authority is acutely aware of the potential impact of the proposals on the stability of these pupils. It is therefore working with their parents /carers to develop a personalised plan for each pupil, to ensure that they get the support and services they need to be able to complete their transition successfully.

## Impact on the Community

The provision for children in Tower Hamlets will not diminish as a result of the proposed closure of Cherry Trees. Thus, there will be sufficient capacity within other specialist provision across the borough to accommodate pupils with SEMH. These will be distributed across the new planned specialist facility at Ben Jonson Primary School, other special schools or, in exceptional cases, one of the independent providers in the surrounding area.

The Cherry Trees School has been a part of the community over the past 20 years and it is acknowledged that it has served its community well. However, the School does not currently provide additional services or use of its facilities for the wider community and there are a number of alternative facilities available for hire at other nearby locations. There will therefore be no loss of any enrichment clubs or programmes for local families.

## Rural Primary Schools

Not applicable

## Balance of Denominational Provision

Not applicable

## Nursery Provision

Not applicable

## Sixth Form Provision

Not applicable

## Travel

Few of the Cherry Trees pupils live in the immediate locality and most travel to school on school bus transport from other parts of Tower Hamlets. There will continue to be travel across the Tower Hamlets area as the Local Authority (LA) is obliged to offer a school place appropriate to a child's need, when the most local provision is deemed unsuitable. Occasionally neighbouring LAs have sought a place for particular children following parental request. However, this necessitates a long home to school journey for these children.

## Finances

When a special school closes its finances is returned to the Local Authority High Needs Funding Budget, including any surplus. However, this proposed closure is not a cost-cutting exercise as all money remains ring-fenced to children with SEN and disabilities.

The proposal for closure follows a strategic review, aimed at ensuring that money is spent to provide best value for all children. Best value cannot be achieved for Cherry Trees as its falling roll will require the Local Authority to provide financial protection to ensure that the School can remain open. It therefore forms part of a strategy to significantly reduce the annual spend on financial protection for schools with falling rolls who are otherwise not financially sustainable.

## Procedure for Making Representations (objections and comments)

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by:

**Email:** [school.organisation@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

**Post:** School Organisation and Place Planning Manager  
Pupil Services and School Sufficiency  
Tower Hamlets Children and Culture  
Town Hall  
Mulberry Place  
5 Clove Crescent  
E14 5BG

**Closing date for responses is 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021.**

We will not be able to consider any responses received after this date. All responses received during the representation period will be published on the Council's website in late January 2021. The website address is:

<https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Home.aspx>

<p><b>Cabinet</b></p> <p>25 November 2020</p>	
<p><b>Report of:</b> Sharon Godman – Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance Will Tuckley – Chief Executive</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020-2024</b></p>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Councillor Candida Ronald, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Mark Waterman - Strategy and Policy Manager, Emily Fieran-Reed - Senior Strategy and Policy Manager
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	15 July 2020
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	The recommended decision has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	<p>It covers the following outcomes from Priority 1, Priority 2 and Priority 3 of the Strategic Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People access joined-up services when they need them and feel healthier and more independent (Outcome 3)</li> <li>• People live in a borough that is clean and green (Outcome 5)</li> <li>• People feel that they are part of a cohesive and vibrant community (Outcome 8)</li> <li>• People say we work together across boundaries in a strong and effective partnership to achieve the best outcomes for our residents (Outcome 10)</li> </ul>

### Executive Summary

Tower Hamlets Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy is a co-produced partnership document. The council has worked in partnership with VCS organisations in the borough, led by Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS), and with Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group (THCCG) and Tower Hamlets Homes (THH), to develop a strategy for the voluntary and community sector for Tower Hamlets for 2020-2024.

The proposed new VCS Strategy will be a successor to Tower Hamlets VCS Strategy 2016-2019. The emphasis is on the council, in conjunction with its statutory and private sector partners, enabling and facilitating the VCS to work together and to develop its potential to fully respond to local needs.

The key focus of the VCS Strategy will be on achieving positive outcomes for residents of Tower Hamlets, supporting the VCS to play a key role in the recovery process for COVID-19 in the borough and in the post-pandemic world. The VCS made a significant contribution to the response to the pandemic in Tower Hamlets, providing services to housebound, socially excluded and vulnerable residents. The VCS Strategy aims to build upon the good practices that the VCS has already demonstrated, particularly during the pandemic, and to support the VCS to provide services that are fully responsive to local residents' needs going forward.

The VCS Strategy will have three priorities:

- Better partnership working within the voluntary and community sector
- A more resilient and sustainable voluntary and community sector
- Improved partnership arrangements across sectors

### **Recommendations:**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Agree the Tower Hamlets Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020 – 2024, including the actions and outcomes under each priority.

## **1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 The council is passionate about the voluntary and community sector and the critical role it plays in supporting residents. The council and its partners, want to work with the VCS in Tower Hamlets to enable it to develop its services and strengthen its resources to enable it to achieve better outcomes for residents of Tower Hamlets and play a key role in the recovery process from COVID-19 in the borough. The VCS Strategy contains the Council's commitment and ambition around the VCS.
- 1.2 The vital importance of the VCS to Tower Hamlets has been witnessed in its role in responding to the pandemic in the borough, delivering services to vulnerable and socially excluded residents and securing volunteers to help deliver these services. This contribution from the VCS creates an impetus for the council to work with its partners to ensure a strong and vibrant VCS in the borough, particularly in the context of the challenges that the VCS faces as a result of the pandemic.
- 1.3 The success of the VCS in responding to the pandemic reflects the underlying strength of the sector in Tower Hamlets and its track record in delivering



responsive and effective services, particularly to marginalised communities. In addition to delivering services the VCS plays a wider role in the borough, bringing communities together, developing relationships between people and making Tower Hamlets a place that people are proud to live in. The VCS will play a vital role in the recovery from the pandemic, but its importance to the borough goes beyond the pandemic and the recovery process.

- 1.4 The aforementioned challenges to the VCS include the need to have sufficient resources to be in a position to be able to deliver effective services to local residents. The VCS Strategy aims to support the sector to develop and widen its resources in a number of areas – funding, volunteering, premises, digital skills and equipment.
- 1.5 A key focus of the VCS Strategy will be on partnership working, including:
  - the council and its partners working to support the development of partnerships between VCS organisations
  - cross-sectoral partnerships to respond to the needs of residents in the borough.

## **2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Do not develop a new VCS Strategy for Tower Hamlets and continue to adhere to the principles and focus of the VCS Strategy for 2016-2019. This is not a viable option as there is a need to revisit our approach, with an increased emphasis on enabling and facilitating the VCS to develop its potential, rather than on the council being seen as directly responsible for developing the VCS. This is particularly important when taking into account the strength of the VCS, as witnessed in its key role in delivering services to Tower Hamlets residents during the pandemic, including the delivery of innovative services, such as the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub and the Emergency Food Hub.
- 2.2 Furthermore, different priorities for and demands upon the VCS have emerged since the introduction of the last Strategy, many of which have been highlighted by the pandemic – e.g. increased demand for digitally-based services. There is a need for a new VCS Strategy with a partnership focus, concentrating on new priorities and actions in response to these priorities.

## **3 POLICY CONTEXT**

- 3.1 The VCS Strategy addresses the key objective of the Tower Hamlets Plan 2018-2023 – **tackling inequality by building a strong, inclusive and fair borough**. It does this by supporting the continuation and development of a thriving VCS that enriches the life of the borough, promotes community cohesion and provides social opportunities and support to all sections of Tower Hamlets' population, including socially excluded communities. The Strategy supports the four key themes of Tower Hamlets Plan:

- **A better deal for children and young people: aspiration, education and skills**
- **Good jobs and employment**
- **Strong, resilient and safe communities**
- **Better health and wellbeing.**

3.2 The VCS Strategy also addresses Priorities 1-3 of the Tower Hamlets Strategic Plan, particularly the following outcomes:

- **Outcome 3: People access joined up services when they need them and feel healthier and more independent**
- **Outcome 5: People live in a borough that is clean and green**
- **Outcome 8: People feel that they are part of a cohesive and vibrant community**
- **Outcome 10: People say we work together across boundaries in a strong and effective partnership to achieve the best outcomes for our residents.**

## **4 DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 4.1 By voluntary and community sector (VCS) we are referring to the VCS in its widest sense as defined in page 9, Appendix 1 of this report.
- 4.2 The council has worked in partnership with a range of VCS organisations in the borough, led by THCVS, and with THCCG and THH to develop the VCS Strategy.
- 4.3 In engaging the sector on the strategy, we have held a number of dedicated events and focus groups prior to the pandemic, which all VCS organisations registered with THCVS were invited to. There has been further consultation with the VCS post-pandemic. All of this consultation is summarised in page 1 of **Appendix 2 - Response to Issues Raised Through Consultation for Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy**. THCVS, particularly through its Chief Executive Officer, Peter Okali, has also carried out consultation work to develop the VCS Strategy, through discussions with VCS organisations, including at VCS partnership meetings and forums.
- 4.4 The VCS Strategy was initially scheduled to appear at Cabinet in July 2020, but this process was postponed due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The priorities of the VCS Strategy, which are outlined in Paragraph 4.7, were

identified as priorities before the pandemic commenced and would thus be priorities if it had not taken place. However, the pandemic has confirmed and highlighted the importance of many of these priorities, with the VCS response centring on many areas relating to the priority areas of the VCS Strategy – volunteering, obtaining external funding for new services and delivery of digitally based services.

- 4.5 The VCS showed strengths in the priority areas during the pandemic, highlighting areas of good practice that predated COVID-19 – e.g. the borough has a track record of local residents serving as volunteers. However, it was also evident that there were disparities between VCS organisations in terms of their ability to respond to VCS Strategy priority areas – e.g. many smaller VCS organisations did not have the skills or resources to deliver digitally-based services during lockdown. These disparities in VCS organisations’ skills and resources were in place before, but the pandemic highlighted their existence. These disparities reinforce the importance of focusing on the VCS Strategy’s priority areas, in relation to the recovery from the pandemic, the response to the second wave of the pandemic and, just as importantly, in the post-pandemic world.
- 4.6 The consultation process was valuable in establishing the three main priorities for the VCS Strategy. The action points in the Strategy under each of the priorities are in response to issues raised during consultation, as well as local needs that have been identified by partnership work to respond to the pandemic, please see **Appendix 2**.
- 4.7 The VCS Strategy will have the following priorities:
- **Priority 1: Better partnership working within the voluntary and community sector**
    - raising the profile of the VCS in Tower Hamlets, including its digital presence and promotion of its career offer with local people\*
    - enhanced communications and joint working between VCS organisations, including via digital tools and management networks
    - establishment of networks of local VCS services, operating on a sub-borough basis.
  - **Priority 2: A more resilient and sustainable voluntary and community sector**
    - development of a volunteering plan to put sustainable volunteering at the centre of the borough, building upon good practices developed during the pandemic and linking volunteers to opportunities in both VCS and partner organisations\*
    - improving VCS organisations’ access to buildings, including statutory sector buildings

- the council and other statutory sector organisations providing opportunities for the VCS through commissioning
  - the council and partner organisations obtaining Social Value from procurement processes to ensure that their contractors contribute expertise and resources to small VCS organisations
  - establishment of an external funding strategy for the local VCS, that will support partnership bids for external funding\*
  - training and development support for VCS groups run for and led by smaller BAME communities and their leaders
  - enabling VCS organisations with low levels of digital resources to obtain digital skills, through training, and digital equipment, through corporate recycling and funding applications\*
  - supporting VCS organisations to develop and implement green action plans to ensure that they operate in an environmentally friendly manner and offer community leadership on green issues.
- **Priority 3: Improved partnership arrangements across sectors**
    - increasing the VCS role in consultation and engagement in order to raise residents' voices, by harnessing the VCS's strong roots within local communities\*
    - improved communications and engagement on policy development between the VCS and local statutory organisations to ensure that strategic decisions are influenced by the VCS at a community level\*
    - establishing protocols for sharing and use of evidence and data across VCS, and between VCS and the local statutory sector, to inform policy development, decision making and funding applications
    - developing closer working relationships between VCS and statutory and private sectors – e.g. purchasing of services from local VCS organisations, network meetings, business forums
    - local VCS infrastructure organisations and local statutory sector organisations working in partnership to develop resilience planning to support VCS organisations' operational responses to emergency situations
    - cross-sectoral working to promote equality principles in regard to delivery of services to Tower Hamlets residents, building upon work of the council's BAME Commission and the work of Tower Hamlets Inter-Faith Forum.

\* Indicates that a sub-priority will be the focus of the VCS Strategy delivery plan in its first year (please see paragraphs 4.9 to 4.11 below).

- 4.8 The VCS Strategy will be implemented through a delivery plan, which will respond flexibly to emerging issues. Some of the VCS strategy's priorities will require further development work, which will be led by VCS Forums. Governance of these forums and their delivery of the strategy will lie with Co-operate. This is a partnership body between the local statutory sector and the VCS. It will be co-chaired by the Lead Member for Resources and the VCS, alongside the Chief Executive of THCVS. Co-operate will take the strategic lead, ensuring that delivery of the strategy's priorities is progressing and that joint working with partner organisations and the VCS is embedded in the Strategy.
- 4.9 The focus of the VCS Strategy delivery plan on raising the profile of the VCS in Tower Hamlets in the first year of the Strategy, under Priority 1, will be specifically concerned with mapping VCS services in the borough. This mapping work will result in a directory of local VCS services which is a necessary underpinning for all the other actions and priorities for the Strategy.
- 4.10 The focus on the three sub-priorities under Priority 2 reflects, as outlined in paragraph 4.4, their high profile in the response of the VCS to the pandemic. They also have an ongoing importance in the recovery process and the post-pandemic world. These sub-priorities focus on securing resources for the VCS to deliver services in response to the latter challenges. A key focus of the VCS Strategy will be development support for VCS organisations who are less well-resourced in regard to sub-priority areas
- 4.11 The focus on the two sub-priorities under Priority 3 reflects partner organisations' need to:
- fully engage with the VCS in order to hear the views and opinions of all borough residents
  - improve their methods for receiving feedback on services and their engagement and consultation procedures for strategy and policy development.
- 4.12 The VCS Strategy has been developed to be delivered within existing resources and should thus have no direct impact on budgets. It is envisaged that resources for the Strategy will come from a range of sources, including:
- external funding secured from partnership bids
  - resources and equipment obtained from private sector organisations via partner organisations' Social Value processes and VCS-private sector networks established by the Strategy
  - volunteering, including employee volunteering from partner organisations.
- 4.13 The Strategy will also be implemented through changes and developments in existing working practices by partner and VCS organisations, which will not

require any new funding – e.g. partner organisations seeking to open up commissioning opportunities to VCS organisations and working more effectively with the VCS on consultation, information and data sharing. It will also support VCS organisations to work together more effectively to save resources – e.g. improved systems for referrals between organisations; management and staff networking to share expertise.

- 4.14 The council is only one partner in the VCS Strategy, with its primary role being an enabling one, including helping to secure the full commitment of partner organisations to the implementation of the VCS Strategy.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on the proposed Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020-2024. This assessment found that a full Equality Impact Analysis is not required as the proposal is likely to have no or minimal impact on the protected characteristic groups listed in the Equality Impact Assessment Screening Tool.
- 5.2 As outlined in paragraph 4.7. above, the actions to respond to the VCS Strategy's priorities will include:
- training and development support for VCS groups run for and led by smaller BAME communities and their leaders to support community leadership in the borough
  - cross-sectoral working to promote equality principles in regard to delivery of services to Tower Hamlets residents. BAME VCS organisations should be central to this process, as should faith groups which represent BAME communities, particularly those providing services to local residents.
- 5.3 LBTH has set up a BAME Inequality Commission to focus on the promotion of equalities in the areas of health, community leadership and employment. The VCS Strategy can link in with the work of this Commission to support the promotion of more responsive VCS services to local BAME residents, particularly in the areas of health and social care, which is particularly important due to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities.
- 5.4 The VCS Strategy recognises the importance of faith groups in responding to community needs during the pandemic, particularly amongst local BAME communities. It recognises the need to support the sustainability of this provision and the need to build on the role of the Interfaith Forum in linking faith communities to wider community support arrangements.

## **6 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no other specific statutory implications relevant to consideration for this report.

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

- 7.1 This report recommends that the Cabinet agree the Tower Hamlets Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy 2020 – 2024.
- 7.2 Council funding and support to the VCS Strategy will be contained within the budget allocation. In addition, Paragraph 4.12 outlines alternative resourcing methods that could be used to support the strategy.

## **8 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 8.1 The Council has the legal power to support VCS organisations in the manner shown in the strategy provided that the purpose of the support is to assist the delivery of the Council's statutory functions.
- 8.2 The Council is able to provide resources and assistance to VCS organisations provided that this is subject to a fair and open process. In the main this means that allocation of grant funding and resources obtained by the Council as Social Value through its procurements should be allocated following some form of application procedure where applicants are assessed on pre-published criteria.
- 8.3 Reference is made to increased procurement of services from VCS organisations. Such procurements must occur in line with the Council's Procurement Procedures and the prevailing procurement law. The key element is ensuring that opportunities are subject to a form of advert and bidders are evaluated against pre-published evaluation criteria.
- 8.4 The Council's legal Best Value duty applies to the activities stated in the strategy regardless of the nature of the support offered or the services purchased by the Council. Therefore, evaluation criteria against which applications and bids are measured should be based upon the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the relevant bids and or applications.
- 8.5 All support should be accompanied by some form of agreement by which the Council can monitor the use of the relevant resources and or manage the relationship with the relevant organisations to also ensure that Best Value is being achieved.
- 8.6 It is likely that the strategy will be implemented by the Council in various projects. Each project will be subject to an Equality Assessment to ensure that the Council complies with its legal duty under the Equality Act 2010. Also, it may be that the Council needs to undertake consultation with affected user groups on a time for time basis, in the event that the Council considers it

necessary in order to properly understand impact on service users who have a protected characteristic.

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

### **Linked Report**

- None

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Tower Hamlets Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020-2024
- Appendix 2 - Response to Issues Raised Through Consultation for Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy

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

- None

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

- N/A



# Tower Hamlets Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020-2024





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The importance of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to Tower Hamlets has been highlighted this year by the key role it has played in response to COVID-19. The VCS successfully delivered services across the borough including to our most vulnerable and socially excluded residents. At the same it has shown real innovation and flexibility in responding to the challenges of working virtually during lockdown and developing new initiatives such as the Volunteer Hub and the Emergency Food Hub as well as working with mutual aid groups and faith groups.

Our VCS organisations played a key role in responding to the pandemic in Tower Hamlets and we look forward to their equally vital contribution to the recovery

process, and what happens next. We all face many significant challenges but can build upon the areas of good practice around volunteering, partnership working and digitally-based services. The way in which the sector is able to provide imaginative and high quality services for our residents is recognised as important.

