



Cabinet

Wednesday, 24 April 2024 at 5.30 p.m.

Council Chamber - Town Hall, Whitechapel

Agenda

Mayor Lutfur Rahman

Cabinet Members

Councillor Maium Talukdar	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor))
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding)
Councillor Saied Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living)
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Equalities and Social Inclusion)
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	(Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Social Care)
Councillor Abu Chowdhury	(Cabinet Member for Safer Communities)
Councillor Iqbal Hossain	(Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation)
Councillor Kabir Hussain	(Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency)
Councillor Abdul Wahid	(Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Growth)

[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 also welcome, however, seating is limited and offered on a first come, first served basis. **Please note** that you may be filmed in the background as part of the Council's filming of the meeting.

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:

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A Guide to CABINET

Decision Making at Tower Hamlets

As Tower Hamlets operates the Directly Elected Mayor system, **Mayor Lutfur Rahman** holds Executive powers and takes decisions at Cabinet or through Individual Mayoral Decisions. 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 Mayor either at Cabinet or 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

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, 26 April 2024**
- The deadline for call-ins is: **Friday, 3 May 2024**

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, 24 April 2024

5.30 p.m.

Pages

PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There will be an opportunity (up to 15 minutes) for members of the public to put questions to the Mayor and Cabinet Members before the Cabinet commences its consideration of the substantive business set out in the agenda.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

9 - 10

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.

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.

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.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

11 - 16

The unrestricted minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 27 March 2024 are presented for approval.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE MAYOR

5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions

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

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

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

6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1	Community Engagement Strategy 2024-28	17 - 72
<p>Report Summary: The Community Engagement Strategy outlines the council's vision for community engagement over the next four years and how we will achieve it.</p> <p>This strategy outlines what community engagement is and why it is important to the council, our guiding principles, and the actions we will take to achieve the outcomes.</p> <p>Wards: All Wards Lead Member: Mayor Corporate Priority: A council that works for you and listens to you</p>		
6.2	Women's Safety Action Plan	73 - 88
<p>Report Summary: The Women's Safety Action Plan includes details on work the Council and partners are taking to improve women's safety across the borough. The Action Plan is based on recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny Board.</p> <p>Wards: All Wards Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Safer Communities Corporate Priority: Empower Communities and Fight Crime</p>		
6.3	New Social Housing Regulatory Functions and Nominees to Adopt Responsibilities	89 - 102
<p>Report Summary: For Cabinet to approve the nominated council positions to take on additional responsibilities that have derived from the changes to social housing regulations and has created two new functions as summarised below:</p> <p>Regulation 1. Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023</p> <p>Regulative Function "Health and Safety Lead" – to monitor Health & Safety compliance in</p>		

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social housing including assessing risks and providing advice to Cabinet on how the risk should be managed.

Regulation

2. Charter for Social Housing Residents/
Consumer Standards

Regulative Function

“Responsible Person” - to oversee compliance with the new consumer standards. The requirement is noted in the Charter for Social Housing Residents.

Wards: All Wards
Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive
Development and Housebuilding
Corporate Priority: A council that works for you and listens to you

6.4 Tower Hamlets Young People’s Supported Housing Pathway

103 - 110

Report Summary:

The tender for the Young People Supported Housing Pathway (YPSHP) went live on 18th of September 2023 and closed on 17th of November 2023. After the moderation and evaluation of the tenders had concluded, the highest scorers in 3 of the 5 lots in the YPSHP were unable to demonstrate that the provision would provide best value and quality for our children. The current contracts in the YPSHP are delivered through four block contracts with three providers. These contracts will expire on 31st May 2024.

The report will ask Cabinet to approve the retendering of the YPSHP and an extension to the existing contracts which will shortly come to an end. This will ensure service continuity and the commencement of a procurement exercise will enable contracts to be awarded to suitably qualified providers when the existing contract extensions have ended. A four-month awarding period will allow for engagement with stakeholders, followed by a four-month mobilisation period to establish; data systems, partnerships, estates, facilities, and service pathways.

Wards: All Wards
Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Deputy
Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education and
Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor)
Corporate Priority: All Priorities



Report Summary:

The robust and rigorous evaluation of the Children and Young People’s Health and Wellbeing service (CYPHWS) procurement concluded the bid did not deliver best value. The proposed timeline would award the contract by November 2024 and enable mobilisation in the Summer term. On this basis, the Mayor in Cabinet is asked to approve extensions for two contracts 1) School Health and Wellbeing Service and 2) Integrated Young People’s Health and Wellbeing Service (Safe East).

Wards: All Wards

Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Social Care

Corporate Priority: A council that works for you and listens to you

7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

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 Cabinet:

Wednesday, 22 May 2024 at 5.30 p.m. in Council Chamber - Town Hall, Whitechapel



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: Linda Walker, Interim Director of Legal and Interim Monitoring Officer, Tel: 020 7364 4348.

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 3.08 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, 27 MARCH 2024

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present in Person:

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	
Councillor Maium Talukdar	(Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor))
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding)
Councillor Saied Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living)
Councillor Suluk Ahmed	(Cabinet Member for Equalities and Social Inclusion)
Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury	(Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Social Care)
Councillor Abu Chowdhury	(Cabinet Member for Safer Communities)
Councillor Iqbal Hossain	(Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation)
Councillor Kabir Hussain	(Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency)
Councillor Abdul Wahid	(Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Growth)

Officers Present in Person:

John Ainsworth	(Senior Performance Improvement Analyst)
Ashraf Ali	(Acting Director of Public Realm)
Jill Bayley	(Head of Legal Safeguarding)
Ann Corbett	(Director, Community Safety)
Azizul Goni	(Environmental Services Manager)
Stephen Halsey	(Chief Executive)
Fiona Heyland	(Head of Waste Strategy Policy and Procurement, Public Realm)
Julie Lorraine	(Corporate Director Resources)
Jack Painter	Democratic Services Officer
Denise Radley	(Corporate Director, Health & Adult Social Care & Deputy Chief Executive)
Steve Reddy	(Interim Corporate Director, Children's Services)
Karen Swift	(Divisional Director, Housing and Regeneration)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

There were none.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

RESOLVED:

1. That the unrestricted minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 21 February 2024 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record of proceedings.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) FROM THE MAYOR

Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive, announced that:

The Best Value inspection is progressing well and is in its fourth week. The inspection is scheduled to last for twelve weeks and the inspectors have been meeting with various individuals.

The Mayor chaired two appointment sub committees for the Corporate Director of Children Services and the Corporate Director of Health and Adult Social Care and shortlisting is currently taking place.

The Council has been shortlisted for nine LGC awards and the Council won two awards at the previous weeks national civil trust awards held in Manchester.

5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions

Councillor Musthak Ahmed, Chair Overview and Scrutiny Committee addressed the meeting on behalf of the Committee. He provided the Mayor and Cabinet with an overview of the Committee's previous meeting including the Committees comments on the two quarterly reports being consider at todays meeting of the Cabinet and the Council's progress and challenges in become a net zero Council. Councillor Ahmed thanked officers and members of the Cabinet that attended the Committee to help with the discussions of those topics.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Ahmed and the rest of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the role that they play in ensuring that the Council has checks and balances and for the work that they do.

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

None.

6. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Fixed Penalty Notice Increase for Environmental Crime

Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency, introduced the report that asked the Mayor in Cabinet to agree new levels for fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for offences related to littering, graffiti/fly-posting, fly-tipping, and breach of the household waste duty of care. The report also asked to Mayor in Cabinet to set new discount levels and periods for those FPNs. Ashraf Ali, Director of Public Realm provided further detail.

The Cabinet welcomed the report but asked officers to make sure that residents are clearly communicated about the changes in the levels.

The Mayor welcomed the report and the benefits to the Council and residents in deterring the offences that FPNs cover and keeping the Council a cleaner borough. The Mayor echoed the Cabinet comments on making sure that all residents are communicated these changes. The Mayor also asked that officers look into the locations of bins in the borough and whether they are in the correct place.

RESOLVED that the Mayor in Cabinet:

1. Agrees to adopt new levels for fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for offences related to littering, graffiti/fly-posting, fly-tipping, and breach of the household waste duty of care and to set discount levels and periods as detailed in the table below.

Description of offence	Proposed FPN level	Proposed discounted FPN level (payable within ten days of issue)
Depositing litter	£500	£250
Graffiti and fly-posting	£500	£250
Household waste duty of care offences	£600	£300
Fly-tipping	£1,000	£500

6.2 Budget Monitoring 23/24 Quarter 3

Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living, introduced the report that introduced the report that presented the forecast year end outturn compared to the budget as of 31st December 2023 (Period 9/Quarter 3) for the General Fund, Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), Housing Revenue Account (HRA), progress against savings targets, the council's capital programme and provides projections on General Fund earmarked reserves.

Cabinet members and relevant corporate directors introduced the key variances that fell within their portfolio areas and explained the drivers for each.

The Mayor thanked officers for the report and all the work they have done and asked officers to make sure that any variances in budgets going forward are report to the Cabinet as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that the Mayor in Cabinet.

1. Notes the council's position and consequent forecast outturn as at 31st December 2023, against General Fund Budget (£0.1m underspend) Dedicated Schools Grant Budget (£0.3m overspend), Housing Revenue Account (£0.1m underspend).
2. Notes the actions taken to date to address the demand pressures as set out in Appendix A to the report, Section 3.2.
3. Notes the progress made against the 2023-24 savings targets, based on forecasts as of 31st December 2023.
4. Notes the council's forecast outturn position against General Fund and Housing Revenue Account capital programme approved budgets for 2023-24, based on forecasts as of 31st December 2023.
5. Approves the anticipated net slippages of £6.7m and net overspends of £2.6m across the General Fund capital programme and net slippages of £7.2m and net overspends of £0.1m across the Housing Revenue Account capital programme as detailed in sections 3.13 and 3.14 of the report submitted.
6. Notes that there are no equalities implications directly resulting from this report, as set out in Section 4 of the report submitted.

6.3 Strategic Delivery and Performance Report Year 2 Quarter 3

Councillor Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living, introduced the report that provided the Mayor in Cabinet with a Quarter 3 monitoring update of Year 2 Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24 performance measures. Councillor Ahmed outlines some of the key achievements from the past quarter, as well as some areas where the Council continued to experience challenge in meeting in targets.

The Mayor welcomed the report and noted the successful performance measures. With respect to the seven red, he invited lead members, supported by relevant corporate directors, to provide explanation for the underperformance and to outline the measures in-place, or planned to reverse the underperformance.

The Mayor offered his thanks to Cabinet members and officers for their contributions.

RESOLVED that the Mayor in Cabinet.

1. Notes the strategic delivery and performance report for Q3 covering the period of 1st October 2023 to 30th December 2023.
2. Notes the measures in Q3 tracking the delivery of Year 2 of the Strategic Plan 2023-2024 in Appendix A of the report submitted.

7. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

A motion to exclude the press and public was not required.

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

Nil items.

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 4.22 p.m.

Chair, Mayor Lutfur Rahman
Cabinet

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Cabinet Wednesday, 24 th April 2024	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Stephen Halsey, Chief Executive	Classification: Open (Unrestricted)
Community Engagement Strategy 2024-28	

Lead Member	Lutfur Rahman, Mayor
Originating Officer(s)	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities Craig Morbey, Strategy & Policy Lead
Wards affected	(All Wards);
Key Decision?	Yes
Reason for Key Decision	Significant impact on wards
Forward Plan Notice Published	15/02/2024
Exempt information	N/A
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	'A council that listens and works for everyone' Empowering communities and fighting crime Strategic Plan 2022-26]

Executive Summary

Our priority is to be a 'council that listens and works for everyone' as set out in our [Strategic Plan 2022-26](#). To achieve this objective, it is vital that we engage effectively with the community on the issues that are important to them.

The council has worked in partnership with 328 stakeholders, including residents, partners, staff, and elected members to develop a new Community Engagement Strategy 2024-2028.

The Community Engagement Strategy outlines our vision for community engagement to be 'a council that listens to communities to build a borough that works for everyone.' To deliver this vision we have identified six priorities:

- A joined-up approach to coordinating and planning community engagement in the council and with partners which leads to better outcomes.
- The council and communities work together to make decisions that improve the borough.
- The council knows how to reach the community and our seldom heard groups are enabled to participate.

- Staff have the knowledge, skills, and resources to engage with the community effectively.
- The community understands how their involvement has influenced decisions made by the council.
- Residents get more involved in their community and become the next generation of community leaders.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Community Engagement Strategy as set out in Appendix 1.
2. Note the consultation with residents, partners, staff, and elected members to develop the strategy as set out in Appendix 2.
3. Note the result of the equality screening as set out in para 4.1.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The Council has a priority in the [Strategic Plan 2022-26](#) to be a ‘council that listens and works for everyone.’ The council does not currently have a Community Engagement Strategy. Agreeing this strategy will mean the council has an approach to engage with the community effectively until 2028.
- 1.2 Developing a new council Community Engagement Strategy was an action agreed in the council’s annual delivery plan 2023/2024.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The council to further develop the Tower Hamlets Community Engagement Strategy based on suggestions provided by Cabinet.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The council delivers vital work that improves the quality of life of our residents. However, to meet our community’s needs, we must work in partnership with residents and partners to come to decisions that deliver better outcomes.
- 3.2 Community Engagement happens when the community has a say over the decisions that impact their lives. This means the council listening to our diverse communities and seldom heard groups and giving them more of a say on the issues that matter to them.
- 3.3 The Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equalities Act (2010) requires that we have due regard to the need to encourage participation and engage with people affected by decisions.
- 3.4 The council has a corporate priority to be a ‘council that listens and works for everyone’ in its Strategic Plan 2022-2026. In support of this, the council has

developed a new Community Engagement Strategy which will run between 2024-2028.

- 3.5 Please note the Mayor's Forward will be added to the strategy after the London Mayoral elections take place.

Vision and objectives

- 3.6 The Community Engagement Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 outlines the council's vision for community engagement between 2024-2028 which is to be 'a council that listens to communities to build a borough that works for everyone.'

- 3.7 To help us turn our vision into a reality, we have developed six priority objectives, as follows:

- A joined-up approach to coordinating and planning community engagement in the council and with partners which leads to better outcomes.
- The council and communities work together to make decisions that improve the borough.
- The council knows how to reach the community and our seldom heard groups are enabled to participate.
- Staff have the knowledge, skills, and resources to engage with the community effectively.
- The community understands how their involvement has influenced decisions made by the council.
- Residents get more involved in their community and become the next generation of community leaders.

- 3.8 Each of the objectives has a set of actions to actions to achieve them. These can be viewed in the delivery plan section in the strategy document in Appendix 1.

Development of the strategy

- 3.9 We brought together a project team of council officers from across council divisions to guide the strategy development and ensure buy-in.
- 3.10 We conducted an evaluation of the council's community engagement practice to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- 3.11 We then worked with the project team and the Mayor's Office to agree draft objectives for the strategy.
- 3.12 We conducted extensive research into good practice from elsewhere, including speaking to four other local authorities to learn from what they do.

Wider consultation

- 3.13 As set out in appendix two we conducted an in-depth consultation with 328 residents, staff, partners, and elected members.
- 3.14 We engaged with a diverse range of community members who were representative of Tower Hamlets diverse communities.
- 3.15 Participants told us:
- What the vision and objectives should be
 - What good community engagement looks like to them
 - The issues they want the council to involve communities in

- Ideas on how the council can improve its community engagement.

3.16 We used a mixture of methods and approaches to consult with communities, including:

- Online survey
- Pop-up sessions
- Two workshops with elected members
- Two staff workshops
- Two workshops with partners
- Six workshops with residents.

3.17 The consultation was promoted through a communication campaign, including a webpage, articles in newsletters, social media, writing to partners and utilising messaging platform.

Consultation findings

3.18 A full analysis of the consultation findings can be viewed in Appendix 2. Key findings from the consultation were:

- Respondents were overall positive about the vision and objectives but wanted them written in plain English and an objective added about empowering communities.
- The new strategy should include principles of good practice based on the feedback from stakeholders about what good community engagement looks like. These principles should guide the council's community engagement work.
- The community doesn't want to be involved in all council decisions but wants to be involved in decisions that affect their everyday lives, so the council should prioritise community engagement on those matters.
- To improve relationships and trust in the community, excellent customer service is vital, therefore linking this strategy to the Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2026 if vital.

Feedback on the draft strategy

3.19 Following the research and consultation process the information was used to write a draft strategy.

3.20 To get feedback internally we delivered a presentation to the Mayor's Office, Divisional Leadership team meetings and met with senior managers with responsibility for proposed actions. We also organised two workshops and a survey to get feedback from residents and partners who took part in the consultation.

Budget

3.21 The Community Engagement Strategy is fully costed. The only action which is included in the strategy that requires growth is the recruitment of an Engagement and Consultation Service in the Corporate Communications and

Marketing service. This has been approved by the council in its medium-term financial plan in February 2024.

Monitoring

- 3.22 To deliver the strategy the council will establish a strategy delivery group with officers from relevant departments to monitor, review, and revise the Community Engagement Strategy.
- 3.23 The council will measure the sentiment of residents in areas such as feelings of trust, involvement, listening, informed and satisfaction on annual basis through the Annual Residents Survey.
- 3.24 To measure the impact the strategy is having, each year we will conduct a survey with 100 residents to understand their experience of the council's community engagement. In year one of the strategy we will collect baseline data.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Extensive engagement and consultation has been undertaken in the development of this strategy. As set out in para 3.7 and Appendix 2, we consulted with 328 residents, staff, partners, and elected members to develop the strategy, delivering a wide range of engagement activities and events, including a survey, pop-ups in public places and workshops. We actively took steps to engage with a diverse range of community members who were representative of Tower Hamlets diverse communities. More details on which community members we engaged with are available in Appendix two.
- 4.2 An equality screening has been completed and there are no evident adverse impacts on any protected characteristics groups that would arise from the implementation of this strategy.
- 4.3 The strategy has an objective that 'the council knows how to reach the community and our seldom heard groups are enabled to participate.' This is supported by a range of actions which will support us to engage with communities with protected characteristics effectively such as creating a directory of local services and groups, developing a recognition and reward policy, strengthening the equalities hub and networks and enabling staff to project easy to understand communications.
- 4.4 For some of the actions included in the strategy it is crucial for services to consider the needs of residents with different protected characteristics. A key action will be to develop an engagement handbook which will provide further guidance on to engage those residents seldom heard and residents with protected characteristics.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Consultations – Details of consultation an engagement undertaken in the development of the Community Engagement Strategy is set out in para 3.7 and Appendix 2.

- 5.2 Best Value – To understand the benefits of effective community engagement we reviewed papers which demonstrate the positive impact that community engagement has. We identify good practice in community engagement by speaking to 2 other local authorities to learn about how they involve communities in decision-making, as well as reading best practice papers and book on community engagement.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 Growth is required for an Engagement and Consultation Service. The growth bid for this 'Bengali Communications and Engagement Team & General Engagement Officer' (GRO / CEO 003 / 24-25) was approved at Cabinet on 31st January 2024 with Council approval for the MTFS to take place on 28th February 2024.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 When exercising its functions, 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). Having a Community Engagement Strategy demonstrates a commitment to that duty.
- 7.2 An Equalities Analysis (EA) has been taken on the strategy. The intention of the strategy is to improve the reach of council engagement across the range of Protected Characteristics. It is expected that the delivery of the strategy will have a positive impact on each of the equalities groups. The strategy will assist the Council in meeting its duties under the Equalities Act (2010).
- 7.3 The Council is a Best Value authority within the meaning of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999. As a Best Value authority, the Council has an obligation under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 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' (the Best Value duty). Meaningful engagement with the community is a way in which the Council can make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- Strategic Plan 2022-2026
- Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2026

Appendices

- Appendix A - Community Engagement Strategy 2024-2028
- Appendix B - Community Engagement – Consultation Report

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

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents: Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities

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Community Engagement Strategy 2024 to 2028

‘Listen to communities to build a borough that works for everyone.’

[Publish Date]

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Our vision

Our vision is to create 'a council that listens to communities to build a borough that works for everyone'.

