Transformation Advisory Board

Agenda

Monday, 8 July 2024 at 2.00 p.m.
Committee Room One - Town Hall, Whitechapel

Members:

Chair: Mayor Lutfur Rahman

Richard Penn	(Independent non-executive member)
Sir Steve Bullock DL	(Independent non-executive member)
Martin Esom	(Independent non-executive member)
Sir Stephen O'Brien	(Independent non-executive member)
Dr Mahera Ruby	(Independent non-executive member)
Dr Kathleen McCarthy	(Independent non-executive member)
Alison Griffin	(Independent non-executive member)
Kate Herbert	(Independent non-executive member)
Hira Islam	(Independent non-executive member)
Stephen Halsey	(Chief Executive - Senior Responsible Officer SRO)
Julie Lorraine	(Corporate Director Resources)

Officers in Attendance:

Robin Beattie	(Acting Director of Strategy Innovation and Transformation)
Amy Jackson	(Head of Mayor's Office)
Afazul Hoque	(Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy)
Ayesha Hakim Rahman	(Acting Deputy Director of Strategy, Improvement and Transformation)

Contact for further enquiries:

Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services,
matthew.mannion@towerhamlets.gov.uk
020 7364 4651

Refreshments

These will be available from half an hour before the meeting and Members are encouraged to attend at this time for informal networking and engagement.

Agenda Papers

Hard copy agenda papers should be requested of the clerk (contact details on the agenda front) by Noon the working day before the meeting.

Officers of the Council who are Members of the Board will also be able to access electronic papers on their Mod.Gov Laptop Apps.

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Transformation Advisory Board

Monday, 8 July 2024

2.00 p.m.

ITEM TITLE	TIME	PRESENTER	PAGES
1. Welcome and Introductions	2:00pm		
2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting	2:05pm		(PAGES 5 - 10)
3. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION			
3.1 LBTH Productivity Plan	2:10pm	Ayesha Hakim Rahman, Acting Deputy Director Strategy, Improvement & Transformation	(PAGES 11 - 20)
3.2 LBTH Strategic Vision 2035	2:40pm	Afazul Hoque, Head of Strategy & Communities	(PAGES 21 - 30)
3.3 LGA CPC Action Plan	3:10pm	Robin Beattie, Acting Director Strategy, Improvement & Transformation	(PAGES 31 - 38)

Tower Hamlets Council
Tower Hamlets Town Hall
160 Whitechapel Road
London E1 1BJ

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| **3.4** Housing Overcrowding | 3:40pm | Karen Swift, Director Housing | (PAGES 39 - 82) |

Next Meeting of the Transformation Advisory Board
Monday, 16 September 2024 at 2.00 p.m. to be held in Council Chamber - Town Hall, Whitechapel

Tower Hamlets Council
Tower Hamlets Town Hall
160 Whitechapel Road
London E1 1BJ

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LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE TRANSFORMATION ADVISORY BOARD

HELD AT 2.16 P.M. ON MONDAY, 15 APRIL 2024

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present in Person:

Mayor Lutfur Rahman	
Richard Penn	(Independent non-executive member)
Sir Steve Bullock DL	(Independent non-executive member)
Sir Stephen O'Brien	(Independent non-executive member)
Dr Mahera Ruby	(Independent non-executive member)
Dr Kathleen McCarthy	(Independent non-executive member)
Alison Griffin	(Independent non-executive member)
Kate Herbert	(Independent non-executive member)
Hira Islam	(Independent non-executive member)
Stephen Halsey	(Chief Executive)

Members In Attendance Virtually:

Martin Esom	(Independent non-executive member)

Officers Present in Person:

Amy Jackson	(Head of Mayor's Office)
Afazul Hoque	(Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy)
Ayesha Hakim Rahman	(Acting Deputy Director of Strategy, Improvement and Transformation)
Lisa Fraser	(Acting Corporate Director, Children's Services)
Steve Reddy	(Corporate Director, Children's Services)
Abidah Kamali	Policy Officer Housing
Matthew Mannion	(Head of Democratic Services)

Officers In Attendance Virtually:

Julie Lorraine	(Corporate Director Resources)

1.   WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies from Sir George Iacobescu CBE.

Martin Esom was in attendance virtually and gave apologies for having to leave the meeting early.

Steve Halsey, the Chief Executive, explained that the agenda for today's meeting had been taken from the agreed forward programme.

2.   MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 19 February 2024 were agreed.

3.   ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1   Education - Outcomes and Attendance

Steve Reddy, Interim Corporate Director, Children's Services and Lisa Fraser, Director of Education, introduced the item on Education matters.

They took the Board through the information contained in the presentation set out in the agenda papers. They highlighted the excellent results local schools were achieving at KS2 and KS4 and a number of other indicators which showed the strengths of local schools.

However, the Board were being asked to consider two areas for action which were around primary level attendance and results at KS5.

KS5 Performance

Looking at KS5 first, the Board were asked to note that in relation to student progress, the Borough's schools performed reasonably well, with all being in the top half of the country's schools for progress but results were still seen as an issue. A lot of students applied to KS5 courses outside of the borough which was also particular concern (this did not used to be the case). The overall situation was being reviewed to develop an action plan.

The Board discussed the issue and came up with a number of suggestions and questions including:
- Was there a curriculum issue at any of the schools, or generally on the offer across the borough? It was also noted that applied studies did a little better than academic studies.
- Was there the right amount/right mix of sixth form provision?
- It was suggested that the overall facilities available be considered in the review, not just facilities relating to the courses themselves.
- Attainment wasn't just about going to university, the Council needed to do more to highlight other options available to students. Schools also needed to be encouraged to see things like apprenticeships as a good solution for many students.
- It was important to look to engage with all communities.
- What were the exemplars both locally and more widely?

The use of data was a particular point of discussion at the meeting including around:
- How far could the data be mined to show more about KS5 students and their progress.

- What could be learnt about the 19% of A level students who didn't go on to university.
- Overall, looked after children did better than the national average but it would be useful to see more in-depth data on this cohort.
- Are there statistics available to track pupils all the way through their schooling?
- What was the retention rate at university once the students progressed.
- More comparison data would be useful to see how the figures compared to other similar authorities.

Actions:
- It was proposed that a specific focus group was required to look at KS5 including schools and external specialists.

- It was agreed that the action plan, once developed, would be provided to the Board and that more detail on the data available would be circulated as soon as possible.

Primary School Attendance

Looking at school attendance, the board were taken through the presentation in the agenda pack. It was noted that secondary school attendance was always very good and was one of the best (possibly 'the' best) in the country. Attendance at primary level starts off poorly but improves as you progress through the schools.

Resourcing of the data team in the council had improved recently, so whilst there was still much to learn, the service were learning more about school attendance and what were the most significant determinants.

Particular points were noted:
- The Council was looking to speak to specific communities were there were problems and would look to engage with faith communities and the third sector.
- The Council was also looking at the impact of universal free school meals.
- It was important to establish good habits even before children started school.
- The attitude to school attendance from parents appeared to have changed post pandemic and needed attention.

Actions:
- That more information on the data available be collated and presented to the Board as soon as possible.
- The Board to be kept updated with progress on this work and to receive further papers if useful.

3.2   Partnerships Review

Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy and Communities (supported by Abidah Kamali, Senior Strategy and Policy Officer), introduced the update report. He reminded the Board that this item had come to the December meeting and the Board were now being provided with a progress update. The Board were asked to consider how it could use its knowledge and expertise to best engage with the Council's partnerships.

The Board was taken through the presentation in the pack including setting out the Partnership review, the five cross-cutting calls to action for the partnership and its linked commitments. A borough action plan was being developed.

The review had engaged with partners as well as over 100 community representatives including through facilitated workshops and was used to develop the set of priority areas to focus on areas of weakness or development.

As set out in the presentation, the headline findings explored areas such as definition, communications, accountability and community representation with the intention that the actions identified would tackle issues such as focus, duplication, inclusivity and engagement.

There was clear enthusiasm for the partnership and it had the potential to have a transformational impact. The Transformation Board were therefore encouraged to engage with this work as much as possible.

The Board welcomed the report and the work that had gone into this vital area for the Council. It then moved on to discuss the item and a number of points were considered including:
- How important it was to have energised partners if you wished to deliver real change.
- Whether it would be useful for Board Members to observe some partnership meetings to get a feel for how they were working.
- What were the priorities for partners and making sure the widest range of partners were considered.
- The need to ensure the right people with authority to agree actions were involved in the meetings.
- The voluntary and faith sectors were important and so was the private sector from the large financial companies to small local traders.
- Whether looking to focus on one or two big areas could be a way of maximising impact/effectiveness.

Board Members indicated that they were happy to help with the work to develop the strategy. In particular, it was agreed that Sir Stephen O'Brien would lead support from the Board supported by Sir Steve Bullock. Other Members were asked to indicate should they wish to be directly involved.

Actions:

- That Board Members consider the report and respond to officers with any comments or to request to be further involved.
- The project to report back to the Board at an appropriate future meeting on progress and to consider how best set out to the Board.

3.3 Transformation Dashboard

Ayesha Hakim Rahman, Head of Corporate Strategy and Transformation, introduced, introduced the revised Transformation Dashboard for discussion by the Board. She explained that the dashboard will show progress against the key indicators such as budget sustainability and progress against the LGA Peer Review actions. Progress will be reported at each Board meeting.

In relation to some of the areas noted by the dashboard the meeting noted that:
- The annual resident's survey was out now and the results should be available by May.
- The Council's governance structures had been made more efficient by reducing the number of boards.
- More information on social housing would be useful.
- Over £8 million of the £20 million planned savings for the year had already been achieved and more detail could be shared with Board Members if useful.

Members welcomed the presentation and dashboard. In looking to continue to develop the tool, the Board asked if consideration could be given to making it more interactive and to how it will show progress over time.

It was noted that the intention was to present the Corporate Peer Review and a Medium-Term Financial Strategy update to the next Board meeting.

Actions:
- Officers to continue to develop the dashboard in particular looking at interactivity and how to display progress over time.
- Reports on the Corporate Peer Review Action Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to be presented to the next meeting.

4. AOB AND CLOSE

Under Another Other Business, the Board were given an update on progress to recruit to senior officer positions with shortlisting for the Corporate Directors for Children's Services and Health and Adults Social Care about to take place and the Sub-Committees for the Director of Legal role due shortly.

The meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.

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Chair, Mayor Lutfur Rahman
Transformation Advisory Board

TOWER HAMLETS

Briefing title	LBTH Productivity Plan
Prepared for	Transformation Advisory Board
Date	08 July 2024
Author	Ayesha Hakim Rahman, Acting Deputy Director Strategy, Improvement & Transformation

Executive Summary

The LBTH Productivity Plan responds to a Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) request for all councils to assess and report on efficiency improvements. The plan details our approach to service delivery, organisational structure, and resident value.

