

Best Value Improvement Board

TITLE	Author	ITEM NO	Date
Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 – Oct-December 2017 Update	Afazul Hoque Interim Service Manager Strategy, Policy & Performance		18 th Dec 2017

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the nine months of the Council's Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 covering the period October-December 2017. The report builds on the June - September 2017 submission to the Secretary of State and details the continuous progress against the five areas of Communications, Property, Elections, Organisational Culture and Grants and the 26 actions found within the Improvement Plan.
- 1.2. The Directions from the Secretary of State for Department of Communities & Local Government (DCLG) requires the Council to submit quarterly update reports. The third quarterly update report will be submitted on 22nd December 2017.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. The Board is asked to:
 1. Consider and comment on the draft update report attached as Appendix 1
 2. Consider and agree any revised milestone timescales in the Improvement Plan attached as Appendix 2.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. The Council as part of its final submission to the Secretary of State for DCLG submitted a Best Value Improvement Plan 17-18 and outlined proposals to set up a Best Value Improvement Board to drive sustainable improvement across the organisation by providing oversight, support and challenge. Following the Secretary of State revoking the previous Directions and the removal of the Commissioners involved in the governance of the Council, the Secretary of State issued new Directions which will be in force until 30th September 2018.
- 3.2. In line with the new Directions the Council has undertaken the following:
 - Submission of quarterly reports on all outstanding actions in the Best Value Action Plan and Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 to the Secretary of State with the second update submitted in September 2017;
 - Set up a new Best Value Improvement Board, chaired by the Mayor, with cross party representation and external representatives to provide suitable challenge to improve all Council activities;

- Developed proposals for an independent review of achievement against the Best Value Action Plan and Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18. This will be undertaken with the LGA in the form of a Corporate Peer Review and is planned for June 2018.

3.3. The Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 has five key priority areas comprising 26 strategic actions. These priority areas are a continuance of those found in the Best Value Action Plans arising from the original Secretary of State's Directions. The Plan demonstrates continued implementation where previous activities could not be implemented before the Directions expired as well as continued improvements.

3.4 The Best Value Improvement Plan sits within an Improvement Framework which outlines the work streams the Council is delivering to become an 'excellent modern council'. This includes the work being driven by the Children's Services Improvement Board led by an independent Chair, an internal time limited Adults Improvement Board and new improvement areas of customer services and Organisational culture as reported to the Board at the last meeting.

3.5 Cabinet on 19th December 2017 will receive a report detailing the progress the Council has made in becoming a more open and transparent organisations with ongoing work that will help to:

- Continuously provide opportunities for the public to hold the Council to account , whilst also ensuring that it always holds itself to account;
- Provide quality data, which is clear, easy to understand and accessible;
- Involve residents in the design and delivery of services enabling a more open and collaborative approach to Council business.

3.6 The latest Annual Residents Survey shows residents perception of the Council is improving with 79% saying they trust the Council and 59% agreeing the Council is open and transparent. We also saw an 11 points increase to 68% of residents feeling the Council listens to their concerns and a 9 points increase to 58% of residents agreeing that the Council involves them in the decision making.

4. OVERALL PROGRESS AGAINST BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

4.1. During the nine months of the Best Value Improvement Plan the Council has delivered the majority of the short-term and medium-term milestones and where there are any delays a revised plan has been set out. Work on the longer-term milestones are on-going with plans for delivery over the next financial year. Regular updates on progress are provided to the Corporate Leadership Team and Members and all activities have been incorporated within individual Directorate Plans to ensure focus remains on delivery.