We perform vital work that improves our residents' quality of life. However, to truly meet the community's needs, we must work with residents and partner organisations to make decisions that result in better outcomes.

That is why we worked with 328 residents, staff, partner organisations and councillors to develop this Community Engagement Strategy.

Community engagement gives people a say over the decisions that affect their lives. We will listen to our diverse community and give people more power to make decisions on the issues that matter to them.

This Community Engagement Strategy builds on our [Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2026](#).

When we involve the community in decisions, we aim to make sure they have a positive experience and that our staff are always helpful and polite. This allows us to build trust with the community and make decisions that residents support. It will also encourage local people to get more involved in shaping their neighbourhoods and leading change in the things that are important to them.

This strategy sets out our vision for community engagement over the next four years and a plan for how we will achieve it. Our aim is to deliver the following objectives.

- A joined-up approach to co-ordinating and planning community engagement leads to better outcomes.
- We work together with the community to make decisions that improve the borough.
- We know how to reach the community and make sure seldom-heard groups can fully take part in community engagement.
- The community understands how their involvement has influenced decisions.
- Our staff have the knowledge, skills and resources needed to engage with the community effectively.
- Residents get more involved in their community.

This strategy sets out:

- what community engagement is and why it is important;
- our principles for community engagement; and
- our objectives and how we will achieve them.

It describes a new kind of relationship where the community is seen as an equal partner, as we work together to change Tower Hamlets for the better.

What is community engagement, and why is it important?

What is community engagement?

Our definition of community engagement is:

‘A planned process, which has the specific purpose of working with residents and groups of people, whether they are connected by place, interest or identity, to encourage them to actively take part in making decisions about their community.’

Community engagement can range from encouraging communities to share their views and influence the services we provide, to giving communities the power to make decisions and provide services with us.

What are the benefits of community engagement?

There are many benefits of involving the community, including the following.

- Involving communities in the decisions that affect them will help us make better decisions about policy and services.
- When communities are involved in shaping our decisions, the decisions are more likely to have support in the community.
- If communities feel able to take action on the things that are important to them, it will increase the number of residents taking action to improve their communities.
- Community engagement builds trust between us and the community, and moves away from a ‘them and us’ situation to one of ‘working together’.

Defining our communities

Communities are usually defined as groups of people who have the same or similar characteristics. They can be broadly categorised as follows.

- **Communities of place** – people living in the same location, such as a street, a ward or a borough
- **Communities of interest** – people having a shared interest, such as using the same service, being a student, being a local business or being involved in the voluntary or community sector.
- **Communities of identity** – people sharing a characteristic, such as ethnicity, faith, age, disability, gender or sexuality.

What are the levels of community engagement?

There are **five levels** of community engagement.

Providing information

Telling the community what is going to happen.

Deciding together

Encouraging the community to provide ideas and options and come to decisions together.

Supporting independent community action

Helping the community do what they want.

Consultation

Offering the community different options and listening to the feedback.

Acting together

The community and us deciding together, and forming a partnership to put the decision into practice.

To involve the community in decision-making, we will organise activities that enable us to engage with people. These could be face-to-face or online, or a combination of methods. Our community engagement handbook explains the range of methods and approaches we will use to engage with communities.

Our principles for community engagement

We worked with residents, staff, partners and councillors to develop guiding principles for community engagement.

These principles will help to make sure that we always deliver high-quality community engagement.

Staff will be clear on the standards they are expected to meet when planning, delivering, and using community engagement to make decisions.

For the communities we engage with, the principles will make clear the standards they can expect from us, which they can use to hold us to account.

Our guiding principles for community engagement are as follows.

What we will do	What we will not do
✓ Make sure there is adequate time and resources	× Rush community engagement
✓ Listen to communities to make decisions that work for everyone	× Make decisions for the community based on what we think is best
✓ Treat the community as equal partners	× Treat the community as service users who we consult only if we have to
✓ Be helpful and polite when engaging with communities	× Be rude and disrespectful
✓ Be open and honest about what the community can and can't influence and why	× Only involve the community after we have already made up our mind
✓ Use plain English and provide translation and interpretation services when needed	× Use jargon in council communications and at engagement events
✓ Deliver events at times and places that suit residents' needs	× Organise events at times or places that the community cannot access
✓ Involve residents who have personal experience and represent the diversity of the community	× Engage with the 'usual suspects' and those who shout the loudest
✓ Provide a mix of online and face-to-face consultation methods to meet communities' different needs	× Deliver community engagement events only online or only in person
✓ Make sure those making decisions attend events to hear from communities first-hand	× Keep the Mayor, councillors and senior managers away from the public
✓ Listen to the issues that are important to the community and understand how we can help	× Only engage with the community on issues that we think are important
✓ Make it easy for the community to find out how they can be involved	× Fail to let the community know how they can have their say
✓ Spot opportunities for joined-up working and use the results of previous community engagement where appropriate	× Engage with the same groups, asking the same questions
✓ Make decisions based on what the community tells us	× Ignore what the community tells us
✓ Provide the community with feedback on the effect their involvement has had	× Fail to tell the community how their involvement has influenced our decisions

National and local context

National factors

Councils often engage with communities because they have a legal duty to do so.

- The Health and Social Care Act 2012 states that ‘individuals to whom the services are being or may be provided are involved by being consulted or provided with information’.
- Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, created by the Equality Act 2010, councils must encourage people to take part in public life and other activities.
- Under the Local Government Act (1999) and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007), local authorities must inform, consult or involve the public.
- The Localism Act (2011) introduced new rights and powers for communities, allowing them to be more involved in the way local decisions are made and have more influence over the future of where they live.
- The ‘Best Value Standards and Intervention’ guide states that local authorities should have a clear understanding of the benefits that can be gained by working effectively with local partners and communities in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for local people.
- Under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, providers of social housing must involve tenants in decisions about the management of their homes, and involve tenants in an effective and meaningful way.

Due to legal or regulatory requirements, some individual council services may need to have a more specific engagement strategy that is in line with this strategy, but is more tailored to that service.

It is now considered important for councils to involve communities in significant issues that affect their lives, such as budget costs or substantial changes to services. There are clear rules about how councils must formally engage with communities. Those rules are called the Gunning Principles, and they state that community engagement activities:

- must happen before a decision is made;
- must give people all the information they need;
- should give people enough time to think things over; and
- should demonstrate that real consideration and thought is given to any feedback from communities.

National research

The importance of effective community involvement is supported by significant research. In 2021, New Local, a think tank that promotes community engagement, produced a report called Community Power: The Evidence. It draws on existing evidence to demonstrate the effect of community engagement. It identifies that community engagement can:

- improve people’s health and well-being;

- improve a community's well-being and resilience (the ability to adapt and overcome difficulties);
- increase participation in the democratic process and boost trust;
- build stronger communities;
- prevent problems from happening in communities and tackle issues early when they occur; and
- produce financial savings.

Local priorities

Our [Strategic Plan 2022-2026](#) sets a priority to be 'a council that listens and works for everyone'. The ambition is for residents to be involved in decisions that affect them.

The Tower Hamlets Strategic Partnership brings together key stakeholders to improve services and outcomes for residents. The Partnership Plan '[A Tower Hamlets for all](#)' includes a commitment that 'everything we do is driven by community needs and has co-production and co-design at its core – supported by resources and built on trust, power sharing, and effective communications'.

Our [Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2026](#) sets out our vision for customer services. It states that we will 'listen and work collaboratively internally, with other agencies and in partnership with our voluntary and community services to design and deliver fit for purpose excellent services'.

Our Target Operating Model recently came to an end. This gave us the opportunity to develop a new model that is focused on the community and based on our strategic priorities. Our new Target Operating Model is to 'create a more efficient, effective, and responsible public-sector organisation that is better able to meet the needs of its communities'.

Local characteristics

Tower Hamlets is a fast-growing, diverse and young borough in East London. The borough's population grew by 22.1% between 2011 and 2021, making it the fastest-growing local authority area in England and Wales.

The borough is also the most densely populated in England, with 15,695 residents per square kilometre. This is over 37 times higher than the national average. The average age of residents in Tower Hamlets is 30, making it the youngest borough in England and Wales. The borough also has the smallest proportion of people aged 65 and over.

Other than the UK, the most common countries of birth for Tower Hamlets residents are Bangladesh, Italy, India, China and France. 14% of residents were born in a current European Union country. Population turnover is high, with more than a fifth (20.8%) of residents having lived somewhere else a year before the 2021 Census.

Tower Hamlets has the UK's largest Bangladeshi population. Although this is a tremendous asset, it provides a challenge for us to reach all of the population. There can be language barriers and cultural issues that prevent some of our residents from engaging with us.

Local views

Over the last six years, the number of residents who say they feel involved in the decisions we make has fallen.

To develop this strategy, we consulted 328 stakeholders, including residents, partner organisations and councillors. The aims of the consultation were to:

- understand what good community engagement means to the community and the issues they want to be involved in; and
- give people the opportunity to share their ideas on how to achieve our vision and objectives.

The community told us that some of the reasons for this reduction in involvement are perceptions that:

- they have not been adequately involved in decisions that have affected them;
- seldom-heard groups sometimes don't engage because of barriers, such as language;
- we engage with those who shout loudest and not always with people who represent the diversity of the community;
- when they get involved, they often don't hear back about how their involvement has influenced decisions; and
- engagement has often been online only, which excludes those without access to technology and without digital skills.

We used the insights from the community to develop our objectives and how we will achieve them.

Our objectives and how we will achieve them

Objective one	A joined-up approach to co-ordinating and planning community engagement leads to better outcomes.
Overview	
<p>We will have a coordinated approach to planning activities and events to engage with the community. We know that our partners in the public, voluntary and community sectors also engage with communities, so we will identify more opportunities to work with them.</p> <p>Each year, we will look at the big decisions we need to make to identify opportunities for community engagement and will make sure there are adequate resources to engage effectively.</p> <p>We will create a calendar of community engagement activities and events, and regularly update it, so that council employees and the community know what is happening.</p> <p>We will find opportunities for staff to share good practice and identify opportunities for working in partnership with other organisations and groups.</p> <p>We will explore the use of technology to improve how we share and manage knowledge gained from previous community engagement activities.</p>	
What we will do to achieve this objective	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring together officers who are responsible for delivering this strategy to monitor and assess progress. • Share information about this strategy, and the implications it has for services, on internal staff-communication channels and through team talks. • Identify opportunities for communities to be involved in decision-making and include these opportunities in service plans. • Develop a central calendar setting out details and time frames for all community engagement activities and regularly update that calendar. • Bring staff involved in community engagement together to provide updates on their work, share best practice and help develop community engagement policy and practice. • Use technology to store the results of previous consultations so they can be accessed by other services. • Strengthen borough-wide partnerships for community engagement, including with Tower Hamlets Together and Housing Forum, and make sure partnerships represent the community. 	

Objective two	We work together with the community to make decisions that improve the borough
Overview	
<p>We will provide more opportunities to involve communities in decisions that affect the borough, including involving the community in producing the long-term vision for the borough.</p> <p>To engage with communities effectively, we will use innovative engagement methods and improve existing approaches. We know that different people like to engage in different ways, so we will make sure our engagement methods offer a mix of face-to-face and online options that are accessible for our communities.</p> <p>We will increase opportunities for the people who use services to work together with us to make decisions together. This is referred to as ‘co-production’. It will be guided by good practice, such as the Act Early Co-production Strategy and Framework, and staff will be provided with appropriate training.</p> <p>There are complex issues that we cannot solve by ourselves. When this is the case, we will bring together our partners in the public sector and third sector to come up with solutions together.</p> <p>We will continue to be open, upfront and honest. We will make sure the Mayor is accessible to the community by delivering Ask the Mayor events and making sure the Mayor and councillors continue to hold regular surgeries.</p> <p>By increasing local people’s involvement in decision-making, we will build trust with the community and decisions will have the support of the community. It will help us understand the needs of the community and identify effective solutions, making sure we make good decisions about policies and services.</p>	
What we will do to achieve this objective	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure that changes to our Strategic Plan, our delivery plan and service plans are guided by community engagement and reflect the community’s priorities. • Review the tools we use to engage communities online, to make sure they are effective. • Trial face-to-face events in places where members of the community can meet and talk to council staff and partners about the issues that affect them. • Help and support the borough to have a co-ordinated approach to dealing with emergencies, and that those approaches enable individuals, businesses, community networks and voluntary organisations to support other members of the public. • Provide a programme of ‘resident perception’ work to understand residents’ views of the council and the borough, and whether they feel they have a say in the decisions that affect them. • Work with the community to identify opportunities for research into health determinants (factors that affect the health of individuals and communities), 	

involve communities in designing and carrying out research, and make sure the findings are used to influence council policies and services.

- Strengthen community-safety meetings held in the community with the police and other partners, to give residents the opportunity to speak to us about issues and get issues resolved.
- Work in partnership with Tower Hamlets Together to understand the health needs of individual areas and neighbourhoods, and bring partners and their communities together to act on the issues that are important to them.
- Adopt neighbourhood approaches to tackling health inequalities through long-term measures to prevent health conditions.
- Hold three Ask the Mayor events a year, each in a different area, to share information about us and listen to the needs of the community.
- Organise, support and attend community events so residents can speak with councillors, senior managers and council services.
- Hold partnership events on important issues to consult a wider range of local partners and residents on key council priorities.
- Establish Tenants' Voice, a group that enables landlords to engage with tenants and leaseholders.

Objective three

We know how to reach the community, and make sure that seldom-heard groups can fully take part in community engagement

Overview

Tower Hamlets has a diverse population. Our community engagement activities will always involve residents who are affected by the issue in question and make sure those we engage with are representative of the borough's population.

Tower Hamlet's has some groups who have been less likely than the wider population to take part in community engagement activities. Many residents do not know about the opportunities to get involved. To tackle this, we will make better use of local media and engage with communities through the voluntary and community sector, as well as faith networks.

Technology has changed how people communicate, so we will use WhatsApp and social media, as well as traditional communication methods.

Our engagement activities will be at times and places that suit the needs of the community and will be culturally appropriate. We will communicate in plain English, and provide translation and interpretation services if necessary. We will develop innovative and appealing ways of engaging with children and young people. In some instances, we will help people to get involved by covering expenses and recognising and rewarding participation.

If our communities have a negative experience of engaging with the council, they will be less willing to engage in the future. When we engage with the community,

we will always try to make sure they have a positive experience and that our staff are helpful and polite.

By doing this, we will increase involvement in community engagement activities and increase the diversity of those involved. This will lead to more representative decision-making and us not just hearing from the people who shout loudest.

What we will do to achieve this objective

- Create a directory of local services and groups, and a database with contact details for key stakeholders, networks and forums we can reach out to.
- Develop a policy for recognising and rewarding community participation where appropriate.
- Strengthen the work of the Equalities Hub and Community Equality Networks to enable residents with protected characteristics to influence our decisions.
- Identify who seldom-heard groups are and measure how well we have managed to reach and involve them.
- Use different methods to communicate with people, including using WhatsApp, social media and local press, radio and TV.
- Continue to promote training and guidance for staff to help them create accessible communications, which are written in plain English, translated or interpreted where necessary, and culturally sensitive.
- Through our Youth Council and Young Tower Hamlets programme, involve young people in shaping services.
- Engage with faith communities through the Interfaith Forum and other faith networks to reach seldom-heard groups.
- Explore how local businesses and traders can be involved more effectively in decision-making

Objective four	The community understands how their involvement has influenced decisions
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Overview

When we engage with communities, we will be open and honest about what they can and cannot influence and the reasons why. When we ‘consult’ communities, ‘decide together’ or ‘act together’, we will make decisions that are influenced by what the community has told us. When important decisions have gone through our decision processes, we will always tell the people who have given up their time about the effect their involvement has had.

To do this we will hold meetings and celebration events, and write to people, to say thank you and update them on what has happened. To increase openness we will also explain to the community how we came to our decisions. This will include providing not only ‘you said, we did’ feedback, but also explaining if there were ideas we could not adopt and the reasons why.

By keeping the community informed, we will build trust among community members. They will be able to see the effect of their involvement, making them more likely to engage with us again. Community members will rightly feel proud of their contributions and be more likely to become the community leaders of the future. Keeping the community involved will also improve our reputation and help us move away from an 'us and them' situation with the community to one of 'working together'.

What we will do to achieve this objective

- Give council services the opportunity to put a 'you said, we did' section in *Our East End*, residents' newsletters and Let's Talk Tower Hamlets so they can promote the outcomes of their community engagement.
- Include guidance in the community engagement handbook on how to update people on the influence their involvement had, such as by writing to them.

Objective five

Our staff have the knowledge, skills and resources needed to engage with the community effectively

Overview

To deliver effective community engagement, we need to develop and train staff so they have the appropriate ethics, knowledge and skills. We also know that the biggest challenge is staff having enough time and budget to engage with the community.

We will create a new Corporate Engagement and Consultation Service, based in the Corporate Communications directorate, to lead community engagement on important council decisions, engage more effectively with our diverse community, support the workforce in developing their skills, and help co-ordinate community engagement across the council.

Staff will receive training and development opportunities to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need in connection with community engagement. They will also receive guidance which outlines best practice in planning, delivering and evaluating community engagement.

This objective aims to make staff feel empowered to deliver high-quality community engagement.

What we will do to achieve this objective

- Establish a Corporate Engagement and Consultation Service that leads important community engagement projects, engages with seldom-heard groups effectively, supports the workforce to develop their knowledge and skills, and helps co-ordinate community engagement across the council.

- Keep track of the teams and staff in the council who deliver community engagement, to understand roles and responsibilities and develop an effective approach to working together.
- Update our community engagement handbook to reflect the priorities set out in this strategy.
- Work with Tower Hamlets Together to develop co-production guidance which is adopted across the council.
- Develop and share case studies, for example from the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coproduction Charter, which we will use to work with professionals, parents, children and young people to ensure meaningful coproduction at strategic and individual levels.
- Provide training and development opportunities for staff who deliver community engagement to develop their knowledge, skills and capabilities.
- Arrange relevant external support to provide staff with advice and guidance.
- Offer councillors training and development opportunities on how to engage with communities effectively.

Objective six

Residents get more involved in their community

Overview

We want to help create communities where residents are active in tackling community problems and improving their quality of life. This could be people contributing to decisions that affect their lives, or people coming together to form groups and organisations that deal with common problems.

We will provide opportunities for young people to get more involved in their communities and take on leadership roles. Through Young Tower Hamlets and our schools, we will help more young people make a positive contribution to society.

Staff and volunteers from the voluntary and community sector will be able to get funding from our Capacity Building Fund to increase their confidence and skills.

We will review how women are (and are not) directly influencing policy through their personal experiences and develop a plan for making sure women's voices are heard.

We will continue to make sure that representatives from the voluntary and community sector are represented on strategic boards, and we will take steps to increase the diversity of councillors by running a campaign to support this.

This objective aims to increase people's sense of belonging in the community, because people from different backgrounds will spend time and work together. It will help community members develop their skills and confidence. It will increase the number of community resources supporting residents and tackling local issues.

What we will do to achieve this objective

- Elect a young mayor every two years. They will identify priorities for young people and work with the Mayor and Chief Executive to put them into practice. They will also chair important strategic partnerships.
- Support a community research network, through our Health Determinants Research Collaboration, to enable residents to gather evidence of what matters to them and use that evidence to influence decisions.
- Continue to run the youth council, where young people get involved in shaping council services, and plan and deliver projects for action on community issues.
- Ensure that children and young people views are heard on issues that affect them through our Let's Talk SEND Ambassadors, Children Living in Care (CLICC), Youth Justice and Young Carers groups.
- Provide funding for young people to design, deliver and evaluate their own projects through the Youth Empowerment Fund.
- Provide funding for voluntary and community organisations to access support to strengthen the roles and capabilities of local volunteers through the Capacity Building Fund.
- Support socially excluded groups from across the borough to become volunteers in local voluntary and community organisations.
- Review our partnerships and make sure voluntary and community organisations are represented in them.
- Identify residents and partners who are well connected and can promote council communications and support them to become community champions.
- Establish a Women's Commission to focus on reducing inequalities that women face, including being involved in local decisions.
- Deliver the Local Government Association's 'Be a Councillor' campaign to encourage a diverse range of candidates to stand at future elections.
- Develop and deliver the 'Street Leaders' scheme, which will support local volunteers to take responsibility for environmental issues.
- Provide training to council tenants so that they have the skills and knowledge they need to make their involvement meaningful and effective.
- Support existing tenant and resident associations (TRAs) and help residents set up TRAs in areas that do not have one, so that residents can work with their landlords to improve housing services.