The VCS Strategy has been developed working with all our partners. It highlights examples of good practice, priority areas for the sector and actions. To deliver for our community we'll have to continue partnership working, we must all work together to reimagine what our post COVID-19 world looks like so it works for our residents.

The focus of the Strategy is how the VCS, with support from its partners,

can be enabled to play a key role in the recovery of the borough and to continue to deliver for local residents. It's about keeping our borough creative, vibrant and maintaining our sense of community.



**Mayor John Biggs**  
Mayor of Tower Hamlets



**Cllr Candida Ronald**  
Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector



The Tower Hamlets Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy for 2020-2024 is a partnership strategy between voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations in the borough, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) and its partners, in both the public and private sector. Its focus is on achieving positive outcomes for the residents of the borough. This will include enabling the borough to recover from the COVID-19 Pandemic and move to a post-pandemic world.

**The VCS Strategy has a vision of a diverse and thriving VCS, working alongside residents, the council and partner organisations to achieve better outcomes for residents.** The Strategy is about the VCS in its broadest sense, but the

ultimate measure of its success will be the impact for residents of Tower Hamlets.

The VCS is core to the existence of Tower Hamlets, contributing to the wider social fabric of the borough in so many ways. It offers opportunities for local residents to come together, across different communities, and work alongside each other to enrich the life of Tower Hamlets. Local residents, in large numbers, have shown their commitment to their local communities by serving as volunteers. This commitment has enabled VCS organisations to develop, flourish and provide networks of friendship and support for local residents.

The strength of the sector is not only in the services that it provides, vital

though they are for many vulnerable residents, but also in the relationships that it develops between people and communities. It provides opportunities for people to cultivate their imagination and interests, allowing them to flourish as human beings.



### New focus of the strategy

The strategy marks a clear break from previous VCS strategies in that its focus will be on how the council and partner organisations will work

in partnership with the VCS. This will allow the VCS to thrive and prosper, rather than being dependent on the statutory sector for its development. The organisations who have worked together to develop this strategy, and who will own it as their own organisational strategy, are LBTH, Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS); Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group (THCCG), who will help to secure Tower Hamlets Together's engagement with the Strategy, and Tower Hamlets Homes (THH), who will help to secure Tower Hamlets Housing Forum's (THHF) engagement with the Strategy.





These organisations have coproduced this strategy with the VCS. There is a wider range of partner organisations however who want to go on this journey with us. They will enable us to make the Strategy happen in the borough. This strategy sets out a framework for action and a commitment for partners to work with the VCS and to build collaboration across the sector.

This strategy will be delivered in collaboration with anchor organisations in Tower Hamlets, those whose purpose and mission are intrinsically connected to the borough. These organisations have the potential to support the development of the local VCS through increased procurement of their services, joint working on areas such as volunteering and sharing of information, expertise and resources. One example of how anchor organisations can support the sector is the council's Social Value process. This involves the council using its procurement process to get contractors to contribute management expertise and resources, such as computers, to

smaller VCS organisations in the borough.



The Strategy will also have a focus on the ambition for the VCS to develop sustainable relationships, not just with the council, but with other anchor and public sector organisations, to enable it to promote its services and offer. For example, the Strategy proposes that the VCS, due partly to its significant role in responding to the pandemic,

promotes itself as a career of choice to young people, and other job seekers. This would involve engagement work by the VCS with local schools, colleges, universities and employment services.

The Strategy will focus on how partner organisations can work with the VCS to facilitate it to be more economically self-sufficient by enabling the sector to widen its funding base. This could possibly include statutory sector organisations opening up commissioning opportunities, within their procurement processes, to the VCS.





The VCS has demonstrated significant success in obtaining new resources for the borough in order to respond to the needs of the pandemic, through successful applications for external funding opportunities. There is a need for the Strategy to build upon that success throughout the life of this strategy.



The VCS can thrive when it is financially independent and responsible for its own resources. VCS success in securing funding from

statutory sector and other anchor organisations will require it to offer services which fully meet commissioning organisations' expectations and demanding quality standards. It is because of the strength and quality of the VCS service offer that the statutory sector commissions the VCS. A key focus of the VCS Strategy will be the development of that offer.

The Strategy also contains a focus on the VCS working in partnership with the private sector, with links to that sector facilitated by partner organisations. This will include engagement with local business networks, such as East London Business Alliance, and promoting information sharing and awareness about business opportunities that would be of benefit to the local VCS.



The Strategy establishes a partnership framework for the VCS, the council and partner organisations to identify future priorities and actions for joint work to respond to needs in the community. It will operate in the wider context of the borough, including the challenges and increased demands for services presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic and recovery from it.



The Strategy also recognises the need to be flexible to changing demands, and through a delivery plan and governance structure led by Cooperate, it will respond to issues as they emerge, as informed by the sector and partners.



The sector's key role in responding to the demand of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the borough is just one way in which it has demonstrated its vital importance. Its achievements have included:

- adopting new ways of working, including the delivery of digital and virtually based services, in order to continue to support local residents during COVID-19 Pandemic lockdown

- 71 VCS organisations in Tower Hamlets reported to the council that they provided support to local residents during the pandemic, in a wide range of areas, including telephone befriending, advice and information and social support services. It is believed that many more VCS organisations were also a part of this effort.
- the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub, commissioned by the council to Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH), recruited and deployed local residents as volunteers in local VCS organisations and the council. Vulnerable local residents were supported through a range of volunteer roles, including food

distribution, shopping and telephone befriending.



- establishment of mutual aid groups in the borough, who have provided support in a range of areas. According to the *Directory of East London Coronavirus Mutual Aid Groups* there were 13 such groups in Tower Hamlets in March 2020, which was significantly higher than the totals for neighbouring boroughs



- an Emergency Food Hub run by council staff, together with 27 VCS organisations, including Bow Food Bank and First Love Foundation, to help supply and deliver food to people who cannot get out, either because they are self-isolating or are considered at high risk of coronavirus

- securing external funding to support organisations' continuation and delivery of services in response to the pandemic.







The sector will aim to build upon the examples of good practice and new skills highlighted during the COVID-19 Pandemic, particularly in regard to volunteering, providing digitally based services, partnership working and securing external funding. The VCS Strategy will work to embed these successes into the longer-term VCS offer.

The success of the VCS in responding to the pandemic reflects the underlying strength of the sector in Tower Hamlets. It builds on its track record in delivering responsive and effective services, particularly to marginalised communities. The role of the VCS in the borough goes beyond delivering services. It brings communities together, develops relationships between people and

makes Tower Hamlets a place that people are proud to live in.



The sector, especially elements such as faith groups, have played a particularly important role in the pandemic in the borough by representing and delivering services to population groups that have been disproportionately affected by the impact of coronavirus. These groups have included: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, disabled

people, people with mental health support needs, people with learning difficulties and elderly people.

The VCS will play a key role as the restrictions of lockdown are eased and we move to a post-pandemic world. It will face the challenge of responding to the "new normal", including adapting to emerging needs in areas which may not have been fully addressed during the pandemic, such as mental health.

There will ultimately be the challenge of how to meet changing and increasing demand. Nevertheless, the strength and adaptability of the VCS witnessed during the pandemic will enable the sector to continue to deliver responsive services that meet the

needs of all sections of the local community going forward. The VCS Strategy will support the sector on this journey.



Our vision is of a local VCS that has a positive impact on the lives of residents and is a celebrated asset of the borough as a whole. It sees the sector playing a key role in Tower Hamlets' recovery from the pandemic, developing its own resources and skills to tackle inequalities in the community.



The voluntary sector in Tower Hamlets comprises a wide range of organisations, approximately 1,300 in total, offering a range of services, including:

- registered charities
- faith groups
- unregistered and informal community groups, including mutual aid groups



- social enterprises
- tenants and residents' associations
- co-operatives
- community interest companies with charitable elements.



Organisations undertake activity in a range of areas including:

- social care
- health
- information, advice and advocacy
- education
- training and access to employment
- children
- culture and the arts
- housing
- sport
- community safety
- environmental projects, including three city farms.

### Statutory sector investment in the voluntary sector

The local statutory sector recognises the key role of the voluntary sector in the borough by funding it to deliver a range of services to Tower Hamlets residents. This includes:

- the council's Local Community Fund programme, £9.3 million funding 50 projects between 2019-2023



## Profile of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Tower Hamlets



- a number of other council grants - Infrastructure and Capacity Building Programme, Small Grants Programme, Innovation Fund, Contingency Fund
- council contracts with VCS organisations totalling around £25 million (2019-2020 total)
- significant sums of investment from Tower Hamlets Housing Forum (THHF) members, as well as usage by VCS organisations of their assets. (THHF is a partnership between housing associations (registered providers) and LBTH).
- Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group (THCCG) spends over £1m each year on VCS organisations in

Tower Hamlets. In many instances, the THCCG and council commission services jointly to ensure a more joined up approach. The THCCG-commissioned services include Social Prescribing and disease specific support such as self-management for Cardiovascular Disease (CVD), Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) Hypertension and Diabetes.



- Council and other statutory sector funding for VCS organisations in Tower Hamlets is a key element of the local voluntary and community sector's funding base. It also assists VCS organisations to obtain funding from external sources, such as charitable trusts and the National Lottery, by demonstrating the strength and credibility of the funded organisations and supporting their management and infrastructure.



### The nature and breadth of VCS activity in Tower Hamlets

The VCS enables local people to live life to the full, to cultivate their imagination, enhance their spirits and develop as human beings. Its way of working and its openness, innovation and inclusivity are as important as any of the services that it delivers.

The vibrancy of the VCS in Tower Hamlets can be seen in the wide range of areas of life that it contributes to. Three city farms allow residents of the borough to get in touch with nature, providing a haven from the pressures of city life. Sports clubs provide enjoyment, the opportunity to stay fit and make new friends. Tenants and residents'

associations give people a say in how the local areas they live in are run. Community education providers allow people to broaden their minds and fulfil their potential.

A range of arts organisations provide local people with the opportunity to participate in or watch performances of dance, drama and music. Employment brokerage and skills training providers enable socially excluded people to get on the first rung of the career ladder or obtain access to education. Information, advice and advocacy organisations allow local residents to access the support that they are entitled to and have a say in determining the services that they receive. The VCS is at the heart of community life in Tower Hamlets in many different

guises.



The current flagship funding programme for the VCS in Tower Hamlets is the council's Local Community Fund programme. It involves the following themes and examples of innovative projects, which engage with local residents, support the development of people's potential and bring communities together:

- **Inclusion, health and wellbeing**  
Residents benefit from a range of

projects that promote their wider health and social inclusion. This includes projects that support participation in physical exercise, empowerment projects for young women and befriending and advocacy support for isolated older people.

For example, The Yard Theatre's Teenage Teens project enables young people, particularly young women, to increase their access to youth services and improve their health and well-being. It provides them with the opportunity to design, produce and participate in innovative theatre-based programmes, building community cohesion through celebrating local life and talent.



• **Digital inclusion and awareness**

Training is provided in digital technology for groups who traditionally have less experience in using IT - for example, older people - and awareness training is provided on on-line safety issues to local families and young people.

A key project for this Theme is SocietyLinks' E-Safety Champions project which trains local women

to become champions for e-safety in the community. The project's trained champions go into local schools and community groups to spread their knowledge of the importance for families of online safety to young people, parents and carers.

• **Advice and information**

This theme involves provision of advice services on a range of issues and capacity building support for the borough's advice services.



Island Advice Centre's Tower Hamlets Advice Training and Capacity Building Project recruits local people for voluntary placements in local advice centres, thus supporting centres to respond to local people's needs. It trains volunteers to be advice workers, on issues such as benefits, housing and debt, thus improving their chances of obtaining employment.

• **Employment and skills**

Training and mentoring support is provided to communities who are disadvantaged in the labour market - e.g. young people not in education, employment or training, BAME women - to enable them to obtain employment and access to education opportunities,

particularly in areas from which they have been traditionally excluded, such as the creative sector.

Magic Me's Artworks project provides traineeships to talented local residents from BAME and working class backgrounds to enable them to gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to access careers in community arts co-ordination and production. Beneficiaries participate in paid placements which give them first-hand experience of the challenges of delivering arts projects in community settings such as care homes, school and art venues across London.



- **Community safety**

Support is provided to develop young people's skills and confidence to improve their community safety and prevent them engaging in criminal activity.



Four Corners' Into Focus Photography Project is an inter-generational photography initiative involving groups of young people and people over 50 working together to produce



photographic exhibitions at Four Corners' Gallery. Exhibitions will focus on social perceptions and misperceptions between older and younger people to promote positive attitudes and increase mutual understanding.

### Employment and volunteering

The voluntary sector is a significant employer and business presence in the borough. In 2016 the London Voluntary Service Council estimated that the sector employed 5,219 people, 1.9% of the workforce in Tower Hamlets, and generated a combined income of £352.4 million.

The borough has a track record of local residents serving as volunteers. Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey 2019 found that 21% of

residents had been involved in some volunteering work over the previous year.



The importance of volunteering in Tower Hamlets has been highlighted by the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub which, as at mid-October 2020, matched a volunteer candidate to a volunteer role 2,924 times. These volunteers have served in a variety of roles to help vulnerable and socially isolated people during the pandemic and support the wider community.



## Challenges

The voluntary sector in Tower Hamlets, and nationally, is faced with a number of serious challenges, many of which are directly or indirectly related to the COVID-19 Pandemic. These include:

- the possibility of an upsurge in the pandemic
- the pandemic's long-term negative health and social care impact on local residents



- challenges in resuming organisations' services with the easing of lockdown restrictions



- the financial challenges to the voluntary sector, with a number of organisations losing hall rental income or retail income and a reduction in donations
- the difficulties that a number of VCS organisations and their beneficiaries face in making use of digital services due to income

- disparities and low levels of IT experience and skills
- beneficiaries of employment and training services provided by VCS organisations will face more intensive competition for employment in the context of an economic downturn.

The sector also faces a number of challenges in the borough that pre-date the pandemic and have been exacerbated by it, including:



- rising need in the community, including child poverty, youth unemployment, mental health and anti-social behaviour
- Brexit, with the loss of European funding and potential source of staff and volunteers, plus negative impacts on the economy and social cohesion
- ongoing wider policy context of reduced resources, which traditionally has an above average negative impact on the sector.



### Responding to the challenges

The above challenges highlight the need for partnership working between VCS organisations in Tower Hamlets, with the support of the local statutory and private sectors, to respond to the unique challenges that our borough faces. The vibrancy of the VCS in Tower Hamlets has been witnessed over a number of years and is evident in the range of successful and diverse organisations that make up the sector in the borough. The VCS can build upon its strengths and successes to face the challenges of the future.

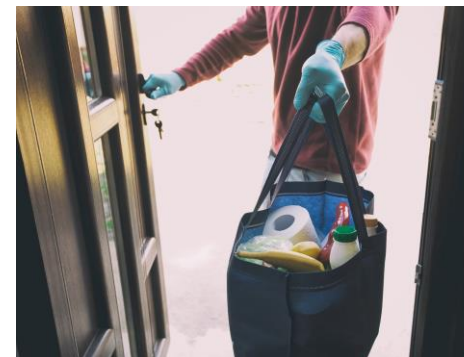
The central role of the VCS in response to the pandemic confirms its vitality, which will be essential in the recovery process and

in the post-pandemic world. The Strategy aims to build upon the above successes and provide the platform for the VCS to continue to flourish.



The achievements of the VCS in Tower Hamlets, and the continued buoyancy of so many VCS organisations in the borough, is a source of confidence for the VCS and its partners as it responds to current and future challenges. There is an urgent need to endeavour to ensure

the survival of VCS organisations that are essential to the recovery process and life in Tower Hamlets post-recovery. This will require the VCS to make the most of the adaptability and imagination that it has previously demonstrated. It will also require the statutory sector working with the VCS on a partnership basis that recognises and acknowledges the strengths of the VCS and identifies areas for joint work to ensure the continued role of the VCS.



The strength and longevity of so many VCS organisations in the borough highlight their accomplishments in securing external resources. This has been highlighted by the success of many VCS organisations in Tower Hamlets in securing external funding to respond to the demands of the pandemic. The ongoing success of the VCS in securing external funding can be enhanced by partnership work between VCS organisations, with support from the local statutory sector.





Tower Hamlets has a proud track record of volunteering, with local residents being prepared to give up their time, on a regular basis, to support their community. The existing strength of volunteering culture in the borough has enabled statutory and VCS organisations in Tower Hamlets to provide support to vulnerable residents before and during the pandemic.

The strategy will build upon this community mobilisation effort to support a more sustainable volunteering picture with both VCS and partner organisations in the borough.

The success of many VCS organisations in using digital technology during the lockdown period, to offer virtually-based services to beneficiaries in their own homes, is an example of the imagination and adaptability of the VCS. Many of these practices have the potential to be integrated into organisations' long-term service offer, going forward. The experience of the pandemic has highlighted more than ever the need to develop the digital skills and capacity of VCS organisations who often have limited

digital resources and experience. This could include complementary work to develop the digital skills of these organisations' beneficiaries, who may have limited or no experience of using digital technology. There is potential for peer to peer VCS organisational support in this area and wider partnership work, including bringing in statutory and private sector partner assistance.







Mind the Gap (formerly known as Project Connect) is an intergenerational project, delivered by Leaders in Community and funded by LBTH through the Local Community Fund. It builds relationships between young adults and those over 50 in the borough, aiming to break down barriers and combat pre-conceived notions each group may have of one another. The project came about because research found older residents felt unsafe around young people.

Through a partnership with Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours and Over 50s Consortium, young people collaborate with older people living in Poplar and Mile End in designing activities to develop long-term social connections. This involves co-

designing community events and exploring the perception of young people in the community from both perspectives.

The project's outcomes are shared with the community through events and publicity to counter stereotypes of both young and old. The project aims to engage 100 younger people and 50 older people each year, with the focus for the younger people being predominantly on those from traditionally disengaged groups - e.g. BAME young people and those not in education, employment or training.

The project has been progressing well, despite the COVID-19 Pandemic. Its steering group discusses ideas to connect with the

older people that it supports.

The biggest challenge was getting the older people connected online. Through a crowdfunding campaign, via Spacehive, it secured £1,895, matched with £984 from the council's Innovation Fund, to buy the older people tablets to connect with others. Tutorials on how to use the tablets were also created.

The project's steering group continues with its work. It has so far produced:

- 20 videos focusing on connecting with older people
- videos relating to members' different cultures to share with older people

The steering group has provided

young people with the opportunity to assume positions of responsibility and develop their self-confidence and leadership skills. They have led in producing social media content to enable the group to communicate with the older members, including:

- Meet the Team blog in which each member described themselves
- Members recorded videos of themselves responding to the questions: *"How would you describe your younger self?"* and *"What made you the person you are today?"*

The project will continue to work towards its goals of building common ground between younger and older people, through asking questions and sharing stories.

## Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020-2024

The development of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy has been supported by a number of consultation events with VCS and partner organisations. This has included consultation through a number of key voluntary sector forums, including:

- Cooperate
- Health and Wellbeing Forum
- Premises Forum
- Somali Community Working Group
- Tower Hamlets Co-production Network
- Tower Hamlets Partnership Executive Group
- Tower Hamlets Registered

## How did we develop this strategy?



- Providers (Housing) Community Involvement Network
- Training Enterprise & Employment Forum workshop
- Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum meeting



The development of the Strategy has also been influenced and supported by:

- a survey with VCS organisations, conducted by the council and THCVS in April 2020
- regular teleconferences that have been taking place since May 2020, between the Mayor, LBTH officers and representatives of VCS organisations in the borough. There was a presentation on the VCS Strategy at the Teleconference meeting of 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.





CORE Projects Get Active Newspaper is a project delivered by ICM Foundation and funded by LBTH through the Local Community Fund. It builds relationships between adults with learning difficulties and disabilities in the borough, supporting them to build their confidence and independence and increase levels of physical and mental wellbeing. Its work is centred on a group of adults with learning difficulties and disabilities who design and deliver accessible newspapers, on the theme of health and wellbeing, to communities that reflect the borough's diversity.

The newspaper focuses on improved lifestyle choices, through increased use of inclusive services. The team plans content, writes articles,

carries out research, and interviews people. They decide on job roles, with role tasks allocated according to participants' strengths and interests. These include meaningful activities that help them to get active, learn skills and make friends and connections. The newspaper reflects the experiences of its creators and readers who access community activities that support healthy lifestyle choices and social inclusion.

The project has been delivered in a person centred, user-led way, where project trainees in the newspaper team decide on what articles to write and research where to go. They travel in the community to take part in a range of activities and review their experience with these

activities. For example, the newspaper team researched healthy eating choices that were affordable and reviewed a lunch option. It also discovered a free skating activity and went along to review it. The team conducted interviews and shared information for disabled people.

The project held a launch event in February 2020, to which they invited other groups to attend and review the printed newspaper, giving the team ideas and feedback on what was good, what needed to be different and what articles to write in the future.

The project trainees have also run workshops for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities to give them a voice on the issues that they

face. The trainees supported participants and responded to questions that they raised.

The project has continued to operate during the COVID-19 Pandemic, now with a digital newspaper. The articles have included features on how to exercise and cook at home, plus interviews and artwork. This digital newspaper was shared with ICM Foundation's network in the borough.

ICM Foundation has also been able to offer wider support to all of its beneficiaries during the pandemic, including videos that promote safety. It has supported accessible exercise at home - such as chair-based exercises - and facilitated arts and craft activities.

## Priority 1

Better partnership working  
within the VCS



**Why is this priority important?**

During the consultation process to develop the Strategy, VCS organisations identified a number of barriers to joint working with each other and potential options to improve partnership working between each other:

- organisations are often geographically close, but do not work together to maximise outcomes for local residents
- the council should use its strategic role to encourage partnerships and promote partnerships in the allocation of funds

- partnerships between smaller VCS organisations are particularly needed
- there is a lack of clarity about the voluntary sector offer and a need for a joint directory of VCS organisations, people and projects.
- supports the focus on the holistic needs of people supported by partners - focus is on people, not organisations
- enables organisations to fully identify the needs of the people that they support, thus providing more effectively targeted services. VCS organisations' community focus and links are particularly helpful, as has been witnessed during the pandemic
- the sharing of expertise and knowledge ensures that residents receive quality services and supports organisational development
- maximises resources by enabling partners to focus on key areas of need for the target group and supporting bids for external funding.



Effective partnership working, both between different VCS organisations, and between VCS organisations and the statutory sector, has many benefits:



The value of partnership working in Tower Hamlets has been demonstrated recently by initiatives to respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic in the borough, including the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub and the Emergency Food Hub.





### What actions will we take?

- Significantly raise the profile of the VCS via enhanced digital presence
- Map VCS organisations and services in the borough and create an on-line directory
- Promote VCS as career of choice for young people and jobseekers

- Set up local VCS partnerships to deliver targeted services.



### Raising the profile of VCS activity

There is a need to increase the profile of the VCS across the borough, so that residents have better access to information and services and organisations are able to work together more effectively.

- Establishing a stronger digital presence for the VCS in the borough. This should include

examining the potential for overhaul of information about VCS services on LBTH and partner organisation web sites. More interactive web material and VCS case studies should be included in the above revised web site information.

- An online directory of VCS organisations and services in the borough, supported by a VCS mapping exercise conducted by THCVS, the council and partners. The on-line directory could provide local residents with details of how, where and when to access local VCS services. It should be hosted on partner organisations' web sites.
- Using the higher profile of the

VCS during the pandemic to establish it as a career of choice for local residents. Local VCS organisations have the opportunity to work with local employment and careers services to promote the sector with young people. This would involve direct work in schools, colleges and universities, and with older job seekers, including people considering a career change, via placements at VCS organisations.

- Highlighting the value of the sector to the local community, including setting up a high profile VCS showcase event, with presentations of awards for projects, organisations and people.



- Use digital technology to support referrals between VCS services



**Enhanced communications and joint working between VCS organisations**

- Ensuring that VCS organisations' beneficiaries receive services that fully address their needs by developing and trialling digital tools and using them to support better referrals between VCS services



**Priority 1 - Outcomes to be achieved by 2024**

- Developing local VCS leadership to help lead the recovery process in the borough. Systems should be set up to increase opportunities for VCS managers and staff to network with each other and share expertise.



**Establishment of local VCS services on a sub-borough basis**

- Establishment of the 15 minute Neighbourhoods/ward-based model, to promote and develop

localised, targeted and multi-purpose services to meet needs in the community and revive local neighbourhoods

- Piloting of ward-based meetings with local VCS organisations and residents to identify organisations and projects for potential new sub-borough partnerships.





Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) is an independent registered charity and a key partner. As the local volunteering infrastructure agency, its mission is to improve volunteering in the borough. It has an established track record of supporting 450+ local VCS organisations, helping them to recruit and manage volunteers.

In March 2020, with the coronavirus pandemic escalating, it was recognised that VCS organisations would be instrumental in supporting residents, and that volunteers would play a critical role. VCTH was commissioned by LBTH to manage the new Tower Hamlets COVID-19 Volunteering Hub. Within just a few days, over 1,000 local people had registered to become volunteers.

Roles were promoted and volunteers rapidly mobilised to help the most vulnerable residents.

During the height of the pandemic, the Hub matched volunteers to more than 60 VCS organisations, ranging from new community groups to well-established charities. The Hub also supplied volunteers to council services. Volunteers deliver food parcels, PPE and toy bags, prepare hot meals, collect shopping and medication, provide befriending and mentoring, patrol parks, manage communications, and support ESOL provision. Volunteers from the Hub also supported organisations to deliver the Holiday Hunger programme, ensuring children accessed healthy lunches and fun activities during the school holidays.

By the end of August, over 2,300 volunteers had registered with the Hub, and more than 2,700 matches had been made to over 150 different roles.

Staff at VCTH also supported workers in VCS organisations to develop meaningful volunteer roles. Free training and peer support for volunteer managers was provided to help organisations.

The Volunteering Hub is an example of a responsive and effective resource for VCS organisations, enabling them to provide even greater support to Tower Hamlets residents during an exceptionally difficult time.

One of the VCS organisations that benefitted from the Volunteering

Hub was the Women's Inclusive Team. Its Chief Executive Officer, Safia Jama, has stated:

*We want to thank VCTH for the invaluable support they have provided in recruiting volunteers for our projects at Women's Inclusive Team. The team provided amazing help and dealt with our last-minute requests efficiently. They went above and beyond to send us really high-quality volunteers to support our COVID-19 response. We simply wouldn't have been able to get through the past few months without their help, and we look forward to continuing this fantastic relationship. WIT has grown so much, due to the support of VCTH.*



## Priority 2

A more resilient and sustainable VCS



Why is this priority important?

VCS organisations raised a number of concerns about resources in the Strategy consultation process, including the need:

- to promote and support employee volunteering, giving it more respect and making use of the untapped potential in this area
- to support, promote and give advice on volunteer management, plus specific support and development for trusteeship
- for affordable premises and flexible premises options, such as co-working/shared office spaces
- for more transparency in decision-making processes on grant and contract awards

- to minimise digital exclusion, with all groups supported to access digital resources, both in terms of organisations and the people that they support.



A focal point for the VCS Strategy will be how the VCS can work in partnership with the local statutory sector and local businesses to become more self-reliant and sustainable. In a time of financial constraint, which has been heightened by the challenges of the pandemic, the VCS and its partners

will need to focus on working holistically to maximise resources.

Volunteering

Volunteering has been of ongoing importance to Tower Hamlets. This has been highlighted by the success of the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub. Follow-up partnership work is required to ensure sustainable volunteering engagement with both VCS and partner organisations.

Many of the volunteers engaged during the pandemic have the commitment, skills and expertise to offer long-term commitments to local VCS organisations, including as trustees. Employee volunteering needs to be developed and encouraged to link private and public sector employee expertise to the local VCS.



The volunteering pool can be further widened by support for remote and informal volunteering. Mutual aid groups have played an important role in the response to the pandemic in Tower Hamlets, engaging with people who would not have had previous experience of voluntary work. These groups should be supported to continue and develop.



### Premises

Access to affordable premises that meet the needs of VCS organisations and their service users is a key issue for the VCS in Tower Hamlets. There is a need for imaginative responses from the local statutory sector, rather than adherence to traditional notions of premises ownership or renting. It needs to be innovative in its planning for provision for VCS premises, including taking the sector's needs into account at the planning stage for new physical development in the borough. Funding for the VCS from the statutory sector must take premises costs fully into consideration.



The local statutory sector must work in an imaginative and flexible manner with the VCS to publicise and maximise the diverse range of premises options for the sector. This should involve the use of on-line technology to publicise all premises options, including buildings available to lease or purchase.

### Statutory sector funding

A key priority for the Strategy will be supporting the statutory sector to set long-term priorities for VCS

grant funding and enabling the VCS to compete effectively for its contract opportunities. The local VCS needs to be able to widen its funding base beyond statutory sector grant funding.

Statutory sector partners should explore how they could possibly prioritise the VCS in their commissioning processes and review how they commission services. This could include examining the potential for longer lead-in times for their commissioning processes, in order to provide smaller VCS organisations with greater opportunities to produce tender submissions. They should also consider introducing promotion and support packages to link VCS organisations, particularly smaller organisations, to their contract

opportunities.

### Social value

Increased support from the local statutory sector to the VCS through its commissioning activity can also be delivered by the Social Value process. LBTH is embedding the Social Value process into its procurement of contracted services to ensure that private sector contractors will be expected to provide support to local VCS organisations, particularly smaller organisations. This will include contractors donating equipment, such as computers, and management time for mentoring support on areas such as bidding for external funding, project management and marketing.



Lessons gained can be shared with other local statutory sector organisations to encourage them to consider adopting Social Value in their procurement processes to support the VCS.

organisations to look beyond the council to seek external funding. The 360Giving web site has reported that VCS organisations in Tower Hamlets have secured £5.9 million in external funding to respond to the pandemic. This is the sixth highest total funding secured by the VCS in a borough in the UK.



**BAME-led voluntary sector**

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on BAME communities in Tower Hamlets. BAME-led VCS organisations have played a vital role in service provision to the above communities during the pandemic.

The VCS in Tower Hamlets needs to be supported to build upon these successes. This should involve development support to enhance the quality of organisations' applications for funding, particularly from smaller organisations, including those representing and supporting BAME communities. There is also a need for improved information sources on external funding opportunities for the sector.

There is a need to develop partnerships between VCS organisations to support applications for external funding. Partnerships for large-scale external funding bids - between the VCS, the statutory sector and local business networks - should also be supported, with VCS organisations being the budget holder for successful funding applications. This partnership working should also support the creation of a VCS funding strategy for Tower Hamlets.



**External funding**

The VCS in Tower Hamlets has demonstrated success in obtaining external funding during the pandemic. The emergency has provided an incentive for VCS





The importance of BAME-led organisations in the recovery process in the borough highlights the opportunity to strengthen their power and influence. VCS groups run for and led by smaller BAME communities should be provided with capacity building support. This should include development support for their managers and leaders. There should be joint work between the voluntary, public and private sectors to assist this process. This development support needs to establish links with the work of LBTH's BAME Commission and its work to develop local community leadership.

### Digital resources

Many VCS organisations in Tower Hamlets have used digital resources in innovative ways during the pandemic to deliver services differently. This demonstrates expertise which can be embedded in the longer-term service offer of the VCS.



The above successes highlight the importance of increasing the digital capabilities and resources of those

VCS organisations and residents in the borough whose access to and experience with IT is more limited. This exclusion or lack of experience with IT can be due to a range of factors, including economic exclusion or traditional digital technology formats being unsuitable for disabled people and people with sensory impairments.

### Developing the VCS contribution to greening

VCS organisations, with their well-established community roots, are in prime position to engage and lead on green issues, including through partnership work between organisations.



This should involve VCS organisations developing green action plans to review their organisations' carbon footprint in a range of areas and identifying actions to ensure that they operate in an environmentally friendly manner. VCS organisations also have the potential to offer community leadership on environmental issues, engaging local residents on the green agenda.



What actions will we take?

- Establish volunteering at the heart of the borough by building on the successful track record of volunteering in Tower Hamlets, including during the pandemic, to establish sustainable and varied volunteering resources for local VCS and partner organisations.



- Enable the VCS to have improved access to community buildings and other available premises by developing innovative approaches to ownership and renting and publicising available premises resources effectively to the VCS
- Ensure that the VCS is seen as a priority in the commissioning processes of local statutory sector organisations and that its access to commissioning opportunities is supported by promotion and support packages
- Promote the Social Value process in public sector procurement to ensure that local VCS organisations secure additional resources from contractors commissioned to deliver public

services



- Widen the resource pool for local VCS organisations by enhancing their capacity to make successful funding applications, making them aware of external funding opportunities and supporting the development of partnership bids
- Deliver capacity building support for VCS groups run for and led by smaller BAME communities,

- including development support for organisations' leaders
- Increase access for VCS organisations and their beneficiaries to digital resources, including devices and shared network connections, plus training of sector staff, volunteers and beneficiaries on IT skills
- Support VCS organisations to develop and implement green action plans to ensure that they operate in an environmentally friendly manner and offer community leadership on green issues



Volunteering

- Development of a borough volunteering plan to build upon the track record of volunteering in Tower Hamlets, including the success of volunteering in the pandemic, and putting volunteering at the heart of the borough and its recovery process. This will involve establishing a sustainable pool of volunteers to support VCS and partner organisations to deliver their services to local residents.
- Promoting volunteering to young people, in schools, colleges and youth hubs, linking volunteering experiences to accreditation and access to education and employment

- Establishment of permanent systems to publicise volunteering roles in the borough, linking volunteers to local VCS and partner organisations



- Increased support for employee volunteering, particularly in large public and private sector organisations, with volunteering opportunities identified through the revised borough partnership structure, outlined in Priority 3

- Ensuring quality management of local volunteering, including by developing shared volunteer management procedures and resources, to support informal and remote volunteering, including mutual aid groups. This should include agreed procedures on DBS checks for volunteers and safeguarding. Partner organisations and the THCVS should examine the possibility of providing capacity building, training and information resources to support the development of mutual aid groups - e.g. with crowdfunding - whilst respecting their independence and local roots.



- Supporting VCS organisations to benefit from volunteers' professional expertise by creating pathways to link volunteers to trusteeship roles with VCS organisations.





**Improving access to statutory sector buildings for VCS**

This will involve:

- creation of a vision and strategies for community hubs and buildings that enable VCS organisations to lead in managing them, support affordable access to these premises by the VCS and recognise the value that these premises bring to residents and VCS organisations alike
- the statutory sector determining how it can widen VCS organisations' access to its buildings, in ways which respect social distancing, to support delivery of services and assist the recovery process in the borough
- development and piloting of ways

of working that consider spaces and buildings in the broadest sense and that involve VCS organisations in positive ways at the earliest stage of new capital developments - e.g. streetscapes and public realm, planning for new buildings, redevelopment of high streets

- enabling VCS organisations to find out about available premises in the borough. This could involve the establishment of a directory of community buildings on local statutory sector and community web sites to publicise information about available buildings, including their location and how they can be accessed by VCS organisations.
- the council working with partners to provide capacity building to VCS

organisations on matters relating to facilities management of premises



**Statutory sector funding**

Local statutory sector organisations should explore the potential to:

- prioritise the VCS in their commissioning processes, including reviewing how they commission services. This could include the introduction of longer-lead in times for commissioning.

They should consider introducing promotion and support packages to link VCS organisations, particularly smaller organisations, to their contract opportunities.

- publicise and promote their grant and contract opportunities more widely with the VCS, making use of on-line publicity formats
- examine their funding processes and feedback from previous local grant and contract rounds to inform development of priorities and procedures for future grants and contracts to ensure that they fully address local priorities. Any local statutory sector organisation grant programmes for the VCS will be aligned with responsible organisations' budget processes to ensure that funding is available.



### Social value

The council and partner organisations should explore the possibility of using Social Value in their procurement processes to require their largest contractors to pledge resources - including computers, other digital equipment and executive management time - to local VCS organisations, particularly smaller organisations.



## Priority 2 - Outcomes to be achieved by 2024



### External funding

The local VCS can be supported in a number of ways to enhance its potential to secure external funding:

- The local statutory sector, voluntary sector infrastructure organisations and businesses should explore the potential of the private sector and social value processes to support smaller VCS organisations, including those representing and

supporting BAME communities, to be better positioned to obtain external funding. Support could include provision of targeted training and mentoring support on how to make high-quality funding applications and linking smaller VCS organisations to partnerships with larger VCS organisations. Support from the local statutory sector and VCS infrastructure organisations could also involve supporting smaller VCS organisations to improve their overall quality standards, which could be formally accredited to support their case with external funders.

- LBTH and THCVS must build upon their work in publicising external funding opportunities relating to the COVID-19 Pandemic to VCS organisations on their websites, providing similar information on external funding opportunities, post-pandemic.