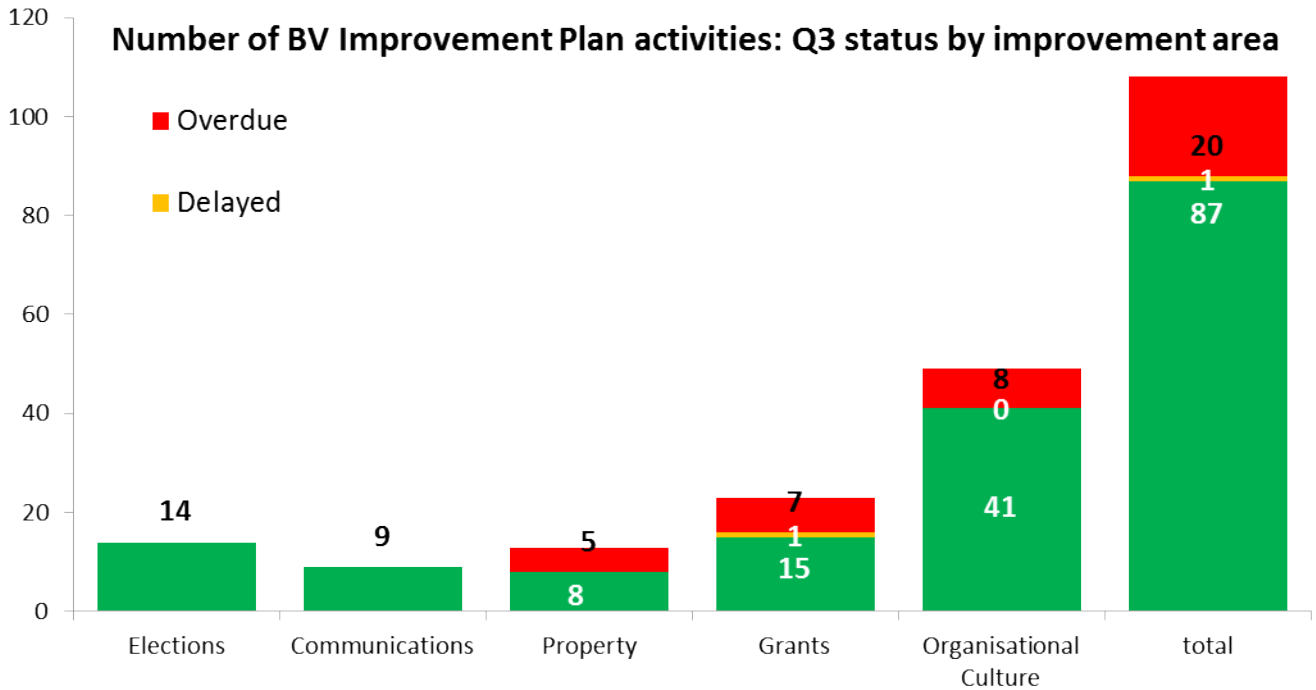
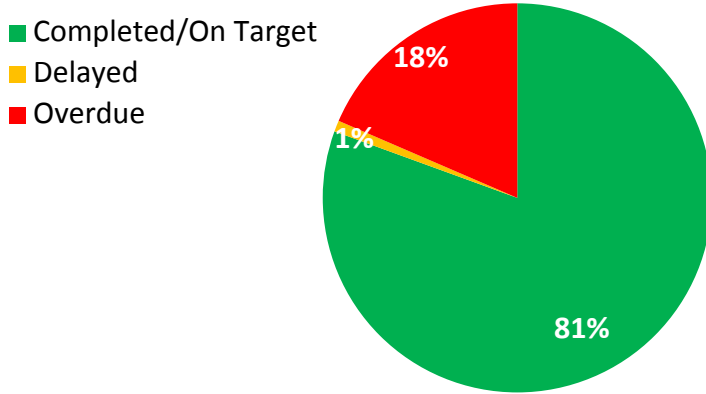
4.2. On election the Council has published a revised Register of Electors and is counting to meet regularly with partners to plan the Mayoral and local

elections. The Council has also agreed to pilot an enhanced Postal Voting Scheme with the Cabinet Office which will include increased security and guidance as well as sample checking. The communication infrastructure has been enhanced considerably over the last nine months. The media consumption survey has been completed and analysed which is being used to develop future work and ensure we can reach different audience. The survey provides a range of intelligence including areas where can further develop its communication work. We have seen significant increase in the number of residents signed up to our e-newsletter and with the segmentation of this we will be able to target information to residents according to their interests.