How we will monitor progress and measure success

We will establish a strategy delivery group of officers and partners from relevant departments and organisations to monitor, review and revise the Community Engagement Strategy.

We will use the Annual Residents Survey to measure residents' views on things such as trust in the council, getting involved, being listened to, being kept informed, and being satisfied with our community engagement activities.

Each year we will survey 100 residents to understand their experience of community engagement. We will carry out the first survey in 2024, and then every year, to evaluate our performance against our objectives.

Delivery plan

Action	Service or person responsible	Deadline
Objective one: A joined-up approach to co-ordinating and planning community engagement leads to better outcomes		
Bring together officers who are responsible for delivering this strategy to monitor and assess progress.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	May 2024
Share information about this strategy, and the implications it has for services, on internal staff-communication channels, and through team talks.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	June 2024
Identify opportunities for communities to be involved in decision-making, and include these opportunities in service plans.	Heads of service	March 2025, then March each year
Develop a central calendar setting out details and time frames for all community engagement activities, and regularly update that calendar.	Corporate Strategy and Communities, Communications	March 2025, then March each year
Use technology to store the results of previous consultations so they can be accessed by other services.	Corporate Strategy and Improvement	March 2025
Strengthen borough-wide partnerships for community engagement, including with Tower Hamlets Together and the Housing Forum, and make sure partnerships represent the community.	Corporate Strategy and Improvement	June 2024, then three-monthly reviews

Objective two: We work together with the community to make decisions that improve the borough.		
Make sure that changes to our Strategic Plan, delivery plan and service plans are guided by community engagement and reflect the community's priorities.	Corporate Strategy and Improvement	March 2025, then March each year
Review the tools we use to engage communities online, to make sure they are effective.	Communications	June 2024
Trial face-to-face events in places where members of the community can meet and talk to council staff and partners about the issues that affect them.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	March 2025
Help and support the borough to have a co-ordinated approach to dealing with emergencies, and that those approaches enable individuals, businesses, community networks and voluntary organisations to support other members of the public.	Community Safety	May 2024, then ongoing
Provide a programme of 'resident perception' work to understand residents' views of the council and the borough, and whether they feel they have a say in the decisions that affect them.	Corporate Strategy and Improvement	October 2024, then October each year
Work with the community to identify opportunities for research into health determinants (factors that affect the health of individuals and communities), involve communities in designing and carrying out research, and make sure the findings are used to influence council policies and services.	Public Health	October 2027
Strengthen community-safety meetings held in the community with the police and other partners, to give residents the opportunity to speak to us about issues and get issues resolved.	Community Safety	December 2024, then ongoing
Work in partnership with Tower Hamlets Together to understand the health needs of individual areas and neighbourhoods, and bring partners and their communities together to act on the issues that are important to them.	Integrated Commissioning and Strategy	March 2025
Adopt neighbourhood approaches to tackling health inequalities through long-term measures to prevent health conditions.	Public Health	Develop plans by September 2024, deliver from October 2024

Hold three Ask the Mayor events a year, each in a different area, to share information about us and listen to the needs of the community.	Mayor's Office	Deliver three times a year
Organise, support and attend community events so residents can speak with councillors, senior managers and council services.	Arts and Events	Various events throughout the year
Provide options for residents and voluntary and community sector organisations to get more involved in scrutiny activities, including giving evidence to scrutiny committees.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	September 2024, then September each year
Hold partnership events on important issues to consult a wider range of local partners and residents on key council priorities.	Corporate Strategy and Improvement	Twice a year
Establish Tenants' Voice, a group that enables landlords to engage with tenants and leaseholders.	Housing	May 2024
Objective three: We know how to reach the community, and make sure seldom-heard groups can fully take part in community engagement.		
Create a directory of local services and groups, and a database with contact details for key stakeholders, networks and forums we can reach out to.	Communications, Corporate Strategy and Communities	July 2025, as long as we have established a Corporate Engagement and Consultation Service
Develop a policy for recognising and rewarding community participation where appropriate.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	October 2024
Strengthen the work of the Equalities Hub and Community Equality Networks to enable residents with protected characteristics to influence our decisions.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	September 2024
Identify who seldom-heard groups are and measure how well we have managed to reach and involve them.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	April 2024
Use different methods to communicate with people, including using WhatsApp, social media and local press, radio and TV.	Communications	As required
Continue to promote staff training and guidance for staff to help them create accessible communications, which are written in plain English, translated or interpreted where necessary, and are culturally sensitive.	Communications	May 2024

Through our Youth Council and Young Tower Hamlets programme, involve young people in shaping services.	Youth & Commissioning	April 2024 and ongoing
Engage with faith communities through the Interfaith Forum and other faith networks to reach seldom-heard groups.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	September 2024
Explore how local businesses and traders can be involved more effectively in decision-making.	Growth and Economic Development	April 2025, then ongoing
Objective four: The community understands how their involvement has influenced decisions.		
Give council services the opportunity to put a 'you said, we did' section in <i>Our East End</i> , residents' newsletters and Let's Talk Tower Hamlets so they can promote the outcomes of their community engagement through social media.	Communications	As required
Include guidance in the community engagement handbook on how to update people on the influence their involvement had, such as by writing to them.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	October 2024
Objective five: Our staff have the knowledge, skills and resources needed to engage with the community effectively.		
Establish a Corporate Engagement and Consultation Service that leads important community engagement projects, engages with seldom-heard groups effectively, supports the workforce to develop their knowledge and skills, and helps co-ordinate community engagement across the council.	Communications	January 2025
Keep track of the teams and staff in the council who deliver community engagement, to understand roles and responsibilities and develop an effective approach to working together.	Communications, Corporate Strategy and Communities	November 2024, as long as we have established a Corporate Engagement and Consultation Service
Update our community engagement handbook to reflect the priorities set out in this strategy.	Corporate Strategy and Communities, Communications	October 2024
Work with Tower Hamlets Together to develop co-production guidance which is adopted across the council.	Adult Social Care	July 2024
Develop and share case studies, for example from the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coproduction Charter, which we will use to work with	Education	April 2024 and ongoing

professionals, parents, children and young people to ensure meaningful coproduction at strategic and individual level.		
Provide training and development for staff who take part in community engagement, to develop their knowledge, skills and capabilities.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	March 2025
Arrange relevant external support to provide staff with advice and guidance.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	July 2024
Offer councillors training and development opportunities on how to engage with communities effectively.	Democratic Services, Corporate Strategy and Communities	April 2025
Objective six: Residents get more involved in their community.		
Elect a young mayor every two years. They will identify priorities for young people and work with the Mayor and Chief Executive to put them into practice. They will also chair important strategic partnerships.	Young Tower Hamlets	Every two years, next election 2025
Support a community research network, through our Health Determinants Research Collaboration, to enable residents to gather evidence of what matters to them and use that evidence to influence decisions.	Public Health	October 2027
Continue to run the Youth Council, where young people get involved in shaping council services, and plan and deliver projects for action on community issues.	Young Tower Hamlets	Ongoing
Ensure that children and young people's views are heard on issues that affect them through our Let's Talk SEND Ambassadors, Children Living in Care (CLICC), Youth Justice and Young Carers groups.	Children's Social Care & Supporting Families, Education	Ongoing
Provide funding for young people to design, deliver and evaluate their own projects through the Youth Empowerment Fund.	Young Tower Hamlets	Three times a year

Provide funding for voluntary and community sector organisations to access support to strengthen the roles and capabilities of local volunteers through the Capacity Building Fund.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	Three times a year
Support socially excluded groups from across the borough to become volunteers in local voluntary and community sector organisations.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	November 2023
Identify residents and partners who are well connected and can promote council communications, and support them to become community champions.	Communications	Within 18 months
Establish a Women's Commission to focus on reducing inequalities that women face, including being involved in local decisions.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	October 2024
Review our partnerships and make sure voluntary and community organisations are represented in them.	Strategy, Improvement and Transformation	December 2024
Deliver the Local Government Association's 'Be a Councillor' campaign to encourage a diverse range of candidates to stand at future elections.	Democratic Services	December 2024
Develop and deliver the 'Street Leaders' scheme, which will support local volunteers to take responsibility for environmental issues.	Public Realm	May 2024
Provide training to council tenants so that they have the skills and knowledge they need to make their involvement meaningful and effective.	Housing and Regeneration	May 2024, then ongoing
Support existing tenant and resident associations (TRAs) and help residents set up TRAs in areas that do not have one, so that residents can work with their landlords to improve housing services.	Housing and Regeneration	May 2024, then ongoing

Community Engagement Strategy

Consultation report

01/12/2023



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Introduction

The council has a corporate priority to be a 'council that listens and works for everyone' in its [Strategic Plan 2022-2026](#). In support of this, the council is currently developing a new Community Engagement Strategy, which is due to be agreed by Cabinet in April 2024.

We consulted with residents, staff, partners, and elected members to develop the strategy. We aimed to engage with a diverse range of residents who were representative of the local community. In total, 328 people took part.

Those who participated in the consultation had the opportunity to:

- Provide us with feedback on a draft vision and objectives
- Tell us what good community engagement looks like to them
- Tell us the issues they want the council to involve communities in
- Come up with ideas on how the council can improve its community engagement.

We used various methods to conduct the consultation, including an online survey, online and face-to-face workshops, pop-up stalls in public places, as well as targeted workshops with priority groups.

This report provides an overview of the end-to-end consultation process, an analysis of the key findings, and recommendations. The council will use this report to inform the development of the new Community Engagement Strategy.

Methodology

The consultation ran for six and a half weeks between the 13th of October and the 30th of November. In total, 328 people took part.

Aim and objectives

The consultation aimed to involve diverse stakeholders in developing the strategy.

The objectives were to:

- Understand what good community engagement means to the community and the issues they want to be involved in.
- Get feedback from stakeholders on the draft objectives and proposed ideas for achieving the objectives.
- Provide stakeholders with the opportunity to share their ideas on achieving the vision and objectives.

We wanted participants to feel listened to, engaged, and aware of how the council will consider their input in the strategy development process.

Stakeholders

A stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted by the project team to identify the stakeholders to engage with. The stakeholders we identified included:

Residents	Residents with protected characteristics
Council staff from relevant services	Elected members
VCS organisations	Local businesses
SME Businesses	Statutory partners
Housing Associations	Faith groups
Tenant residents' associations	

To ensure we could involve these groups, we chose the most effective methods to engage with them and decided to deliver a mixture of approaches to meet their different needs.

Engagement methods

The methods we used to engage with the community were:

- Online survey
- 4 X Pop-up sessions across different localities
- 2 x Workshop with staff (one in-person, one online)
- 2 X Workshop with members (hybrid)
- 2 X Workshop partners (one in-person, one online)
- 2 X Workshop with residents who are members of Equalities Networks (hybrid)
- Session with targeted residents (older people, young people, Somali community, Bangladeshi women)
- Meetings with council service areas who are responsible for doing community engagement

Recruiting participants

To inform stakeholders about the consultation and how they could participate, the project team worked with the Communications Service to develop and implement a [communications plan](#) that identified the objectives, key messages, target audience, communication methods, and timeline. The methods we used to promote the consultation included.

Creating a webpage for the consultation	Social media campaign
Special bulletin in the VCS newsletter	Article in THCVS newsletter
Article in THNow	Email to internal services

Advertisement on Ideas Store screens	Email invitation to internal services
Email invitation to partners	VCS organization client groups
Social media campaign for resident and partner workshops	THNow
Messages through Whatsapp	

Equalities considerations

To ensure there were no barriers to stakeholders' participation, we completed an [equalities screening form](#), which identified our target audience, the potential barriers they may face, and the solutions we put in place.

The council put the following solutions in place to minimize barriers to participation:

- Providing translation services
- Ensuring all in-person venues were accessible
- Delivering in-person events at different localities in the borough
- Writing documents in plain English
- Offering to pay expenses and provide additional support to residents and voluntary and community sector representatives

Who took part

A breakdown of who took part in each activity is as follows:

Approach	Location	Number of participants
Online Survey	Online	62
Pop-up 1	Whitechapel Idea Store	25
Pop-up 2	Chrip Street Idea Store	40
Pop up 3	Interfaith Forum	10
Staff workshop 1	Online	12
Staff workshop 2	Town Hall	24
Partner workshop 1	Online	12
Partner workshop 2	Brady Arts Centre	12
Members workshop 1	Town Hall	6
Members workshop 2	Town Hall	1
Workshop with residents who are part of an equalities Network 1	Hybrid – Town Hall and online	3

Workshop with residents who are part of an equalities Network 2	Hybrid – Town Hall and online	6
Workshop with young people	Partner organisation	25
Workshop with Bangladeshi community	Partner organisation	35
Workshop with Somali/Bangladeshi community	Partner organisation	35
Workshop with elderly people	Partner organisation	20
	Total	328

We did not collect demographic data from participants of all our engagement. However, we did collect it from the survey respondents, which can be found in appendix one.

Data collection and analysis

Following the end of the consultation we organised the data and analysed it to draw findings to develop the strategy.

The different methods we used to consult required different data collection and analysis techniques, including:

- **Survey** – We used Let’s Talk Tower Hamlets to collate the information. We reviewed statistical data and read through comments to find common themes and essential points to develop the findings.
- **Pop-ups** – We used boards and post-it notes to collect feedback, wrote the information into a document, and looked for common themes to develop findings.
- **Workshops** – We collected information using flipcharts and post-its, wrote it in a document, and reviewed it to identify common themes to develop the findings.

Because the approaches we used involved quantitative and qualitative methods, we triangulated the data by comparing the information from different sources and stakeholders to identify patterns and areas of differences.

How will ideas influence the strategy?

To develop recommendations to inform the strategy, we delivered a meeting with the project team.

We reviewed all the ideas from the research and consultation and prioritised them using an effort versus reward decision making matrix.

The team prioritised which actions they thought would have the most impact. These ideas were used to write the recommendations for this report.

How will we give feedback to participants?

Following the agreement of the strategy by Cabinet, the team will provide feedback on the impact ideas had on the strategy by:

- Using 'You Said, We Did' format in Let's Talk Tower Hamlets
- Organising an event to launch the strategy
- Writing to those who can't attend the event.

Findings

What does good community engagement look like?

We asked stakeholders who attended the workshops and pop-up sessions what good community engagement means to them.

There were a lot of similarities across the different stakeholders, which we have synthesised in the bullet points below:

- Residents have a right to have a say over the decisions that the council makes that impact their lives, particularly issues that significantly affect them.
- Residents shouldn't be viewed as passive recipients of services whom the council consults with. Instead, the council should enable residents to get more involved in community life and empower residents to become active citizens and community leaders.
- Staff delivering engagement must be friendly and kind and treat the community respectfully; otherwise, it damages relationships and means that communities avoid participating again.
- It can be frustrating and a waste of resources to ask the community about things they cannot influence. The council should be open and honest with communities about what they can and can't influence and explain the reasons why.
- The community can get angry when they participate in consultations and don't hear back what happens. The council should always give the community feedback on the impact of their involvement.
- Tower Hamlets is a diverse place with many residents who speak English as a second language. Therefore, the council's communications must be written in plain English, with translation services provided when necessary.
- Some barriers get in the way of the community participating in community engagement, including language, sessions not being culturally sensitive, timings or venues. The council should identify these barriers and implement effective solutions so those who want to participate can do so.
- Tower Hamlets is a diverse borough. The council should always try to engage with a representative mix of the population when engaging with the community and not just involve the usual suspects.
- The community engages in different ways. Some people prefer online options, whereas others, especially those without digital skills, prefer in-person sessions, so the council should provide a mixture of options to take part in.

- The Mayor and elected members should be visible by organising meetings with the community and listening and responding to their issues.
- The council needs to be open to changing their minds when engaging the community and make decisions based on the community's best interests and not the political leadership.
- The council has different partnership boards that they lead on or are members of. The council should ensure good representation on these partnerships and boards from residents with lived experience and the voluntary and community sector.
- The council shouldn't just reach out to communities when it has a policy, strategy, and service that it wants the community to help shape. It should also organise ways to identify the issues concerning the community and respond.
- When community engagement events happen, they should be attended by lead members and senior officers responsible for making the decisions so they can speak with the community directly and hear the community's input firsthand.

There were also several differences between stakeholders listed below:

- Residents said they want to be made aware of opportunities using effective methods. They said to rely less on traditional methods such as press releases or social media and instead use WhatsApp and go to the places where communities congregate, such as community centres, community events, and chicken shops.
- Residents said they want their involvement to have a demonstrable impact on decision-making because when that doesn't happen, it damages trust between the council and residents, which means residents don't want to get involved again.
- Staff and members said they are concerned that the council consults with the same groups, often asking similar questions, which leads to duplication of resources and consultation fatigue.

What issues should the council involve the community in?

Most staff and members recognised that the council has limited resources, so we need to prioritise what issues to involve the community in.

Staff and members felt that these include:

- Strategic plan
- Budget
- Service design
- New policies and strategies
- When there is a large amount of investment.
- Regeneration projects

When residents and partners who work directly with communities were asked, interestingly, they talked more about the issues that affect residents and their service users' everyday lives, as well as recent high-profile issues, such as:

- Recycling
- Housing issues such as mould, repair, and rent issues
- Environment, including liveable streets but also litter, graffiti and parks and open spaces
- Community safety issues
- Regeneration projects

Many residents and partners who work directly with residents spoke about being unable to get hold of council staff when they have an issue. There was a desire to improve the telephone system and bring back the One Stop Shops.

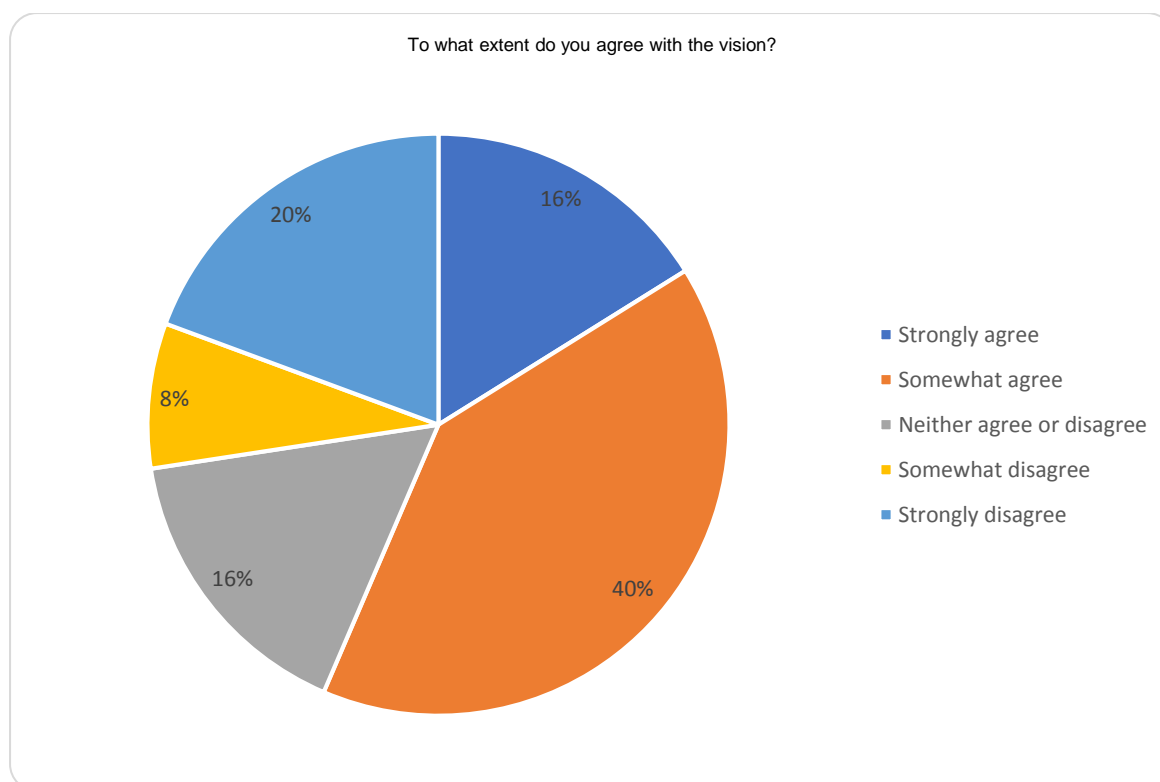
Staff and residents spoke about the importance of the community being able to set the agenda, not just being the council speaking to the communities about what is important to us but listening and responding to issues important to communities.