Key points:

- **Submission deadline:** 19 July 2024
- **Public transparency:** Plan will be uploaded to the council website

Benefits:

- Contributes to national efforts to identify best practices and enhance local government.
- Provides council residents with insight into our commitment to efficiency.

Recommendations

The Transformation Advisory Board is recommended to:

1. Review the LBTH Productivity Plan (Appendix 1) and advise if any gaps or oversights. This plan fulfils the government's request for councils to assess and report on efficiency improvements.

2. Acknowledge the submission deadline of 19 July 2024 and website publication requirements. The council will ensure timely submission and public accessibility of the plan.

3. Recognise the LBTH productivity plan as a positive reflection of ongoing efforts to strengthen its efficiency framework. The plan demonstrates the council's commitment to continuous improvement and resident value.

Information

1.1 The LBTH Productivity Plan (Appendix 1) responds to a directive from the Minister for Local Government dated 19 April 2024 (Appendix 2), for all councils to develop productivity plans. The plans are designed to:

- Identify national best practices in service delivery and efficiency.

- Uncover common challenges and opportunities for improvement across local government.

- Inform future strategies for enhancing resident value.

1.2 The department provided the following guidelines for plan development:

- **Length:** 3 – 4 pages

- **Content:** Focus on recent and ongoing initiatives to transform the council's organisation and services, with emphasis on:
  o Efficiency of service design and delivery;
  o Leveraging technology and data for better decision-making and resource allocation;
  o Strategies to minimise wasteful spending; and
  o Identification of barriers requiring government intervention

- **Metrics:** Inclusion of relevant metrics to track progress (addressed by productivity dashboard on the last page of the plan).

- **Submission:** Deadline of 19 July 2024, with email submission and website publication for public access.

- **Approval:** Councillor oversight and endorsement before submission.

1.3 The department will analyse submitted plans to identify common themes and best practices (individual plans will not be scored or rated). A panel of experts will be established to evaluate the findings and propose collaborative improvements for national and local government.

Next Steps

- Cabinet: 10 July
- Email submission to Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUCH): 17 July
- Publish on council's external website: 17 July

London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Productivity Plan

TOWER HAMLETS

How have you transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources?

Tower Hamlets Council is undergoing a bold transformation journey, driven by a commitment to using our resources wisely and delivering exceptional services to our residents.

Turning the tide: financial sustainability
Faced with financial challenges, we took decisive action last year, identifying over £43m in efficiency savings and resolving significant historical financial management issues. This allowed us to reinvest in frontline services, investing in council systems and community support programmes for young people and vulnerable residents.

Balancing priorities: council tax fairness and investment
This year, we adopted a groundbreaking approach to council tax. We understand the rising cost of living and its impact to residents. Therefore, while agreeing to a 2.99% rise in the general council tax element, this increase will be offset for many households by the new Council Tax Cost of Living Relief Fund. This means households with incomes below £49,500 will not need to pay the increase. Additionally, a dedicated budget of £658,000 ensures the established council tax reduction scheme will also continue to support those who need it most.

Investing in a brighter future for our residents
The relocation of the Town Hall to the heart of Tower Hamlets is a symbol of our commitment to accessibility. This strategic decision has helped regenerate the area and made local services more accessible for all residents We are further enhancing accessibility by extending the opening hours of community centres, ensuring residents have convenient access to the support they need.

We are also investing in the future of Tower Hamlets with initiatives like being the first council in the country to offer free secondary school meals, as well as student bursaries to ensure all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy outlines out commitment to sustained improvement in key areas like health, waste management, education, and social care. By strategically allocating resources, we continue to build a stronger, healthier, and more vibrant Tower Hamlets for all.

A People First transformation journey
Tower Hamlets Council's 'People First' transformation journey is much more than delivering better services – it is about doing so with a laser focus on resource optimisation. Our innovative approach utilises a powerful three-pronged approach. Firstly, a robust transformation governance framework ensures strategic oversight and informed decision making, to prevent wasted resource due to misaligned priorities. Secondly, our substantial workforce culture transformation programme – Innovation TH – builds on collaboration and innovation to foster creative solutions that maximise the impact of every resource. Finally, we are revamping out Target Operating Model to prioritise resident needs, streamline structures and empower teams.

A new blueprint for the future
Our new Target Operating Model (TOM) serves as the cornerstone of our transformation journey. This resident-focused model is designed to create a more efficient, effective, and responsive public sector organisation that truly serves its communities. By streamlining processes and optimising resource allocation, the TOM empowers are teams to proactively deliver more responsive services for residents.

Empowering our people, strengthening our services
We strengthened our organisational structure, creating dedicated directorates for Communities and

Housing & Regeneration. These directorates ensure a laser focus on public safety, the environment, and maintaining our position as a regional leader in new social housing development. We recognise the importance of investing in internal functions such as Human Resources, Organisational Development, Business Support and Procurement. Plans are in place to enhance these services, leading to increased efficiency and improved service delivery.

Measuring progress: multiple lenses, meaningful outcomes

The council's comprehensive transformation dashboard tracks progress against financial goals, industry benchmarks and resident engagement measures (referenced in productivity dashboard at the end of this update). Strategic progress is monitored via the Annual Delivery Plan against agreed KPI's, and partnership progress is overseen by our dedicated Partnership Executive Group.   This multi-pronged approach ensures we deliver value for money, while keeping residents at the heart of everything we do.

How do you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision-making, service design and use of resources?

At Tower Hamlets Council, we are on a mission to become a truly data-driven organisation, harnessing the powerful of technology and data to make smarter decisions, design better services, and optimise resource allocation. This translates to better outcomes for our residents and a more efficient, forward-thinking council.

The power of collaboration: the Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC)

The HDRC is a pioneering initiative at the forefront of our data journey. This dynamic work fosters collaboration across service departments, tackling challenges around data collection, data quality, and data management. The HDRC is actively developing a resident-facing platform to encourage open communication and participation in research projects, fostering a spirit of transparency and co-creation.

Building a strong data foundation

We are committed to using analytical tools like Power BI to automate data gathering and linking, ensuring consistency and enriching insights. We believe in open communication and data transparency – initiatives are underway to make data more accessible to residents through partnerships and co-production efforts. By leveraging data analytics, we are aligning budgets with our priorities, implementing real-time financial reporting, and empowering budget holders with technology they need to manage resources efficiently.

Strength in partnership: data sharing for improved outcomes

Robust data sharing partnerships are key to our success. We have strong relationships with health, safeguarding, and community safety partners. This collaborative approach has already yielded impressive results, with our community safety work being recognised as 'sector leading' by the police. Similarly, data-sharing with health organisations has led to improvements in areas like reduced hospital transfer delays.

EDITH: a powerful took for population health

We are excited to develop EDITH – a place-based data tool to holistically understand health and its determinants across demographics and trends within Tower Hamlets. This interactive platform will be a central hub for health intelligence, informing evidence-based decisions to address population needs across healthcare, social care, and community sectors.

The future of data: predictive analytics and AI

The Council is strategically investing in data architecture and infrastructure to support future applications like predictive analytics and AI. A solid data foundation will allow us to optimise data quality, developing statistical models to identify and address inequalities, ultimately transforming Tower Hamlets into a data-driven, future-proof organisation.

Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems?

At Tower Hamlets Council, we are committed to responsible financial management. We are constantly working to identify and eliminate wasteful spending, ensuring every penny goes towards delivering the best possible services for our residents.

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Identifying and eliminating waste

We have implemented a multi-layered approach to ensure responsible financial management. Our annual budget setting process prioritises need, actively identifies opportunities for savings, and rigorously challenges proposals before implementation.

Dedicated transformation boards oversee budget monitoring and spending. The council's Budget Board, chaired by the Corporate Director of Resources, meets monthly to ensure financial health of our organisation. The board monitors spend against budgets, assesses progress towards efficiency targets, and reviews all budget growth requests. By ensuring proper financial procedures and controls, the Budget Board provides sound recommendations that guide our leadership team's decisions.

We are collaborating with a trusted third-party company to review and streamline procurement services. This expert partnership allows us to assess current spending on third-party external contracts and implement a more commercial approach to maximise efficiency and cost savings.

Investing to Save: smart strategies for long-term gains

The Council is making strategic investments that yield long-term benefits. For example, our £4.9m investment in tech-enabled care is projected to save an impressive £10.3m over five years. Similarly, our voluntary redundancy scheme, with a payback period of just 1.1 years, will deliver ongoing savings of nearly £3m.

Optimising staff costs: reducing reliance on agency and consultancy services

In 2023/24, agency staff accounted for 14% of our total employee costs. We're actively taking steps to reduce this by transitioning qualified agency staff to permanent roles. This year, significant cost savings (c£4.5m annually) were achieved by making such transitions, particularly for senior positions. We are committed to further reducing reliance on agency workers and currently have a plan to address the remaining long-term agency staff positions.

The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove?

At Tower Hamlets Council, we are dedicated to continuous improvement and delivering exceptional services for our residents. However, external factors can put a strain on our ability to deliver the high-quality services our community deserves. This is particularly evident in the Housing sector, where national and regional pressures are compounded by Tower Hamlets' unique demographics, creating a complex and demanding environment.

What we need to move forward

Stable funding: Multi-year funding structures, like our current three-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), are vital for effective planning and resource allocation. We urge the government to move away from one-year allocations.

Policy and collaboration pilots: Our unique set of challenges and opportunities positions us well to contribute valuable insights to policy development. We are keen to participate in collaborative pilot programmes with government departments, building on existing successful partnerships like those with the Department for Education and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Streamlined reporting: Reducing the burden of reporting requirements from central government would free up valuable resources that could be better utilised in directly serving our residents.

Proportionate scrutiny: Tower Hamlets Council is proud to be one of the most financially stable and effectively run councils in the UK. A proportionate and fair approach to government scrutiny is essential. While we welcome constructive reviews, lengthy and disruptive interventions can hinder progress.

We believe that by working together, the government and local authorities can achieve remarkable outcomes. Through collaboration, streamlined processes, and a long-term vision, we can build a stronger, more prosperous Tower Hamlets for all. .
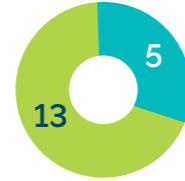
Tower Hamlets Productivity Plan – Visual Metrics

How you have transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources.

