

BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2017 UPDATE

1 Introduction

The Council is pleased to provide an update on the progress made in implementing the Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 as required under the Directions of March 2017. The Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 includes 26 strategic actions against the five areas of: Property, Elections, Organisation Culture, Grants and Communications.

This report notes that in the first nine months of this Improvement Plan, covering the period between October-December 2017, a large number of milestones have been completed and where any are overdue or delayed a revised plan has been developed to ensure delivery. This demonstrates the focused determination of the Council in delivering continuous improvement and provides the Council with momentum as it works to deliver the remaining milestones in the plan over the next six months.

2 Summary of key achievements

A summary of key achievements for Quarter 3 is detailed below:

- The Council has agreed to take part in a Cabinet Office Pilot on Postal Vote which will lead to improvements in security and guidance;
- Regular review and planning meetings with Police and Electoral Commission and other partners are taking place for the 2018 Mayoral/borough elections on an on-going basis now;
- The weekly staff newsletter continues to have a high open rate and the results of the media consumption survey have been considered by the team and discussed with stakeholders. This will be used to target communication information to different audiences;
- Tramshed has been identified as the second community hub and feasibility work has been undertaken and costings are being finalised. The opening of this hub is expected to take place in April 2018.
- The Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee has met 5 times this municipal year to consider a range of Grants Decision Reports and MSG monitoring reports. The Committee is currently planning an in-depth review into grant spending on organisations that provide physical activities for young people;
- All Community Cohesion contracts have now been mobilised and are delivering.. Where contracts are successfully delivering we are hoping to extend by a further 7 months to bring the end date into line with MSG grants. This will enable them to be considered and co-produced as part of the future grants/commissioning process;
- Reports outlining revised Council Procedure Rules and Member/Officer Relations Protocol went to General Purposes Committee on 12 October 2017 and were approved by Council on 22 November 2017;

- A Report went to GPC on 12 October 2017 and then Audit Committee on 16 November 2017 with a revised Whistleblowing Policy, Procedure, Guidance for Managers and Guidance for Investigators as well as an Action Plan for the implementation of a more effective whistleblowing framework.
- The Corporate Peer Challenge proposals were agreed by the Best Value Improvement Board at their last meeting. Planning for this is currently underway and will be held in June 2018. A Members Seminar was jointly delivered with the LGA on Members' role in Children's Services. Discussions are planned with the LGA about further areas of review and improvement work.

Best Value Improvement Plan Summary

ELECTIONS: Progress Summary

The Council has delivered a number of successful elections and referendum since 2015 which include:

- UK Parliamentary Election May 2015
- Election of Executive Mayor June 2015
- Election of Mayor of Tower Hamlets and Greater London Authority elections May 2016
- EU Referendum June 2016
- Whitechapel ward by election December 2016
- UK Parliamentary Election May 2017

Key achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council taking part in Cabinet Office Postal Vote Pilot • Published revised Register of Electors on 1st Dec 2017 • Provisionally booked the Excel as the Count Centre but other venues being explored. • Regular review and planning meetings with Police and consultation work with Electoral Commission Office have taken place for 2018 Elections. • Additional Presiding Officers are being identified in January 2018 and contingency planning for the 2018 elections and given training on additional duties required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All meetings have been diarised up to April 2018. New dates being issued for April to June 2018. Attendees include senior officers and representatives from relevant agencies /bodies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently undertaking a review of Count Venues. Due to it being a combined election, the location size and security are of paramount importance. Count processes to be reviewed and documented including the use of grass skirt counting method for mixed votes and improving the layout of the count venue. • Awareness raising and publicity for 2018 elections. • Due to the complexity of the combined elections in 2018, mandatory face to face training will take place in April 2018. • Visual aids to be included in combined election training 2018 and for this to be made available at all polling centres to help voters with language difficulties. More work to be done by LBTH Communications Team to promote this new resource and to make voters aware of polling centre rules in particular that staff can only speak in English whilst on duty in the polling station.

COMMUNICATIONS: Progress Summary

Communications in Tower Hamlets had a history of being reactive with a heavy reliance on the Council's weekly publication, East End Life. Many of the messages and activities being communicated were determined by services' willingness and ability to pay and there was little use of insight or data to identify appropriate communication channels and support the delivery of effective communications campaigns. Since the Best Value Action Plan was introduced there has been significant progress in reforming the way the Council deals with internal and external publicity management.

Key achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further development of staff newsletter with a forward planner of articles and a range of regular updates including on Cabinet decision, ICT improvements and Learning and Development opportunities. • Media consumption survey has been completed and analysed to develop future work programme • Gov Delivery Company procured. Setting up of E-Newsletter is on schedule for December 2017. This will put all council newsletters into one portal and segment our residents so that they can receive information from services and communications about specific areas of interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tower Hamlets Now open rate continues to improve with an average 64% (including an issue at 73%) • The media consumption survey has been completed and involved 943 residents. Analysis of the results has enabled us to identify gaps in service delivery and areas for improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture change regarding communications: a critical aspect of changing the culture is to work collaboratively with teams to determine delivery milestones related to key programmes so that they can be communicated widely to residents. • Progress on intelligent newsletter and new intranet site is continuing. Project Delivery Company has been procured and the first E-Newsletter is on schedule for December 2017. • Research phase completed for new intranet site. Final proposals for Corporate Leadership Team in place and will be going to procurement by end of March 2018.