- VCS forums, such as the new Community Sector Forum and the Health & Wellbeing Forum, should be supported to identify areas of high level need and broker VCS partnerships to produce sector focused applications for funding



- Links should be developed between VCS networks in Tower Hamlets and similar networks in neighbouring boroughs to establish partnerships and

funding applications for cross-borough projects on priority areas

- Protocols between the voluntary and local statutory sectors should be established to support applications from both sectors for external funding for new services in the borough, with support from the private sector. The protocols should stipulate how each sector can cooperate with each other in terms of development of funding applications, including consulting on these applications, and delivering the services they fund. There is the possibility of joint work on large scale funding bids - e.g. to the National Lottery - for new projects for which VCS organisations would have the responsibility of managing any

secured funds. The local statutory sector has the potential to fundraise for money and in-kind support from third parties to support VCS projects in Tower Hamlets - e.g. the council in crowdfunding to respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic.



- The above cross-partnership working should also be used to set up an external funding strategy for the VCS in Tower Hamlets, through a revived

Funders Forum. A key objective for the Forum should be developing links between external funders, including regional funders, and the VCS in the borough.

#### BAME-led VCS organisations

The local statutory sector, in partnership with VCS and business infrastructure organisations, needs to support community leadership, to aid the borough's recovery process, by providing training and development support to:

- VCS groups run for and led by smaller BAME communities
- BAME leaders in the local VCS.

### Digital resources

Local VCS organisations and their beneficiaries who have limited digital resources must be supported to fully benefit from the possibilities of digital technology. This will enable them to fully participate in the post-pandemic world, when digitally-based services will be more prevalent.



## Priority 2 - Outcomes to be achieved by 2024



This process requires support from local statutory sector organisation social value processes, volunteer resources, including employee volunteering, the development of links with local digital technology businesses and corporate donations of staff time and equipment. It could involve:

- distribution of IT equipment to VCS organisations, including corporate recycling of equipment and partnership bids for funding new equipment
- establishment of models for digital skills training for VCS organisations and beneficiaries, via corporate and health sector volunteers. This should involve local business networks

developing links with local digital technology businesses to secure their training and mentoring support for smaller VCS organisations and their beneficiaries.



- VCS organisations being supported to obtain access to good broadband connections through local business hubs, including access to flexible workspaces with broadband links.

The above work should link in with partner organisations' work to promote digitalisation in the borough, including the council's Digital Inclusion strategy.





**Developing the VCS contribution to greening**

VCS organisations, with their strong community roots, are well positioned to offer community leadership on green issues. This should involve:

- VCS organisations working in partnership to develop green action plans, which will review their carbon footprint in a range of areas. These will include use of renewable energy, transport, recycling, waste disposal, environmentally preferable purchasing, paperless systems and digital meetings. These action plans can identify measures for organisations to implement to ensure that they operate in the most

environmentally friendly manner.



- Local VCS organisations setting up a Green Forum to:
  - support VCS organisations to develop their green action plans and best practice on environmental issues. This could include joint work on areas like recycling or premises sharing.

- provide community leadership on green issues, linking in with the development of 15-minute Neighbourhoods, as proposed in Priority 1



- Partner organisations should support local VCS organisations to be more sustainable, examining the potential to link them to sustainability initiatives that they

are involved with. They should examine the potential to purchase services from local green social enterprises.



The key funding stream in London to assist the VCS to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic has been the London Community Response Fund (LCRF). Over £22 million was distributed through this Fund, which involved 60 funders across different sectors.

East End CAB to fund additional, trained benefit advisers to deal with increased demands on the organisation's service following the pandemic and lockdown. It has also supported East End CAB to purchase additional equipment to respond to the remote calls on its service.

triage system which enables beneficiaries' queries to be directed to the most appropriate adviser. This system enables appointments to be arranged between beneficiaries and advisers, with East End CAB staff contacting beneficiaries to set up these appointments. Staff also responded to beneficiaries' queries directly, via e-mail and SMS. The new system has supported queries to be dealt with in appropriate response times.

and council tax arrears.

East End CAB is exploring how it can incorporate its partners into the new telephone advice services that it has set up to respond to the pandemic.

Ali Halil, Manager at East End CAB, believes that the funding from LCRF has helped his organisation to provide a high quality service during the pandemic. It has enabled East End CAB to hire additional staff and purchase new equipment to address the high level of additional client demand that it has faced. LCRF funds has supported East End CAB to use technology in the most resourceful way to address beneficiaries' needs. The triage telephone system has saved money and time on beneficiaries' behalf.

With the closure of East End CAB's offices, client queries are being made via telephone, e-mail and SMS. It has been receiving on a daily basis, during the pandemic, 450 to 500 requests for support, compared to pre-pandemic demands of 20 to 30 cases each day, which were handled on a face-to-face-basis.

The additional advisers have manned the new advice lines to respond to the pandemic, including a telephone

The main area of the additional queries from beneficiaries during the pandemic have concerned Universal Credit, including from people who had been made redundant or put on furlough, because of lockdown. There have also been additional queries about housing, such as rent

Page 205 Organisations operating in Tower Hamlets have had significant success in securing LCRF monies, with £2.3 million being awarded to projects that work solely in Tower Hamlets, or for multi-borough projects that cover Tower Hamlets. East End Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) obtained £55,000 to support it to deliver its work in Tower Hamlets and neighbouring boroughs.

This LCRF allocation has enabled

# Priority 3

## Improved partnership arrangements across sectors



Why is this priority important?

The VCS Strategy's consultation process identified a number of ways for the sector to work with partners to improve local residents' lives, including the need for:

- a new forum representing smaller VCS organisations to influence policy and decision making
- better two-way communication between the council and the VCS
- VCS organisations to ensure that local residents have an effective voice in local consultation
- strengthened collaboration and referral pathways between organisations.

The VCS has played a key role in responding to COVID-19 in the borough, successfully delivering new services to vulnerable residents and adapting existing services during lockdown. It will be vitally important in both the recovery process in the borough and the post-pandemic world.



There is an opportunity to improve the statutory-voluntary sector joint working structure in order to support the implementation of the VCS

Strategy, the recovery from the pandemic and the journey to a post-pandemic world. This improved structure should promote a more open dialogue and improved information sharing between partners.

VCS participation in policy making in Tower Hamlets has often been piecemeal, with engagement taking place quite late in the process. The role of the VCS in consulting with local residents needs to be developed to be at the forefront of consultation.

There is a need to develop better working links between VCS organisations, the local statutory sector and local businesses. Each sector can benefit from the

expertise sharing and interaction with each other.

The VCS can engage in the economic recovery process in the borough by increased participation in local opportunities for growth. Partner organisations should examine their potential to commission more services from local VCS organisations.



The COVID-19 Pandemic has highlighted the importance of organisations working together to respond to emergency situations. It has raised the need for the VCS to engage at a strategic level with local statutory sector organisations in relation to resilience planning for Tower Hamlets, to assist the borough to respond effectively to future emergencies.

COVID-19's disproportionate effect on local BAME communities and the Black Lives Matter movement have raised the importance of ensuring that all public and community services adhere to equality principles in their service delivery. There is a need for joint work between the local voluntary, public and private sectors to ensure that all residents

of the borough receive effective and responsive services that fully meet their needs.



**What actions will we take?**

- Place the VCS at the forefront of consultation processes in the borough in order to ensure that all of Tower Hamlets residents are able to have a say in the development of local strategy and policy making
- Establish a more central role for the VCS in the borough's joint decision-making process, particularly in relation to the recovery process from the pandemic
- Develop protocols for sharing and use of evidence and data across VCS organisations, and between VCS organisations and the statutory sector, to inform policy development
- Develop links between VCS organisations, the statutory sector and local businesses in order that each sector can benefit from newly established working links. This should include promoting the potential for VCS organisations to access local business opportunities.
- Local statutory sector organisations should work in partnership with local VCS infrastructure organisations to develop strategic relationships in regard to resilience planning. This strategic engagement should also support VCS organisations' operational responses to emergency situations.
- Joint work between the local voluntary, statutory and private sectors is required in order to embed equality principles in the delivery of services to local residents and promote equality within the borough.





**Increasing VCS role in consultation and engagement**

VCS organisations' strong roots with local communities can help to amplify residents' voices, including with the local statutory sector. The community intelligence from the VCS must be at the heart of consultation and engagement in the borough. Effective use of this intelligence will support the development of new local policies and strategies. This will involve the local statutory and voluntary sectors developing processes for deciding how and when to make use of co-production and consultation as part of the policy formation process, including the establishment of clearer "policy pipelines".



**Strategic decisions are influenced by VCS at a community level**

This will be achieved through improved communications and engagement on policy development between the VCS and local statutory sector organisations.

Joint working between the local voluntary and statutory sectors needs to result in a meaningful impact on policy development. The contribution of the VCS must be fully

reflected in resulting policies and strategies.

This will involve:

- establishing a revised Tower Hamlets Cooperate-Voluntary Community Sector Partnership structure, with Cooperate having a more pro-active role in securing local partners' direct involvement in policy development

- Setting up Tower Hamlets Community Sector Forum to enable a wider range of people and organisations from the VCS, particularly from smaller and more informal groups, to fully influence the development of local policy and strategy
- VCS Forums leading implementation of VCS Strategy and recovery work.





**Establishing information sharing protocols**

There is a need to improve the sharing of information and data between the local voluntary and statutory sectors. Agreed protocols in this area can inform policy development and decision making and support applications for external funding for new services.



This will involve developing:

- a system where the sharing of lessons and evidence from VCS projects can be recorded to feed into the policy and decision-making process
- increased joint working between statutory sector data and intelligence teams and VCS organisations - e.g. on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.

**Developing closer working relationships between VCS and local statutory and private sectors**

This needs to involve:

- partner organisations examining their potential to purchase more services from local VCS organisations. This would help to

revive the local economy and support the economic development of local neighbourhoods in the borough.



- setting up network meetings and a business forum between VCS organisations, local businesses, including SMEs, and East London Business Alliance to broker business opportunities between each sector. Any plans to promote engagement with local businesses will need to be mindful of the

challenges that they are facing due to the economic dislocation caused by the pandemic. However, the above networking could also help to promote opportunities for local businesses who are currently under threat. Furthermore, each sector could gain from the other's expertise and insights into the local economy and community needs.

- As outlined in Priority 2, the local statutory sector needs to use the Social Value process to enable businesses to donate management expertise, computers and other equipment to VCS organisations, particularly smaller organisations.



### Resilience planning

The VCS needs to be a full partner with local statutory sector organisations in regard to resilience planning for any future emergency situations in the borough. Local statutory sector organisations should work with local VCS infrastructure organisations, such as THCVS and VCTH, and with VCS networks, such as the Inter-Faith Forum, to develop strategic relationships in regard to resilience planning. This strategic engagement should also support VCS organisations' operational responses to emergency situations.

### Joint working to promote equality

The local VCS, statutory sector organisations and business networks must work together to promote

equality principles in regard to delivery of services to Tower Hamlets residents. BAME-led VCS organisations should be central to this process, as should faith groups which represent BAME communities, particularly those providing services to local residents.



LBTH has set up a BAME Inequality Commission to focus on the promotion of equalities in the areas of health, community leadership and employment. The work of this

Commission can support the promotion of more responsive VCS services to local BAME residents, particularly in the areas of health and social care, which is even more important than ever due to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities. We will work to make VCS management committees and trustee boards more representative of the diversity of the borough, with more equal representation of BAME people and women, for example, on VCS Boards.



This process can also be supported by strengthening the involvement of the range of faith communities across Tower Hamlets. This will build on the role of the Interfaith Forum in linking faith communities to wider community support. Faith groups played a vital role in responding to community needs during the pandemic, particularly amongst local BAME communities. There is a need to ensure that faith communities' role continues to be central to our approach.



LBTH worked with the VCS to establish a Food Hub in April 2020, a collective partnership to provide assistance to vulnerable residents during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Hub is run by council staff, working with VCTH and food banks, with 27 VCS organisations helping to supply and deliver food to high risk or self-isolating residents.

The Hub has been feeding 5,000 people a week, via food parcels, offering Halal, vegan and fresh food options where required. Where possible, food has been sourced from local retailers. This ensures that allocated food parcels, which also involve food delivered to the Hub by the government, are sufficiently nutritious for vulnerable residents. There has also been

support from private sector companies in relation to packaging and distribution of the food.

The Emergency Food Hub has worked with the Somali Senior Citizens Club (SSSC). This work has enabled hot, Halal meals to be delivered on a daily basis to 30 SSSC members. Jama Omar from SSSC reports that the Food Hub is vital for his organisation's beneficiaries as it provides the security of knowing that they will receive food every day. The support from the Food Hub and SSSC provides beneficiaries with someone to talk to and makes them feel part of the community. SSSC has also been able to support these beneficiaries through shopping, evening befriending sessions and getting their laundry washed.

The Women's Inclusive Team (WIT) has also worked with the Food Hub. 90 of WIT's beneficiaries, who are predominantly Somali, have been able to benefit on a weekly basis from the Food Bank. The Bank has provided them with vegetarian ready meals, fresh food and vegetables, plus ambient foods which can be stored for long periods. All food provided meets beneficiaries' dietary requirements. Local residents have also benefitted from WIT's community kitchen, which was feeding 150 people a week, seven days a week, during the height of the pandemic.

Jennifer Sutcliffe, Community Centre Manager at WIT, believes that the importance of the Food Hub and WIT's community kitchen is that

these services are feeding people who would not otherwise be fed. They remove feelings of isolation that might otherwise result from WIT's luncheon club being closed. WIT has been providing beneficiaries with daily telephone befriending calls. Many of the beneficiaries do not have family or friends, or cannot cook, as they are living in temporary accommodation. A number have lost their jobs and income overnight and thus cannot buy food. Jennifer believes that both the Emergency Food Hub and WIT benefit from working with each other, each complementing the other's services.



## Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020-2024

The VCS Strategy sets out a framework for action and will be implemented via a delivery plan approach developed by strategy partners. These partners include the VCS, led by THCVS, and statutory and private sector partners. This approach will translate the words of the strategy into action.



The work will be supported by a revised Cooperate-VCS Partnership structure. Cooperate is the key VCS partnership body in the borough. In

## Next Steps

the new structure, it will be co-chaired by the council's Cabinet Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector and the Chief Executive Officer of THCVS.

Meetings of Cooperate will bring together relevant partners and representatives of the wider VCS to take the strategic lead on delivering against VCS Strategy priorities, with task and finish groups taking the lead on who does what and when. A number of VCS forums will report to Cooperate under the new structure, including the new Tower Hamlets Community Sector Forum. These Forums will take specific VCS Strategy priorities and identify actions and solutions to address them.



The VCS Forums will seek to engage in this work key anchor organisations in the borough including the council, the NHS, registered providers of social housing, New City College, and the police, as well as the private sector, through organisations such as East London Business Alliance. This approach will ensure that the VCS and partners have ownership of the VCS Strategy and resulting actions, with the oversight of Cooperate.

Cooperate will also engage with Tower Hamlets Partnership Executive Group (THPEG), which involves senior management from key stakeholder organisations in the borough, to ensure full engagement of the VCS Strategy with the Tower Hamlets Plan.





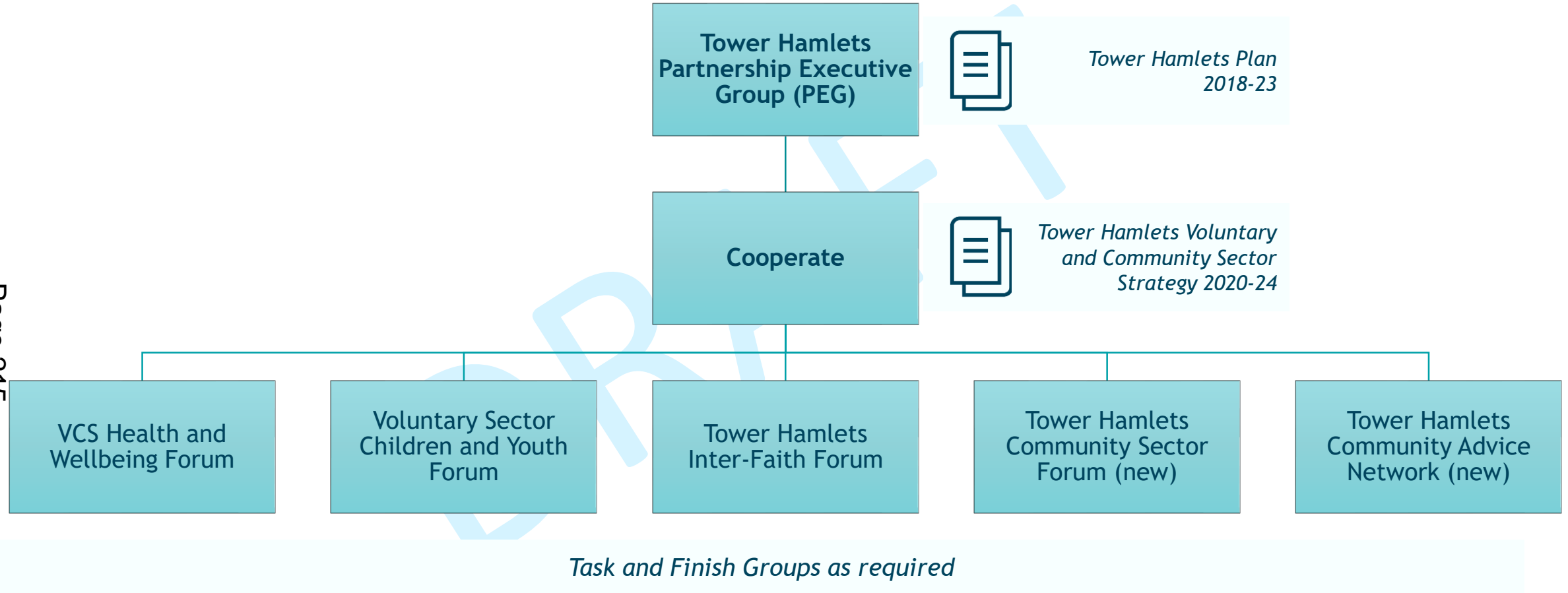
- establishing an external funding strategy for the VCS
- enabling VCS organisations with low levels of digital resources and skills to access digital training and equipment
- increasing the VCS role in consultation and engagement, using its community roots to amplify residents' voices
- improved communications and engagement on policy development between the VCS and local statutory organisations. This should ensure that strategic decisions are influenced by the VCS at a community level.

The VCS Strategy's key priorities in its first year will be:

- mapping VCS organisations and services in the borough to support the establishment of an on-line directory of VCS services and organisations. This directory should be hosted on local partner organisations' web sites.
- development of a borough volunteering plan

The priorities for delivery in future years will be determined by Cooperate, working with the VCS Forums, and focusing on priority areas that have been highlighted in this strategy.