- 4.3. The Programme of work to develop a range of community hubs is progressing with the first hub launched in September. Three more sites have been identified and work is progressing to deliver these over the next two years. The Council continues to manage its assets through the revised governance structure and use vacant buildings for housing and commercial use.
- 4.4. A new approach to grants management is being developed in partnership with the local voluntary and community sector. The Mainstream Grants Programme is monitored quarterly by the Grants Scrutiny Committee and Grants Determination Committee. An audit has recently been completed of the grants monitoring process and recommendations arising from this will be taken forward.
- 4.5. On organisational culture the Council has agreed a refreshed Member/Officer Protocol and work will be undertaken over the next quarter to raise awareness and implementation. A revised Whistleblowing Policy has been agreed and launched to a wide range of audience. This will be a mandatory training for all staff in the new Learning Management System. A range of activities were held during Core Value launch week in October to engage staff and an engagement tool developed for managers embed this across the organisation.
- 4.6. The Tower Hamlets Partnership bringing together key statutory and voluntary sector partner is developing a Community Plan which will set out a joint vision and priorities for the borough. A Tower Hamlets Summit has been planned for January 2018 and invitation has been sent to a range of stakeholders to ensure their views and involvement helps shape the Plan.
- 4.7. The charts below shows progress against the 108 milestones in the Best Value Improvement Plan which are still active. In order to ensure consistency in the reporting of the status of key milestones the following criteria have been applied:
- **On Target** – where the key milestone will be achieved by the deadline
 - **Completed** – Where the key milestone has been achieved by the deadline
 - **Delayed** – where the key milestone has not yet been completed but will be completed within a month of the original deadline
 - **Overdue** - where the key milestone has been delayed by more than a

month from the date of the original deadline

BV Improvement Plan activities : Overall Q3 Status



5. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

5.1. The Best Value Improvement Plan is a priority for the Council, and requisite resources have been identified within the budget in order to deliver the outcomes. Any additional resources required to deliver any of the activities will need relevant authority before commencing.

6. LEGAL COMMENTS

6.1. 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).

- 6.2. Where the Secretary of State is satisfied that an authority is not meeting its best value duty, the Secretary of State may: (1) direct the authority to take action to bring itself into compliance with that duty; (2) direct that specified functions be carried out by the Secretary of State or a nominee and that the authority follow the Secretary of State’s instructions and provide such assistance as may be required (Local Government Act 1999). In accordance with this power the Secretary of State gave directions to the Council on 17 December 2014, 29 April 2015 and 6 May 2015. Revised directions were also given on 16 January 2017.
- 6.3. The directions are enforceable by the Secretary of State, who may seek an order in the High Court requiring the Council to remedy any breach. Under the current circumstances, it is appropriate for the Council to take steps to comply with the directions and to monitor its compliance with the directions. The report relevantly informs members of progress and appropriately indicates that Cabinet approval will be sought before presenting the required update to the Department of Communities and Local Government.
- 6.4. Although the Directions expired on 31st March 2017 and the specified functions to be carried out by the Commissioners on behalf of the Secretary will return to the authority, it is open to the Secretary of State to issue fresh directions to the Council for it to take specific action which is considered necessary or expedient to secure the Council’s compliance with its best value duty without specifying that specified functions be carried out by the Secretary of State or a nominee.
- 6.5. When taking action in response to the directions, 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). Compliance with this duty has been a feature, to the extent relevant, of the Council’s action in response to the directions.
- 6.6. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

Appendix 1: Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 summary

Appendix 2: Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 delivery plan