Peer review progress

Local Government Association recommendations for improvement:
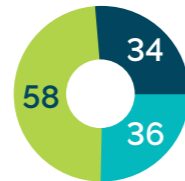– **5** completed   – **13** in progress

5
13

Budget sustainability

Key budget highlights
– **£0.3m** revenue underspend for the general fund in 2023/24
– **£81.7m** of general fund capital investment in 2023/24
– **£20m** general fund reserve

Mayor's transformational priorities

Progress of projects focused on the Mayor's manifesto:
– **36** completed
– **58** on schedule
– **34** reprogrammed

34
58
36

DLUHC Data Performance – Oflog financial indicators

At **85.7%**, Tower Hamlets ranks **6th** among its CIPFA neighbours

Ranked 6/16

Non-ringfenced reserves as percentage of net revenue expenditure

At **64.4%**, Tower Hamlets ranks **7th** among its 16 CIPFA neighbours

Top 25%

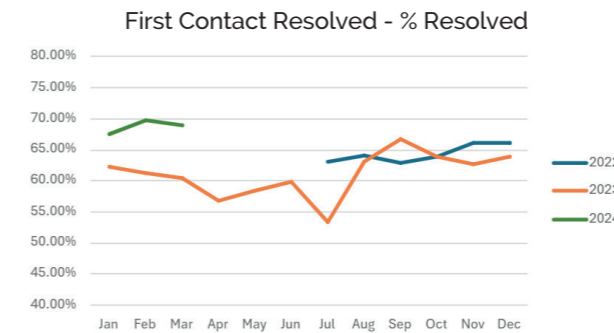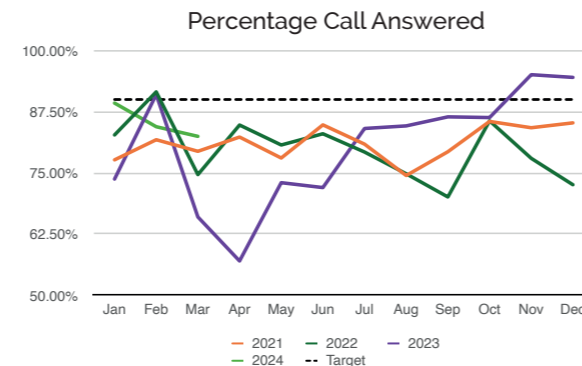Non-ringfenced reserves as a percentage of service spend

Transforming organisation's structure

Identified **£43.4m** savings and created **5** transformation boards to strengthen the governance and improve performance.

£5m restructure savings (**£3.4m** services and **£1.6m** corporate restructure savings).

Customer metrics

These metrics highlight the productivity of residents' issue resolution at the corporate contact centre

Percentage Call Answered

100.00%
87.50%
75.00%
62.50%
50.00%

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

2021   2022   2023
2024   -- Target

First Contact Resolved - % Resolved

80.00%
75.00%
70.00%
65.00%
60.00%
55.00%
50.00%
45.00%
40.00%

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

2022
2023
2024

The percentage of calls answered in April 2024 was **89%**. This is an increase of **32** percentage points from April 2023.

The percentage of calls resolved at first contact in April 2024 was **68%**. This is an increase of **11** percentage points from last year.

People First Transformation

These are the tools put in place to deliver one of the most ambitious agendas in local government:

| Community-Led Target Operating Model	Transformation Governance Framework	Simplified Priorities, Improved Accountability
Financial Discipline	Cross-Council Efficiencies Programme	Innovation TH (workforce culture programme)

Finance metrics

Key financial indicators:

– We have identified **£43.4m** of savings - **£5.6m** more than our target
– Our capital expenditure is fully funded - **£755m** to be invested over the next 3 years
– We have minimised additional borrowing requirements with just **4%** (**£2.7m**) of new General Fund capital investment funded from borrowing.
– Oflog indicators show that Tower Hamlets has a comparably high level of Non-ringfence reserves in comparison to other authorities (a value of **85.7%** of net revenue expenditure).

Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.

In the MTFS, the Council has **£8.5m** of transformation savings, **£7.2m** of efficiency savings and **£5m** of restructure savings.

£8.5m
£5m   £7.2m
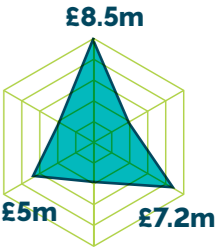
In 23/24, agency spend accounted for **14%** of total employee costs a – reduction of **0.9** percentage points from the previous year.

Currently there are **199** agency staff who have been in place for over a year – a reduction of **53** from the previous year..

The Council is investing in tech enable care with investment of **£4.9m** over the next 5 years and savings of **£10.3m** expected over the same period.

We have **5** EDI staff networks in the Council, each of which receives an annual budget of **£3,000**.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Simon Hoare MP
Minister for Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

16 April 2024

Dear Chief Executive

Productivity in Local Government

As you know, the Government is reviewing productivity across all public services and local government is, of course, part of that exercise. The recent Local Government Finance Settlement announced that councils would be asked to produce productivity plans. This letter formally begins that process.

May I first thank you for your very helpful engagement with my officials. Your views and thoughts have been valuable in shaping this approach to make it as useful as possible for all of us.

Local government has already done a huge amount in recent years to improve productivity and efficiency. However, lockdown and post-lockdown has proved challenging, and you are looking for new ways to go further. These new plans will help us understand what is already working well across the whole country, what the common themes are, whether there are any gaps and what more we need to do to unlock future opportunities. We will share these important lessons across the sector.

Productivity is not one-dimensional, and I would encourage you to consider the various facets that encompass the drive for greater productivity. When developing your plans, please think broadly and include reference to not only how you run your organisation, but also how you run the public services you provide and how you provide place leadership. It is with this wide view that we can ensure we are providing value for money for residents.

I am not looking to impose excessive burdens. I am not issuing you with a formal template or a detailed list of criteria to meet. I expect your plans to be three to four pages in length, and to set out what you have done in recent years, alongside your current plans, to transform your organisation and services. I do not want to specify a list of metrics you must report, but I do want to understand how you will monitor and assess your plans to assure yourselves and your residents that they will be delivered.

The plans should consider the below themes and where appropriate, should reference the work your council undertakes alongside other public services, such as the NHS and police.

1. **How you have transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources.**

   Questions to consider:

   - how has the organisation changed in recent years to become more productive? You may wish to consider what you have done around staffing, structures, operating models etc;
   - how do you measure productivity in your organisation?
   - what changes have you made to improve services, and what effects have those had?
   - what are your current plans for transformation over the next two years and how will you measure the effects of those changes?

- looking ahead, which service has greatest potential for savings if further productivity gains can be found? What do you estimate these savings to be?
- what role could capital spending play in transforming existing services or unlocking new opportunities? If you have already used capital spending to boost growth or improve services, we would be interested in learning more;
- what preventative approaches you have undertaken and can the value of these be quantified?
- are there wider locally-led reforms that could help deliver high quality public services and improve the sustainability and resilience of your authority?

2. How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources.

Questions to consider:

- what are your existing plans to improve the quality of the data you collect; how do you use it and how do you make it available to residents?
- are there particular barriers from legacy systems?
- how often do you share data with other organisations, and do you find this useful?
- Are there opportunities to use new technology to improve workflows and systems, such as predictive analytics and AI?

3. Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.

I know we will share the aim to reduce waste wherever we can and, while you have all made huge strides in recent years, no organisation is ever 100% efficient. You should set out your plans to reduce wasteful or "gold-plated" spend.

Questions to consider:

- how do you approach identifying and reducing waste in the organisation? How do you monitor progress?
- where have you followed invest to save and what was the result?
- how much time and money do you spend on staff EDI training (internal and external), networks, and other programmes? How many EDI Champions do you have as an organisation? How do you log and report the time and money spent on EDI related activity? How do you assess the effectiveness of that training?
- what percentage of total staff budget is spent on a) agency and b) consultants? How do you assess value for money on agency & consultancy spend and what are your plans to reduce use / costs? How many of those consultants or agency staff have been in place for over a year?
- what governance structures do you use to ensure accountability of spend?
- do you share office functions with other councils and if so, how useful do you find this?
- if you share external training costs with neighbouring councils, how do you factor out duplications of service between your council and your upper-tier council (if you have one)?

- if you have one, what is your assessment and experience of working with an elected mayor, combined authority, or devolution deal?
- what proportion of your paybill is spent on trade union facility time?

4. The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove.

There will be barriers preventing you from going as far or as fast as you would like to. I would like your plans to set those out, so that we can understand how government, or the market, can help you overcome these barriers to go even further.

Questions to consider:

- what are the barriers preventing you from improving productivity further within your organisation?
- what are the barriers preventing you from improving services further?
- are these barriers consistent across multiple services?
- what would you need to remove those barriers? What do you need from government, the market or elsewhere?

Your plans must be returned by 19 July 2024, by email to productivityplans@levellingup.gov.uk.
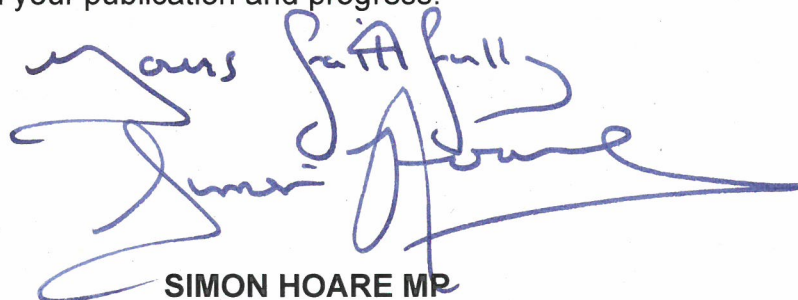
You must ensure that there is member oversight and endorsement of the plan before it is submitted, and the plan must also be uploaded to your website so that residents can see it. You should consider how you will update the plans and report on progress on a regular basis. The plans should also contain relevant metrics and key performance indicators to allow you and your residents to monitor progress.

Once received, we will review the plans to identify common themes and issues across the sector. We are keen to highlight best practice that others can learn from.

Individual plans will not be rated or scored, and we will not produce any kind of league tables. We are interested in understanding what is happening across the sector.

We are setting up a panel to consider the themes and evidence that comes from the plans. I will chair the panel and bring together experts from the sector and beyond, including Oflog and the LGA. They will consider the issues emerging from the plans, the implications for future national policy design, the role of government in supporting further change and the role of the sector in going further. The panel will advise national government and local government, and I believe this collaborative approach will ensure the most effective outcomes.

I look forward to updates on your publication and progress.

SIMON HOARE MP
Minister for Local Government

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Developing our Long-Term Strategic Vision 2035

July 2024

TOWER HAMLETS

Discussion Points

1) **Addressing competing priorities and delivering for current and future generations:** How can we be more ambitious and yet realistic in our vision?

2) **Designing a strategic vision that enables meaningful participation:** What more can we do to connect with our communities and stakeholders?

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A New Strategic Vision 2035

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendation 1: Strategic vision - Develop a more comprehensive long-term strategic vision for the borough and the council which is co-produced with the community

Local Government Association
Independent Group

Factsheet

Setting a vision statement for your council.