Tower Hamlets Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy has a vision of a diverse and thriving VCS working alongside residents, the council and partner organisations to achieve better outcomes for residents. If you would like to know more about the VCS Strategy for Tower Hamlets, or would like to become involved with the voluntary sector in Tower Hamlets, then please contact the London Borough of Hamlets or Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service:

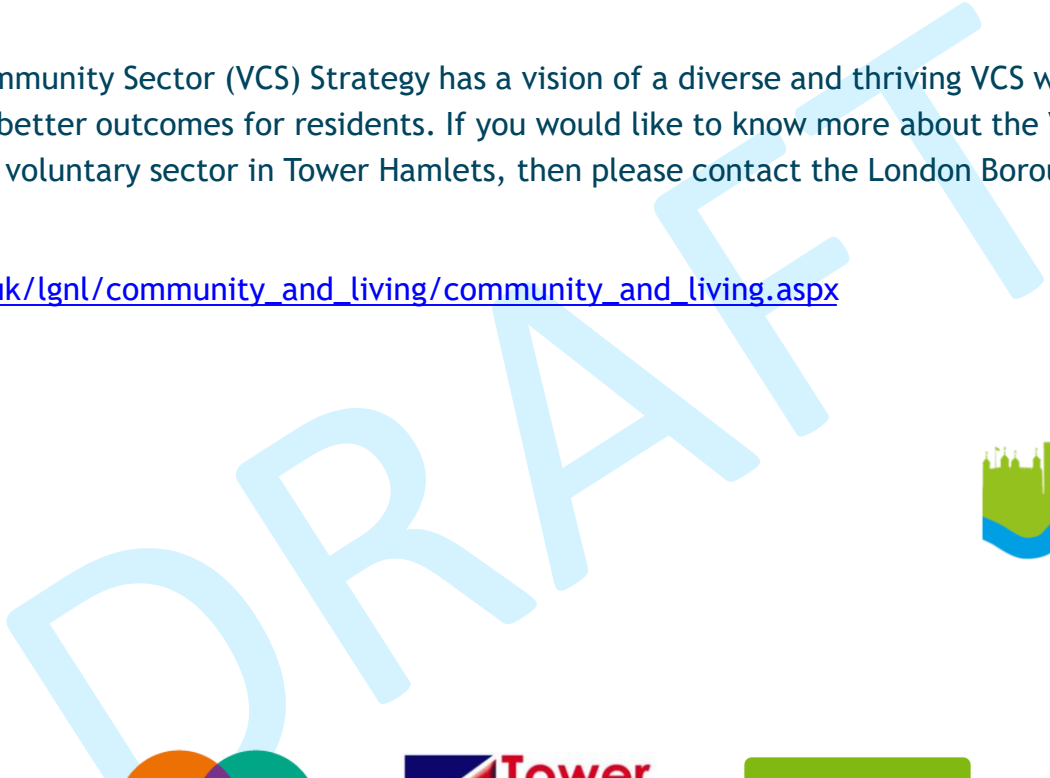
[https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/community\\_and\\_living/community\\_and\\_living.aspx](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/community_and_living/community_and_living.aspx)

<https://thcvs.org.uk/>

[vcs@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:vcs@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

[info@thcvs.org.uk](mailto:info@thcvs.org.uk)

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## **Appendix 2: Response to Issues Raised Through Consultation for Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy**

In engaging the sector on the strategy, we have held a number of dedicated events and focus groups prior to the pandemic, which all VCS organisations registered with THCVS were invited to. Consultation to support the development of the VCS strategy has also taken place with a number of existing partnerships and voluntary sector networks. This consultation work has included:

- Co-operate meetings on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2019, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 and 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020
- Health and Wellbeing Forum meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020
- Premises Forum meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2019
- Somali Community Working Group meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020
- Tower Hamlets Co-production Network meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019
- Tower Hamlets Funding Fair on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020
- Tower Hamlets Partnership Executive Group meetings of 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020 and 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- Tower Hamlets Registered Providers (Housing) Community Involvement Network meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- Training Enterprise & Employment Forum workshop on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019
- VCS Representatives meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020
- VCS Strategy Co-design session with VCS organisations on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019
- VCS Strategy Development Session – Premises, Volunteering and Infrastructure on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020
- Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020


The development of the VCS Strategy has also been influenced and supported by:

- a survey of VCS organisations, conducted by the Council and Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services in April 2020, at the start of the pandemic
- regular teleconferences that have been taking place since May 2020, between the Mayor, LBTH officers and representatives of VCS organisations in the borough to identify issues and support joint working in response to the pandemic. There was a presentation on the VCS Strategy at the Teleconference meeting of 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Key Messages (You Said)	What Will Be Done As A Result (We Will Do)
No Council-led central information system for VCS to advertise their services.	Establishment of a stronger VCS digital presence in the borough, including on statutory sector web sites, with introduction of more interactive web material, VCS case studies and an on-line services directory.
Need to celebrate the value VCS brings to communities	Setting up a high profile VCS showcase event, including presentations of awards for projects, organisations and people
Need for better communication between VCS organisations to understand and strengthen referrals	Development and trialling of digital tools and using them to support better referrals between VCS services
Sometimes things need to be hyperlocal; people feel more comfortable if a service is nearby and walkable	Establishment of the 15 minute Neighbourhoods/ ward-based model to promote and develop localised, targeted and multi-purpose services to meet needs in the community and revive local neighbourhoods
Need to recognise importance of both employee and informal volunteering. Untapped potential for employee volunteering in the borough and possibly lots of unmapped, informal volunteering, e.g. in faith groups.	Development of a borough volunteering plan to put all types of volunteering at heart of borough – employee volunteering, informal volunteering, mutual aid groups, linking volunteering to access to education and employment, trustees.
Need for on-line premises directory for VCS organisations.	Establishment of directory of community buildings on local statutory sector and community web sites to publicise information about available buildings, including their location and how they can be accessed by VCS organisations.

Key Messages (You Said)	What Will Be Done As A Result (We Will Do)
Contracts not reflecting the needs of local organisations – commissioning needs to change.	Local statutory sector organisations should explore how they could possibly prioritise the VCS in their commissioning processes, review how they commission services and consider introducing promotion and support packages to link VCS organisations to their contract opportunities.
Need for cross sector partnership bids, negotiated and agreed via sector forums.	VCS forums, such as the new Community Sector Forum and the Health & Wellbeing Forum, should be supported to identify areas of high level need and broker VCS partnerships to produce sector focused applications for funding
Need to minimise digital exclusion, including access for all groups.	VCS organisations with low level of digital resources will be supported to obtain digital skills, equipment and broadband connections
VCS can provide a voice for residents – online resident surveys and consultations will not reach everyone and might not be understood.	Increase VCS role in consultation and engagement in order to amplify residents' voices, by making use of its strong roots with local communities to ensure the community intelligence that they have is at the heart of consultation and engagement in the borough to support the development of new local policies and strategies.
VCS has the ability to represent different communities, give residents a voice and support collective bargaining.	Set up Tower Hamlets Community Sector Forum to enable a wider range of people and organisations from the VCS, particularly from smaller groups, to fully influence the development of local policies and strategies.

Key Messages (You Said)	What Will Be Done As A Result (We Will Do)
Lack of accurate and up to date information.	Increased joint working between statutory sector data and intelligence teams and VCS organisations – e.g. on Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
Challenge for the VCS in interacting with private sector.	Set up of VCS organisation-business network meetings and multi-agency business forum.
Reduction in support for equalities groups.	Training and development support for VCS groups run for and led by smaller BAME communities.

<p><b>Cabinet</b></p> <p>25 November 2020</p>	
<p><b>Report of:</b> Will Tuckley, Chief Executive</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Strategic delivery and performance report – quarter 2 2020/21</b></p>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<p><b>John Biggs, Executive Mayor</b>  <b>Cllr Asma Begum, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Youth and Equalities</b></p>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	<p>Sharon Godman, Divisional Director Strategy, Policy &amp; Performance          Thorsten Dreyer, Head of Intelligence &amp; Performance</p>
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	25 August 2020
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	This report has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	<b>All Strategic Plan priorities and outcomes</b>

### Executive Summary

This report provides Cabinet with an update on the delivery and implementation of the council’s Strategic Plan in quarters 1 and 2 of 2020/21.

### Recommendations:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the strategic delivery and performance report for quarters 1 and 2 2020/21.
2. Review the performance of the strategic measures, including those measures where the minimum expectation has been missed; and
3. Review progress in delivering the council’s Strategic Plan.

### **1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 The council is committed to improving outcomes for residents. Our corporate

priorities and outcomes are found in our Strategic Plan and provide a framework for action.

- 1.2 Our Performance & Accountability Framework sets out the process for monitoring the timely and effective delivery of the Strategic Plan to improve outcomes for residents. In line with the framework, Cabinet receives regular update reports to ensure oversight of pace, delivery, performance and improvement activities.
- 1.3 This report promotes openness, transparency and accountability by enabling Tower Hamlets residents to track progress of activities that impact on their lives and the communities they live in.

## **2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Cabinet can decide not to review the delivery and performance information. This is not recommended as Members have a key role to review and challenge underperformance and to utilise performance information to inform resource allocation.

## **3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

### *3.1 Background*

- 3.2 The Strategic Plan is the councils' main business plan and embeds the priorities of the administration into council delivery. This report provides Cabinet with an update on the delivery and implementation of the council's Strategic Plan to the end of quarter 2 2020/21.
- 3.3 The council is committed to making Tower Hamlets a safer, cleaner, fairer borough. In 2018 we adopted three new corporate priorities and 11 outcomes that provide a framework for action to improve outcomes for our residents.
- 3.4 Our strategic delivery and performance reporting cycle would normally see Cabinet receiving a report at the end of each quarter. However, since March we have been focusing our efforts on responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and protecting those most vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic. As a result, we have had to delay some of our usual business for a period of time.

### *3.5 Performance summary*

- 3.6 Over the first half of the year, like most councils, we have focused our efforts on responding to the pandemic. We have prioritised protecting the most vulnerable and those most at risk during the height of the pandemic. We have supported more than 8,500 shielding residents by assessing their needs, delivering food or medication and provided social support to tackle loneliness. We have worked with schools to ensure the children of key workers were able to go to school, allowing their parents and carers to provide essential

services. We set up a community volunteering hub to coordinate the enthusiasm more than 2,000 volunteers have shown to support their communities. We have managed support schemes for businesses on behalf of central government, including issuing grants and business rates relief.

- 3.7 Alongside this, we have worked hard to keep other services running where possible in line government guidance and Covid-19 regulations. We have had to change the way we deliver quickly and in some cases this means we had to review how much of what we wanted to deliver can realistically be achieved. We have had to close some services for periods of time during lockdown and some remain closed. Other services had to be reduced or we moved to different delivery models, including online only. All of this has an impact on our strategic delivery and performance.
- 3.8 In July we published an initial pandemic impact report, which has helped us reshape our services and the Strategic Plan for the remainder of the year. We updated our Strategic Plan in July to reflect the changing needs and priorities during an ongoing pandemic and as we move into the recovery phase.
- 3.9 We have amended some of our performance targets in light of the pandemic and to reflect the changed circumstances in which we now operate. This means that in some cases, performance may be lower than last year but is meeting the new targets which take into account the challenges of delivery during the pandemic. We have also changed the way we calculate some indicators to better reflect the nature of the indicator. Examples include indicator that measure percentage of WorkPath customers who share particular protected characteristics. The changes we have had to make means that performance is not always directly comparable to last year.
- 3.10 Some indicators that perform highly must be seen in the context of the pandemic. Where customer numbers have reduced, we may have been able to dedicate more time to those who needed us the most. That may result in higher than usual performance when compared to other periods prior to the pandemic.
- 3.11 Our first quarterly strategic delivery and performance report of 2020/21 summarises what we have delivered, how we have made a difference to people's lives, and how we have performed against our strategic outcome indicators. What we have delivered and how we have made a difference during this very challenging time is set out in the attached report.
- 3.12 At the end of quarter 2 2020/21, 12 performance indicators have met or are exceeding their target and 6 are between the target and the minimum expectation, while 10 are falling short. The remaining 28 indicators are data only measures or they are based on our annual residents' survey which is due to take place in quarter 4. Due to Covid-19 there are also some indicators for which data collection was suspended or not possible and is now resuming. These include school attendance as schools were operating for small numbers of pupils only during much of the summer term.

- 3.13 Indicators that are exceeding the target broadly fall into the main areas of the business as set out below. Full details of all indicator performance can be found in appendix 1.

#### Education, skills, employment and income

- Number of SMEs and new enterprises supported through the council's business programme
- Residents who are female supported into employment by the Workpath service
- Residents who come from deprived postcodes supported into employment by the Workpath service
- Average annual income increase for residents receiving benefit maximisation support
- Resident Universal Credit application support
- Percentage of Idea Store learners who pass their English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course

#### Health, social care and safeguarding

- People who are more independent after being supported through reablement services
- Residential and nursing admissions (over 65s)

#### Environment and sustainability

- Primary school pupils benefiting from a school street at their school (traffic reduction outside the school)
- Level of household recycling (quarterly audited)

#### Community safety

- Victims of violence against women and girls or hate crime who feel safer after engaging with victim support

#### Customer service and how we work as a council

- Service user satisfaction with the council's online service offer
- Media and press view of the council

- 3.14 Indicators that are falling short of the minimum expectation broadly fall into the main areas of the business as set out below:

#### Education, skills, employment and income

- Number of adults supported into employment by the Workpath service
- Residents who have disabilities supported into employment by the Workpath service



- Number of adults supported into employment by the Workpath partnership

#### Environment and sustainability

- Level of public realm cleanliness (litter)

#### Housing supply and homelessness

- Homeless households moved into permanent social housing
- Households prevented from becoming homeless

#### Community safety

- Young people entering the youth justice system for the first time

#### Customer service and how we work as a council

- Council staff sickness absence rate
- Budget variance for the general fund

### 3.15 *Setting targets and improving outcomes*

3.16 The council is committed to driving improvement which sees us deliver high performing services and in turn improved outcomes for our residents. As part of our move to becoming an outcomes-based organisation, we have introduced a more mature approach to performance management which seeks improvement while at the same time taking into account more clearly the operating realities we face.

3.17 We need to consider factors affecting local government today. For example, budgetary constraints mean we have to do more with less whilst our population continues to grow, and expectations rise.

3.18 Absolute numerical improvement is often less appropriate now that we have refocussed our activities on improving the life chances of our most vulnerable residents. A focus on numerical improvement can drive the wrong kind of behaviour and place the focus in the wrong area of concern.

3.19 Our improvement journey has been steep, and whilst there is no doubt that we need to continue improving, there is also recognition that sustainability is important. Improvements and new ways of working take time to bed in, and our targets need to reflect this.

3.20 Our target setting principles take these challenges into consideration:

- We will only set targets for performance indicators and not for contextual indicators. Contextual indicators are those less directly in the council's control but which are important for prioritising council investments and actions.

- Targets will be set using a bandwidth approach consisting of a target and a minimum expectation.
- The target (upper bandwidth) should adhere to one or more of the following target setting principles:
- Be aligned to an external target, such as a statutory, national or Mayoral manifesto target, or target in strategies and policies where they have been agreed by Cabinet or a Tower Hamlets Partnership group;
- Aim to improve on our benchmark performance position within the appropriate benchmark family group or maintain a high level of performance where we are among top performing councils;
- Be based on management information evidence, especially for new measures where targets have previously not been set;
- Take account of operational practicalities as described below;
- In relation to perception surveys, we will monitor the direction of travel rather than set specific targets.
- Targets for all measures are set against the operating realities of the service – for example service changes, funding changes, changes in legislation or in local or national policy. These changes may result in the need to re-baseline the targets from one year to the next to reflect the changing circumstances in which the service operates.

3.21 The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent and ongoing recovery has had a significant impact on many services. Our target setting principles take these challenges into consideration.

3.22 Changes that have had occurred as a result of Covid-19 can be taken into consideration under the last principle. Where services have had to cease or significantly alter operations in response to government guidelines we have adjusted existing targets accordingly, where needed, to ensure they remain realistic. For example, cumulative targets will not take into periods during which services were suspended. Targets also take into consideration, where possible, any further impacts Covid-19 may have on services.

#### **4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The council's Strategic Plan is focused on meeting the needs of the diverse communities living in Tower Hamlets and ensuring that everyone can play their part in a vibrant and cohesive community. The strategic outcomes and supporting activities are designed to reduce inequalities and the foster community cohesion. Equalities considerations are embedded in all outcomes of the Strategic Plan with specific actions focusing on areas of inequality identified through the Borough Needs Assessment being addressed under Outcome 4 - Inequality is reduced and people feel that they fairly share the benefits from growth.

#### **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 *Best Value (BV) Implications*

5.3 Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 requires the council as a best value authority to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”. Monitoring of performance information and acting on the findings is an important way in which that obligation is being fulfilled.

## 5.4 *Sustainable action for a greener environment*

5.5 Outcome 5 - People live in a borough that is clean and green is dedicated to taking sustainable action for a cleaner environment. It focuses on key areas of sustainability, including air quality, waste and carbon emission. Key activities include work to drive up the borough’s recycling rate, reducing CO2 emissions, and implementing a number of initiatives to improve air quality, including making Tower Hamlets one of the best boroughs for walking and cycling through our Liveable Streets programme.

## 5.6 *Risk management implications*

5.7 In line with the council’s risk management strategy, the information contained within the strategic indicator monitoring will assist Cabinet, Corporate Directors and relevant service managers in delivering the ambitious targets set out in the Strategic Plan. Regular monitoring reports will enable Members and Corporate Directors to keep progress under regular review.

## 5.8 *Crime and disorder reduction implications*

5.9 Strategic Plan Outcome 7 - People feel safer in their neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour is tackled and Outcome 8 – People feel they are part of a vibrant and cohesive community are dedicated to crime and disorder reductions. Activities under these outcomes are designed to improve safety, the perception of safety and community cohesion.

#### 5.10 *Safeguarding implications*

5.11 Strategic Plan Outcome 2 - Children and young people are protected so they get the best start in life and can realise their potential is dedicated to keeping children and young people safe from harm. The activities under this outcome seek to safeguard children and build on our Ofsted success.

5.12 Outcome 3 - People access joined-up services when they need them and feel healthier and more independent is our key outcome in relation to safeguarding vulnerable people. Key activities include projects to address childhood obesity and improve nutrition, as well as supporting greater choice and independence for those requiring adult social care.

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

6.1 This report sets out the delivery, performance and improvement position for the Strategic Plan at the end of quarter 2 2020/21. There are no additional financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report

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

7.1 The report provides performance information. It is consistent with good administration for the council to consider performance related monitoring information. This also assists the council achieve Best Value and may demonstrate continuing improvement.

7.2 When considering its performance, the council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (the public sector equality duty). The council's targets are formulated by reference to its public sector equality duty and monitoring performance against those targets should help to ensure they are delivered.