Staff and members spoke about significant issues in the borough. On these, there was a desire to see people brought together to learn, discuss, and make recommendations.

A limited number of people from across stakeholders said that communities should be involved in all decision-making and that community engagement should be embedded in all council interactions.

Feedback on the vision and objectives

The council asked survey respondents to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the vision. in the survey and at workshops. The results by stakeholder group are in Appendix One. The results from the survey are below.



There were similarities in comments from the different stakeholders about the vision and objectives, which have been synthesised in the bullet points below:

- Respondents were positive about the vision and objectives in the survey and the workshops.
- Most participants felt that the vision and objectives covered the main areas required for an effective strategy.
- Language for the objectives and the strategy could be phrased more positively and written in plain English, not council jargon.
- The council should align the community engagement strategy with other relevant council and partner strategies.
- The vision and objectives are too top-down and should also be about listening to communities and empowering active citizens.
- 'Closely in partnership', should be included in the vision.

There were also the following differences in comments from stakeholders:

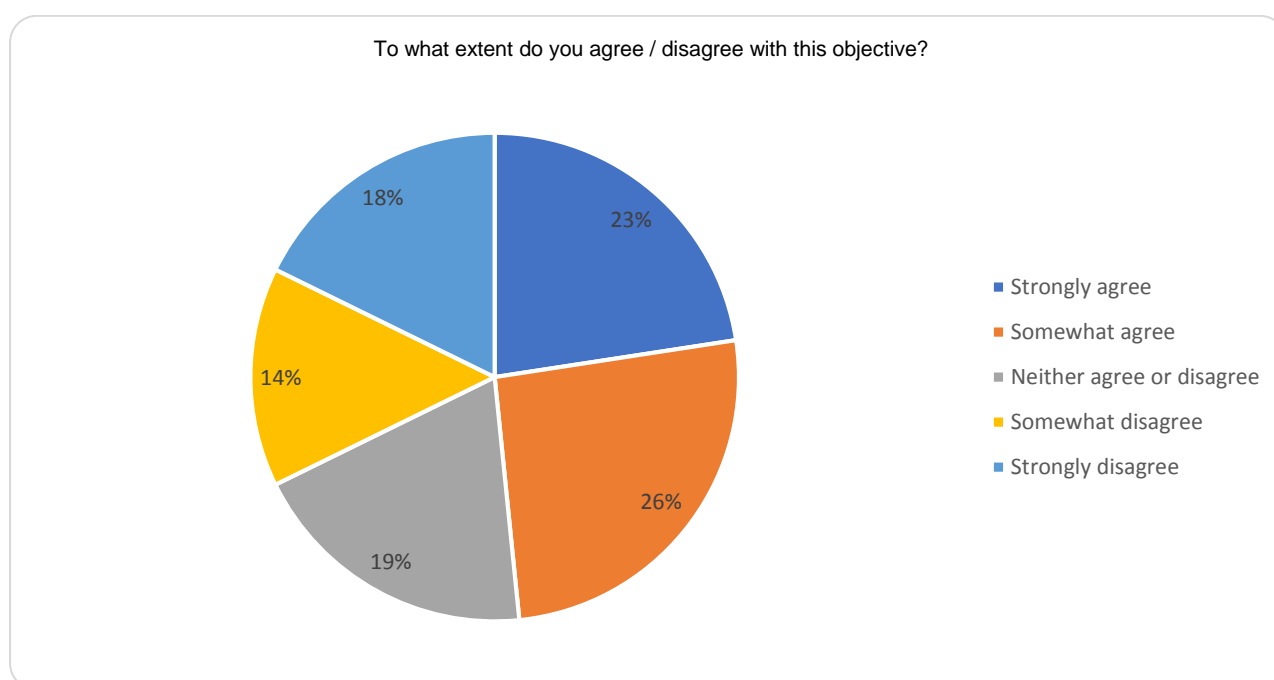
- Some partners suggested that the vision needs to be short, and the objectives must be SMART.
- Some residents suggested that the council must work out how to measure the strategy's success and review and adjust it.
- Some partners said the strategy should include a mission and core values.
- Some staff stated that the word 'meaningful' needs to be defined for objective one.
- Some staff commented that there needs to be a shared understanding of what we mean by community.

We asked stakeholders if they felt any objectives were missing or if any changes were needed. Their suggestions are as follows:

- An objective should say about reaching out to and involving the seldom-heard people.
- An objective should say that engagement leads to good services and better customer satisfaction.
- An objective about building trust with the community by being honest, transparent, and accountable.
- An objective about the council ensuring that residents have a say and feel heard.
- An objective about empowering communities to become active citizens and the next generation of community leaders.
- An objective about embedding co-production.

Objective 1: The council provides meaningful opportunities for the community to influence the decisions that impact their lives.

Survey respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with this objective.



During the survey and the workshops, we asked stakeholders to tell us what they thought about the draft objective and to provide ideas on achieving it.

A summary of the comments provided on the objectives are as follows:

- There are currently limited opportunities for meaningful engagement in the decision-making process for residents.
- There needs to be more face-to-face opportunities for communities to influence council decisions.
- The objective should explicitly mention 'empowering communities'.

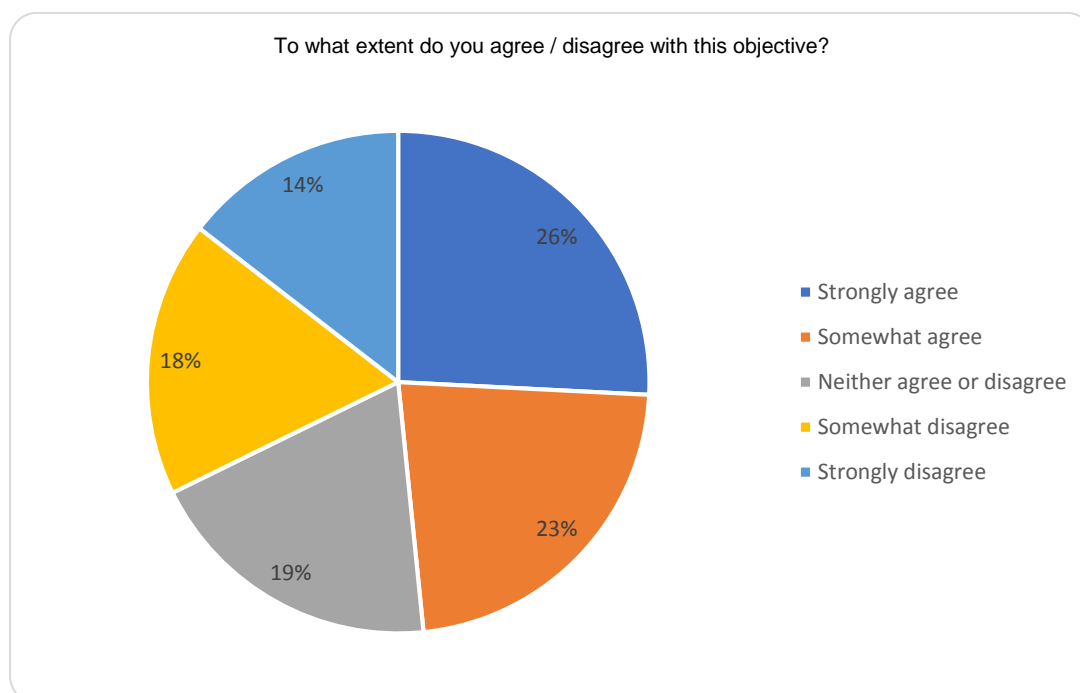
- Instead of only mentioning 'meaningful opportunities' it should include 'meaningful and consistent' opportunities.
- Council staff should go into communities, listen to issues, and develop solutions together with communities.
- The Mayor and members should be visible, and accept invitations from resident groups for events.

Ideas on how to achieve the objectives:

- Have tea and chat sessions in community where residents can speak to officers and members.
- Utilise 'Citizens Science' as an engagement approach.
- Recruit community champions from different wards who can engage residents from various backgrounds and who council can consult with.
- Recruit and train local people to become community researchers. Community research involves training residents to identifying issues in their community and come up with solutions.
- Have area forums with budgets attached. Area Forums are meetings held locally, often hosted by the local council. They typically comprise residents, councillors, senior representatives from the local authorities, and other key stakeholders, to debate key topics and answer residents' questions face-to-face.
- Restart 'Ask the mayor' events in the community, which the council could deliver with partners.
- Member walkabouts – members organising periodic walkabout, which will be good for members to be more visible and pick up issues.
- Cabinet – not always holding Cabinet in the Town Hall but taking it to different areas of the borough.
- Respond to petitions; when a certain number adds their name, it is debated in the council chamber.
- Bring back One Stop Shops so when residents have issues, they can be resolved quickly.
- Encourage diversity in boards of different organisations so that the organisations are representative and can speak on behalf of the borough's diverse community.
- The council should adopt a bottom-up approach and have community development officers based in communities, whose job is to build relationships with residents and partners and bring people together to act on the important things to them.
- Council should work with communities and partners to co-design / co-produce projects and services, including how the engagement objectives can be delivered, impact can be assessed, and feedback can be given.
- The council needs to work with communities to understand what meaningful opportunities and use the information to assess the engagement opportunities the council is providing.

Objective 2: Community engagement activities are well communicated and are inclusive and accessible for all Tower Hamlets residents.

Survey respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with this objective. The results are below.



During the survey and the workshops, we asked stakeholders to tell us what they think about the draft objective and provide ideas for achieving it.

A summary of the comments provided on the objectives are as follows:

- All stakeholders thought a database of contacts was a good idea. However, it will require someone to manage it so it is updated regularly.
- Along with directory of external organisations the council should create a directory of council services to engage with when developing strategy.
- The council should reach out to residents more rather than expecting residents to come to the council.
- Recognition and reward can be things other than money, like a small trophy, certificate, gift card, work experience, or career development.
- There is a perception that the council mainly uses digital communications, i.e., social media and e-newsletters, to communicate with residents. However, many find more traditional forms of publicity like leaflets, posters, newsletters through the post more effective and visible.
- Many residents are digitally excluded and cannot access digital platforms to access information, so non-digital activities should be provided.
- There is a perception that only a small proportion of the community is being engaged through the council's engagement and communication methods.
- WhatsApp is an effective way to reach large groups of people, including many who are seldom heard.
- The delivery of strategies and policies needs to be inclusive and should not favour one community over others, as it can lead to community tensions.

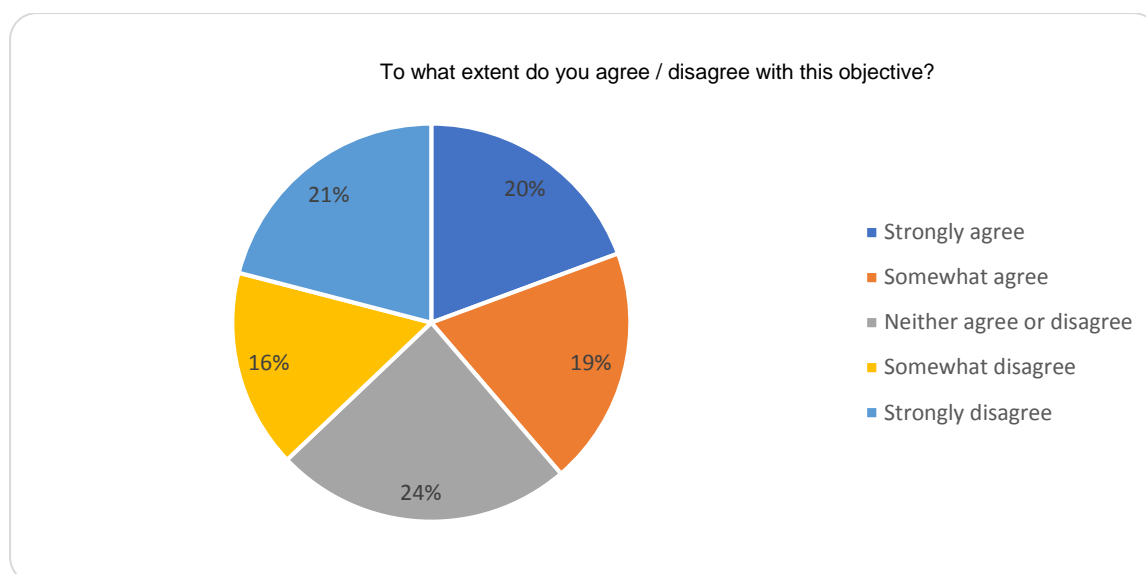
- There needs to be better partnership working with the voluntary and community sector to reach diverse groups seldom heard groups.
- 'Culturally appropriate' should be added before inclusive and accessible.
- Some residents have stated that they are not aware of what's going on and have never been approached to get involved with anything.

Ideas on how to achieve the objectives:

- Have an annual awards ceremony that recognised those who have influenced local decision making. This could be built into the existing Civic Awards.
- Recruit apprentices who gain qualifications and work experience in research and community engagement.
- Better use of videos to promote community engagement opportunities.
- Organise intergenerational sessions with families where they can take part in community engagement together.
- Identify community leaders in communities who have large networks who can promote council messages through Whatsapp and social media.
- Make more use of community media that residents use.
- People have different learning styles so create council communications in different formats, including:
 - Information in different languages
 - Alternative text on all pictures,
 - Using plain English
- Provide opportunities for residents who don't speak English to develop English speaking skills.
- Actively engage with VCS organisations already working with seldom-heard communities.
- Provide adequate time for publicity of engagement activities and events.

Objective 3: The impact that resident's involvement has had on shaping council decisions is communicated effectively.

Survey respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with this objective. The results are below.



During the survey and the workshops, we asked stakeholders to tell us what they thought about the draft objective and to provide ideas on achieving it.

A summary of the comments provided on the objectives are as follows:

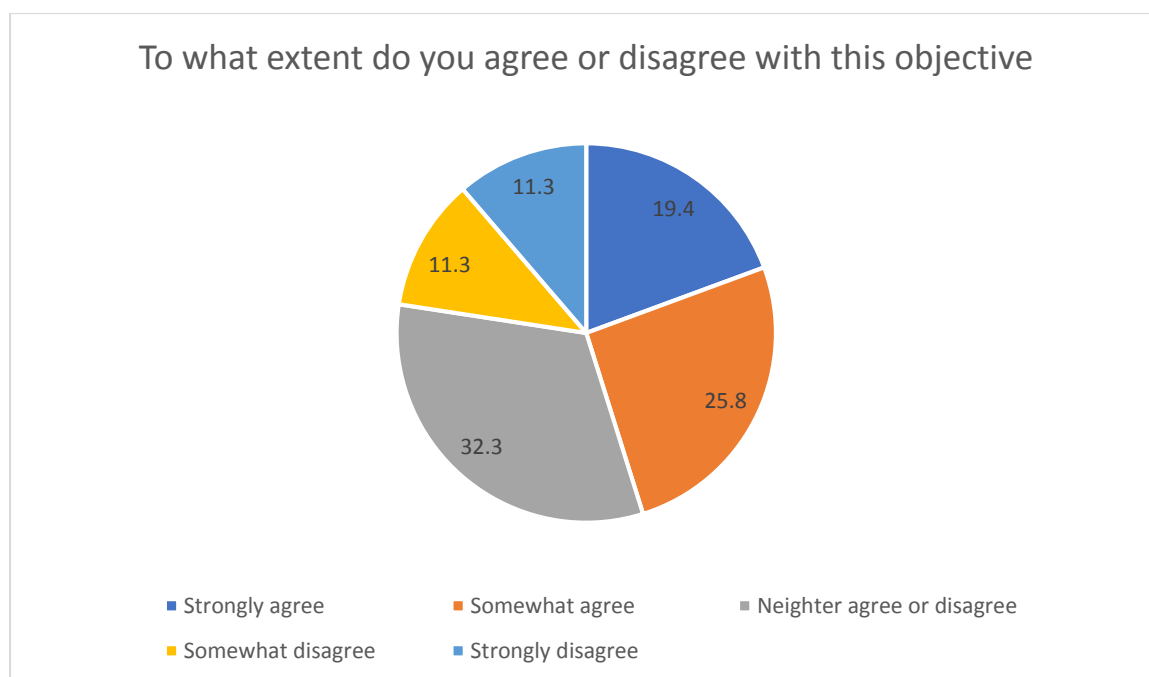
- Ensure the council uses print methods to share the impact of resident's involvement.
- Let's Talk Tower Hamlets is not easy for some people to use. Registration is a barrier for people to complete the surveys.
- Work with communities to understand what effective communication from the council means to them rather than making assumptions.
- The council needs to be transparent and honest with residents and partners about what the council can or cannot deliver and the reasons why.
- There needs to be more trust that residents' and partners' voices will be listened to and that their opinions will lead to change.
- Make more use of locations visible to residents regularly to publicize impact, such as supermarket noticeboards, community centres, and billboards.

Ideas on how to achieve the objectives:

- Use existing newsletters from different partners to communicate impact to residents.
- Use personalised methods of communication to residents to say thank you such as having personalised postcards.
- Use public meetings and events.
- Use different visual techniques, such as infographics.

Objective 4: Staff are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to deliver high quality community engagement.

Survey respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the objectives. The results are below.



During the survey and the workshops, we asked stakeholders to tell us what they think about the draft objective and to provide ideas on achieving it.

A summary of the comments provided on the objectives are as follows:

- Two respondents who filled in the survey said the objective reads incorrectly and should say 'high-quality community engagement.'
- A survey respondent said that training should not only be for frontline staff but for council staff and members at all levels.
- Several survey respondents said it is not only about knowledge and skills, but the resources part of the statement is essential to ensure adequate resources to deliver the strategy effectively.
- All workshop participants said they think the objective is a good idea to develop staff knowledge and skills to deliver community engagement effectively.
- A community engagement coordinator will be necessary to ensure good coordination of community engagement activities.
- One resident said we should remove the word necessary because they felt it limits the scope to compliance and training, not continuous learning and development.