A vision statement is one of the many ways to aid a connection between councils and their constituents.

"Creating a council vision statement can be a tricky task, especially when working across party lines. Statements give councillors and constituents a sense of direction, hope for the future, and something to look forward to for their wards. A vision statement creates a baseline for the planned achievements of the council" (Local Government Association)

Our approach

✓ An opportunity for the Mayor and council to set out a long-term vision for the council and borough to 2035 as a place to live and work and as a society

✓ A task and finish group chaired by the Mayor.

✓ A 'can do' approach focusing on assets, opportunities and making history.

✓ Built on evidence about the borough, engagement with staff, partners, and residents and the wider community, and a mayor's partnership congress with stakeholders about what matters to them.

✓ Agreed by Cabinet and the Partnership Executive Group

✓ Underpinned by our current medium-term plans (Strategic Plan 2022-2026, Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-2027 and Partnership Plan 2023-2028), implemented through the core work of the council, and with partners

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Insights from elsewhere

Council Vision Statements - examples

ISLINGTON

Towards a fairer Islington - *We're determined to make Islington fairer. To create a place where everyone, whatever their background, has the opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life.*

Leeds
CITY COUNCIL

Vision for Leeds - 'Best city in the UK'- *that is the key aim of the Vision for Leeds 2011-2030. It means:*

Leeds will be fair, open and welcoming

Leeds' economy will be prosperous and sustainable
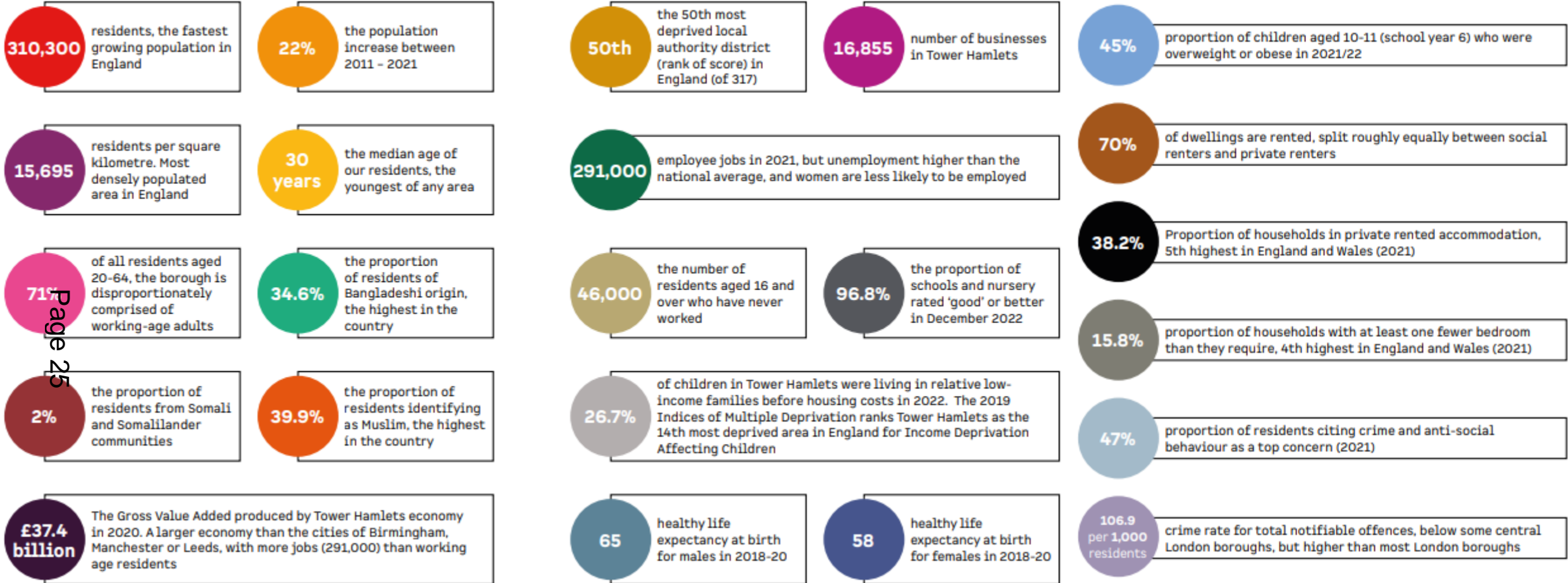
all of Leeds' communities will be successful

Common themes in vision statements across other local authority areas include:

- Equality and Opportunity

- Prosperous and Sustainable Economy

- Successful Communities

- Fairness and Openness

- Health and Well-being

- Climate Justice and Sustainability

- Partnerships and Collaboration

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Our challenges and opportunities

310,300 residents, the fastest growing population in England

22% the population increase between 2011 – 2021

50th the 50th most deprived local authority district (rank of score) in England (of 317)

16,855 number of businesses in Tower Hamlets

45% proportion of children aged 10-11 (school year 6) who were overweight or obese in 2021/22

15,695 residents per square kilometre. Most densely populated area in England

30 years the median age of our residents, the youngest of any area

291,000 employee jobs in 2021, but unemployment higher than the national average, and women are less likely to be employed

70% of dwellings are rented, split roughly equally between social renters and private renters

71% of all residents aged 20-64, the borough is disproportionately comprised of working-age adults

34.6% the proportion of residents of Bangladeshi origin, the highest in the country

46,000 the number of residents aged 16 and over who have never worked

96.8% the proportion of schools and nursery rated 'good' or better in December 2022

38.2% Proportion of households in private rented accommodation, 5th highest in England and Wales (2021)

15.8% proportion of households with at least one fewer bedroom than they require, 4th highest in England and Wales (2021)

2% the proportion of residents from Somali and Somalilander communities

39.9% the proportion of residents identifying as Muslim, the highest in the country

26.7% of children in Tower Hamlets were living in relative low-income families before housing costs in 2022. The 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation ranks Tower Hamlets as the 14th most deprived area in England for Income Deprivation Affecting Children

47% proportion of residents citing crime and anti-social behaviour as a top concern (2021)

£37.4 billion The Gross Value Added produced by Tower Hamlets economy in 2020. A larger economy than the cities of Birmingham, Manchester or Leeds, with more jobs (291,000) than working age residents

65 healthy life expectancy at birth for males in 2018-20

58 healthy life expectancy at birth for females in 2018-20

106.9 per 1,000 residents crime rate for total notifiable offences, below some central London boroughs, but higher than most London boroughs

Note: Data from autumn 2023, and includes 2021 census findings

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Our hopes for the future

A Tower Hamlets for All engagement (2022-23) - an example of what partners and residents want Tower Hamlets to be like in 2032

A Tower Hamlets for All Engagement - What residents and organisations said

- **Housing**: Housing conditions improved, with more affordable and family-sized homes and quicker access to social housing

- **Environment:** Public spaces, air quality and transport improvements

- **Crime and safety:** Crime, violence, and anti-social behaviour is reduced

- **Health**: Access to health and GP services, better mental health and wellbeing, and reducing health inequalities

- **Children and young people**: Opportunities for young people in education, employment and careers

- **Economy**: Sharing the benefits from regeneration, growth and economic opportunities

- **Equality and cohesion**:
  - Fairness, cohesion and opportunities for all - Equal access to opportunities for young people, women and all our residents from Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic communities to learning, skills, job opportunities and career progression
  - Fewer people living in poverty and more support with the cost of living
  - Building personal and community responsibility, more community spirit and neighbourliness

- **Place**: Celebrating the borough and its people

A Tower Hamlets for All Engagement - Feedback from the Tower Hamlets Partnership

Residents say
- No child grows up in poverty
- Tower Hamlets helps people to thrive - My child has access to the best jobs in the borough and I get fair access to services and don't face discrimination or racism. We are respected for who we are, and hate is not tolerated. We can afford to live in the borough
- TH is green and clean and a safe place to live and work

Public services say
- We are joined up around resident needs. We work with residents and communities and in a joined-up way for them
- We are integrated to deliver fair and equal opportunity for all - Our partnership has achieved real change and reduced inequalities
- We can meet the aspirations and employment needs of our young people and our workforce reflects our local community

Businesses say:
- Being in Tower Hamlets helps us grow and prosper - we have the workforce we need, and we give back to the community

Others say:
- They have really changed the story – we can do this like they do in Tower Hamlets

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Developing our ambitions for people and place

Research and Evidence	Phase 1 (July-September): Consultation and Engagement - gaps in evidence	Phase 2 (October – November): Consultation and engagement - vision workshops
A State of the borough paper - a short, factual overview of changes the borough and its population have experienced in recent years)

Resident perspectives paper – resident feedback and insights across a range of council consultations and engagements about the issues that matter to them. | The foundation for additional evidence collection and need analysis:

To collect feedback from key stakeholders on the key issues affecting them and what improvements they would like to see made in the future. This will form a key part of the evidence collecting/'need analysis'. | Vision workshops carried out with key stakeholders reflecting on the feedback provided during phase 1, and how this has inputted into a draft strategic vision.

'Vision Workshops' will present analysis of key evidence and draft of the strategic vision to test the initial analysis. What's working, where the gaps might be, what needs to be amended to land on a vision everybody is happy with. |

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Creating our Vision Statement

A vision that is evidence-led and informed by the national and local policy context - to improve the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the borough and its people by enhancing social mobility and fostering social cohesion.

Key themes?

- Housing
- Health
- Economy
- Education
- Safety and Security
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Infrastructure

The main goals and principles?

- Tackling inequalities - inclusivity and equity (including health)
- Economic growth
- Social cohesion
- Social mobility
- Environmental sustainability
- Innovation
- Quality of Life

Strategic Vision and Approach → **Tower Values** → **Our Aspirations and goals** → **Outcomes and Measures** → **Quick wins / Annual Delivery Planning**

TOWER HAMLETS

TOWER HAMLETS PARTNERSHIP
Working together for a better borough

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What we will do next: We will put Coproduction and Communities First to build a borough that works for everyone

Timeline

April - December 2024: Meetings of the vision task and finish group

June — October 2024: Data, insights, and gaps in evidence about people and place (including strategic assessments for example health and community safety). Update of the state of the borough paper.

July 2024 - October 2024 Launch of strategic vision campaign and multi-method stakeholder engagement focused on achieving our hopes for the future.

October 2024: Mayor's partnership congress (vision development). **Theme: Making history!** Keynote speaker. Held the same day as the Town Hall reception event.

October 2024 — Resident perspectives paper updated

December 2024: Vision agreed by Cabinet and Partnership Executive Group

December 2024 - January 2025: Vision launched

May 2025: Strategic Plan Annual Delivery Plan 2025-26 agreed by Cabinet and underpinned by current Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027.

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Summary...