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

### **Linked Report**

- None

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Strategic delivery and performance report – quarter 2 2020/21

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

- None

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

Juanita Haynes, Senior Intelligence and Performance Manager

Vicky Allen, Intelligence and Performance Manager

# Strategic delivery and performance report

## Mid-year review 2020-21



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## Our delivery and performance

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## Our priorities and outcomes

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The Strategic Plan is the main business planning document of the council and a central part of our Performance Management and Accountability Framework.

The strategic delivery and performance report explains our performance against the goals and targets we set in the Strategic Plan.

### Priority 1 - People are aspirational, independent and have equal access to opportunities

1. People access a range of education, training, and employment opportunities.
2. Children and young people are protected so they get the best start in life and can realise their potential.
3. People access joined-up services when they need them and feel healthier and more independent.
4. Residents feel they fairly share the benefits from growth and inequality is tackled.

### Priority 2 - A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in

5. People live in a borough that is clean and green.
6. People live in good quality affordable homes and well-designed neighbourhoods.
7. People feel safer in their neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour is tackled.
8. People feel they are part of a cohesive and vibrant community.

### Priority 3 - A dynamic, outcomes-based council using digital innovation and partnership working to respond to the changing needs of our borough

9. People say we are open and transparent putting residents at the heart of everything we do.
10. People say we work together across boundaries in a strong and effective partnership to achieve the best outcomes for our residents.
11. People say we continuously seek innovation and strive for excellence to embed a culture of sustainable improvement.

## Priority 1

People are aspirational,  
independent and have  
equal access to  
opportunities

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## Our delivery and performance

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### Outcome 1

People access a range of education, training and employment opportunities



Outstanding education and economic opportunities support people to thrive in our changing and challenging environment. We want to ensure that everyone has the best possible opportunities and life chances.

#### What we have delivered

We have spent a significant part of the year refocussing our work to support residents and local businesses impacted by the pandemic and to aid in anticipation of economic recovery.

We are developing a programme of training on introductory digital skills and modern online recruitment methods as part of all core training that we provide at WorkPath. This training which is due to start early in the new year will equip job seekers with the skills needed to use new technologies so that they can participate in online recruitment and work from home.

We managed the government's coronavirus grant funding to over 5,000 small businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. Businesses received cash grants of between £10,000 and £25,000 to help with cashflow and fixed costs. In addition, we also managed the government's 100% business rates discount for over 3,000 local businesses.

We have developed a new 'Business Pivot Project' which will provide £1,000 funding to support 50 local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to access new markets and sources of income. This project launches in October.

We have been raising awareness of the various support schemes and initiatives that businesses can take advantage of. So far, we have helped several businesses to set up crowdfunding and to access £5,000 match funding through the 'Pay it Forward' scheme.

We have supported local hospitality businesses to continue to trade through the pandemic by putting in place temporary road closures, closing off parts of Brick Lane to traffic. This pedestrianisation has created safe walking space and space for outdoor seating for restaurant owners encouraging residents and visitors to support local shops, markets and businesses.

#### What difference have we made

We are tackling long term youth unemployment by bidding to deliver the government's Kickstart scheme. We are working with our partners and with businesses in the borough to provide high quality work placements. We expect to recruit at least 50 participants and will support them to gain the relevant skills needed to progress to permanent employment.

Over 60 small businesses have benefitted from attending enterprise masterclass webinars to help them adopt new working practices in digital trading, online marketing, and business resilience.

Businesses in Petticoat Lane market will see their footfall increase through our investment in the area. This will help them recover from the wider economic impacts of the pandemic.



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## Our delivery and performance

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We have secured more than £600,000 worth of investment from Historic England for improvements to Petticoat Lane which has recently been named a High Street Heritage Action Zone. We will be restoring shop fronts in Wentworth Street and the Victorian Public toilets in Leyden Street.

### Our performance

We have selected five measures to understand whether we are making progress in achieving this outcome. We have met or exceeded the target for one measure, two measures fell short of the target but exceeded our minimum expectation. Unfortunately, we did not achieve our target for one measure. The remaining measure does not have an outturn for this quarter.

We have provided 156 SMEs and new enterprises with advice and training through our business programmes, focussing on recovery activities post lockdown.

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## Outcome 1

People access a range of education, training and employment opportunities



90.1 per cent of young people in the borough are in education, employment or training – we have not met our target. Emerging evidence suggests that across the country young people are more impacted by Covid-19 job losses than other age groups. 3,111 out of 5,520 young people were in education, employment or training. In August, many young people will be in ‘transition’ and the figure always drops during this period as we need to confirm destinations after school, which we are doing and will be working on over the next few months.

Between April and September, our WorkPath service has helped 51 people find a new job. This is less than we wanted to achieve. The economic downturn has resulted in fewer jobs becoming available. We are starting to deliver more employability training to help our residents, particularly those further away from the labour market who will find themselves competing with

those who have recently become redundant.

Due to limited school opening during lockdown our usual half-termly attendance collection was suspended and will resume in the Autumn half-term. However, we have continued to work closely with schools and have run a series of campaigns to reassure parents and carers about the return to school. The highest daily attendance rate in Tower Hamlets during September for secondary school pupils was estimated by the DfE to be 91%.

**Outcome 1**

People access a range of education, training and employment opportunities



Indicator Name	Outturn 2019/20	Target Q2 2020/21	Minimum expectation Q2 2020/21	Outturn Q2 2020/21	Year on year trend Q2 2020/21	RAG status Q2 2020/21	Comment
Percentage of secondary pupils attending school regularly	90.4%	87.0%	82.0%	<b>N/A</b>	N/A	N/A	Due to the changes in schooling our usual half-termly attendance collection was suspended and will resume in the Autumn half-term.
Percentage of Idea Store Learning learners who pass their course	93.0%	90.0%	81.0%	<b>85.0%</b>	N/A	<b>AMBER</b>	Minimum expectation exceeded
Percentage of 16-17 year olds in education, employment or training	94.3%	93.0%	83.7%	<b>90.1%</b>	↑	<b>AMBER</b>	Latest data is for August 2020. It is impossible to predict exactly what the impact of Covid and the economic fall out will be on this specific cohort. 3,111 out of 5,520 young people were in education, employment or training
Number of SMEs and new enterprises supported through the council's business programme	124	74	67	<b>156</b>	↑	<b>GREEN</b>	YTD. Target exceeded
Number of adults supported into employment by the Workpath service	504	156	140	<b>51</b>	↓	<b>RED</b>	YTD. The economic downturn has resulted in less jobs becoming available for residents supported by the Workpath service.

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## Our delivery and performance

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High quality provision to support the learning, development and care of young children prepares them for school and their futures. We want children and young people to live in a safe environment, ensuring the best health and development outcomes.

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## Outcome 2

Children and young people are protected so they get the best start in life and can realise their potential

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### What we have delivered

We are putting children and young people at the heart of what we do so that they have the best possible life chances.

For most of the first half of the year schools were closed following the government lockdown announcement. We made sure children of critical key workers and vulnerable children still attending school were able to access a safe educational environment. We worked with schools to develop guidance around social distancing and infection control procedures and encouraged attendance of vulnerable children. We also provided alternative provision for children whose schools were unable to open because of staff self-isolation.

Over the summer we offered families and young people over 200 free online and outdoor activities organised by the

council and voluntary organisations, including sports, music, reading, virtual baking and much more. Much of our usual offer was reconfigured to comply with lockdown restrictions.

Through our Idea Stores children participated in 'The Silly Squad' summer reading challenge and games, collecting rewards and earning badges as they read new books. Our youth arts scheme – 'A' Team Arts – ran an exciting online programme for young people between the ages of 11 and 19 about how art can be used to help shape a greener future after Covid-19.

### What difference we have made

During the pandemic we made sure that children and families continued to have access to vital health services and special educational needs support. Children's centres in key locations around the borough remained open during the height of the pandemic.

Ensuring children are safe from harm is a key priority. Keeping our multi-agency safeguarding hub open and operating alongside support from the assessment and intervention team during this period has meant that we were able to see at least 75% of families face to face for meetings and visits.

We increased phone and social media contact with care leavers and looked after young people so that we could continue to help address the issues they faced such as struggling with lack of routine and maintaining a healthy diet. Some young people were also prioritised by the Through Care Team for face-to-face visits and all care leavers have been receiving regular food parcels.

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## Our delivery and performance

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By distributing free broadband and laptops to 200 families, we were able to prevent children with poor access to online learning fall behind whilst they were being home schooled. We worked with our partners, the LETTA Trust schools, Poplar HARCA, the East End Community Foundation and Community Fibre to achieve this.

### Our performance

We have selected five measures to understand whether we are making progress in achieving this outcome. We are unable to report on two of the measures due to Covid-19, which impacted the opening of schools in the summer term. For the remaining three indicators we do not have final performance data at the moment and we expect to report on these in the next quarter.

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## Outcome 2

Children and young people are protected so they get the best start in life and can realise their potential

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## Performance summary

### Outcome 2

Children and young people are protected so they get the best start in life and can realise their potential



Indicator Name	Outturn 2019/20	Target Q2 2020/21	Minimum expectation Q2 2020/21	Outturn Q2 2020/21	Year on year trend Q2 2020/21	RAG status Q2 2020/21	Comment
Percentage of long-term looked after children who are in stable placements	71.6%	72.0%	65.0%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	N/A	The latest performance data is being quality assured.
Percentage of families who are seeing the benefits of being supported before problems escalate	74.1%	80.0%	70.0%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	N/A	The latest performance data is being quality assured.
Percentage of pupils who are regularly attending school in reception year	76.5%	73.0%	65.7%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	N/A	Due to the changes in schooling our usual half-termly attendance collection was suspended and will resume in the Autumn half-term.
Percentage of pupils who are regularly attending primary school in Years 1-6	NEW	86.0%	81.0%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	N/A	Due to the changes in schooling our usual half-termly attendance collection was suspended and will resume in the Autumn half-term.
Young people engaging with the youth service who achieve a recorded outcome	61.0%	20.0%	15.0%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	N/A	The latest performance data is being quality assured.

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## Our delivery and performance

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### Outcome 3

People access joined-up services when they need them and feel healthier and more independent



We are committed to improving the health and wellbeing of our local population and the care services they receive. We are working in partnership with others to deliver joined-up person-centred services.

#### What we have delivered

In Tower Hamlets, nearly one in seven four to five-year olds, and over one in four 10 to 11-year olds are obese. We are running activities that encourage residents to have healthy lifestyles. We are providing opportunities for children and families to be active and to develop healthy lifestyles through active play, walking, cycling, swimming and the provision of weight management schemes. We are recruiting two healthy weight officers who will be working with residents in GP surgeries.

We have put a protocol in place for managing any potential Covid-19 outbreaks in hostel accommodation. Additional support services through primary care, community nurses and substance misuse services has been put in place together with additional capacity to meet demand. At the height of the pandemic accommodation with en-suite provision was made available for rough sleepers to self-isolate

together with onsite provision of meals.

We have adapted our essential services for psychological therapies to help address psychological health concerns caused or aggravated by Covid-19. A 24/7 mental health crisis phone line has been opened to ensure that people whose primary concern was a mental health issue and did not need physical health care, could be supported appropriately.

#### What difference we have made

We produced an impact assessment to help us understand and address the wider impacts of Covid-19 on residents, the business community and our services. Our assessment focused on 15 key topic areas including physical and mortality, mental health, social care, deprivation and employment, business, homelessness, rough sleeping, and safeguarding. It also looks at mental health and at how to mitigate the disproportionate impact on those from

Black and Ethnic Minority groups. We are now reshaping our services to support those impacted by the pandemic.

We have contacted over 13,800 residents to offer information, and support as part of our pandemic response. Our support has resulted in delivery of urgent food parcels to 13,000 residents, 180 provided with immediate financial advice, as well as over 500 referrals for ongoing social and practical support from the council's community navigators, social prescribers in primary care, and East London Foundation Trust's (ELFT) care navigators. This support has positive impacts on the health and wellbeing on our most vulnerable residents during the pandemic.

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## Our delivery and performance

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### Outcome 3

People access joined-up services when they need them and feel healthier and more independent

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#### Our performance

We have selected three measures to understand whether we are making progress in achieving this outcome. We have met or exceeded the target for one measure. We do not have a result for the remaining two measures in this outcome as they are related to our annual residents' survey which will not be conducted until early 2021.

We exceeded our target for enabling people to be more independent after being supported through reablement services. The proportion of new clients who required reduced or no support after their reablement was 84.2 per cent.

## Performance summary

### Outcome 3

People access joined-up services when they need them and feel healthier and more independent



Indicator Name	Outturn 2019/20	Target Q2 2020/21	Minimum expectation Q2 2020/21	Outturn Q2 2020/21	Year on year trend Q2 2020/21	RAG status Q2 2020/21	Comment
People who are more independent after being supported through reablement services	75.5%	80.0%	72.0%	<b>84.2%</b>	↑	<b>GREEN</b>	Target exceeded
Residents' self-reported level of physical activity	N/A	31.88%	26.12%	<b>N/A</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.
Residents' self-reported level of health	N/A	79.48%	74.52%	<b>N/A</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.



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## Our delivery and performance

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We cannot deny that this is a borough of contradictions. We are supporting residents to access the economic opportunities by tackling inequalities in employment, health and housing.

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## Outcome 4

Residents feel they fairly share the benefits from growth and inequality is tackled

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### What we have delivered

In September we launched the Tower Hamlets Black and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission as part of our response to community feedback following the Black Lives Matter movement and the world-wide response to the tragic killing of George Floyd. The commission will focus on key areas of inequality experienced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents in the borough and the support needed in the fight against Covid-19 as evidence demonstrates that they are far more likely to become negatively impacted by the virus. The commission will gather evidence to investigate what practical changes and improvements can be made, especially in the areas of health, employment and education, and community leadership.

We have delivered a resident support grant scheme to provide financial assistance to residents experiencing hardship as a result of the pandemic.

We are promoting digital inclusion with residents and working in partnership with voluntary sector organisations to enable better access to digital opportunities. We have established a working group which will promote and support IT use amongst digitally excluded residents.

We have implemented a range of initiatives in response to the impact the pandemic has had on homelessness and rough sleeping. We have moved away from an office-based drop-in service and we have launched our homelessness assessment over the phone. We have ensured the technology is right so that residents in need get through to the right person quickly. We have also developed an online form so that homeless people can request assistance via our website.

### What difference we have made

We have been supporting families who are struggling to manage their finances and to put food on the table, particularly as a result of the pandemic and where income has been reduced as the economy stalls. We have been combatting hunger by delivering food parcels to over 4,000 households in the borough, supporting more than 11,000 residents, many of whom were shielding. We have been actively supporting local food providers including schools, food banks and hot meal providers to meet increased demand for food during the crisis. We matched food providers with corporate donations and food supplies, as well as providing support with storage and logistics.

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## Our delivery and performance

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## Outcome 4

Residents feel they fairly share the benefits from growth and inequality is tackled

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We have supported the Bow Food Bank and First Love Foundation providing funding through our Innovation Fund which enabled each organisation to access nearly £11,000 of additional funding through our crowd funding platform.

We have delivered holiday hunger schemes to school children in need and their families across the borough. 12,000 free hot meals were handed out across nine locations during the Easter school holidays.

Since we started delivering income maximisation support in 2018, we have supported more than 4,782 residents. Our support has resulted in an additional £2,131,020 in Universal Credit and £79,122 of discretionary housing awards being claimed by our residents.

### Our performance

We have selected nine measures to understand whether we are making progress in achieving this outcome. We have exceeded our target for four measures. One measure fell short of the target but exceeded our minimum expectation. Unfortunately, we did not achieve our target for two measures. We do not have a result for the remaining two measures in this outcome as they are related to our annual residents' survey which will not be conducted until early 2021.

We exceeded our target to maximise income for residents in the borough. 1,009 clients achieved an increase in their income, achieving an average £6,216 expected annual increase in income.

We have met some of our targets for supporting residents from specific groups into employment through our WorkPath service. So far this year we

have achieved 51 job outputs. Of those almost 65 per cent were female, 82 per cent were from BAME communities, and 67 percent were from deprived postcodes. The target for the percentage of residents who were supported into work by the WorkPath service so far this year and who were disabled was narrowly missed.

We prevented homelessness for just over 19 per cent of households who approached us for support. We are improving our procedures and processes, so we can continue to meet our statutory obligations and improve our performance.

**Outcome 4**

Residents feel they fairly share the benefits from growth and inequality is tackled



Indicator Name	Outturn 2019/20	Target Q2 2020/21	Minimum expectation Q2 2020/21	Outturn Q2 2020/21	Year on year trend Q2 2020/21	RAG status Q2 2020/21	Comment
Residents who are female supported into employment by the Workpath service	250	45.0%	41.0%	<b>64.7%</b>	N/A	<b>GREEN</b>	Target exceeded
Residents from BAME backgrounds supported into employment by the Workpath service	439	85.0%	77.0%	<b>82.4%</b>	N/A	<b>AMBER</b>	51 residents have been supported into employment by the Workpath service so far this year and 42 of those were from BAME backgrounds.
Residents who have disabilities supported into employment by the Workpath service	91	15.0%	14.0%	<b>13.7%</b>	N/A	<b>RED</b>	7 of the 51 residents who have been supported into work by the Workpath service so far this year have been recorded as having a disability.
Residents who come from deprived postcodes supported into employment by the Workpath service	424	70.0%	63.0%	<b>76.5%</b>	N/A	<b>GREEN</b>	Target exceeded
Residents' self-reported level of health for groups experiencing health inequalities - BAME residents	N/A	79.4%	74.4%	<b>N/A</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.
Residents' self-reported level of health for groups experiencing health inequalities - residents from C2, D, E socio-economic groups	N/A	71.1%	65.6%	<b>N/A</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.

**Outcome 4**

Residents feel they fairly share the benefits from growth and inequality is tackled



Indicator Name	Outturn 2019/20	Target Q2 2020/21	Minimum expectation Q2 2020/21	Outturn Q2 2020/21	Year on year trend Q2 2020/21	RAG status Q2 2020/21	Comment
Average annual income increase for residents receiving benefit maximisation support	N/A	£6,216.20	£5,594.58	<b>£6,249.05</b>	N/A	<b>GREEN</b>	Target exceeded. There is no 2019/20 outturn as the methodology for this indicator has changed from the previous year.
Households prevented from becoming homeless	14.08%	26.0%	21.8%	<b>20.99%</b>	↑	<b>RED</b>	We have recruited Tenancy Sustainment Officers to work with social and private landlords, and directly with clients to prevent homelessness.
Resident Universal Credit application support	N/A	68	61	<b>68</b>	N/A	<b>GREEN</b>	Target achieved.