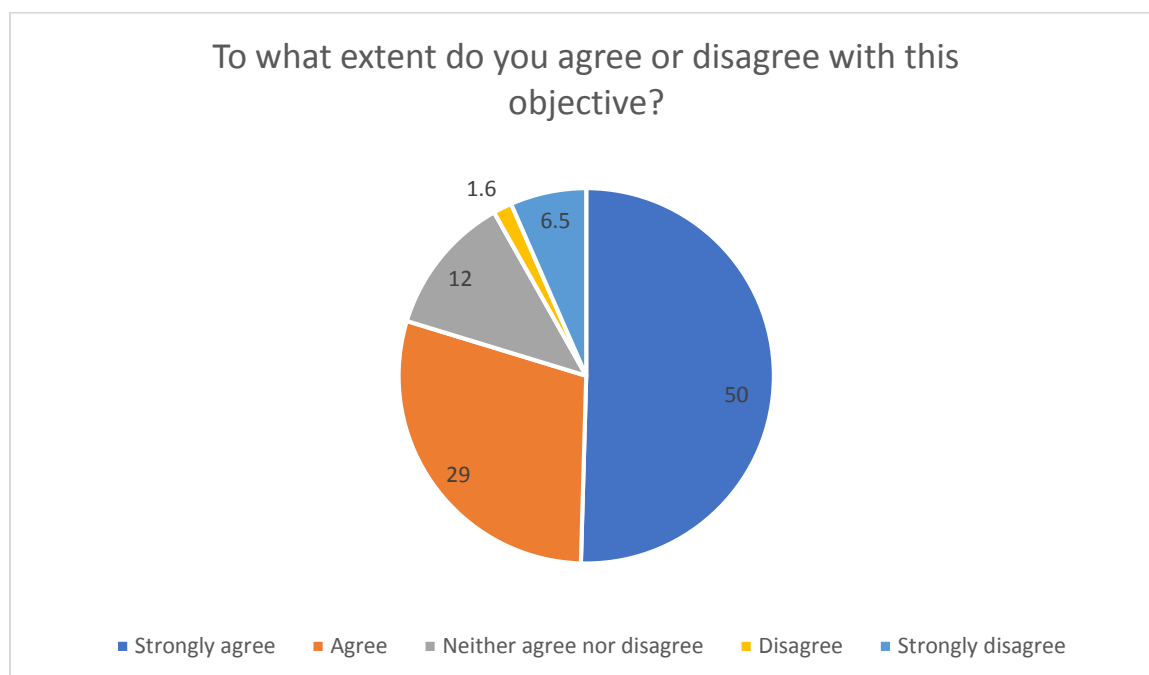
Ideas on how to achieve the objectives:

- Create a community engagement team that leads strategic community engagement projects, supports the workforce to develop their knowledge and skills, and helps coordinate community engagement across the council.
- Developing a how-to guide/toolkit that outlines good practices that staff can use when planning, delivering, and evaluating community engagement.
- Provide training and development opportunities for staff to develop the confidence and skills to deliver community engagement effectively.

- Develop a bank of good practice case studies that are both written and in video form so other staff can learn from them and gain inspiration.
- When staff start working at the council, they could do a week-long induction to spend time in the community, visit different services, and meet the voluntary and community sector.
- Bring officers together who lead on community engagement periodically to share good practices and lessons learned.
- Set up a community engagement practitioners network through which those involved in community engagement can be supported. This can include a Viva Engage group.
- Put community engagement knowledge, skills, and experience into the job descriptions of key staff to ensure we recruit staff with the ability and desire to deliver good community engagement.

Objective 5: A joined-up approach to coordinating and planning community engagement activities across the council, and with partners, leads to better outcomes.

Survey respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the objectives. The results are below.



During the survey and the workshops, we asked stakeholders to tell us what they think about the draft objective and to provide ideas on achieving it.

A summary of the comments provided on the objectives are as follows:

- The council needs to be honest about its challenges and constraints in delivering high-quality community engagement.
- There is lots of support for better partnership working, but some scepticism about whether it can be delivered in practice.

- The council can't solve every problem in Tower Hamlet's itself, so working with other organisations on shared challenges is essential.
- Staff and partners felt that the council doesn't currently coordinate community engagement well, which leads to consultation fatigue and duplication.
- Voluntary and community sector organisations said that if the council is working in partnership with other organisations, then it needs to treat them as equal partners.

Ideas on how to achieve these objectives:

- Create an engagement calendar at the beginning of each year with the community engagement projects listed.
- All the opportunities for community engagement in council services across the council should be mapped, and the important ones should be prioritized to ensure they have adequate resources.
- At a strategic level, the council should engage the Partnership Executive Group to agree on opportunities to work together to give communities a say.
- The council should attend the partnership meeting for strategic leads in community engagement hosted by Tower Hamlets Together, where they can share upcoming opportunities.
- More opportunities for staff who deliver community engagement to meet up regularly to share their work and lessons learned.
- Identify where organisations have shared interests and pool money and resources to achieve shared goals.
- Create a place to store the results of previous consultations that can be accessed and used by other council services.

Additional insights

Many residents and voluntary and community sector partners said they find it difficult to get hold of a council departments when they have an issue, because no one picks up the phone.

Residents expect the council to get the basics right, such as answering the phone, cleaning the streets, and making housing repairs. If not, this will affect their willingness to participate in community engagement.

Some residents strongly felt that the council needed to listen to the community on other matters, such as complaint handling.

Recommendations

By analysing the findings from the consultation, the council has identified recommendations for developing the strategy, and a list of actions that will achieve the draft vision and objectives. They are as follows:

Recommendation for developing the strategy

Design principles of good practice – The new strategy should include principles of good practice based on the feedback from stakeholders about what good community engagement looks like. These principles should guide the council's community engagement work.

Prioritising community engagement – The community doesn't want to be involved in all council decisions but wants to be involved in decisions that affect their everyday lives, so the council should prioritise community engagement on those matters.

Demonstrating the importance of consultations – When the council wants to involve the community in important decisions, such as the strategic plan, budget, or strategy development, we must show why it matters to communities and use effective methods.

Getting the basics right – To improve relationships and trust in the community, the council needs to get the basics right. For many residents, this means being able to speak to someone on the phone or in a council building when they have an issue. Residents and voluntary and community sector partners are less willing to engage without this.

More opportunities for co-production – In some instances informing and consulting communities is the most appropriate level of participation. However, the council should find more opportunities to come together with residents with lived experience and other key stakeholders to making decisions on an equal basis. There are different methods and approaches to doing this, and the council should enable its staff to deliver them.

Use plain English – change the vision and objectives so they are written in plain English. Also, write the strategy in plain English.

Adjust the objectives – develop the objectives so they are not as top-down by having an objective about empowering communities to become active citizens and the next generation of community leaders and include to building trust with communities and ensure residents feel heard into the objectives.

Visibility of the Mayor and elected members – To build trust with communities and partners the mayor and elected members should restart the Ask the Mayor events, ensure consistent surgeries, and continue to organise opportunities for the

Mayor and elected members to spend with the community to listen and respond to their issues.

Actions to achieve the draft objectives

The project team worked together to prioritise the actions the council should include in the Community Engagement Strategy. They are as follows:

Objective one: The council provides meaningful opportunities for the community to influence the decisions that impact their lives.

- **Ask the Mayor events** - To share information relevant to the ward hosting the event, helping residents better understand and influence priorities for their local areas.
- **Locality Working** – Working in partnership with Tower Hamlets Together to understand the needs of localities and bring partners and the community together to act on the things important to communities.
- **Annual residents survey** – An annual survey to Understand residents' views of the council and if they feel they have a say over the decisions that affect them.
- **Online engagement** – Review Lets Talk Tower Hamlets and explore an online engagement tool that has a wider range of functionality and enables officers to deliver surveys, polls, crowdsourcing, etc.
- **Tea & chat** - Arrange drop-in sessions where the community members can share their views and issues can be resolved.
- **Community events** – Utilise community events so residents can speak with elected members, senior managers, and services.
- **Participatory budgeting** – Explore how residents can be involved in spending decisions in their localities.
- **Scrutiny** – Explore options for how residents and the voluntary and community sector can be more involved in scrutiny reviews and how these feeds into policy.
- **Citizen's science** – residents and voluntary and community organisations collaborate in the collecting, analysing and recommending on research.

Objective two: Community engagement activities are well communicated, inclusive, and accessible for all Tower Hamlets residents.

- **Database of contacts** - Create a database with contacts of key stakeholders, networks, and forums the council can contact when conducting engagement activities.
- **Recognition and reward** - Agree on an approach to reward and recognition that enables greater resident participation.
- **Equalities Hub and Networks** – Strengthen the work of Equalities Hub and Community Equality Networks to enable residents with protected characteristics to influence council decision-making.
- **Monitoring engagement** – Provide guidance on how to monitor who is responding to our engagement activity so we can identify if particular groups

are not taking part and adjust our engagement programme to ensure that all relevant points of view contribute to our decision making

- **Community connectors** – identifying residents and partners who are well connected and who can promote council communications in a way that happens with social media influencers.
- **Staff inductions** – when staff start at the council, they will get to know the community and spend time in different departments.
- **Publicising engagement** - Ensuring that information and engagement opportunities are publicised in different formats to ensure our communications style meets the needs of diverse communities.
- **Civic education** - Develop a targeted approach to civic education on local democracy through local schools and in Young Tower Hamlets.

Objective three: The impact of resident involvement on shaping council decisions is communicated effectively.

- **Using council communications** – Feeding back to the community by having 'you said we did' sections in the resident's newsletters and promoting outcomes through the council's social media channels.
- **Celebration and information events** – when the decisions are finalised, inviting those who have taken part to a celebration and information event sharing event where appropriate.
- **Annual awards ceremony** – holding an annual awards ceremony to celebrating the impact of community leaders. This could be built into the annual Civic Awards that already takes place.
- **Let's Talk Tower Hamlets** – Use the 'You Said, We Did' function on Let's Talk Tower Hamlets to let communities know about the impact of their involvement.
- **Personalised postcards** – Send everyone who took part a personalised postcard to say thanks and explain their involvement's impact.
- **Infographics** – better use of infographics to share information visually.

Objective four: Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources to deliver high-quality community engagement.

- **Create a community engagement team** - that leads strategic community engagement projects, supports the workforce to develop their knowledge and skills, and helps coordinate community engagement across the council.
- **Refresh the community engagement handbook** – Refresh the council's how-to guide on delivering effective community engagement with accompanying templates. This will be made available on The Bridge.
- **Training and development** - Organise learning opportunities for relevant staff to develop their knowledge, skills, and capabilities through e-learning modules, face-to-face training sessions, learning sets led by different services, or mentoring and coaching opportunities.
- **Co-production academy** – organise training and learning by doing approach on co-production where staff from different services take part in training and have access to coaching on co-production and then deliver co-production projects.

- **Case studies** - Develop a bank of good practice case studies that are both written and in video form so other staff can learn from them and gain inspiration.
- **Recruit staff with community engagement experience** - Put community engagement knowledge, skills, and experience into the job descriptions and person specifications when recruiting key staff.
- **Member development** – Training and development opportunities for members on how to engage with communities effectively.

Objective five: A joined-up approach to coordinating and planning community engagement activities across the council and with partners leads to better outcomes.

- **Service planning** – During service planning, each service will identify the opportunities for communities to be involved in decision-making, and this will form part of their service plans.
- **Develop a community engagement calendar** - This will act as a central database, setting out details and timeframes for taking part in all council community engagement activities.
- **Community Engagement Network** - Creating a network of staff who do community engagement to come together periodically to update on work and share best practice.
- **Repository of previous engagement results** - Create a place to store the results of previous consultations that can be accessed and used by other council services.
- **Partnership working** - Participate in Tower Hamlets Together’s partnership group for strategic leads in community engagement.
- **Lead officers** – Each council division will identify a community engagement lead who will coordinate community engagement.
- **Strategy delivery group** - Establish a working group with officers from relevant departments to monitor, review, and revise the Community Engagement Strategy.

Appendices

Demographic data of survey respondents

Ethnicity	Percentage	Number of responses
Asian British Bangladeshi	23.30%	7
Other Asian Background	6.70%	2
Black / Black British	3.30%	1
Other Black African	3.30%	1
Black Black British Carribean	3.30%	1
Any other background	3.30%	1
White British	36.70%	11
Other White Background	13.33%	4
Prefer not to say	6.70%	2

Age	Percentage	Number of responses
25-34	16.10%	5
35-44	35.50%	11
45-54	25.80%	8
55-64	16.10%	5
65-74	3.20%	1
75-84	3.20%	1

Gender	Percentage	Number of responses
Man	36.70%	11
Woman	60%	18
Prefer to self-describe	3.30%	1

Is your gender identity the same as the sex you were assigned at birth?	Percentage	Number of responses
Yes	96.70%	29
No	3.30%	1
Prefer not to say	0	0

Religion or belief	Percentage	Number of responses
No religion or belief	40%	12
Muslim	26.70%	8
Christian	20%	6
Buddhist	3.30%	1
Humanist	3.30%	1
Prefer not to say	6.70%	2

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months (include any problems related to old age)?	Percentage	Number of responses
Yes	9.70%	3
No	90.30%	28

Sexual Orientation	Percentage	Number of responses
Gay	16.70%	5
Bi-sexual	6.70%	2
Hetrosexual / straight	66.70%	20
Prefer not to say	10%	3

Do you have caring or parenting responsibilities?	Percentage	Number of responses
Yes	46.70%	14
No	46.70%	14
Prefer not to say	6.70%	2

Cabinet 24 th April 2024	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Simon Baxter, Corporate Director - Communities	Classification: Unrestricted
Women's Safety – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Recommendations and Action Plan	

Lead Member	Councillor Abu Talha Chowdhury, Cabinet member for Safer Communities
Originating Officer(s)	Menara Ahmed/Simon Smith
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	No
Reason for Key Decision	This report has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.
Forward Plan Notice Published	Not Applicable
Exempt information	None
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	6. Empowering communities and fighting crime.

Executive Summary

1. This report sets out the Women's Safety Action Plan developed and implemented as a result of seven recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2023. These recommendations are set out in the body of this report.
2. The resultant action plan, and service comment and initial progress is attached at Appendix A. This is submitted for decision by the Mayor in Cabinet.
3. A further report will be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2024 to provide a progress update on delivery against those recommendations.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to

1. Approve the women's safety action plan at Appendix 1 to this report.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 This paper submits the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the women's safety action plan for consideration and approval by Cabinet.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Take no action. This is not recommended as the recommendations set out recommendations and actions to improve women's safety in the borough.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The current 2019-24 Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy sets out the current priorities of the Council and partners on this issue. This Strategy is due to expire in March 24. Work is ongoing to develop an ambitious new Violence against Women and Girls strategy. The next stage in developing this work to protect women and girls from gender-based violence and improve feelings of safety in Tower Hamlets is to publish a new Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy by July 2024. Gender based violence is predominantly a pattern of behaviour perpetrated by men against women. One of the core aims of the work is to prevent VAWG, reduce gender inequality and discrimination and improve women's safety.
- 3.2 In February 2023 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed seven recommendations following two in depth scrutiny review sessions. These are as follows:

Recommendation 1

The council and its strategic partners to collaborate to improve the awareness of women of the programmes and help available directly that support women's safety on the streets.

Recommendation 2

The Council to review current funding arrangements and increase the capacity to support women's groups that offer domestic abuse services to the community.

Recommendation 3

The Council to ensure that if factors in improving self-defence access for women and girls when considering leisure, public health and physical wellbeing activities.

Recommendation 4

The Council's Children and Education Service to support increasing capacity at schools on raising awareness of domestic abuse and support available.

Recommendation 5

The Council and Residential Social Landlord (RSL) partners should actively strengthen their partnership workings to focus on tackling women safety issues on RSL estates.

Recommendation 6

The Police/THEOs to actively target and focus their recruitment and retention strategy to reflect recruiting representative women from the community in Tower Hamlets.

Recommendation 7

All Tower Hamlets Councillors (male and female) to support and champion women's safety issues through the established channels such as male allies' Programme, women safety focussed walkabouts and building this within the roles when engaging the public within the constituencies and member surgeries.

- 3.3 As a result of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations made, a holistic action plan was developed incorporating views from a wide range of services, third sector partners and statutory partners such as the Police. The action plan is attached as an appendix to this report and provides detail of the initial progress against the recommendations.
- 3.4 This programme of work will be embedded into the VAWG Strategy 2024-2029 which is in development.
- 3.5 A significant number of actions have been completed prior to submission of this report.

1.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 1.1 Gender based violence is predominantly a pattern of behaviour perpetrated by men against women. Prevention of VAWG and improving women's safety is a key priority for the Mayor.
- 1.2 It is recognised that prevention over the long-term can only be achieved by tackling the misogynistic attitudes and behaviours that can lead to these

crimes. Consequently, a programme of training and awareness around VAWG (including digital abuse), healthy relationships, toxic masculinity and a Schools Pledge is available to Schools and Youth Services.

- 1.3 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee heard about the importance of “safe spaces” and that women feel significantly less safe after dark in Tower Hamlets compared to men. This appears to be part of a broader trend across the UK and internationally, whereby women tend to feel less safe in public spaces and fear crime more than men. As well as the significant impact on women’s health and wellbeing as a result of being a victim of crime, safety fears more broadly affect women’s behaviour and choices and restricts their freedom to be in public spaces.
- 1.4 Whilst this draft action plan has a focus on gender, it is important to note that this is not the only determining factor when it comes to feeling and being safe: Older and younger people also tend to report feeling less safe.
- 1.5 In recent local research women have described how they create routes that navigate around places where groups of men congregate and cat call, hot spots for drug dealing or where they have previously experienced threat. They also navigate around streets that feel unsafe due to limited sight lines, escape routes or poor lighting and that this ‘way’ of getting around is precautionary. All women, girls, and gender diverse people, feel or perceive safety or public space differently. However, most women agree (96% of Let’s Talk Survey respondents) that there must be a culture shift to improve attitudes towards women and girls.
- 1.6 Equally it is important to highlight the issue of intersectionality. Women of different ethnicities, women of different faiths, women of different sexual orientations, gender identities, age and disability will not all have the same experience of safety in public spaces.
- 1.7 The VAWG Needs Assessment 2024 found that faith leaders and men/boys have a key role to play in tackling misogyny. A programme of work is in place with Tower Hamlets Inter-faith Forum, Council of Mosques and Schools to support them with this. This includes a Male Allyship Programme, London Muslim Centre Ambassadors Project and Don’t Cross the Line Campaign.
- 1.8 The draft Action plan and recommendations from the Committee will have beneficial consequences for equalities, inclusion and diversity in the Borough.

2. BEST VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Women’s’ safety is a Mayoral priority and is set against the context of Tower Hamlets having some of the highest levels of VAWG offending including domestic homicides in London. Since 2011, there have been 14 Domestic Homicide Reviews commissioned totalling approximately £130,000. This does not include the wider cost implications to service providers such as Social Care, schools, criminal justice agencies and health providers involved in managing the support provided to victims. The estimated cost for a victim of

domestic abuse is £34,015¹ and £58,860² for a victim of rape. Furthermore, the human cost of the physical and emotional impact of abuse far outweighs any financial cost. Hence earlier intervention, prevention and safeguarding work is key to ensuring best value for money and a more invest to save approach has been adopted.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 The Violence against Women & Girl's (VAWG) service has a net budget of £0.494m, comprising gross expenditure totalling £1.237m for staffing and the provision of funding to third party service providers, offset by income of £0.743m in the form of grants and recharges from internal service users.
- 6.2 This report provides an update of the Women's Safety Action Plan and its recommendations. The cost of developing the action plan has been contained within these existing budgets. However, the cost of implementing these recommendations require further financial review and may incur additional cost above budgeted levels. Any requests for additional financial resources will be subject of separate reports.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The Women's Safety Action Plan complies with a number of the Council's key safeguarding duties. The Care Act 2014 sets out the council's duties to safeguard adults who are experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect. The Act also sets out the council's duties to ensure the provision of preventative services, promote wellbeing when carrying out any of their care and support functions (this includes protection from abuse and neglect), cooperate with relevant partners and provide information about services available in the area that can prevent abuse and support.
- 7.2 The Children Act 1989 provides the legislative framework relating to the council's duty to protect children from abuse and neglect and to promote the welfare of all children and young people in their area. The Children Act 2004 places duties on a council to ensure its functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to cooperate with other agencies to promote the well-being of children.
- 7.3 In the exercise of its functions, the Council must comply with the public sector equality duty to eliminate unlawful conduct such as discrimination, harassment and victimisation under the Equality Act 2010.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Overview and Scrutiny Notes and presentations held in February 2023 on Women's Safety

¹ Home Office. 2019 'The economic and social costs of domestic abuse.'

² Ibid.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft Women’s Safety Action Plan

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

- None

Officer contact details for documents: Menara Ahmed

Women's Safety Action Plan

Recommendation 1

The council and its strategic partners to collaborate to improve the level of women's awareness on the local offer of help available that directly support women's safety on the streets.