- Tower Hamlets is a borough of vibrant diversity and dynamic contrasts, where opportunities and challenges live side by side.
- We have a real shared commitment to tackling inequalities, stronger public services, and building a borough that works for everyone.
- A new strategic vision is an opportunity for the Mayor and council to set out their long-term vision for the council and borough to 2035 as a place to live and work and as a society.

... and discussion

1) **Addressing competing priorities and delivering for current and future generations:** How can we be more ambitious and yet realistic in our vision?

2) **Designing a strategic vision that enables meaningful participation:** What more can we do to connect with our communities and stakeholders?

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Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC)

Transformation Advisory Board (TAB) overview of CPC

TOWER HAMLETS

Overview

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

18 – 22 September 2023

Feedback report

In September 2023, the Local Government Association (LGA) undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge (LGA CPC).

The findings were captured in a report published in December 2023. This acknowledged the many positive aspects of the organisation's performance and the motivated and focused staff who work for it.

18 core recommendations were suggested by the report which look at a variety of areas.

Some of these recommendations include developing a longer-term strategic vision for the borough, ensuring this is aligned to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and addressing diversity issues.

An Action Plan was developed to tackle and monitor tasks within each core recommendation (latest progress report appended) .

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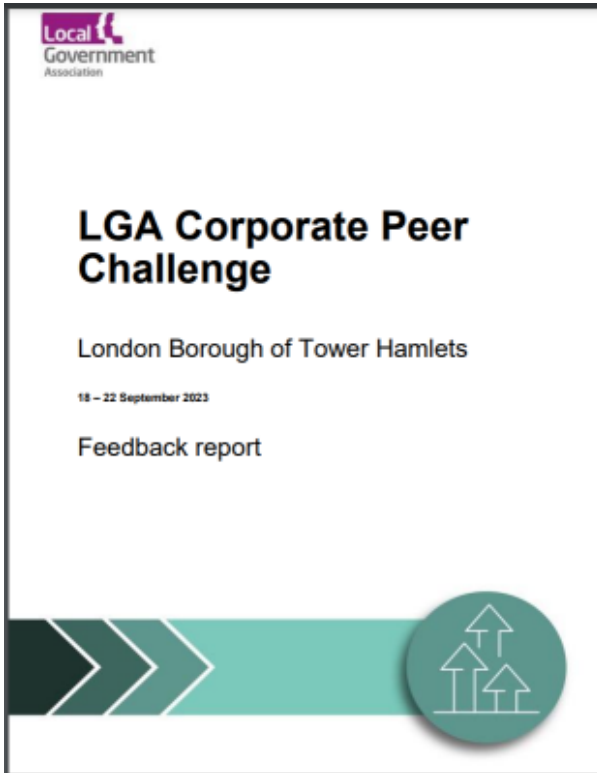
The Role of Transformation

The TMO

The Transformation Management Office (TMO) has undertaken the role of (i) managing the delivery of the CPC action plan and (ii) producing key deliverables as part of the Action Plan.

(i) Assurance

The TMO has developed a four-stage assurance framework to manage the successful delivery of the CPC action plan.

Several key project management artefacts have been developed such as a risk register (recording risks and mitigating actions), prioritisation grid (to triage actions according to complexity) and monthly progress update reports.

(ii) Producing key deliverables

The TMO is involved with the delivery of certain key activities within the CPC Action Plan.

The TMO has direct involvement with the delivery of several actions, including boards rationalisation (Action 6.1), the 'Be a Councillor Campaign (Action 13.2), a feedback system for speakers at council meetings (Action 13.4) and contributing to the LGA's call for evidence for women and girls being active (Action 13.8).

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Assurance

Assurance Framework

An assurance framework has been developed to ensure control and accountability is maintained for delivering the CPC Action Plan. These are categorised into four key areas.
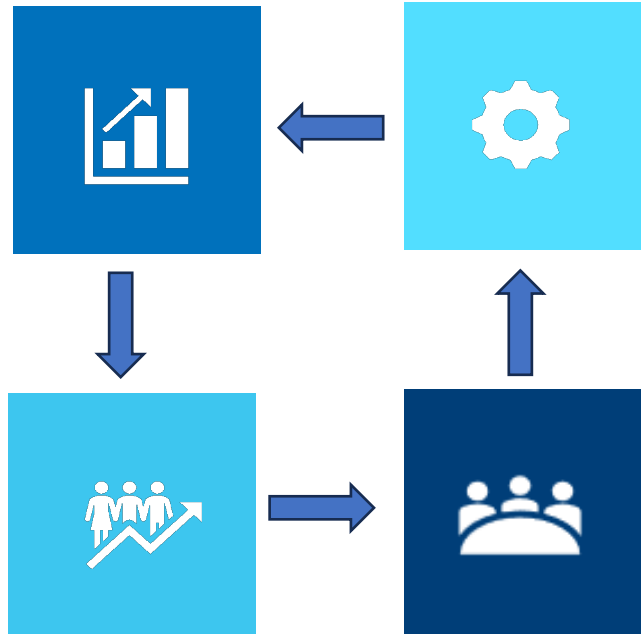
Updates

CPC Action Plan updates are collated monthly and delivered to MAB-SRP to ensure progress is tracked and scrutinised.

Any risks and mitigating measures are recorded as part of the monthly update.

Risk Management

Any risks that emerge from the Corporate Peer Review Action Plan are recorded within a risk register, alongside the mitigation activities and reported to the Transformation Management Office for oversight. The risks are then escalated where relevant.

The monthly update delivered to MAB-SRP may inform future prioritisation of actions.

Action owners communicate any risks to delivery and mitigation measures to the TMO.

Prioritisation

A priority grid has been developed to triage actions according to priority and complexity. This enables stakeholders to see how often reporting and updates should be conducted.

Following the prioritisation of actions, communications is sent requesting a progress update.
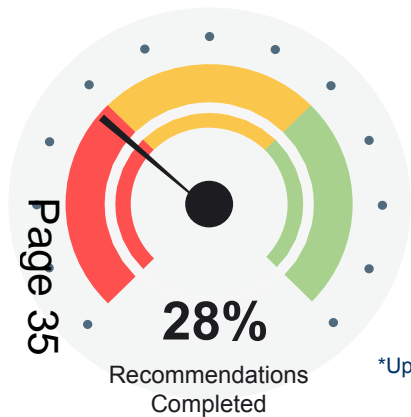
Communications

A strong communications network has been developed by the responsible action owners and actionees. This has enabled the swift collection of updates or raising any risks. Residents are informed about the latest progress through the TH website.
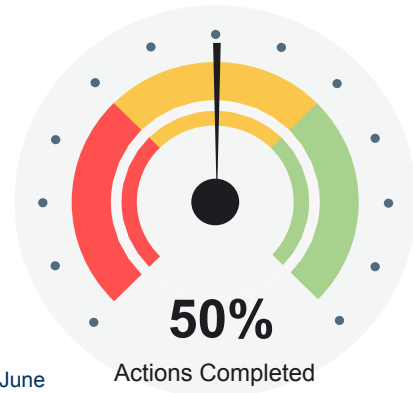
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CPC Action Plan Progress

Performance Summary

28%
Recommendations Completed

*Update as of June 2024.

Up from **17%** in April 2024

50%
Actions Completed

Up from **39%** in April 2024

81%
Estimated percentage of actions completed by August 2024

Good progress is being made on the CPC Action Plan. In the latest update, several actions were completed (for example, the Council has developed a clear single narrative around transformation and improvement using the People First initiative). All in progress actions are currently scheduled to be completed by the target deadlines.

As of June 2024, **5/18** Recommendations and **32/64** Actions have been completed. This is a significant increase since April 2024.

Please see more information in the appended progress report).

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Risks and Issues

Risk Management

Any risks that impact the delivery of the CPC Action Plan are recorded and mitigated accordingly.

Page 36

Medium

Low   High

RISK

Risk	Potential Impact	Mitigation	Current Status
Deputy CEO left council. Several actions were at risk of not being completed.	🔴	New Deputy CEO was appointed, and actions were re-assigned.	Resolved
Some actions were unassigned in the CPC Action Plan	🟠	Stakeholder analysis took place, and all actions were assigned to the new/relevant stakeholders.	Resolved
Some Actions were at risk of missing deadlines	🔴	Actions that were at risk of missing deadlines were reviewed and action owners were informed enabling mitigatory activities.	Resolved
The completion of some actions are dependent on the development of the Mayor's long term strategic vision	🔴	A project team has been put together to develop the Mayor's long-term strategic vision	In Progress

Next Steps

81%

**Actions
Completed**

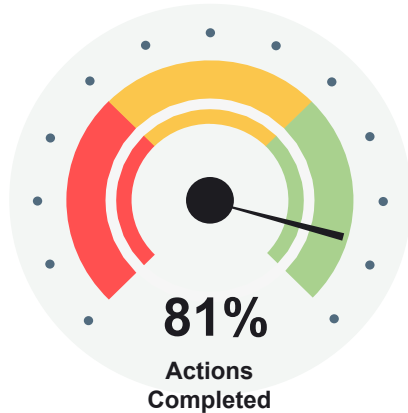Estimated percentage of
actions completed by
August 2024

CPC: The Next Steps

The LGA CPC team are scheduled to return in August 2024 to review progress. Based on current estimated timelines, 81% of actions are scheduled to be completed by this date.

It is important to ensure that residents are continually informed about the progress against the CPC Action Plan. The TMO team is working with the Communications team to ensure publication of the latest progress updates.

How can the TAB support the CPC Action Plan?

The TAB will be provided with oversight of the CPC Action Plan. In addition to this, the TAB is requested to review the Action Plan and advise if they can offer support for any in-progress actions.

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Transformation Advisory Board

Overcrowding

Karen Swift, Director of Housing

TOWER HAMLETS

Discussion

- **Are the actions underway and planned future work the right ones?**

- **What other actions are we missing? Are there any community groups or other services that we need to engage with?**

- **How could we make best use of the HDRC programme - what kind of data and research should we be seeking to inform future strategy and policy - to bring better outcomes for our residents in overcrowded households?**

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Local Context & Overcrowding

- Tower Hamlets has the **fastest growing population** of any Local Authority across England and Wales. It grew 22% between 2011 and 2021 and is now circa 10,300.

- Tower Hamlets is the **most densely populated borough in England** with 15,695 residents per square kilometre (that is over 37 times higher than the mean average population density for England).

- Population turnover is high compared to elsewhere with **more than a fifth (20.8%) of residents having lived somewhere else a year prior to the census**

- Overcrowding is a key housing issue nationally, but more specifically across London and in Tower Hamlets where rates are higher.

- In the UK, overcrowding is measured by lack of bedroom(s). Using the '*bedroom standard*' definition of overcrowding, a home is considered overcrowded if two or more people of a different sex who are not a couple share a bedroom.