## Priority 2

A borough that our residents  
are proud of and love to live  
in



We need to manage and reduce air pollution, carbon emissions, and the levels of waste produced by a growing population. We are working with our communities to change behaviours and protect our environment.

**What we have delivered**

We are continuing to improve our local environment to benefit residents, workers and visitors. We have been implementing new arrangements to improve waste and street cleansing. We have developed ward-based action plans which target fly tipping hotspots. We continue to provide education and advice to residents and businesses and will take enforcement action, by issuing fixed penalty notices where necessary. We have also launched a borough-wide communications campaign to explain to residents, businesses and private landlords how they can play their part in reducing illegal disposal of waste.

We are continuing to implement initiatives to encourage waste reduction and recycling amongst residents and businesses. We have been working in partnership with Tower Hamlets Homes to develop an action plan that focuses on improving recycling for those living in

flats.

We are continuing to deliver the Mayoral pledge of planting 1,000 trees. We have started consulting residents on the location of the trees that we will be planting between October and March.

We are taking measures to encourage the use of less polluting electric vehicles. We have already installed some on-street electric vehicle charging points including some rapid chargers and we have recently secured funding for an additional 50 residential charge points. In June we implemented a diesel levy for paid for parking to discourage diesel vehicle use.

**What difference we have made**

Our Liveable Streets programme makes it easier, safer and more convenient to get around by foot, bike and public transport. We have completed detailed

designs and started improvement works in Bethnal Green, Wapping, and Barkantine. We have started consulting residents on plans for the Brick Lane and Shadwell Liveable Streets areas.

Pupils at six primary and nursery schools in the borough are benefitting from a safer journey to and from school because of the school streets programme we have recently implemented. 2,179 children at Ben Johnson, Harry Roberts, Blue Gate Fields Junior, English Martyrs, Malmesbury and Harry Gosling primary schools and nurseries are the first to benefit. Changes include wider pavements, safer crossings, restricted traffic at the start and end of the school day as well as trees and plants to filter pollution.

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## Our delivery and performance

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We are continuing to invest in projects to reduce carbon emissions. We are giving energy grants of up to £5,000 to ensure that at least 40 SMEs are supported to make improvements that will result in lower energy costs, consumption and related carbon emissions.

### Our performance

We have selected five measures to understand whether we are making progress in achieving this outcome. We have met or exceeded the target of one of these measures. Unfortunately, we did not achieve our target for two measures. For the remaining measures there is no planned outturn for this quarter or there is a delay in national data being released due to the pandemic.

We exceeded our target for the number of school street improvement works completed so far this year. 8.5 per cent

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## Outcome 5 People live in a borough that is clean and green

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of primary school children now benefit from a safer environment.

We have not met our target for the level of cleanliness of our public realm. The amount of litter has increased over the last couple of months as lockdown measures have eased. We use graphical analysis of litter and flyposting maps to ensure our rapid response teams are deployed to hot spot areas. Our Love your Neighbourhood app can be downloaded onto phones so that residents can report any issues they think need our attention – such as litter, fly tipping, fly posting, potholes and more.

We did not meet our target for the percentage of household waste sent for recycling. Between April and June 2020 (this is latest available data) 23,242.71 kgs of waste was collected from households in the borough and 4,036.61 kgs were recycled. This period coincided

with the start of the pandemic. The amount of household waste increased during this period. However, the amount of waste sent for recycling did not. Lockdown required a temporary suspension of services while social distancing measures were put in place.

In addition, we have seen an increase in contaminated waste over recent months. Through our estates recycling project we are tackling this problem by creating awareness with residents and caretakers about the importance of recycling correctly.



Indicator Name	Outturn 2019/20	Target Q2 2020/21	Minimum expectation Q2 2020/21	Outturn Q2 2020/21	Year on year trend Q2 2020/21	RAG status Q2 2020/21	Comment
Level of public realm cleanliness (litter)	96.96%	95.0%	85.5%	<b>85.42%</b>	↑	<b>RED</b>	Performance dipped below target in Q2. The level of litter has increased as lockdown measures have eased.
Level of household recycling (quarterly audited)	21.5%	22.0%	19.8%	<b>NA</b>	NA	NA	There is a significant timelag in official outturns being released nationally due to the pandemic.
Level of CO2 emissions generated by the council's activities	64.0%	26.0%	23.4%	<b>NA</b>	NA	NA	Annual measure
Primary school pupils benefiting from a school street at their school (traffic reduction outside the school)	1.4%	6.9%	6.2%	<b>8.5%</b>	-	<b>GREEN</b>	Target exceeded
Percentage of population that benefits from liveable streets projects	NA	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>	-	NA	This measure will only be reported when Liveable Streets projects have been fully implemented in specific areas. Construction is currently underway.



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## Our delivery and performance

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People find accessing good quality, affordable housing difficult in a borough with a fast-growing population, low-income levels for many, and a growing private rented sector with high rents and house prices.

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## Outcome 6

People live in good quality affordable homes and well-designed neighbourhoods

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### What we have delivered

We have adopted new planning policies for the borough to ensure that communities can share the benefits of growth and we manage the challenges growth in an inner London area can bring with it. We recently consulted on our draft conservation area management plans for Whitechapel and on our South Poplar master plan.

Working with social housing landlords and other partners, we are delivering more quality, affordable homes for residents. We have completed moving the last of the residents from old blocks in Robin Hood Gardens. This site is being redeveloped as part of Blackwall Reach regeneration programme which will see 1,575 new homes delivered once completed.

We are building new infrastructure to meet the needs of residents, workers and visitors to the borough. We

consulted on our plans to build a new pedestrian and cycle bridge to connect Canary Wharf and Marshwall, called South Dock Bridge. An earlier study has shown that the bridge should align with Upper Bank Street on the north bank of the South Dock and the Berkeley Homes 'South Quay Plaza' scheme on the south bank. We will submit a planning application for the new bridge before Christmas.

### What difference we have made

Our Housing Options service has moved 168 households in temporary accommodation into permanent social housing so far this year. Forty-five of those families moved to permanent housing were previously homeless.

We are working hard to reduce overcrowding in the borough. So far this year we have let social housing to 138 households, 36 of whom were overcrowded by 2 or more bedrooms.

As part of the Mayor's commitment to deliver new council homes, we have started to clear infill sites for the development of 85 new council homes in St. Paul's Way, Lowder House, Mellish Street, Strahan Road, Hanbury Street and Sidney Street. We have completed 77 new council homes on three infill sites – Locksley A, Jubilee Street and Baroness Road. We have also procured a contractor to build a further 190 new council homes at Barnsley Street, Locksley D, Solander Gardens and Shetland Road.

We have started to refurbish St George's Town Hall to provide a new base for our Registrar's Office, and we are renovating the former Montefiore Centre to provide a hub for local small businesses.

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## Our delivery and performance

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### Our performance

We have selected five measures to understand whether we are making progress in achieving this outcome. One measure fell short of the target but exceeded our minimum expectation. Unfortunately, we did not achieve our target for one measure. We do not have a result for three measures. One measure in this outcome is related to our annual residents' survey which will not be conducted until early 2021.

We are unable to report on our two measures relating to housing delivery. This is because the Greater London Authority (GLA) decommissioned their repository for recording the numbers of planning consents and completions generated by all London local authorities, called the London Development Database. While the GLA are developing their new database, we are working to put temporary reporting measures in place so that we can

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## Outcome 6

People live in good quality affordable homes and well-designed neighbourhoods

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provide provisional data for these two measures in future reports.

46.5 per cent of all social housing properties let went to overcrowded households, we exceeded our minimum expectation. We moved 26.1 per cent of homeless households into permanent social housing - unfortunately we did not meet our target. The number social housing properties available to let this year is less than this time last year and there are a number of high priority households eligible including residents in blocks being decanted for regeneration.

**Outcome 6**

People live in good quality affordable homes and well-designed neighbourhoods



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Indicator Name	Outturn 2019/20	Target Q2 2020/21	Minimum expectation Q2 2020/21	Outturn Q2 2020/21	Year on year trend Q2 2020/21	RAG status Q2 2020/21	Comment
Lets to overcrowded households	1,078	50%	45%	<b>46.5%</b>	-	<b>AMBER</b>	Overcrowded households are considered alongside other high priority groups such as homeless households and applicants in blocks being decanted for regeneration.
Homeless households moved into permanent social housing	27.4%	30.0%	27.0%	<b>26.1%</b>	↓	<b>RED</b>	There were 33 per cent fewer social housing properties let this year compared to same period last year and this has affected performance.
Level of affordable homes permitted (by habitable room)	31.4%	50.0%	35.0%	<b>NA</b>	NA	NA	We are currently unable to report as the London Development Database has been decommissioned. Our planning service is collating interim data while a new London-wide database is being set up.
Level of affordable homes completed (by habitable room)	24.53%	50.0%	35.0%	<b>NA</b>	NA	NA	We are currently unable to report as the London Development Database has been decommissioned. Our planning service is collating interim data while a new London-wide database is being set up.
Residents' satisfaction with the local area as a place to live	NA	72.2%	67.8%	<b>NA</b>	NA	NA	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.

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## Our delivery and performance

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Tower Hamlets is a vibrant, diverse and exciting place. We want everyone to feel safe and enjoy all that it has to offer. We are working with residents and the police to tackle the linked issues of violence, anti-social behavior, and drugs and alcohol.

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## Outcome 7

People feel safer in their neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour is tackled

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### What we have delivered

We are making Tower Hamlets safer by working with our public sector partners and our communities.

Last year we set up our specialist substance misuse service, offering a person-centred recovery support service to adults misusing drugs and alcohol. We are now preparing to run new projects to get more people into treatment programmes so that more people get the help they need. One project will provide online mutual aid sessions. Our substance misuse team uses a range of powers to direct complex drug and alcohol users into treatment. So far this year 63 opiate users that left drug treatment successfully free of drug dependence have not returned to treatment again for at least six months.

We have completed the specification for our new CCTV system and CCTV control

suite. The upgrade to this infrastructure network will enable us to use this technology to deter, detect and investigate crime and ASB better.

We are currently developing a new Community Safety Partnership Plan. We recently carried out engagement with residents and key stakeholders to develop our priorities for this new plan. Formal consultation with residents is due to begin in December.

### What difference we have made

During the lockdown period the number of incidents of domestic violence increased nationally. To support victims of violence we created a dedicated violence against women and girls webpage to provide support for those who may be at risk of domestic abuse. The information on the website under the “youarenotalone” banner, ensured that victims and professionals were aware of all the help available. We

implemented a virtual multi-agency risk assessment conference to support high risk victims of domestic abuse.

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## Our delivery and performance

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### Our performance

We have selected five measures to understand whether we are making progress in achieving this outcome. We have met or exceeded the target for one measure. One measure fell short of the target but exceeded our minimum expectation. Unfortunately, one measure fell short of the target. Two measures in this outcome are related to our annual residents' survey which will not be conducted until early 2021.

The number of drug (opiate) users who have successfully completed their treatment has dropped to 5.3 per cent and we have missed our target. We have recently changed our main contractor and we expect performance to pick up again once the changes to staffing and systems have been embedded.

Unfortunately, the proportion of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time has risen and we

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## Outcome 7

People feel safer in their neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour is tackled

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missed our target. Our youth offending team prevention officers are working with young people at risk of becoming involved in crime, helping them make different choices and support them if they are being criminally exploited by others.

## Performance summary

### Outcome 7

People feel safer in their neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour is tackled



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Indicator Name	Outturn 2019/20	Target Q2 2020/21	Minimum expectation Q2 2020/21	Outturn Q2 2020/21	Year on year trend Q2 2020/21	RAG status Q2 2020/21	Comment
Residents' concern about crime and anti-social behaviour	N/A	45.1%	50.9%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	NA	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.
Young people entering the youth justice system for the first time	411.3	350	385	<b>388.7</b>	↑	<b>RED</b>	Data covers period April 2019-March 2020. During this period 114 young people entered the youth justice system for the first time in their lives.
Residents' feeling of safety in their local area	N/A	88.0%	84.0%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	NA	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.
Drug users (opiate users) successfully completing treatment	6.45%	5.5%	4.95%	<b>5.29%</b>	↓	<b>AMBER</b>	Latest available data Q1. 63 drug and opiate users left drug treatment successfully free of drug(s) dependence and did not return to treatment again within 6 months.
Victims of violence against women and girls or hate crime who feel safer after engaging with victim support	97.0%	86.6%	77.4%	<b>100.0%</b>	↑	<b>GREEN</b>	Target exceeded

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## Our delivery and performance

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We are one of the most vibrant and diverse communities in the UK. Local people are proud of how our many communities work together and they value the rich cultural offer that comes with this mix of influences.

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## Outcome 8

People feel they are part of a cohesive and vibrant community

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### What we have delivered

We celebrate our diverse communities, promote cohesion and work in partnership to react quickly when tensions arise.

We want our borough to continue to be a place where people feel they belong and where people feel they get on well together and have an equal voice. In September we published our Cohesion Plan called Our Tower Hamlets: A plan for a more cohesive community. The plan sets out our approach to do that by focusing on three key priorities: Connected People: Cultivating and strengthening positive relationships; Involved and empowered community: Greater engagement and participation in public life; and Equality: Valuing diversity and advancing equality of opportunity.

We have been working with communities to develop a no Place for Hate action Plan which aims to tackle

emerging tensions and issues within and between communities, including those generated by hate crime and extremism.

### What difference we have made

We set up a Covid-19 volunteering hub which has been run by Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets. We have recruited over 2,000 Covid-19 community champions who have been taking on vital roles including collecting pre-paid shopping for vulnerable residents, food sorters and packers, assistant park rangers and toy bag collectors for children and families that we support.

Council volunteers have helped to:

- pack and deliver food parcels to over 13,000 vulnerable residents from the council's emergency food hub.
- deliver 13 tonnes of food to 24 organisations from New City

College's food hub.

- keep over 120 parks open and safe, patrolling over 100 sites weekly.
- make up 500 activity packs for children living in shielded households.

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## Our delivery and performance

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### Our performance

We have selected five measures to understand whether we are making progress in achieving this outcome. We have met or exceeded the target for one measure. Three measures in this outcome are related to our annual residents' survey which will not be conducted until early 2021.

For one measure, related to hate crime, we do not set a target. The reason for this is that reported hate crime numbers can go up or down for a number of reasons. For example, an increase in reported hate crime may be due to an actual increase in the number of hate crimes being committed or it may be the result of improved reporting by victims. The level of reported hate crime in Tower Hamlets has remained relatively stable from last year to this year.

93% of all learners in English for speakers of other languages courses (ESOL) passed their course. This is above

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## Outcome 8

People feel they are part of a cohesive and vibrant community

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our target of 75%.





Indicator Name	Outturn 2019/20	Target Q2 2020/21	Minimum expectation Q2 2020/21	Outturn Q2 2020/21	Year on year trend Q2 2020/21	RAG status Q2 2020/21	Comment
Level of hate crime	879	N/A	N/A	<b>1,022</b>	N/A	N/A	No targets set for these contextual measures.
Residents' level of volunteering	N/A	23.4%	16.6%	<b>21.0%</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.
Residents' perception of people from different backgrounds getting on well	N/A	80.4%	75.6%	<b>78.0%</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.
Percentage of Idea Store learners who pass their English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course	76.0%	75.0%	67.5%	<b>93.0%</b>	N/A	<b>GREEN</b>	Target exceeded
Proportion of residents who have friends from other ethnic backgrounds	N/A	N/A	N/A	<b>N/A</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.

## Priority 3

A dynamic, outcomes-based council using digital innovation and partnership working to respond to the changing needs of our borough

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## Our delivery and performance

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The three enabling outcomes in Priority 3 are designed to support us to deliver outcomes 1-8 in a modern, collaborative and innovative way that makes the most of limited resources.

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## Outcomes 9-11

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Outcome 9 - People say we are open and transparent putting residents at the heart of everything we do

Everyone who lives, works, studies, visits or does business in Tower Hamlets will use a council service in some form. We work with our residents to improve our services and design them around people.

Outcome 10 - People say we work together across boundaries in a strong and effective partnership to achieve the best outcomes for our residents

Making change happen is easier when we work together with others. The Tower Hamlets Partnership brings together the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to improve the lives of our residents.

Outcome 11 - People say we continuously seek innovation and strive for excellence to embed a culture of sustainable improvement

Our improvement journey has seen us take huge strides forward. We will build on our successes, reflect on where we could have done better, and we have put in place the building blocks to improve continuously.

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## Our delivery and performance

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### What we have delivered

We are helping people through the Covid-19 crisis and have created dedicated website pages with key facts and information brought together in one place. This includes online forms for residents to apply for business support, tax relief and self-isolation support. We also set up a dedicated telephone helpline for residents that are shielding. Since March over 12,000 calls have been received.

We recently improved how we consult and engage with our internal and external stakeholders. We are using our new online consultation platform Let's Talk Tower Hamlets, to support greater resident participation. We have delivered engagement and consultation training sessions to Members and

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## Outcomes 9-11

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council staff and are moving more consultation and engagement onto the new platform.

The Tower Hamlets Partnership has reviewed its priorities to ensure they support social and economic recovery of the borough in light of the pandemic. The four areas where we can have the biggest impact when working together are:

- better outcomes for children and young people
- making it easier for people to meet their health and care needs
- reducing crime and anti-social behaviour
- improving skills and job opportunities

We are continuing to work with our partners to prepare for Brexit and the

changes this may bring for our residents, businesses and the economy including developing a Brexit impact mitigation plan.

We received recognition for the innovative way in which we are delivering services to an excellent standard for our residents despite the ongoing financial constraints faced by local government. We were shortlisted for awards in six areas by the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) including for environmental services, health and social care, public health, and community involvement.

### What difference we have made

Residents have been able to continue to access key services through online services throughout the pandemic. Idea Stores have created online activities for all users including some summer term courses. Since the beginning of the year 2,137 people joined the Idea Stores to

access online services, including free e-book downloads.

We have worked hard to re-open our buildings and open spaces in a Covid-secure way. Over the summer we reopened the Brady Arts and Community Centre so that community organisations could resume working and we have recently been able to resume the art and community music tuition classes, albeit at reduced capacity. The building hosted the holiday hunger programme which provided free hot meals to local families in need.

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## Our delivery and performance

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### Our performance

We have selected fourteen measures to understand whether we are making progress in achieving these outcomes. Three measures exceeded the target while one measure fell short of the target but exceeded our minimum expectation. Unfortunately, we did not achieve our target for three measures. Six measures in this outcome are related to our annual residents' survey which will not be conducted until early 2021. For one measure we are still awaiting final data.