PROPERTY: Progress Summary

The Council owns, occupies or maintains around 860 non-HRA properties, valued at £1bn, located within the borough. The Council also owns around £800m of HRA properties (the housing element is managed and maintained by Tower Hamlets Homes (THH), the Council's arms-length management organisation) as well as a further £50m of community assets.

Key achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility work completed on second community hub which is expected to open in April 2018 • Raines House identified as third community hub and feasibility work completed • Vacant building in Watney Market ready for marketing • Specialist consultants appointed to review depot provision across the borough • On-going work to agree occupation agreements with building occupiers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd, 3rd & 4th Community Hub identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granby Hall is now likely to be the fourth community hub. The timetable has been revised to allow negotiations to commence with the current occupiers of the building. • Specialist consultants have been appointed to provide additional consultancy advice for a complete review of depot provision across the borough. Work on the feasibility work has started; this is due to be completed by January 2018. • Temporary community use is in place for Turin Street, approved by the Mayor, which is due to come to an end in July 2018. • Housing Strategy are taking forward the Bethnal Green Cottage, the scheme is in planning awaiting a delegated decision for November 2017. Start on site will be scheduled to commence for January 2018.

GRANTS: Progress Summary

All actions in the original Grants Best Value Action Plan have been completed. Work has been undertaken to review and develop approaches to, and processes for, grant making with the Grants Determination Sub-Committee. The Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee continues to provide cross party member review and challenge to the grants decision making process.

Key achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit of grants monitoring completed. • The Grants Determination Sub-Committee (GDSC) and Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee continue to meet every six weeks. • The system mapping of requirements to improve management reporting, information management and analysis of the new GIFTS software has now been completed. • Detailed and technical work is progressing to revise the business processes, streamline the system for grant awards and monitoring via the internet, ensuring accessible information and reporting for members, the VCS and the public. • Working collaboratively with TH CVS and the sector to develop a Grants Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete audit of grants monitoring completed. • 8 contracts previously grants co-commissioned with the voluntary and community sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is on-going work to get greater involvement of voluntary and community sector in the co-production of commissioned services. • Work with the voluntary sector to develop a voluntary sector compact is progressing. Further discussion with the VCS will be carried out so that the new Compact can be considered alongside the new grants policy and replacement programme for the current mainstream grants. • Co-production programme to produce new grants policy is now under way working with TH Council for Voluntary Service. First stage to develop policy framework will be complete by Christmas and on target for consideration by Cabinet in March 2018. Second stage of co-production to develop the detailed scheme and procedures will begin in the New Year with a view to launching the new programme early in the summer. • Finalising third sector team structure and implementation of web based GIFTS system

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE : Progress Summary

Organisational culture is recognised as a key component in moving the Council forward. The aims of the Organisational Culture Plan are to: ensure that the culture of the organisation continues to be one which strives for continuous improvement; engages and invests in staff; ensures relationships between groups of members and between members and officers are professional, respectful, open and honest and rebuild trust in the areas where this has, or is perceived to have, broken down.

The key outcomes we are looking to achieve are:

- Staff engaged with and committed to delivering the Council’s vision and priorities;
- Improved clarity and understanding of formal roles and responsibilities of the Executive, non-Executive and senior officers of the Council in a Mayoral system;
- Effective working relationships between elected members, and between elected members and senior officers, to enable all to work together to achieve the best outcomes for Tower Hamlets and its residents;
- A shared commitment to a set of agreed behaviours and cultural values to underpin formal roles and responsibilities;
- A sustainable approach to maintaining and refreshing this shared commitment.

Key achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshed Member / Officer protocol agreed by Full Council which also included Member to Member conduct • LGA supported seminar for Members to increase understanding of their roles in children services • Comprehensive Quarter 2 financial monitoring report presented to Cabinet in November with savings and growth tracker information • Transformation Programme engaging staff through conversation groups and other wider staff engagement. • Core Values launched through range of engagement events across different Council sites • Revised whistleblowing framework agreed by general Purpose Committee and implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Board and Smarter Together Governance agreed and Boards meeting monthly • Smarter Together Programme plans agreed and progress monitored by Transformation Board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members Annual Declaration of Interest • Corporate Scheme of Management (what is this?) • Planning for Corporate Peer Challenge underway • Refreshed Member/Officer Protocol will be cascaded to all staff in the organisation and will form part of induction for new staff and members • Communication to members and officers about revised whistleblowing arrangements