- Living in overcrowded homes has significant impacts on residents' lives, which can include lack of privacy/sleep, impact on physical and mental health, place strain on family relationships and can pose risks to safety.

- Traditional responses to combat overcrowding are to build more homes and to manage stock more efficiently; which can undoubtably have an impact.

- However, with the current housing crisis, many families are likely to live in overcrowded accommodation for extended periods before more suitable housing is secured.

- Leading to the need for a more holistic approach among partner agencies to support residents living in overcrowded accommodation.

- **NOTE**: Overcrowding does not just affect families; single people are affected.

- The council has statutory duties related to overcrowding.

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Overcrowding in Tower Hamlets (Census 2021)

Number of bedrooms in home (all tenures)	Number of households	Change since 2011
One bedroom	37,943 (31.5%)	26% ⬆
Two bedroom	48,055 (39.9%)	15% ⬆
Three bedroom	24,199 (20%)	17% ⬆
Four + bedroom	10,422 (8.6%)	28% ⬆

Tenure of household	Tower Hamlets	London	England
	Overcrowded %	Overcrowded %	Overcrowded %
Owned	**7.5%**	4.5%	1.9%
Owned: Owns outright	**5.7%**	2.7%	1.1%
Owned: Owns with a mortgage or loan or shared ownership	**8.4%**	5.9%	2.7%
Rented	**18.8%**	16.9%	8.5%
Rented: Social rented	**26.8%**	19.4%	9.6%
Rented: Private rented or lives rent free	11.2%	**15.0%**	7.5%
Total	**15.9%**	11.1%	4.4%

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Providing Homes for the Future Summary

Select Month below

Data Date

May 2024

Households on the Common Housing Register	Total Overcrowded	Total Under Occupied	Total No. of Beds Lacking
24,954	10,907	1,552	11,570

Average Years Waiting			Total Beds Surplus
6.82	44% Total Overcrowded %	6% Total Under Occupied %	1,988

Figure 1: Total Demand by Priority Band

Band 3 10,350 (41.48%)

Band 1 2,828 (11.33%)

Band 2 11,776 (47.19%)

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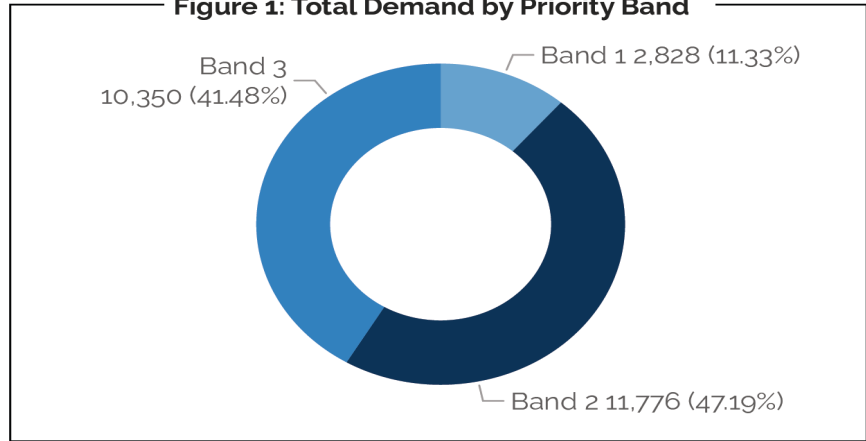
Housing Overcrowding - Beds Lacking (2+)

Total Overcrowded	Total Overcrowded %
2,243	21%

Total No. of Beds Lacking	Average Years Waiting
11,570	6.11

Table 2: Top 10 Overcrowded by RP

Registered Provider	Total
Single Housing Register	1183
LBTH Council	321
Poplar HARCA	106
One Housng	89
Clarion Housing Group	74
Eastend Homes	69
Swan Housing Association	66
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	58
Peabody	57
London and Quadrant	44

Figure 2: Map showing Overcrowded Households

Table 1: Overcrowded by Beds Lacking

Band	Band 1		Band 2		Total	
Beds Lacking	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
2	9.01%	202	74.68%	1675	83.68%	1877
3	1.43%	32	13.06%	293	14.49%	325
4	0.58%	13	1.20%	27	1.78%	40
5			0.04%	1	0.04%	1
Total	**11.01%**	**247**	**88.99%**	**1996**	**100.00%**	**2243**

Table 3: Top 10 Overcrowded by Ward

Ward	Total	%
Lansbury	301	9.60%
Mile End	276	8.80%
Bethnal Green	240	7.65%
Shadwell	214	6.82%
St. Peter's	206	6.57%
Bromley South	198	6.31%
Bromley North	186	5.93%
Whitechapel	181	5.77%
St. Dunstan's	174	5.55%
Stepney Green	157	5.00%

Overcrowding and Children

- There are 46,070 pupils on roll in Tower Hamlets schools (Nursery – Year 13) (Source; School Census 2023)

- 17,085 children on the Common Housing Register lack 1 or more bedrooms of which 75% (12,885) are school aged

- With some exceptions of children attending school out-of-borough, just under 30% of children in TH schools lack 1 or more beds

Beds Lacking	Total school aged children (Age 5-17)
1	8957
2	3172
3	630
4	123
5	3
Total	**12885**

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Impacts of Overcrowding

Impact on Health and Wellbeing

The World Health Organisation (WHO) identified overcrowding as one of a number of challenges for housing and health.

Overcrowding is associated with poor health and wellbeing outcomes caused by condition such as:

- Tuberculosis (TB)

- Respiratory infectious diseases e.g., cold, flu, COVID-19

- Gastrointestinal and diarrhoeal diseases

- Meningitis

- Mental health problems including depression, stress and anxiety, alcohol abuse, and feeling unhappy.

- Sleep disorders (WHO, 2018).

"*Adults in overcrowded homes are more likely to experience psychological distress*" *(Health Foundation, 2023).*

References
- World Health Organization (WHO), 2018. WHO Housing and Health guidelines: Report of the systematic review on the effect of household crowding on health. Web Annex A [Accessed 30/08/2023]
- Health Foundation, 2023. Relationship between overcrowding and mental health [Accessed 30/08/2023]

Overcrowding Damp and Mould

- Overcrowding is one of the most significant risk factors for condensation. (London Assembly, 2019)

- Overcrowding can generate condensation causing damp and mould (London Assembly, 2019)

- Overcrowded households are more likely to report mould, which can harm health (London Assembly Survey, 2022)

- Having damp and mould in a property is more likely for a person to have respiratory problems, respiratory infections, allergies or asthma. Damp and mould can also affect the immune system (NHS, 2022; Caillaud et al., 2018).

References
Keeping out the chill. London Assembly, 2019
- London Assembly Survey, 2022
- NHS, Can damp and mould affect my health? [Accessed 30/08/2023]
- Caillaud, D. et al., (2018). Indoor mould exposure, asthma and rhinitis: findings from systematic reviews and recent longitudinal studies. Review Asthma

Impact on Educational Attainment

- One in every six children live in overcrowded conditions in England (NHF, 2023).

- Studies have shown overcrowding in the home has negative impact on children's education and a range of physical health outcomes (ODPM, 2004).

- Living in overcrowded home was associated with greater risk of childhood behavioural problems, independent of confounding factors, improved housing conditions might reduce behavioural problems and that families living in overcrowded conditions might benefit from greater support. (Marsh, R. et al. 2019)

References
- National Housing Federation (NHF), 2023. Overcrowding in England [Accessed 30/08/2023]
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), 2004. The Impact of Overcrowding on Health & Education: A Review of Evidence and Literature.
- Marsh, R. et al., 2019. The association between crowding within households and behavioural problems in children: Longitudinal data from the Southampton Women's Survey. Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology.

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What aspects of being overcrowded impact mental and physical health?

Stress of bidding system	Lack of Privacy (dignity, emotional space, and damaging relationships)	Restricted Outdoor Access	Pre-existing health support needs not met
Uncertainty	Perceived discrimination/ corruption	Unsafe housing	Disrupted sleep
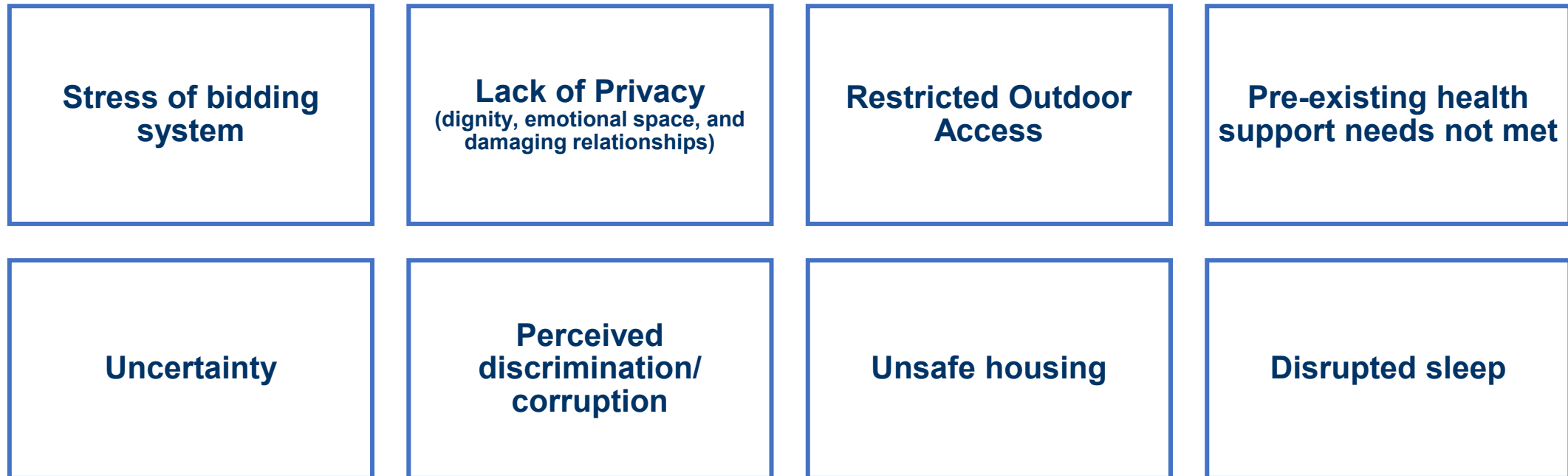
NB: Preliminary findings

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Overcrowding Action Plan

Allocations policy review

Modelling the impact of affording more priority to severely overcrowded households.
Exploring definitions of overcrowding.

Best use of existing stock

Tackling tenancy fraud (22 council homes recovered in 2023/24 and 9 RTB's stopped).
Reducing void turnaround time, tenancy checks, encouraging swaps.

Knock throughs and extensions programme with annual capital budget
provision (since 23/24) of £500k.