Comments from Service:

A new ambitious campaign to tackle sexual harassment and misogyny in the Nighttime Economy was launched in Dec 23 – called Don't Cross the Line. It is a cross border collaboration with LB Hackney and the City of London. It is in response to the rise in misogynistic behaviours in the night-time economy since the pandemic. Social media content online in relation to the night time economy targeted at young men may often encourage misogynistic views. In 2023 we trained over 1600 nightlife staff in 2023 which has seen incident reports go up for what was previously considered "low level" offences. These were significantly underreported. This increased reporting is extremely positive, however, longer term awareness raising is needed to challenge the behaviours themselves. The campaign messaging is directed at men using male role models to challenge misogynistic behaviour, male 'entitlement' and negative views about women which have created permissive environments and enabled unsafe spaces for women. The campaign and its messaging was developed working with focus groups of men who live locally and use the night-time economy in Tower Hamlets/Hackney/City of London.

Mainstreaming Violence Against Women and Girls - The Council's new Statement of Licensing Policy 2023-2028 was agreed by full Council on 27th September 2023. The policy states that the borough expects licence holders to take a zero-tolerance approach to misogyny within their venues and mainstreams considerations in relation to women's safety and VAWG challenges.

A series of in person "Women's Safety Walks" were offered to all residents to share their concerns on public safety issues across the borough. There was low attendance. Based on feedback from women a series of 'digital safety walks' across the borough were created. These were very successful and had much better attendance and involvement from women and girls. All 20 wards

were covered with group and one-one sessions offered. Each concern or issue raised was either flagged as an action for a response across the relevant service areas i.e., parks, public realm, community safety or the planning team/s.

In addition, a local research report on gender inclusive design has been written - led by planning but facilitated and in collaboration with community safety. This research and work engaged with over 300 women and girls across Tower Hamlets. This report was initially envisaged as a 'Women's Safety' Project. It was set up in the light of the tragic murders of Sarah Everard, Biba Henry, Nicole Smallman, Sabina Nessa and many others whose stories may not have received national coverage. Horrific acts of misogyny, which shone a light on the precarity women face both on streets and in public spaces and within a legal and judicial system that empowers men to act against women. The writing of this report contains original research and accounts from women and girls across Tower Hamlets. The report maps out the scope of the findings and makes a series of recommendations to ensure greater balance and representation in the planning and design of the borough. The report provides insights into the evidence base and the source of the series of recommendations can be traced through the original research with women and girls in the borough. This document is being used to inform the local plan and have been aggregated throughout the plan with input into each policy strand. The report includes recommendations for other services and directorates across the council and could be used by VAWG team, Youth Service and strategic planning for public health, High Streets, parks and green spaces, leisure and planning for new developments. The report sets out a 'vision' which has been devised in response the evidence base. A set of design themes that flow from the vision and outline specific recommendations.

With regard the VAWG Open Space, the local police held the first Innovation hub, a collaborative approach to problem solving, where police explored ways to improve women's safety and rebuild trust and confidence. The police worked with the local authority, Transport for London, various charities, and repeat victims. The police delivered welfare, vulnerability and engagement training to businesses to generate ideas on how to mitigate the associated risks. This is co-funded and co-hosted by both Hackney and Tower Hamlets. Locally, police deliver walk and talk events, and until recently a 'ride a long' experience (currently paused). Police also run regular events at Riverside Hostel which has been well received.

Given issues of safety in the night time economy a priority has been given to VAWG work. This includes a digital media campaign and QR codes displayed on a mobile messaging van and deployed with key messaging related to drink spiking, Ask for Angela, and the Look Up Look Out (anti robbery campaign).

The Aldgate Connect Business Improvement District and the councils (City of London and LBTH) have formed partnership of the Met Police, City of London Police, City of London Corporation, LBTH and businesses to develop a collaborative business engagement campaign signposting to resources and information relevant for their employees, businesses and colleagues. The campaign name is **Safer Paths**.

It's a long-term umbrella initiative that aims to tackle violence against women & girls, trialled first within Aldgate and City of London districts through a collaborative and engaging communications campaign. The Safer Paths campaign will have a range of touchpoints and outputs that helps to:

- Support businesses offering guidance and advice from local authorities.
- Signpost support opportunities for any vulnerable individuals.
- Highlight nearby safe venues and organisations for anyone feeling unsafe in the City of London.
- Showcase **#SaferPaths** approved businesses within the City of London that can offer support & guidance.
- Raise awareness of venues who deploy night-time safety schemes – e.g., Ask for Angela, WAVE.
- Reverse the perception of 'unsafeness' through careful empowerment messaging.

The establishment of a Women's Resource Centre is one of the mayor's priority projects. The objective of the centre is to provide a safe space for learning, development and support for women as part of addressing the equity challenges for marginalised women including victims of domestic abuse and especially Bangladeshi women. Local data suggests Bangladeshi women continue to be marginalised and face economic, health, social and gender inequalities disproportionately.

The exclusive centre for women and girls will the opportunity to seek support in a centre carefully designed to meet their needs including an on-site creche facility to support childcare arrangements. The centre will be based in a gated location between Osmani School and Osmani Trust, set within a mile of the former Jagonari Women's Education and Resource Centre. In addition to the learning and development courses that will be delivered from the site, the centre will also provide a vital advice base for VAWG and other public health concerns affecting women such as women's safety in public spaces.

Women's Safety Action Plan

Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an anti-sexual harassment campaign with Hackney Council and City of London. 	Stacey Bradburne, VAWG Coordinator, LBTH	November 2023 <i>Completed</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing Policy includes requirements for all licensed premises in LBTH to actively not tolerate misogyny in their venues. 	Tom Lewis, Licensing and Safety Team Leader, LBTH	December 2023 <i>Completed</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's Safety Walks occur regularly to provide an opportunity for female residents to share concerns over specific areas in LBTH 	Joshuah Codjoe, Neighbourhood Safety Manager, LBTH	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's Safety in Public Spaces Consultation recommendations published 	Jennie Savage, Public Realm Project Officer, LBTH	October 2023 <i>Completed</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police try to improve their relationship and build trust with women and girls 	DI Yasmin Lalani - MPS	Ongoing Met Police New VAWG Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police target perpetrators within the night-time economy 	DI Yasmin Lalani - MPS	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Aldgate Connect Business Improvement District's Safer Paths will launch Q1 2024 with a microsite, a business communication (print and digital) and internal posters of awareness of safety champions and anti-misogyny messaging. The collaborative 'Safer Paths' campaign is around safety, reassurance and business awareness of how employers can have agency in combatting VAWG. The campaign promotes gentle messaging, business advice with wayfinding, solidarity and community being central to combatting VAWG and hate crime. • Phase 2 will be the roll out of awareness of Safer Paths venues (safe havens) staff training and other campaign roll out activities like fun runs etc. 	Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and Hate Crime Manager and Zoe Barwick, BID Director, Aldgate Business Connect	<p>Phase 1: Launch business booklet and toolkit for businesses in Q1 2024.</p> <p>Ongoing promotion and awareness raising through 2024</p> <p>2024 campaign KPIs will be worked but through a safety partnership working</p>

Women's Safety Action Plan

		group coordinated by the Aldgate BID.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Growth & Economic Development team organised an open day, providing an opportunity for the boroughs Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to drop in and meet with business facing services in the council. VAWG team present to engage with smaller businesses across the borough and promote awareness of the VAWG agenda 	Lucy Collins – Business Liaison Manager, Growth & Economic Development, LBTH	November 2023 <i>Completed</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Growth & Economic Development to deliver an event targeting LBTH corporate organisations to join up community/charity/third sector offers to corporates. VAWG to be present to engage with Corporates. Details to be agreed 	Lucy Collins, Business Liaison Manager, Growth & Economic Development, LBTH	March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayor's Priority Project: Establishment of a Women's Resource Centre. The Corporate Strategy and Communities team are leading the establishment of a new women's resource centre in the borough. This centre will serve as a learning, development, capacity building and wellbeing resource for marginalised women. 	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy and Communities Syeda Hassan, Voluntary and Community Sector Development Officer	September 2024
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The Council to review its current funding arrangements and strongly consider increasing the capacity to support women's groups that provide domestic abuse (DA) services to the community.</p>		
<p>Comments from Service:</p> <p>The Director of Public Health has committed to £475,000 per annum from the Public Health grant for re-commissioning of the domestic abuse casework service. Contract has gone to tender in 2023.</p> <p>The Current Refuge Provision comprises of 34 bed spaces, a generic refuge and BAMER specific refuge. This is currently being reviewed and re-commissioned.</p>		

Women's Safety Action Plan

The 'Safer Paths' Campaign promotes gentle messaging around the topic with wayfinding, solidarity and community being central to combatting VAWG and hate crime.

Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioning of domestic abuse casework service with £475,000 funding committed per annum for next three years. 	Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and Hate Crime Manager, LBTH	March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Aldgate Connect Business Improvement District and the collaborative 'Safer Paths' campaign around safety, reassurance and business awareness of how employers can have agency in combatting VAWG. The campaign promotes gentle messaging around the topic with wayfinding, solidarity and community being central to combatting VAWG and hate crime. 	Zoe Barwick, BID Director, Aldgate Business Connect, Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and Hate Crime Manager	December 2023 and ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support community campaigns such as safe havens, fun runs and safer walking routes developed through this wider partnership Safer Paths work. 	Zoe Barwick, BID Director, Aldgate Business Connect	Ongoing

Recommendation 3
 The Council to ensure that it factors in improving self-defence access for women and girls when considering leisure, public health and physical wellbeing activities.

Comments from Service: In keeping with our Women's Safety theme, we are partnering with our Physical Activity Team, and have commissioned them to deliver 2 self-defence classes each week for 18 months. This gives women access to physical and mental health & wellbeing classes, leisure and it has a positive impact on public health. We have also included the VAWG Team training courses, which the council offers for free, to ensure that we are educating and empowering our local female business owners and employees with knowledge on VAWG issues which may affect them. We are targeting all the businesses within the town centre and its central activity zone which is included for the purpose of the programme. This has approximately 400 businesses.

Women's Safety Action Plan

<p>The Sports Team are currently seeking funding to develop a sports programme for women and girls to celebrate International Women's Day.</p> <p>The in-housing of the leisure services is under development and further information will be available soon regarding any opportunities around women safety.</p>		
Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whitechapel Town Centre commission self-defence classes for local businesses. 	Bridget Galloway, Whitechapel Town Centre Manager, LBTH	March 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAWG Days of Action for local businesses to encourage take up of VAWG training and awareness sessions. 	Bridget Galloway, Whitechapel Town Centre Manager, LBTH	March 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports Team to create calendar of sporting activities for women and girls 	Lisa Pottinger, Head of Sports/Physical Activity, LBTH	April 2024
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The council's Children and Education Service to support increasing capacity at schools on raising awareness of domestic abuse (DA) and support available.</p> <p>Comments from Service: Schools are continually offered support with training and changing policies around VAWG and misogyny in schools.</p>		
Action	Owner(s)	Completion date

Women's Safety Action Plan

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anti-VAWG pledge and support promoted to schools to educate staff, parents and governors about VAWG. 	<p>Amy-Kate Garwood, VAWG Training and Awareness Officer, LBTH</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 5</p>		
<p>The Council and Residential Social Landlord (RSL) partners should actively strengthen their partnership workings to focus on tackling women safety issues on RSL estates.</p>		
<p>Comments from Service:</p> <p>It is recommended that all Registered Social Landlords improve their response to victims of domestic abuse through Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation – this is the national benchmark of good practice for RSLs.</p> <p>Good practice recommendations letter sent to Housing teams and registered providers of social housing via TH Housing Management Forum and Executive Board to encourage improvement of their response to victims of domestic abuse by going through Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Action</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Owner(s)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Completion date</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send letter of good practice recommendations to TH Housing Management Forum and Executive Board Chair for circulation to all RPSH's Support RPSH's with good practice recommendations where requested. 	<p>Menara Ahmed, Senior VAWG and Hate Crime Manager, LBTH</p>	<p>October 2023 and ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 6</p>		
<p>The Police/THEOs to actively target and focus their recruitment and retention strategy to reflect recruiting representative women from the community in Tower Hamlets.</p>		
<p>Comments from Service:</p>		

Women's Safety Action Plan

An inclusive recruitment campaign was designed by the community safety working alongside HR, Trade Unions, the Women's Staff Network, Account3, Female THEOs, the VAWG Team and other female members of staff within the organisation. This design work was to identify and understand any barriers to women joining the THEO service. Some of the work that followed included "Women only Open Evenings" and bespoke presentations from women who are currently carrying out the THEO role. On the first phase of recruitment several women were shortlisted and attended the recruitment and inclusive selection day/s. In the first tranche of recruitment 4 women were successfully recruited into the THEO service. Other tranches of recruitment are to follow.

Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> THEO inclusive campaign and recruitment targeted under-represented minorities, including women so that women felt represented on the streets of LBTH. 	Joanne Woodgates, Enforcement Team Leader, LBTH	December 2023 <i>Ongoing</i>

Recommendation 7
 All Tower Hamlets Councillors (Male and Female) to support and champion women's safety issues through the established channels such as 'male allies' programme, women safety focussed walkabouts and building this within the roles when engaging the public within the constituencies and member surgeries.

Comments from Service: All councillors have been offered the VAWG Champions and male allyship training programme. This can be delivered in person or virtually.

Action	Owner(s)	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAWG Champions training offered to all Tower Hamlets Councillors. 	Stacey Bradburne, VAWG Coordinator, LBTH	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAWG Champions training offered through the 'Safer Paths' Campaign as part of the rollout (phase 2) 	Zoe Barwick, BID Director, Aldgate Business Connect	Ongoing

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<p>Cabinet</p> <p>24 April 2024</p>	 <p>TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of: Paul Patterson, Interim Corporate Director of Housing & Regeneration</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Nominees for Adopting New Social Housing Regulatory Functions</p>	

Lead Member	Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding
Originating Officer(s)	Karen Swift, Director of Housing, Nicola Klinger – Housing Management Programme Lead, Lola Williams, ALMO Client Officer
Wards affected	All Wards
Key Decision?	Yes
Forward Plan Notice Published	22/03/2024
Reason for Key Decision	Impact on all wards
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Homes for the future . 2. Empower Communities and Fight Crime 3. A council that works for you and listens to you

Executive Summary

This report sets out the requirement to nominate individuals to two new functions (Responsible Person and Health and Safety Lead) to comply with the below new regulations for social housing landlords:

- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduced that social housing landlords should designate an employee as a Health & Safety Lead who is responsible for monitoring and assessing the risk of failure to comply with health and safety requirements in social housing. This includes informing Cabinet of any non-compliance with health and safety requirements and providing advice to Cabinet on how the health and safety risks and failures should be addressed.
- The Charter for Social Housing Residents sets out the requirement to have a senior “Responsible Person” overseeing compliance with the new consumer standards.

It is recommended that the Mayor appoint postholders to these two new functions.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the requirement for individuals to be appointed to two new functions to comply with new commitments and legislation related to social housing landlords:
 - a. **Responsible Person** to oversee the council's compliance with the new social housing Consumer Standards, as set out in the Charter for Social Housing Residents and Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
 - b. **Health and Safety Lead** to be responsible for monitoring and assessing the risk of failure to comply with health and safety requirements related to the council's social housing stock as set out in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
2. Appoint the Director of Housing Asset Management to be the Council's Health and Safety Lead as set out in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
3. Appoint the Corporate Director, Housing & Regeneration to be the Council's Responsible Person as set out in the Charter for Social Housing Residents.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 Under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, the council must nominate individuals to adopt a new function, namely a Health and Safety Lead and under the Charter for Social Housing Residents, the council should nominate a Responsible Person.
- 1.2 Compliance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 will be monitored by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) via an inspection regime which will commence from 1 April 2024.
- 1.3 The council must publish the names of the individuals who will take on the responsibilities as outlined in the functions mentioned in 1.1 by 1 April 2024.
- 1.4 Non-compliance with legislation set out in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act could lead to:
 - the council facing unlimited financial penalty; and/or:
 - The Regulator publicly admonishing the council for non-compliance.

1.5 Health and Safety Lead

- 1.5.1 Under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 the council as a social housing landlord, must designate an employee as a Health & Safety Lead.

The Health and Safety Lead is responsible for monitoring and assessing the risk of failure to comply with health and safety requirements in its social housing.

1.5.2 This includes informing the Mayor and Cabinet of any non-compliance with health and safety requirements and providing advice to the Mayor and Cabinet on how the health and safety risks and failures should be addressed.

1.5.3 Appointing an individual to this role will provide the Mayor and Cabinet with a clear line of responsibility regarding monitoring health and safety requirements in social housing.

1.5.4 In the case of a local authority which operates executive arrangements with a mayor and cabinet the individual can be:

- A member of the executive other than the elected mayor or
- An employee of the authority

1.6 Responsible Person

1.6.1 The Charter for Social Housing Residents sets out the requirement to have a “Responsible Person” overseeing compliance with the new Consumer Standards, which will be fully implemented in April 2024.

1.6.2 The Charter for Social Housing Resident’s states that the Responsible Person must be:

- a senior officer such as an executive and
- an employee of the landlord.

1.6.3 Appointing an individual to this role will provide the Mayor and Cabinet with a clear line of accountability regarding compliance with the new Consumer Standards.

1.6.4 The name of the Responsible Person must be published so tenants know who is responsible for compliance with the consumer standards for council-owned housing stock in the borough.

1.6.5 It will also demonstrate to the Regulator of Social Housing and its’ tenants the council’s commitment to meeting the requirements of the Charter for Social Housing Residents and the Consumer Standards.

1.6.6 It is also proposed that the Responsible Person is designated as the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) in line with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsmans’ Code, which comes into effect in June 2024. The role is to report to the Governing Body on complaints’ performance and trends, and foster a positive complaint handling culture.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

2.1 Decision not to appoint a Health and Safety Lead overseeing compliance and risks of failure to comply with requirements (related to the council's housing stock).

- 2.1.1 If a Health and Safety Lead is not appointed, there is a risk that no individual postholder will have oversight of health and safety and the risks of failure across the council's social housing. There is a further risk that tenants and leaseholders, as well as the Mayor and Cabinet, do not have a clear lead on health and safety risks and mitigations.
- 2.1.2 At its most serious, this could result in injury or loss of life if failures of health and safety are overlooked, or issues are not raised to the relevant and appropriate services, bodies or decision makers.
- 2.1.3 If the council does not appoint a Health and Safety Lead, it will be breaching the Consumer Standards as set out by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- 2.1.4 This could result in an enforcement notice and penalty from the Regulator of Social Housing.
- 2.1.5 The council could also be admonished publicly resulting in significant reputational risk.

2.2 Decision not to appoint a Responsible Person overseeing compliance with the Consumer Standards

- 2.2.1 The requirement to have a Responsible Person is not set in legislation and so it could be decided not to appoint a Responsible Person.
- 2.2.2 However, the commitment is set out in the Charter for Social Housing Residents and additional information regarding the role is outlined in the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill equalities impact assessment.
- 2.2.3 Therefore, while currently the role is non-statutory, the Regulator of Social Housing could view not having an individual Responsible Person as non-compliance with the Government's commitments outlined in the Charter for Social Housing Residents.
- 2.2.4 This is of significant reputational risk to the council.
- 2.2.5 There is also a risk that accountability for compliance with the Consumer Standards is less robust without a nominated individual responsible for compliance with the Consumer Standards across all council services. This could result in less comprehensive oversight of compliance and areas for improvement (including by the Lead Member, Mayor and Cabinet as well as

corporately, without a Responsible Person to report on this).