We measure our customers' satisfaction with the improvements we are making to our website and digital services, enabling more residents to get things done online more easily. 56 per cent of customers who completed the online survey were positive. For residents who are used to dealing with the council face to face, we have provided online access to our services through digital hubs in

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## Outcomes 9-11

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our Idea Stores. Our Idea Stores staff support those residents who cannot access services digitally or by phone.

We measure the proportion of older people who have received long-term support by being admitted to residential or nursing care as a ratio per 100,000 residents over the age of 65. This year to date, the proportion is 105.5 – we have exceeded our target.




Indicator Name	Outturn 2019/20	Target Q2 2020/21	Minimum expectation Q2 2020/21	Outturn Q2 2020/21	Year on year trend Q2 2020/21	RAG status Q2 2020/21	Comment
Service user satisfaction with the council's online service offer	66.00%	50.00%	50.00%	<b>56.0%</b>	↓	<b>GREEN</b>	Target exceeded
Residents' satisfaction with Idea Stores and libraries	N/A	64.9%	59.1%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.
Residents' perception of being involved in council decision-making	N/A	59.9%	54.1%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.
Residents' perception of council transparency	N/A	53.9%	48.1%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.
Residents' perception of being kept informed by the council	N/A	74.6%	69.4%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.
Residents' satisfaction with council and partner response to antisocial behaviour (ASB)	N/A	54.9%	49.1%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.
Children and young people receiving support from mental health services	45.5%	35.0%	35.0%	<b>NA</b>	N/A	N/A	Due to Covid-19 we were unable to obtain data for this measure, however we expect to be able to restart reporting against this measure during Q3 2020/21.



Indicator Name	Outturn 2019/20	Target Q2 2020/21	Minimum expectation Q2 2020/21	Outturn Q2 2020/21	Year on year trend Q2 2020/21	RAG status Q2 2020/21	Comment
Residential and nursing admissions (over 65s)	460.2	225	247.5	<b>105.5</b>	↑	<b>GREEN</b>	Target exceeded
Number of adults supported into employment by the Workpath partnership	1180	100	90	<b>43</b>	↓	<b>RED</b>	YTD. Because of the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, many partners are focussing on skills and training support to make residents job ready
Council staff turnover rate	14.14%	9.0%	12.0%	<b>9.6%</b>	↑	<b>AMBER</b>	A number of organisational changes and reviews have led to voluntary departures.
Council staff sickness absence rate	10.35%	8.00%	10.24%	<b>11.6%</b>	↓	<b>RED</b>	Main three reasons for absence remain as MSK, flu/colds and mental health related absences.
Media and press view of the council	91.60%	80.00%	72.00%	<b>92.6%</b>	↑	<b>GREEN</b>	YTD. Target exceeded
Residents' perception of the council doing a better job than last year	N/A	N/A	N/A	<b>N/A</b>	N/A	N/A	The 2020/21 Annual Residents' Survey will be conducted early in 2021 with results reported in the final quarter of the year.
Budget variance for the general fund	TBC	£0	£0	<b>£11.5m</b>	-	<b>RED</b>	Latest available data August 2020.

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<p><b>Cabinet</b></p> <p>25 November 2020</p>	
<p><b>Report of:</b> Denise Radley, Corporate Director Health Adults Communities</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Hackney Road Hostel Project: Direct Award of Contract to Look Ahead Care and Support</b></p>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Health, Adults, Communities</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Joseph Gillam/Maria Kaustrater
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	Financial threshold
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	29/09/2020
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	<b>People are aspirational, independent and have equal access to opportunities</b>

### Executive Summary

This report summarises the recommendation for a Direct Award of Contract to Look Ahead Care and Support to act as the contract provider to a proposed Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funded Homeless Hostel project at Hackney Road for four years – from April 2021 until March 2025.

This Homeless Hostel provision is part of the wider measures that the Council has undertaken to rehouse everyone off the streets in response to Covid-19, and the endeavours to ensure rough sleepers can move into long-term, safe accommodation.

### Recommendations:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. To agree the direct award to Look Ahead Care and Support in order to meet the funding conditions of the MHCLG funding bid.

## **1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 The tight timeframe of the MHCLG and GLA funding do not allow for a formal tender process. Agreed tenancies and support provisions have to be in place by 31 March 2021 in order to meet the terms and conditions of this funding.

## **2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- LBTH could go through a formal tender process but this would be a lengthy process and LBTH would not meet the MHCLG funding condition that services are fully operational by 31 March 2021.
- LBTH could continue to support this cohort of rough sleepers through the existing hotel provision. It has to be noted that this is an expensive option and comes at a cost to Tower Hamlets and foregoes the opportunity that this would be funded through the MHCLG funding
- LBTH could not commission any provision at all which would leave some of the most vulnerable members of the community at risk. With the spread of Covid 19 it would also affect rough sleepers and could spread further into the community. It would come at a high price to LBTH and also could lead to reputational damage.

## **3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1. Mid-March 2020 saw the commencement of the 'Stay at Home' phase in the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. With it came the 'Everyone In' initiative which made local authorities responsible for accommodating all rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping, regardless of priority need, local connection or recourse to public funds.
- 3.2. On the back of this, in Tower Hamlets, a significant number of rough sleepers have been accommodated directly from the street into commercial hotels and bed and breakfasts during the Covid-19 crisis. Many of them (approximately 153 in total) have complex and high support needs, (including mental health, physical health, and substance misuse issues) and it is estimated that accommodation and associated costs for this cohort are in the region of £300k per month.

- 3.3. Of the 153 rough sleepers that were originally provided with temporary accommodation, approximately 51 of these have returned to the streets. The key reasons for this have been eviction due to violent conduct or anti-social behaviour, as well as leaving through choice (termed as voluntary abandonment).
- 3.4. Following the first wave of the pandemic, Central Government requested a plan for moving the rough sleepers supported during the 'Everyone In' initiative onto the next stage of accommodation and there is a Government/GLA commitment to ensure no one temporarily accommodated is forced to return to the streets. As part of this commitment, capital and revenue funding of £265m from Central Government has been announced to help facilitate this.
- 3.5. The deadline for bids for Central Government funding, which Local Authority officers were expected to co-produce with Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) / GLA Advisers, was 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020. A core condition of the grant funding is that any accommodation and support costs are required to be mobilised before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
- 3.6. In response to this Central Government directive and funding opportunity, the LBTH Housing Team, in partnership with Integrated Commissioning, developed an Exit Plan (attached in section 6 of the report below), outlining the medium and long-term options that would be made available to support the rough sleepers that have been provided with temporary accommodation during the pandemic. One of the key proposals within this plan was the re-purposing of the current Hackney Road Project into a service for complex needs rough sleepers.

### **The Hackney Road Project - Current service provision and proposed changes**

- 3.7. The Hackney Road Project is a 35 unit abstinence hostel due to be de-commissioned on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
- 3.8. The Hackney Road Project is currently delivered by Look Ahead Care and Support and is a service for homeless single people who formerly had substance misuse and addiction issues and are now abstinent.

- 3.9. A decision was made by Cabinet last year to decommission the service, on the grounds that it primarily supports service users with low levels of need/complexity and alternative provision could be put in place for them from other sources e.g. private rented accommodation, funded through housing benefit. It was noted at the time that there were risks with the decommissioning decision, a key one being that this would result in no exclusively lower needs beds within the Tower Hamlets Hostels pathway.
- 3.10. The decommissioning of the service is expected to release annual savings of £468,003 from 2021/22 onwards and there is no budget within the Council to fund the service beyond March 2021.
- 3.11. As part of the Exit Strategy referenced in point 1.5 above, LBTH has approached MHCLG for funding to continue to provide a hostel service at the Hackney Road Project from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. However, the new service would be complex needs provision, as this is in keeping with the high support requirements of the rough sleepers that have been accommodated during the 'Everyone In' initiative.
- 3.12. The bid to MCHLG totals £787k and is comprised of the following:
- Capital funding of 212k to convert 10 rooms with shared facilities into 6 self-contained units with en-suite facilities, providing rough sleepers with safer accommodation to practice social distancing during the Covid19 crisis. This will reduce capacity from 35 to 31 units and Peabody Trust, who own the building, have given their agreement to this change.
  - Annual revenue funding of £575k to provide an opportunity for sustained progression for rough sleepers in a long-term home, rather than equivalent or higher sums being spent on on-site support at commercial hotels where, by necessity, the efforts of support providers are oriented to delivering short-term and more limited outcomes. Approximately £11k of the £575k funding has also been earmarked to upgrade CCTV around the site, as well as appoint a Rough Sleeping Neighbourhood Relationship Manager, with a view to minimising incidences of crime and ASB in the wider vicinity for local residents.
- 3.13. The GLA and MHCLG have indicated that they are, in principle, supportive of the bid and are intending to inform us of their final confirmation in November 2020. As of 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020, a letter was received from the GLA stating

that LBTH has been successful in its bid in its entirety (£2,283,000 over four years).

- 3.14. Assuming that the funding from GLA and MHCLG is forthcoming, this would protect the LBTH annual savings (£468,003) associated with the decommissioning of the Hackney Road Project from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 onwards. It is important to note that the GLA and MHCLG funding is, at this point, for a four year period only. As such, if Cabinet are in agreement to proceed with this proposal, once the immediate priority of commissioning a new complex needs service has been addressed, consideration will need to be given to funding implications and sources beyond the four year period.
- 3.15. As mentioned above, funding is conditional upon mobilisation of the new complex needs service by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The requirements and timescales as set out by MHCLG reduce the likelihood of a successful competitive process. For expediency, we are therefore seeking formal agreement to the Direct Award of Contract to Look Ahead Care and Support for a four year period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.
- 3.16. Look Ahead Care and Support have been working closely with Peabody Trust over a number of years to provide safe and effective services at Hackney Road, and the tight timescales surrounding the capital works and implementation of revenue support services mean that staying with the current provider at Hackney Road is highly desirable. Peabody Trust, the owners of the Hackney Road Project have also given their agreement to the proposed change of cohort and the capital works needed to accommodate them.
- 3.17. Starting the new service for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 will be dependent upon commencing a decant of existing residents at Hackney Road Project. As the current service was scheduled for decommissioning, this activity will be required, irrespective of decisions on future use.
- 3.18. The decant of Hackney Road Project is being overseen by the LBTH Housing Options Team and work on this is underway. Move on pathways have been identified for each service user and the Team are working in conjunction with Look Ahead and the Peabody Trust to facilitate these changes. The decant is starting with service users in the shared facilities, with a view to these being empty well in advance of Christmas, such that the capital works can be completed in time. The decant of the other rooms will then be undertaken in phases over January and February 2021.

- 3.19. Without the Direct Award of the contract to Look Ahead to provide revenue support at Hackney Road Project, there is a risk that a successful competitive procurement process would not be possible within the target timeframe to have a new complex needs service in place on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. Consequently, this would jeopardise the bid into MHCLG for the funding of the project.
- 3.20. Equally, without the commissioning of the 31 units at Hackney Road Project, the Council will need to identify funding to house entrenched rough sleepers for long periods in B&Bs or commercial hotels, which comes at a considerable cost. Commercial hotel accommodation and 24/7 on site support between March-July 2020 was estimated to cost the Council approximately £1.5m and is currently running at over £200k per calendar month (net Housing Benefit contributions). The Council has had to use the Covid19 funding to cover these costs and will also require Central Government Next Step Accommodation Programme funding to reimburse its costs for the remainder of 2020-21 as these cannot be absorbed within already over-stretched Council budgets. The MHCLG bid thereby provides an opportunity to work with Central Government to source strategic investment to support this group of service users for a 4 year period.
- 3.21. Alongside the original decision to decommission the Hackney Road Project, there was an associated savings proposal and agreement by Cabinet to reduce the current floating support service provision by 50% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, thus releasing annual savings in the region of £250k. A bid to secure additional funding from MHCLG to bolster the service (following a 50% reduction by LBTH) to support the additional rough sleepers that have been accommodated during the pandemic was unsuccessful. As such, so we are currently exploring opportunities to use LBTH Covid-19 funding for this purpose, with a view to protecting the savings that have been allocated to this scheme.

#### **Statutory considerations – crime and disorder**

- 3.22. Hackney Road Project is located in Weavers Ward. It is one of four wards in the North West Cluster which represent over 50% of reported crime and ASB in the borough. Therefore, it is clear that adequate crime prevention measures need to be put in place.

- 3.23. Elsewhere in the borough, intensive joint working between the Council's Neighbourhood Management 'Pilot' and police, both on enforcement and community liaison, has contributed to a reduction in complaints. Lessons learned from working with local residents' concerns about homeless hostels in their area has also been considered. These measures will include:
- Incorporating into the specification for any new service at Hackney Road Project a requirement on the Provider to manage the behaviour of individuals in the vicinity of the building , e.g. regular patrols, and close co-ordination and escalation arrangements with police and community safety, including information sharing with police and others to ensure any risks are quickly identified and addressed;
  - Thorough Neighbourhood management ensuring an engagement plan with local residents and businesses is developed and implemented to provide reassurance and to address complaints and concerns promptly;
  - Recognising there is no quick fix for those with complex needs, and there consequently will be a need to ensure compliance with neighbourhood agreements and use tools and powers where appropriate to support recovery plans.
  - A site survey of Hackney Road Project has been undertaken by a qualified crime prevention design officer to 'design out' crime and ASB, e.g. CCTV and lighting. Funding for the cost of works recommended following the survey is included in the MHCLG/ GLA bid, should such works meet the funding criteria.
  - Funding for additional staff to support community liaison and undertake enforcement actions aimed at reducing crime and ASB at Hackney Road Project and Luke House will be requested from the MHLCLG/ GLA bid. Funding will also be sourced for this function through the DHSC £23m rough sleeping substance misuse treatment pot, though this will be subject to the funding criteria which has yet to be announced. For staffing, Community Safety recommend a minimum of 1 x FTE. Consultation is in the process of taking place with the Police given the demands on neighbourhood policing.

## 4. Next steps

4.1. Indicative timelines for this project are as follows:

- Await confirmation and contract on funding proposal from MHCLG – November 2020
- Project group established to manage Hackney Road Project decant and (potential) new commissioned service – late October 2020
- Receive confirmation from Cabinet on Direct Award arrangements – end November 2020
- Begin capital works on Hackney Road – End November/early December 2020
- Complete Hackney Road decant – February 2021
- New service commencement date (if agreed) – 31 March 2021

## 5 **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This proposal seeks to provide support to some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

## 6 **OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 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:

### **Crime Reduction**

- 6.2 The Council is statutorily required to have due regard for the likely crime and disorder implications in its area and local environment in exercising its



functions (s.17, Crime and Disorder Act 1998). The scope of the statutory duty encompasses drug misuse and ASB,

6.3 Hackney Road Project is located in Weavers Ward. It is one of four wards in the North West Cluster which represent over 50% of reported crime and ASB in the borough. Therefore, it is clear that adequate crime prevention measures need to be put in place.

6.4 Elsewhere in the borough, intensive joint working between the Council's Neighbourhood Management 'Pilot' and police, both on enforcement and community liaison, has contributed to a reduction in complaints. Lessons learned from working with local residents' concerns about homeless hostels in their area has also been considered. These measures will include:

- Incorporating into the specification for any new service at Hackney Road Project a requirement on the Provider to manage the behaviour of individuals in the vicinity of the building , e.g. regular patrols, and close co-ordination and escalation arrangements with police and community safety, including information sharing with police and others to ensure any risks are quickly identified and addressed;
- Thorough Neighbourhood management ensuring an engagement plan with local residents and businesses is developed and implemented to provide reassurance and to address complaints and concerns promptly;
- Recognising there is no quick fix for those with complex needs, and there consequently will be a need to ensure compliance with neighbourhood agreements and use tools and powers where appropriate to support recovery plans.
- A site survey of Hackney Road Project has been undertaken by a qualified crime prevention design officer to 'design out' crime and ASB, e.g. CCTV and lighting. Funding for the cost of works recommended following the survey is included in the MHCLG/ GLA bid, should such works meet the funding criteria.
- Funding for additional staff to support community liaison and undertake enforcement actions aimed at reducing crime and ASB at Hackney Road Project and Luke House will be requested from the MHLCLG/ GLA bid. Funding will also be sourced for this function through the DHSC £23m rough sleeping substance misuse treatment pot, though this will be subject to the funding criteria which has yet to be announced. For staffing, Community

Safety recommend a minimum of 1 x FTE. Consultation is in the process of taking place with the Police given the demands on neighbourhood policing.

## **Consultations**

- 6.5. Engagement with residents in the vicinity of the Hackney Road Project will be undertaken once a decision regarding the direct award has been made. Similarly, residents at the Hackney Road Project will be informed of the decommissioning of the current provision which is due to end on 31 March 2021 anyway to realise the savings.

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

- 7.1. The funding bid to support this proposal has been submitted to the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme through the GLA and MHCLG with approval of the funding of £2.496m notified on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Funding will be for four years and will be subject to meeting terms and conditions on an annual basis. Any contract award should be subject to meeting these terms and conditions with an exit plan in place prior to the end of year 4 to minimise the risk of any residual costs being left with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 7.2. The direct award to Look Ahead Care needs to be considered in the context of a recent financial appraisal conducted on Look Ahead for another contract. The financial appraisal suggested that Look Ahead Care has financial weaknesses, particularly in relation to debt to asset ratio. This is not a reason not to make the direct award but to acknowledge during the course of the contract.

## **8 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 8.1. This is a Light Touch Service with a contract value above the relevant threshold (£663,540) and should be tendered competitively in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulation 2015. However, there is insufficient time to run a competitive process by the mobilisation date stipulated in the grant funding agreement.
- 8.2. This report is seeking approval to award a contract without competition to Look Ahead Care and Support for the provision of the services outlined in the report, at an annual contract value of £515,750 (£2.063m) for 4 years, for

reasons of extreme urgency brought about by events unforeseeable by the Council, the time limits for competitive procedure with negotiation cannot be complied with, in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 32 (1) (c) of the Public Contracts Regulation 2015.

- 8.3. It is a condition of the grant that funding is subject to services being mobilised before 31st March 2021, hence this approval is being sought.
- 8.4. To note that Look Ahead Care and Support will be providing the Services from property/ies owned by Peabody Trust as Landlord and Tenants.
- 8.5. The grant funding application includes and is approved subject to a capital investment. Such capital works are to be carried out by the Landlord (Peabody Trust).
- 8.6. To note that there is no confirmation from the GLA as to whether the capital investment element of the grant funding will be paid directly to the Landlord or to the Council as part of the overall grant funding.
- 8.7. If this decision is approved, the Council proposes to enter into a contract with Look Ahead based on its standard terms and conditions.

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

### **Linked Report**

- NONE

### **Appendices**

- **LBTH Housing Exit Strategy for Homelessness Accommodation**

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

- NONE

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

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