Working in partnership

Establishing a framework for greater partner engagement to mitigate overcrowding situations.

Damp and Mould

Damp and Mould Action plan for council homes; prioritising works in overcrowded homes.

Living in Tower Blocks

Tours and open days of Tower Blocks to showcase high rise living

Direct delivery programme of new council housing

Funding and delivery of at least 1000 homes via mixed delivery programme of direct build, acquisitions, HAP regeneration, Developer Agreements. In partnership with GLA.

New Affordable Homes

Target of delivering 4,000 affordable homes in partnership with Registered Providers between 2022/3 and 2025/6

1,159 under-occupying tenants. 263 are THH tenants.

Dedicated officer support.

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Knock Throughs and Extensions programme

- Mayoral commitment to provide larger (family sized) accommodation to alleviate high levels of overcrowding within the council social housing stock

- Referrals through the Mayor's office, Voids, Housing and Occupational Therapy teams. Future projects will be identified across housing services including the Housing Options Service and Overcrowding Officer.

- **11 properties** have been approved

- **9 projects** in progress which will provide:

  - **4** properties with an **extra bedroom**
  - **1** property with **a dining room**
  - **1** property with **an extra bedroom and shower room**
  - **1** property with **an extra bedroom and bathroom**
  - **1** property with **an extra bedroom and w/c**
  - **1** property with **3 extra bedrooms, an extra bathroom, enlarged kitchen and lounge**

- Over the coming months, a spotlight session is planned with THHF Executive to showcase and encourage RPs to explore providing a similar programme .

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Knowledge share/raising awareness

- **Housing & Regeneration, Communities, HASC, Children's and Resources DLTs between November 2023 and January 2024** to discuss tackling overcrowding through different lens.
- **Damp and Mould Workshop 27 March 2023 synopsis** to share good practice on best initiatives to tackle damp and mould; attendees were Environmental Health, Planning & Building, Public Health, Senior Officers from largest RPs in the borough, NHS Trusts, GPs.
- **Overcrowding knowledge share' session:** 4th October 2023 with London Boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Newham and Waltham Forest; focus on allocations
- **Tower Hamlets Together Board: 7th March 2024** presentation to Board on how the council is addressing overcrowding, Q&A from Board and residents.
- **Mayor's Advisory Board: 12 May 2024** agreement to model extra priority for severely overcrowded households and definition of overcrowding

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Feedback from DLTs

Feedback received from colleagues emphasised the importance of mitigating the impact of living in overcrowded housing, focusing on understanding the health and well-being of residents, not just the physical asset.

.

- Promote youth and leisure offer
- Enhance advice to mitigate against damp and mould
- Utilise community assets
- Awareness raising for staff; safe sleeping
- Seeing overcrowding through different lens
- Safe spaces outside the home
- Better capture information from home visits; digitalise
- Better signposting to council wide services

Mitigating the impacts of Overcrowding

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How will we do it?

Communications

- Spread positive news on achievements in reducing overcrowding.
- Dedicated webpage for overcrowding information, advice and signposting.
- London-wide summit on overcrowding that that is hosted in the Town Hall.

Enhancing Officer Involvement

- Use digital form to capture information during visits to enable better signposting.
- Target visits on the most severely overcrowded.
- Co-location of a specialist in family support to work alongside overcrowding officers.

Information package

- Consolidate council-wide information for overcrowded residents to utilise the various support available in the borough such as sports and leisure, green space, homework clubs, damp and mould, safe sleeping.

Explore policy changes

- Severely overcrowded (lacking 2+ bedrooms) - model additional priority in Allocations Scheme.
- Explore definition of overcrowding

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Further research/insight
Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC)

- The council holds the power to influence the building blocks of health, including the environment, economy, education and other social factors which cause health inequality.

- HDRC is a 5-year programme funded by NIHR - Dept of Health, total funding: £5 million.

- The HDRC will boost the use of evidence and enhance the council's capacity to generate and collate evidence with local communities, the voluntary sector and universities, involving residents in policy change, harnessing the power of data and conducting research to deliver actionable insights.

- **Housing is the initial HDRC research theme** – a co-designed approach with universities, VCS, local residents, council and elected members was used to identify this.

- HDRC will host the **Tower Hamlets Housing Research Showcase** event on July 16th bringing people together to build research partnerships and shape the future of local housing research.

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Further engagement with external partners

- Public bodies own land in the borough. Are we sufficiently engaged with partners on the best use of their land in a Tower Hamlets context Where do those discussions take place?

- Role of GPs and primary health practitioners; how can they best direct their efforts?

- Can we leverage opportunities from our 'borough footprint' through Higher Education Institutions' Civic University Agreements (e.g., to contribute research and evidence to inform inclusive placemaking)? *The Civic University Network "works with governments and strategic partners to ensure that a university's geographic role and responsibility is used more effectively as an agent to drive positive societal change".*

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Discussion

- **Are the actions underway and planned future work the right ones?**

- **What other actions are we missing? Are there any community groups or other services that we need to engage with?**

- **How could we make best use of the HDRC programme - what kind of data and research should we be seeking to inform future strategy and policy - to bring better outcomes for our residents in overcrowded households?**

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Appendix A
The council's statutory duties in relation to overcrowding

- Housing

- HMOs and Private Renting

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Appendix B
Overcrowding Insight

- Census
- Tower Hamlets Common Housing Register
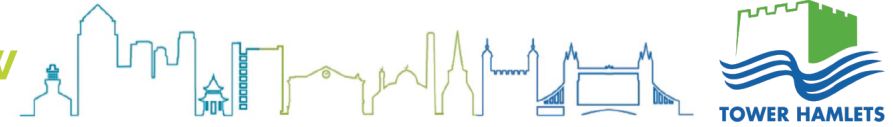
Common Housing Register (May 2024)

- **24,954** applications on the Common Housing Register

- Eligibility criteria includes:
  - To be over 18 years of age
  - Have a local connection via living in the borough for the last 3 years
  - Not be subject to immigration control and have recourse to public funds
  - Joint or sole income not exceeding £90,000

- It is not the only indicator of housing need but it the Common Housing Register is a key source of information to understand critical housing need in the borough.

- **Applicants on Register; 54%** housing association tenants, **34%** rent privately or live with relatives/friends and **12%** council tenants.

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Households on the Common Register - Overview

Households on the Common Housing Register	Common Housing Register excl Current Social Housing Residents	Households on the Common Housing Register (Band 1 + Band 2)
24,954	**11,383**	**14,604**

2,828 Band 1	11,776 Band 2	10,350 Band 3
11% Band 1	47% Band 2	41% Band 3

Figure 1: Map showing current applicants

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Rehousing List Code	% ▲	Total
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TRANSFER	38.19%	9,531
SHR	54.38%	13,571
Total	**100.00%**	**24,954**

Table 3: Top 10 Total Demand by Housing Association and Bands

Registered Provider	1	2	Total ▼
Single Housing Register	418	5732	**6150**
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Poplar HARCA	376	497	**873**
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Housing Overcrowding - Beds Lacking

Total Overcrowded	Total Overcrowded %	Total Overcrowded 2+
10,907	44%	2,243

Total No. of Beds Lacking	Average Years Waiting
11,570	5.55

Table 2: Top 10 Overcrowded by RP

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Single Housing Register	5937
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Stepney Green	681	5.78%
Whitechapel	678	5.76%
Bromley North	597	5.07%
Bow East	560	4.76%

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Band	Band 1		Band 2		Total	
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1	5.07%	553	74.37%	8111	79.44%	8664
2	1.85%	202	15.36%	1675	17.21%	1877
3	0.29%	32	2.69%	293	2.98%	325
4	0.12%	13	0.25%	27	0.37%	40
5			0.01%	1	0.01%	1
Total	**7.33%**	**800**	**92.67%**	**10107**	**100.00%**	**10907**

Household Size for Overcrowding

Total Overcrowded	Total No. of Beds Required	Total No. of Beds Lacking	Total Beds Surplus	Average Years Waiting
10,907	26,428	11,570	1,988	5.55

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Beds Lacking:
- 5 → 1
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(x-axis: Total Households, 0K – 5K – 10...)

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Appendix C
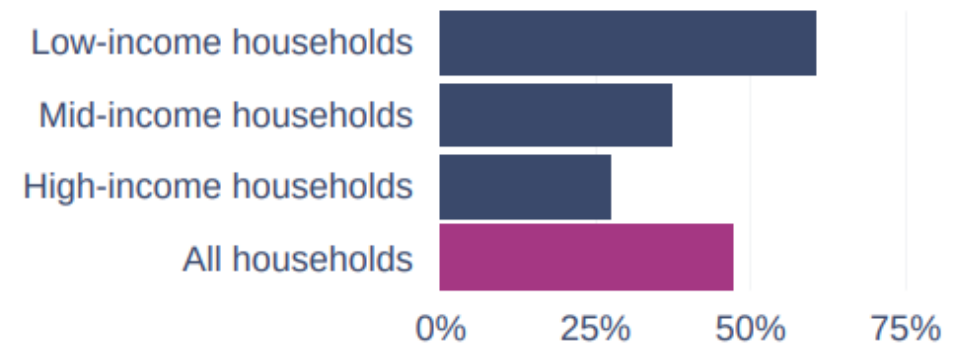# Tower Hamlets Research- Preliminary Findings

Building on Previous Projects - Overcrowding and Family Wellbeing in Tower Hamlets

15.8% of households in Tower Hamlets overcrowded in 2021

Figure 1: Percentage of households that met the overcrowding criteria as per 2021 census

About **half** of all responses to a survey of 620 families during the pandemic said they didn't have enough space. **Lack of space** is more prevalent for **low-income households** (see Figure 2).