- 2.2.6 It is also possible that subsequent legislation introduces the requirement, meaning that the council could face a contravention or prosecution for non-compliance in the future.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1. Background

- 3.1.1. In November 2020, the Government published “The Charter for Social Housing Residents” White Paper. This was published following the Grenfell tragedy in 2017. The reforms set out in the White Paper fundamentally seek to redress and balance the relationship between landlords and social housing tenants; to ensure transparency and accountability which in turn provides assurance that residents in social housing are safe, listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when things go wrong.
- 3.1.2. The Charter outlines aspirations to make social housing residents:
- feel safe in a home that is of good quality,
 - heard by their landlord including via the complaints process, and
 - treated with respect by a landlord who is transparent.
- 3.1.3. The Grenfell tragedy in 2017 has focused discussion around how to ensure buildings are safe and fit for purpose as well as how residents can influence landlords and shape how services are delivered and complain and seek redress when unhappy about issues. These discussions have culminated in the Building Safety Act (2022) and the Fire Safety Act (2021). The council is the “accountable person” for building safety under the new post-Grenfell regulations. Both pieces of legislation place extra duties on councils with regards to the homes that it owns.
- 3.1.4. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act received royal assent in July 2023. The Act changes the role of the Regulator by removing the ‘serious detriment’ test which currently limits the Regulator to a reactive role as opposed to a proactive role in ensuring Consumer Standards are met in social housing.
- 3.1.5. The focus is on ensuring that homes are safe but also that local residents are engaged and involved in decision making and supporting wider neighbourhood development in their areas. The approach is designed to mark a sea change in current delivery methods.
- 3.1.6. The Regulator will be empowered to proactively ensure social landlords are compliant with Consumer Standards (which are expected to be reviewed and added to) and will seek assurance of compliance through a new inspection regime. As the Council holds over 1,000 units of stock, its housing management function will be assessed at least once every 4 years. The inspection regime will come into effect from 1 April 2024.

3.2. Health and Safety Lead (for Social Housing)

- 3.2.1. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (the Act) introduced a requirement for social housing landlords to identify a nominated individual as a Health and Safety Lead.
- 3.2.2. The Act legislates that all social housing landlords with 15+ employees should nominate a senior individual within their organisation to be responsible for the Health and Safety lead function as outlined in the Act.
- 3.2.3. The Act states where a local authority has a cabinet and an elected mayor, the Health & Safety Lead can be:
 - a member of the executive other than the elected mayor, or
 - an employee of the local authority.
- 3.2.4. The Regulator of Social Housing has stated that registered providers/local authorities need to designate the function of Health and Safety Lead to a person who can carry out the function but has not provided any guidance related to the competencies required.
- 3.2.5. The function that the Health & Safety Lead must deliver, as outlined in the Act and the Charter includes:
 - a. to be a health and safety champion who is accessible and visible to tenants.
 - b. their name being published as the Health & Safety Lead.
 - c. monitoring and ensuring that the council is compliant with health and safety requirements.
 - d. assessing risks of failure to comply with health and safety requirements.
 - e. informing Cabinet of assessments of risks and material failures whilst aiming to comply with health and safety requirements.
 - f. providing Cabinet with advice on how the council should mitigate and remedy any risks and failures.
- 3.2.6. Therefore, while the Regulator of Social Housing is not prescriptive about qualifications for this role, it is considered that the postholder for the Health and Safety Lead should have:
 - a. recent experience of working in a technical environment where health and safety requirements are delivered,
 - b. has knowledge to provide technical advice to Cabinet regarding health and safety requirements and
 - c. should have technical competency to be responsible through providing assurance to tenants regarding health and safety concerns in social housing.
- 3.2.7. Health and Safety Lead Option 1 (recommended): Director of Housing Asset Management

3.2.7.1. The Director of Housing Asset Management is responsible for the functions that are responsible for ensuring the health and safety for residents in the councils social housing, monitoring and assessment of risks and material failures and remediating risks and failures.

3.2.7.2. In their day-to-day role, the Director of Housing Asset Management is responsible for:

- a. Overseeing and monitoring all the work that the Housing Asset Management department carries out.
- b. keeping abreast of asset management related regulatory and policy matters concerning council-owned social housing.
- c. ensuring the delivery through effective programming in accordance with regulatory requirements including health and safety requirements.
- d. ensuring that Housing Asset Management are compliant with an internal risk assessment framework.
- e. representing the council, acting as an ambassador regarding asset management including health and safety.
- f. ensuring that decisions are made within a robust risk assessment framework and that there is compliance with all statutory regulation.
- g. providing strategic direction related to Housing Asset Management ensuring the work of the department are compliant with the latest legislation and regulations.

3.2.7.3. The Director of Housing Asset Management also has experience and knowledge of:

- a. close involvement in delivering high quality services to residents, which are based on knowledge of customer needs, regulatory standards and best practice. This experience will be beneficial when addressing tenants' health and safety concerns.
- b. understanding the regulatory framework which governs the provision of social housing.
- c. technical requirements for delivering health and safety within social housing.

3.2.7.4. The above indicates that the Director of Housing Asset Management postholder has the relevant knowledge of risks, control of service delivery and technical expertise required to hold the Health and Safety Lead role in the council.

3.2.8. Health and Safety Lead Option 2: Head of Asset Management

3.2.8.1. The Head of Asset Management is responsible for ensuring the Health and Safety of council residents through effective management of gas servicing, electric safety tests, the asbestos register, fire risk assessments, lift servicing, legionella and radon inspections.

3.2.8.2. The reasons why the Head of Asset Management is not recommended to adopt the Health and Safety Lead function are:

a. the Health & Safety Lead will be responsible for overseeing that health and safety requirements are being managed and delivered by the teams under the Head of Housing Asset Management, which could mean there would be a conflict as this would be self-monitoring.

b. The Head of Asset Management would not have oversight over health and safety aspects that are outside of their areas (e.g. responsive repairs).

3.2.9. Health and Safety Lead Option 3: Building Safety Lead

3.2.9.1. The Building Safety Lead post has been in place since May 2022 and the role is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Building Safety Act 2022. It provides building, fire safety and health and safety advice to officers in the council and the Mayor and Cabinet.

3.2.9.2. The role was created as the council lacked technical expertise whilst overseeing its arms-length management organisation's (Tower Hamlets Homes) preparations and compliance with the new building safety regime for any building with two or more residential units and 18m+/7 storeys+ in height.

3.2.9.3. The role is also the link between the Building Safety Regulator and the council, champions and coaches building safety culture across the council, provides technical advice for council officers whilst overseeing housing management's compliance with building safety (including health and safety requirements) and the new building safety regime borne by the Building Safety Act 2022.

3.2.9.4. The Building Safety Lead was originally earmarked for the Health and Safety Lead role as the role sat at a distance from Housing Asset Management.

3.2.9.5. However, the post has been vacant since February 2024 and therefore is not considered a viable option at this time.

3.2.10. Health and Safety Lead Option 4: Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding

3.2.10.1. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding is accountable for housing services delivered by the

council.

3.2.10.2. The Cabinet Member receives regular updates regarding compliance with statutory health and safety requirements from all housing-related directors including the Director of Housing Asset Management and Corporate Director of Housing & Regeneration.

3.2.10.3. Therefore, the Cabinet Member could be considered for this role.

3.2.10.4. However, the Cabinet Member would need to have extensive and technical knowledge of health and safety in social housing in order to provide technical advice to Cabinet and tenants regarding health and safety requirements. Technical competency will also be required to provide assurance to tenants regarding health and safety concerns in social housing.

3.2.11. Health and Safety Lead Option 5: Team Leader Corporate Health and Safety

3.2.11.1. Whilst it may appear that another option for the Health and Safety Lead role could be the corporate Health and Safety Lead (Team Leader Corporate Health and Safety), it should be noted that this post and service (including officers that transferred to this team upon insourcing of housing management services) is focused on the health and safety of Tower Hamlets Council employees not its social housing stock.

3.2.11.2. The team does not hold any expertise in relation to the health and safety of council stock and its residents.

3.2.11.3. It would also be unlikely considered unsatisfactory for the Health and Safety Lead to be assigned to an officer that is not in a senior role.

3.2.12. **Responsible Person (Consumer Standards)**

3.2.12.1. The Government's Charter for Social Housing Residents sets out the commitment for all social housing landlords to nominate and publish the name of a senior officer who will be responsible for overseeing compliance with the new consumer standards. The consumer standards that are set by the Regulator of Social Housing will be fully implemented from April 2024.

3.2.12.2. The Charter for Social Housing Residents' equality impact assessment states that the Responsible Person must be:

- a. a senior officer such as an executive and
- b. an employee of the landlord

3.2.13 Responsible Person Option 1 (recommended): Corporate Director Housing & Regeneration

3.2.13.1 The Corporate Director Housing & Regeneration is assessed to be the most suited to the function of Responsible Person as they have (in their day-to-day role) responsibility for the following:

- a) ensuring statutory requirements are met in the Housing and Regeneration directorate.
- b) being accountable for the development of housing policy, housing strategy and driving improvements in delivery of housing-related services.
- c) providing strategic direction in relation to managing and delivering housing services for council-owned stock whilst meet and exceeding statutory standards.
- d) ensuring housing related divisions (Housing Asset Management, Neighbourhood Services and Housing) take responsibility and are accountable for all aspects of their service including complying with the consumer standards and other housing regulations.
- e) working closely with the three housing related directors and receives regular updates on compliance issues across all housing related matters.
- f) line management for the three housing-related directors.

3.2.13.2 The Corporate Director of Housing & Regeneration role is the only officer role in the council which has direct oversight of all three housing divisions through internal governance arrangements (e.g. Divisional Leadership Team) and direct line management of all three housing directors.

3.2.14 Responsible Person Option 2: Chief Executive

3.2.14.1 The council's Chief Executive's role includes monitoring compliance and performance at a strategic level and is the most senior council officer and therefore could be considered suitable for this position.

3.2.14.2 However, it is not considered feasible for the Chief Executive to take on the Responsible Person function for the following reasons:

- a) the postholder's role's responsibilities are too wide-spread across the council limiting the capacity to focus on the three housing-related divisions' (Housing, Housing Asset Management and Neighbourhood Services) compliance with the consumer standards.
- b) there needs to be close working with the Director of Housing, Director of Housing Neighbourhoods and Director of Housing Asset Management (housing-related directors) who will provide information regarding compliance with the consumer standards. The Chief

Executive does not work closely or directly enough with the three housing-related directors to receive full oversight of compliance with the consumer standards.

- c) the role does not receive the level of information to deliver the Responsible Person function including driving forward improvements and change to comply with the Consumer Standards.
- d) the Chief Executive's role relies on the Corporate Director, Housing and Regeneration to have oversight of housing-related statutory and regulatory compliance advising them of any issues and mitigations.

3.2.15 Responsible Person Option 3: Director of Neighbourhood Services

3.2.15.1 The Neighbourhood Services division is most impacted by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 in terms of areas of compliance and the Director of Neighbourhood Services is responsible for the Regulatory Assurance team, which focuses on compliance with regulation, monitoring and improvement in delivering housing services.

3.2.15.2 Therefore, another option for the Responsible Person role is the Director of Neighbourhood Services role.

3.2.15.3 However, this is not recommended for the following reasons:

- a) the role works equally alongside the other two housing-related directors, which equally will need to comply with all the Consumer Standards. The Charter implies one person should be designated accountable for the function of the Responsible Person and it would be difficult for one divisional director to be entirely responsible for functions outside of their division and in other directors' divisions.
- b) the role does not have line management responsibility for the housing-related directors and cannot set strategic direction or implement change across all areas which are affected by the Consumer Standards.

3.2.16 Responsible Person Option 4: Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding

3.2.16.1 The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding is accountable for housing services delivered by the council and receives regular updates from all housing-related Directors including the Corporate Director of Housing and Regeneration.

3.2.16.2 However, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding cannot adopt the role of Responsible Person as the Charter for Social Housing sets out that:

- a) the Responsible Person needs to be a senior officer and/or

b) needs to be an employee working in the council.

3.2.16.3 The person appointed as Responsible Person will be accountable to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding, as well as the Mayor and Cabinet.

3.3. **Succession Planning**

3.3.1. Where changes are made to the council structure or roles/responsibilities of the nominated roles are amended, consideration will be given as to which posts are in the best position to hold the roles of Responsible Person and Health and Safety Lead respectively, and this will be reflected in the development of job descriptions.

4 **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 At this stage, there are no specific equalities implications to consider.

4.2 It is assessed that appointment to the two roles will result in a positive impact on tenants who:

- will feel reassured they can discuss their health and safety concerns with a named council officer and,
- will be aware of who is accountable for overseeing compliance with the Consumer Standards.

5 **OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 It should be noted that the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) will oversee compliance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Charter for Social Housing Residents.

5.2 The RSH will also work closely with and receive referrals from the:

- the **Building Safety Regulator** (part of the Health and Safety Executive) for non-compliance with the Building Safety Act 2022, which monitors compliance with building safety, fire safety and the building safety regime which was fully implemented in October 2023.
- The **Housing Ombudsman** which investigates housing complaints in breach of the Housing Complaints Handling Code, including complaints related to health and safety such as damp and mould.

6 **COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

6.1 Providing the recommendations of this report are implemented there will be no financial implications. Failure to make these appointments could result in financial pressures by way of penalties, legal costs and corrective action costs.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The report clearly sets out the requirements of the Charter for Social Housing Residents and the statutory requirements of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 to appoint responsible persons to be the Health and Safety Lead for social housing and for Consumer Standards and the consequences of non-compliance with these requirements and who these persons should be.
- 7.2 The Council should comply with its statutory and other obligations with regard to the appointment of these two persons.
-

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- None


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

- [The Charter for Social Housing Residents \(Social Housing White Paper\)](#)
- [The Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#)

Officer contact details for documents:

- N/A

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<p>Cabinet</p> <p>24 April 2024</p>	 <p>TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of: Steve Reddy, Interim Corporate Director, Children’s Services</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Contract Extension for Young People’s Supported Living Pathway</p>	

Lead Member	Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor)
Originating Officer(s)	Layla Richards, Covering Director Commissioning and Youth
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	Yes
Reason for Key Decision	Financial threshold
Forward Plan Notice Published	22 March 2024
Exempt information	None
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	<p>Strategy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Homes for the future 2. Invest in Public Services 3. Empower Communities and Fight Crime 4. A council that works for you and listens to you <p>Plan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A better deal for children and young people: aspiration, education and skills 2. Good jobs and employment 3. Strong, resilient and safe communities 4. Better health and wellbeing

Executive Summary

The Tower Hamlets Young People’s Supported Housing Pathway (YPSHP) serves the borough’s Children’s Social Care (CSC) and Housing Options team (HOST) with accommodation-based support services in single and shared units across the borough. The council has full nomination rights to all properties and works collaboratively with the service providers to ensure that our young people

are placed in suitable accommodation with staff available to provide sufficient support hours to meet their needs. The service provides a safe accommodation option for 16/17-year-olds and young people aged 18-25 who are in and on the edge of care and homeless young people (prioritising young people with Special Educational Needs). It meets the statutory responsibilities of all local authorities under the Children's Act 1989 and 2008, The Housing Act 1996 and The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The current pathway was previously extended through Cabinet approval on 29th November 2023 until 31st May 2024 to enable the Children's Services Strategy and Commissioning Service to re-commission and to re-procure the provision in the pathway. The tender for the improved YPSHP Pathway went live on 18th of September 2023 and closed on 17th of November 2023. Although a high number of bids were received, the quality of the bids did not meet the quality level the Council was seeking. Due to the nature of the pathway (accommodation and support for our most vulnerable children and young people) the report asks Cabinet to approve the retendering of the YPSHP and an extension to the existing contracts which will shortly come to an end. This will ensure service continuity and the commencement of a procurement exercise will enable contracts to be awarded to suitably qualified providers when the existing contract extensions have ended. A four-month awarding period will allow for engagement with stakeholders, followed by a four-month mobilisation period to establish; data systems, partnerships, estates, facilities, and service pathways.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the re-commissioning of the Young People's Supported Housing Pathway procurement that went live on 18th September 2023 and closed on 17th November 2023.
2. Approve the award of contract extensions to the four block contracts of three existing providers in the Young People's Supported Housing Pathway of 6 months each to allow for a suitable tender and mobilisation period of the reprocurement.
3. To note the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 4.1

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 To ensure the Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Housing Pathway contracts are extended to enable a transformative re-commission of the pathway and start of the new Young People's Supported Housing Pathway.
- 1.2 To allow the time to fully engage with the market, young people and social care practitioners to redesign the pathway so the interests of the key

stakeholders are aligned and to ensure the continued and high-quality service for our most vulnerable children and young people.

- 1.3 Consultation undertaken during the tender process indicates that the market has changed considerably since the service was designed in 2023 and that the current pathway can be improved and redesigned to result in high quality bids.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 To award all the lots and to manage the risks associated with the quality levels of the low scoring providers in the 3 lots of concern.
- 2.2 To award the contracts to the highest bidders for the 2 lots who were able to demonstrate that they have the requisite quality and experience to provide an excellent service.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 Service background

- 3.2 The Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Housing Pathway (YPSHP) provides a safe alternative to accommodating 16/17-year-olds and young people aged 18-25 who are in and on the edge of care, as well as homeless young people (prioritising young people with Special Educational Needs) and meets the statutory responsibilities of all local authorities under the Children's Act 1989 and 2008.

- 3.3 The key service objective of the YPSHP is to enable young people to develop the independent living skills required to move on to longer term stable housing, explore life choice options, and become independent.

- 3.4 The YPSHP aims to achieve the following desired outcomes for our young people:

- Enabling young people to continue to work towards independence and achieve better life outcomes.
- Maximising and improving opportunities for accessing education, training and employment.
- Improving access to health services and ensuring service users are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles.
- Helping to facilitate provision for service users in need of care.
- Decreasing criminal activity and anti-social behaviour by supporting service users to address offending and re-offending behaviour.
- Supporting service users to understand and access sources of assistance in the community that will be able to continue to assist them in the future.

- Improving and encouraging the development of skills and confidence to negotiate safe healthy relationships and support young people to tackle issues affecting their physical, mental and sexual health and well-being.
- Promoting responsible parenting, enabling young people to make informed decisions as to parenthood and where required access appropriate accommodation.

3.5 The Young People's Assessment and Support Service contract acts as the entrance to the YPSHP assessing young people unknown to Children's Social Care to identify their support needs. The other three services deliver a wide range of support, from high support placements, i.e. staff on site 24 hours, medium support placements, where staff are on site during the day only, and low support placements, where staff support is provided to young people by visiting their managed properties, and lastly a floating support provision.

3.6 The Young People's Supported Housing Pathway Tender consisted of 5 separate lots.

- Lot 1 – 12 units of shared accommodation, with referrals received from HOST and Leaving Care and Through Care Teams. This is the first stage of the pathway, where the child's needs are assessed for up to 16 weeks before they are moved on within the pathway or to needs-appropriate accommodation.
- Lot 2 – 55 units of accommodation, with referrals received from HOST and Leaving Care and Through Care Teams. This is the second stage of the pathway where young people are referred into their longer-term accommodation (up to 2 years) and supported to learn the independent living skills.
- Lot 3 – 30 units of accommodation, with referrals received from HOST and Leaving Care and Through Care Teams. This provides accommodation and support towards independent living.
- Lot 4 – 26 units of accommodation, with referrals received from HOST and Leaving Care and Through Care Teams. This provides accommodation and support towards independent living for young people and teenage parents.
- Lot 5 - A floating support service for young people who have moved-on into their first long term independent property after receiving the supported housing services from the YP Pathway. Young people will be settling into their new home and support will be offered to ensure they are coping well and engaged in employment, education, training and/or volunteering.

3.7 The evaluation and moderation of the Young People's Supported Housing tender concluded on 22nd December 2023. Following careful consideration of the bids, the service has decided that the existing specification and resultant bids would not meet the needs of the young people who would use the service. This is due in part to changes within the market place since the scheme was originally created in 2017. Therefore, the Council is abandoning

all 5 lots of this procurement in order to carry out an appropriate service review so the retendered service will deliver Best Value

3.8 Contracting approach

3.9 Commissioners are focused on ensuring a robust service review is conducted and that incumbent providers are continuously supported and in agreement with extensions to their existing contracts. The Council intends to carry out a period of in-depth market and stakeholder engagement, research, and service redesign, before going back out to tender with a revised specification and service model. We aim to complete this as quickly as we realistically can, balanced with the need to allow sufficient time to properly understand the market and to develop a robust, high-quality specification.

3.10 It is vital that sufficient time and resource is allocated to complete the integrated service review of the Young People’s Supported Housing Pathway. This will include, consultations with key stakeholders and young people, market warming to ensure that the tender is designed to produce a pathway that meets the needs of stakeholders and the young people, the end users, as well as the importance of ensuring a quality recommission that minimally disrupts the lives of our service users.