Low-income households
Mid-income households
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All households

0%   25%   50%   75%

Figure 2: Percentage of households who reported not having enough space in their homes in a survey of 620 parents of children aged 0-4 and parents to be living in Tower Hamlets

NB: Preliminary findings

Methods

- 2 x 1.5-hour focus groups with people who work with families affected by overcrowding (henceforth, "professionals")
- 2 x 1.5-hour focus groups with residents

Session structure:

- What does overcrowding mean to you?
- Lived experiences and impacts
- Vignettes (ordering priorities)

Inclusion criteria:

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- Self-define as living in overcrowded housing with their family (min 1 non-adult)
- Live in Tower Hamlets

Professionals:

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⚠️ **The usual indicators of overcrowding miss many of the ways in which lack of space affects families and children**

Overcrowding generates many impacts that are not accounted for with current indicators. The impacts mentioned by the participants in the survey are captured in Figure 3.
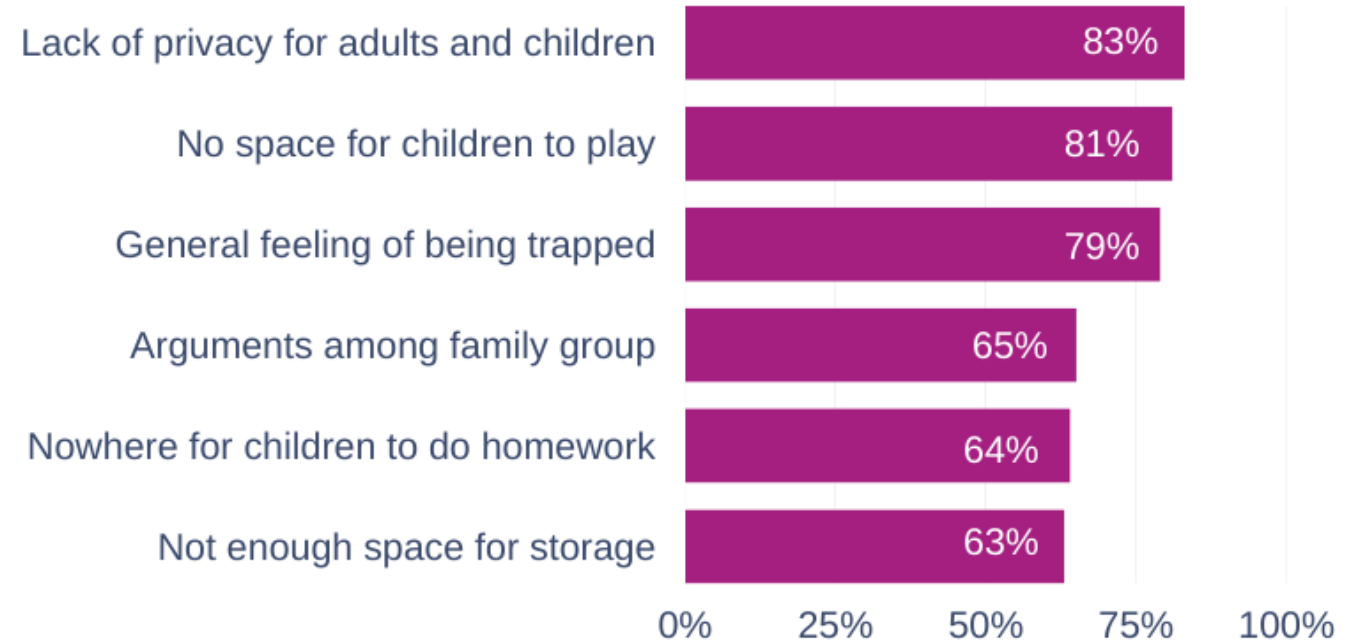
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Impact	Percentage
Lack of privacy for adults and children	83%
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Figure 3: Impacts of lack of space, for respondents who reported this problem

Priorities

Ideal solution: more housing with space that was built with families in mind.

Other aspects of living in overcrowded housing that could be improved to support their health and wellbeing:

- **Safety/Built environment**

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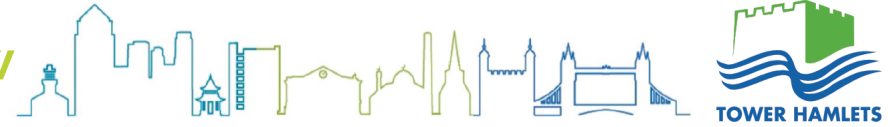
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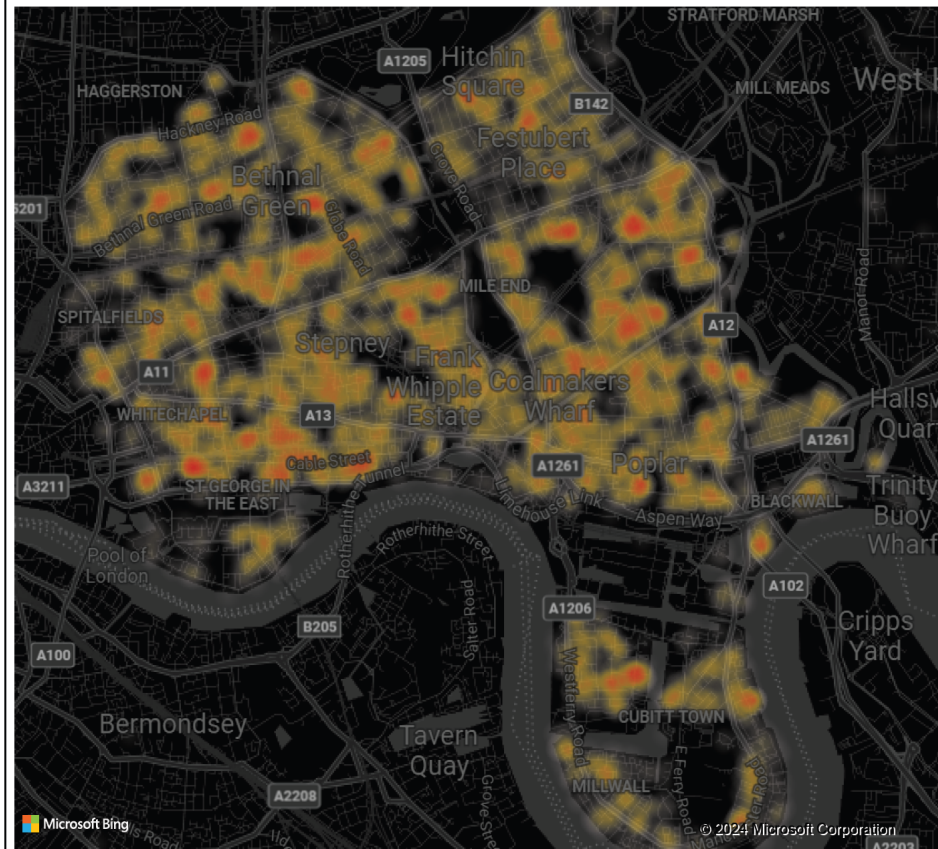| Households on the Common Housing Register	Common Housing Register excl Current Social Housing Residents	Households on the Common Housing Register (Band 1 + Band 2)
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© 2024 Microsoft Corporation

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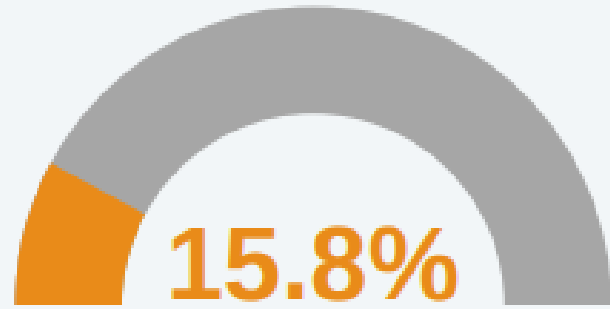# Tower Hamlets Research- Preliminary Findings

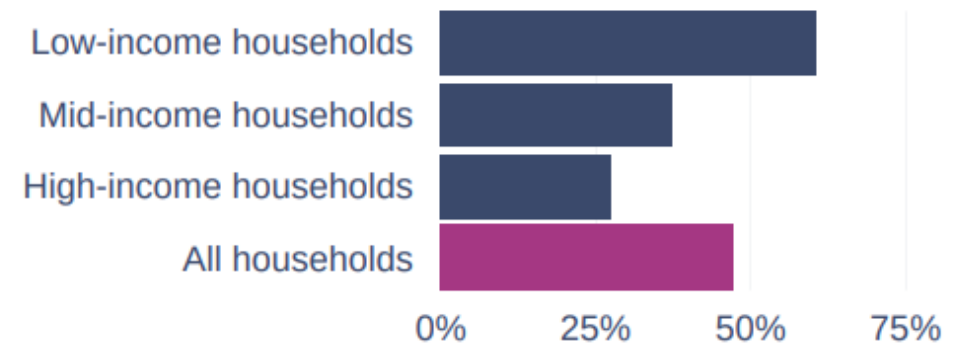# Building on Previous Projects - Overcrowding and Family Wellbeing in Tower Hamlets

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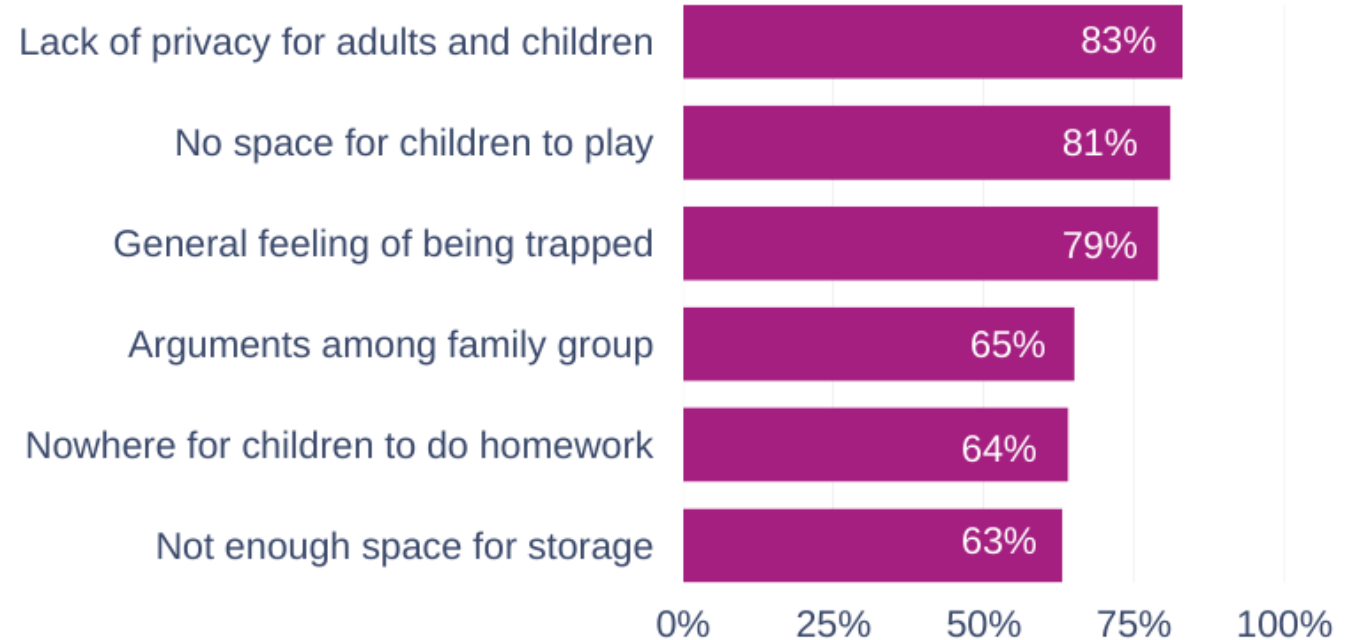
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