3.11 We are recommending a 6-month extension between June 2024 and December 2024 to award the contract, allowing sufficient time to develop the market working with providers to ensure the whole system understands the needs of the young people accessing the service and is able to respond to that and developing a new service specification.

3.12 During the mobilisation period, the service changes will have to be put into a clear operational plan with the service users, Children’s Social Care, commissioners, and the winning provider/s ensuring the improved service offer will be implemented in a clear and visible manner that speaks to all our children in our care. This will require careful and timely planning between the incumbent and new provider, service users and CSC to ensure that their lives are minimally disrupted.

3.13 It would thus be in the best interest of the council and service users to offer an extension to the existing four block contracts, from 1st June 2024 to 31st December 2024. There are some risks associated with this timeline, outlined in the table below:

3.14

Event	Lead	Date	Risk Highlights
CABINET APPROVAL	Cabinet	*24th April 2024	
Development of service specification including stakeholder	Commissioning	Wc April 8th – 16 th July 2024	Sufficient engagement from all stakeholders will be required to complete this exercise within this timescale. There is a risk that the

engagements, pricing schedule, quality questions			resulting tender may not get better results due to timeline.
Deadline for submission of Tollgate to PRP	Commissioning/Procurement	16th July 24	
ATTEND PROCUREMENT REVIEW PANEL (PRP)	Commissioning/Procurement	23rd July 24	These are fixed dates that occur every fortnight.
Invitation to Tender preparation and period til close	Procurement	24th to 30 Sept 24	Procurement capacity
Tender Evaluation and moderation(Selection Questionnaire, Social Value, Price)	Procurement	1st to 23 rd Oct 24	The number of lots we develop will be limited by this timeline.
Deadline for submission of Tollgate to PRP		05-Nov-24	
ATTEND PROCUREMENT REVIEW PANEL (PRP)		12-Nov-24	
Award contract		23-Nov-24	
Contracts signature		29/02/24 to 19/03/24	
Mobilisation		23rd Nov to 31st Dec 24	Over Christmas. Mobilisation would normally be at least 3 months for this type of service.
Contract start date		Jan-25	

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 An equalities impact assessment is not required at this stage as the extension to the existing block contracts award is to ensure continued service, and to allow time to retender the contracts. The Young People's Supported Housing Pathway supports our most vulnerable children and young people in the borough and ensuring they receive continued high quality is of paramount importance.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Young People's Supported Housing Pathway is crucial to safeguard our most vulnerable children and young people offering them support ensuring accommodation needs are being met and that they are receiving good quality support in order to enable them to move-on to their own independent housing having received from the Young Person's Supported Housing Pathway, training on how to maintain and sustain their tenancies.
- 5.2 The services in the pathway meet the statutory responsibilities of all local authorities under the Childrens Act 1989 and 2008, The Housing Act 1996 and The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 5.3 Best Value is a core objective of the proposals outlined as they seek to secure the best outcomes for the population in the context of access to high quality accommodation for young people.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 This report seeks approval of extension of the existing provision for the Young People's Supported Housing Pathway for a period of 9 months, during the contract award and mobilisation period, at a cost of £1,016,839.
- 6.2 The costs of this extension period will be met from within the existing revenue budget for the service. It is in the best interests of the service users to extend the existing four block contracts and avoid the requirements to transfer to spot purchasing of placements against the existing block contract arrangements, resulting in a significant increase in placement costs and risking the ability to achieve best value.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The Invitation to tender reserves the right for the Council not to award to any bidder. However, procurement law requires the Council to have good grounds for abandoning the tender. The fact that the Council no longer wishes to purchase the configuration that was originally specified as the Council believes it will not meet the needs of the children and young people is such a ground for abandonment. This will be borne out with the reconfiguration of the services work referred to in the report undertaken by the Council prior to tendering.
- 7.2 The Council is required to ensure statutory Best Value in the delivery of its functions in terms of economy efficiency and effectiveness. The award of a contract which the Council does not consider to be efficient or effective in terms of meeting the needs of the children would not meet this legal duty
- 7.3 It is clear that the reason why the Council needs to extend the existing contracts is the result of a failed tender. Regulation 32 of the Public Contracts Regulations allows the Council to agree a new contract for the interim period

with each of the existing suppliers without further competition. Also the Council is ensuring that the interim contracts are proportionate to the time required to revise the specification and rerun the procurement and is therefore not extending the contracts anti-competitively

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- NONE

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

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A

Agenda Item 6.5

<p>Cabinet</p> <p>24 April 2024</p>	 <p>TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of: Denise Radley, Corporate Director, Health and Social Care</p>	<p>Classification: Open (Unrestricted)</p>
<p>Contract extension for (1) School Health and Wellbeing Service and (2) Integrated Young People’s Health and Wellbeing Service (Safe East)</p>	

Lead Member	Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Social Care
Originating Officer(s)	Dr Somen Banerjee, (Director of Public Health)
Wards affected	(All Wards);
Key Decision?	Yes
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.
Forward Plan Notice Published	22/03/2024
Exempt information	<p>This report and/or its appendices include information that has been exempted from publication as the Monitoring Officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has deemed that the information meets the definition of a category of exempt information as set out in the Council’s Access to Information Rules; and • has deemed that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. <p>The exempt information is contained in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix 2 <p>The exempt information falls into this category:</p> <p>Category 3: Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority handling the information)</p>
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accelerate Education 2. Invest in public services 3. A council that works for you and listens to you

Executive Summary

The Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Service (CYPHWS) is the new service model which brings together two statutory services 1) School Health and Wellbeing Service and 2) Integrated Young People's Health and Wellbeing Service (Safe East). The robust and rigorous evaluation of the CYPHWS procurement concluded the bid did not deliver best value for the requirements as set out in the service specification.

Two contract extensions are required to support the continued delivery of the two statutory services whilst re-tendering is completed. We propose a four-month period from August – November 2024 to award the contract following retendering which will take place between May-October 2024. Following the contract award, the new service will require a four-month mobilisation period.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to

1. Approve the extension of the contracts for the two services for a period of 8 months to allow for the continuation of the procurement process and mobilisation of the new contract during term time.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The contract extension will comprise of two phases: four months to contract award, including market engagement, tendering, evaluation and contract award processes.
- 1.2 The second phase is a four-month mobilisation period. This is necessary because there are significant risks to changing provider when term-based programmes are underway. It is safer to change providers (if required) at the start of terms (in the Summer holidays as originally planned, in January (insufficient time to retender and mobilise) or in April (as proposed).
- 1.3 Most staff work on term-time only contracts and may need to be TUPE'd so the mobilisation stage requires a longer period to maximise engagement and retention of hard-to-recruit staff.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 A shorter contract extension period.
- 2.2 Do not agree to an extension; these two core universal services will be suspended from 1st August until retendering is complete.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 See accompanying report at Appendix 1.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The new CYPHWS service model has been designed to better reduce inequalities than the existing model by increasing capacity for co-production and culturally sensitive health communications. The contract extension aims to increase the success of a future tender, to introduce the new model as effectively as possible.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory duty to commission 5-19 public health services, sexual health and substance misuse services as a condition of the Public Health Grant.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 Further to an unsuccessful tender exercise for the new Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Service, on the grounds of delivery of best value, the existing statutory contract provision for the 2 service areas will require an extension for a period of 8 months.
- 6.2 The total contract value per annum for both contracts combined is £2.4m and is funded within the statutory element of the Public Health Grant. The cost of the extension of the existing contracts will be funded via the Public Health Grant and therefore there are no additional financial implications associated with this proposal.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The Invitation to tender reserves the right for the Council not to award a contract to any bidder. However, procurement law requires the Council to have good grounds for abandoning a tender. The fact that no bids were received that the Council reasonably believed would not deliver an appropriate level of quality (in terms of efficiency and effectiveness) would be an appropriate ground.
- 7.2 The Council is required to ensure statutory Best Value in the delivery of its functions in terms of economy efficiency and effectiveness. The award of a contract which the Council does not consider to be efficient or effective in terms of meeting the needs of the children would not meet this legal duty
- 7.3 It is clear that the reason why the Council needs to extend the existing contracts is the result of a failed tender. Regulation 32 of the Public Contracts Regulations allows the Council to agree a new contract for the interim period with each of the existing suppliers without further competition. Also the Council is ensuring that the interim contracts are proportionate to the time required to revise the specification and rerun the procurement and is therefore not extending the contracts anti-competitively
- 7.4 It is noted that one of the alternative options is to award a shorter extension than that which is requested. However, given the fact that any tender must be

undertaken in timescales that are at least reasonable, legal advice is that a shorter time period may not be practically possible.

- 7.5 Appendix 2 to this report contains detail as to the tender evaluation. This information is exempt information for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1972 (Schedule 12A) The publication of this detail would assist existing bidders who may make a submission in the new tender and affect the veracity and fairness of the new process as compared with other bidders taking part in that process only. Therefore, whilst the public interest in knowing the information is appreciable it is outweighed by the public information in maintaining the exemption.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – report details
- Appendix 2 – EXEMPT tender evaluation.

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

- NONE.

Officer contact details for documents:

Dr Somen Banerjee, (Director of Public Health) or state N/A

Appendix A to	Contract Extension for School Health and Wellbeing Service and Integrated Young People’s Health and Wellbeing Service
Author(s):	Sumaira Tayyab – Public Health Programme Lead Katie Cole – Associate Director of Public Health
Presented by:	Sumaira Tayyab – Public Health Programme Lead

Executive Summary	
<p>The Children and Young People’s Health and Wellbeing Service (CYPHWS) is the new service model which brings together two statutory services 1) School Health and Wellbeing Service and 2) Integrated Young People’s Health and Wellbeing Service (Safe East).</p> <p>The robust and rigorous evaluation of the CYPHWS procurement concluded the bid did not deliver best value.</p> <p>Two contract extensions are required to support the continued delivery of the two statutory services whilst re-tendering is completed. We propose a four month extension from August – November 2024 to award the contract following retendering which will take place between May-October 2024. Following the contract award, the new service will require a four-month mobilisation period which aligns with the school term and accommodates the school holidays, which are critical for the service because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most staff work on term-time only contracts and may need to be TUPE’d so this stage requires a longer period to maximise engagement and retention of staff • mobilisation needs to be considered as a term-time only activity. Schools plan their terms early in the year– to maximise school’s embracing and valuing the change, we must factor in ample time for the changes to be clearly communicated supporting a successful service implementation • The extension period works out as 24 weeks school term time when school closures are taken into account. This period is crucial and will be used to establish strong data capture and reporting systems, partnerships, estates, facilities, service pathways. <p>This extension will bring the current service delivery to the end of the financial year supporting the new service delivery to commence at the start of summer term. A new procurement cycle cannot be completed before the current contracts comes to an end.</p>	
Key issues	
<p>This paper focuses on the decision of whether and how long to extend the contract for the current services.</p> <p>The decisions relating the evaluation of tenders and the future approach to retendering the service are not in scope of this Cabinet decision but are included in this paper and a restricted appendix for context.</p>	
Details of recommendations and timescales for decision	
<p>DLT are asked to support one of three options:</p> <p>1) A contract extension from 1st August 2024 to 31st March 2025; four months to</p>	

award the contract and four months to mobilise the service during term time.

2) A shorter contract extension period of less than eight months.

3) Do not agree to an extension; these two core universal services will be suspended from 1st August until retendering is complete.

We recommend option 1.

Details on who has been consulted with on this paper to date and details of further plans for consultation.

1	Children's DLT	18/03/2024
2	HASC DLT	18/03/2024
3	Cllr Talukdar briefing	26/03/2024
4	Cllr Choudhury briefing	25/03/2024
5	Mayors briefing	26/03/2024
6	CMT	
7	MAB	03/04/2024
8	MAB CPAP	10/04/2024
9	Cabinet	24/04/2024

Risk implications

Without the extension, the two services will cease activity on 31st July 2024. Risks include:

- Failure to meet our statutory duty to ensure: 1) the delivery of the Healthy Child Programme (HCP) which is an evidence-based, universal programme for all children and 2) commission sexual health and substance misuse prevention and treatment services for young people.
- Failure or significant delay to the delivery of other key services including hearing and audio screening and the National Childhood Measurement Programme (NCMP)
- Significant staffing challenges
- Reputational damage

Risks associated with a shorter contract extension period depend on which phases of the procurement will be reduced:

- If shortening the market engagement period, the key risk is that we insufficiently understand the reasons behind the sub-optimal tender and fail to respond to these reasons before or during the reprocurement, increasing the risk of a future sub-optimal tender.
- If shortening the tender period, numerous risks associated with unforeseen delays, reduced quality of scoring, challenges in seeking legal/procurement advice at pace etc., which in turn increase the risk of another sub-optimal tender, legal action or other adverse procurement outcome.
- If shortening the mobilisation period, there are risks around supporting staff through the TUPE process which might increase the risk of resignations (noting these are hard-to-recruit posts) and the service starting with an incomplete mobilisation, with risks around data, information-sharing, inadequate pathway development etc.

The main risk associated with the extension is the continuation of a sub-optimal

service model for the current services, which the new service model for the CYPHWS seeks to address. The mitigation is therefore to reprocur the service, informed by renewed market engagement, and in line with realistic timelines to ensure an effective and successful tender exercise.

Budget/Legal Issues

Budget – The contract value of the existing services is the same as the new service, so the extension would not affect the budget for these services.

Legal – Potential challenges from Lot 1 and Lot 2 bidders as a result of ceasing the tender. We have received advice from Legal who are in support of our recommendation to cease the procurement.

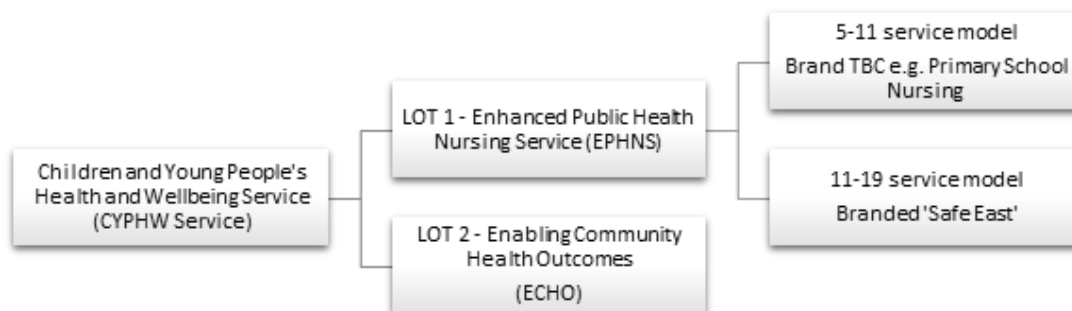
Equalities considerations

The new CYPHWS service model has been designed to better reduce inequalities than the existing model by increasing capacity for co-production and culturally sensitive health communications. The contract extension aims to increase the success of a future tender, to introduce the new model as effectively as possible.

1. Background:

1.1. Public Health have completed the procurement of a new Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing service (CYPHWS). This new service brings together School Health and Wellbeing Service and Integrated Young People's Health and Wellbeing Service (Safe East) into a single new service. The CYPHWS service model was co-produced with service users and partners following an 18-month transformation workstream, including an evaluation and needs assessment.

1.2. The CYPHWS consists of two lots:



- Lot 1 – Enhanced Public Health Nursing Service (EPHNS): A universal and targeted service for children and young people aged 5-19 (25 with SEND) with two service elements supporting health, education and other partners working together across a range of settings to enhance the life chances of children and young people.
- Lot 2 – Enabling Community Health Outcomes (ECHO): A dedicated function to support the Lot 1 Provider with system leadership, co-production, evaluation, research, and culturally appropriate communication resulting in an innovative service that reflects and meets local need.

1.3. The CYPHWS model was informed by the perspective of children and young people on their health and what they value about the services that support them. To ensure the voice of children and young people drives service delivery and continual improvement, the Lot 2 Provider shall provide a dedicated focus on co-production and communication resulting in an innovative child-centred service.

2. Tender evaluation process:

- 2.1. Cabinet approval was granted on 23rd October 2023 as part of the Q2 (FY 2022 -2023) Contract Forward Plan.
- 2.2. Tollgate 1 was approved on 7th November 2023 by the Procurement Review Board.
- 2.3. A pre-tender market engagement exercise (webinar) was held on 24th July 2023.
- 2.4. A LBTH wide stakeholder workshop was held on 2nd August 2023, bringing together partners who are responsible for commissioning and delivering services to children and young people. The feedback received for the proposed service model was positive and partners recognised efforts had been made to address system challenges.
- 2.5. This tender was undertaken in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015(PCR 2015) Schedule 3 (Light Touch Regime) and a process akin to the open procedure was utilised a open tender route to market. The purpose was to create competition, opportunities for emerging businesses to apply for new work and minimise discrimination as it is a transparent process that facilitates fair play for suppliers.
- 2.6. Tender was issued on 15th December 2023 with deadline for return on Tuesday 30th January 2024. The evaluation period was 31st January - 27th February 2024.

3. Tender outcome

- 3.1. The evaluation panel has concluded that none of the responses received for Lot 1 were of sufficient quality to deliver best value for the requirements as set out in the service specification.
- 3.2. The options the panel have considered, on legal and procurement advice are:
- 3.2.1. To not award the contract and end this tender process (tender 'abandonment') and proceed to retender with no substantial changes to the service specification
 - 3.2.2. To not award the contract and end this tender process (tender 'abandonment') and undertake in-depth market engagement with a view to making substantial changes to the service specification prior to retendering.
 - 3.2.3. To pursue Regulation 32 undertakings, to negotiate with one or more bidders of the Council's choice.
- 3.3. The Council has chosen to pursue the option described in 3.2.1. There is no indication from the bids submitted that the service specification requires substantial modifications. The specification was developed through an 18-month transformation process including involvement of national advisors and commissioners are confident that the model is deliverable and will improve service quality and outcomes for children and families.
- 3.4. A Regulation 32 procedure (to negotiate with one or more bidders of the Council's choice) was assessed as unfavourable as it does not provide the same level of competition between providers as option 3.2.1 and it would therefore be more difficult to demonstrate the value of the solution once negotiation had concluded.
- 3.5. Lot 2 is specified to enable the effective delivery of Lot 1 and cannot be mobilised or delivered independently of Lot 1. Unfortunately, and in the absence of a clear award for Lot 1 the Council has no immediate need of the services that would have been awarded under Lot 2.
- 3.6. Whilst the Council intends to retender Lot 1 this will not be until July with a potential award some significant time following. Therefore, the Council has decided to abandon this Lot 2 tender also as the Lot 2 bids may no longer be relevant or commercially viable by the time we might be in a position to award the retendered Lot 1. Therefore, under clause 11.1 in the ITT instructions, we are abandoning the entire tender for HAC5906.

4. Extension and retendering timelines

- 4.1. There are two stages of the contract extension that are required to retender the contract, from the current contract end date (31st July 2024) to proposed new contract start date on 1st April 2024:

Four months to award contract (August '24 – November '24)

- Market development, tender document updates, tender opens: May-September
- Evaluation/award report/standstill/PRB: September/November
- Contract award: November

Four months to mobilise (December '24 – March '25):

- TUPE – November/December [December – 2 weeks school holiday plus decreased activity with schools due to Christmas activities in term-time]
- Service mobilisation – January-March (factoring in school holidays, this is about 3 months of term-time)
- Contract start: April 2025 (start of term)

- 4.2. Due to the costs associated with any period of extension, a decision at Cabinet is required. Cabinet will have an option to extend the contract or not to extend it. If it chooses not to extend the contract, then the service will end on 31st July 2024. For children and young people to continue receiving the nationally mandated healthy child programme and access to sexual health and substance misuse services, the two service contracts will require an extension while the service is retendered.
- 4.3. We are recommending an extension; 4 months to award the contract in November 2024 and 4 months to mobilise the service between December 2024 – March 2025. The recommended period of extension provides adequate time for the procurement which factors in current procurement capacity and accommodates the school holidays, which are critical for the service because 1) most staff work on term-time only contracts and may need to be TUPE'd, and 2) schools are critical to supporting the mobilisation – so the mobilisation needs to be considered as a term-time only activity.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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