

BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017- 2018 YEAR END REPORT

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 over the last year 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.

2 Summary of key achievements

A summary of key achievements for 2017/18 is detailed below:

- Review of UK Parliamentary Government Election delivery completed and lessons learnt will be incorporated for the 2018 elections;
- 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 resulting in a stronger approach to identifying and tackling potential issues;
- New Communications strategy adopted and major campaigns launched throughout the year;
- A weekly staff e-newsletter has been introduced with continually growing open rates throughout the year;
- A media consumption survey was held and results used to target communication information more effectively to different audiences;
- New Statutory Notice Publication Scheme established;
- 4 Community Hub sites have been identified with feasibility work undertaken and costings finalised for two so far. The opening of the second hub is expected to take place in April 2018;
- Planning consent granted to convert vacant community buildings to residential use for transfer to Tower hamlets Homes/Homelessness Services;
- A review of depot provision across the borough is being undertaken and specialist consultants have been appointed to conduct a feasibility study;
- Comprehensive review of Third Sector Team completed;
- The Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee has met regularly throughout 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 with a view to bring successful contract timelines in line with MSG grants enabling them to be considered and co-produced as part of the future grants/commissioning process;
- Clear Up Project report went to Council in July 2017 with updates and actions reported through the year;
- Staff Survey and Wellbeing Surveys completed;
- Year one of the Smarter Together Programme completed as planned
- Reports outlining revised Council Procedure Rules and Member/Officer Relations were approved by Council on 22 November 2017;
- Planning Code of Conduct reviewed and updated;
- 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.

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 2017/18	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published revised Register of Electors on 1st Dec 2017. • The Excel Exhibition Centre has been confirmed as the Count Centre. A site visit in March by the core management team will enable a comprehensive count plan to be prepared. • Regular review and planning meetings with Police and consultation work with Electoral Commission Office have taken place for 2018 Elections. • Police presence and increased security at all polling stations has been confirmed with the including the use of photo ID for count staff.. • Mandatory training and written guidance is planned for all count staff, Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks. • Council taking part in Cabinet Office Postal Vote Pilot. • Comprehensive communications/engagement plan in place with a media plan being developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued scheduling of project group and partner agency meetings. Attendees include senior officers and representatives from relevant agencies /bodies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner and management meetings will continue to be held on a regular basis. • 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. • Due to the complexity of the combined elections in 2018, mandatory face to face training will take place in April 2018 • Recruitment and allocation of experienced staff for count and polling stations to identify further training needs and opportunities. • Awareness raising and publicity for 2018 elections is ongoing and a media plan will form part of the comprehensive communications/engagement plan. • 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 2017/18	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council tax booklet completed and sent to all households. • Communications Strategy for 17/18 completed with major campaigns launched. • Internal communications improved through the placement of new poster sites and 12 plasma screens now live in the Council Town Hall, Mulberry Place. All being regularly monitored for timeliness and quality of presentation. • Over 1,000 marketing sites identified through an asset audit. • Launch and development of staff newsletter with a forward planner of articles and a range of regular updates including on Cabinet decisions, ICT improvements and Learning and Development opportunities. • Intranet project manager appointed and specification/project scope developed. • Media consumption survey has been completed and analysed to target communications better. • Statutory Notices contract procured and mobilised with communications sent to staff regarding the new contract and its processes via intranet article and managers' briefing. . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tower Hamlets Now open rate was at 50% in Q1 and has now reached 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. • Scoping for delivery of the new intranet project and procurement to be completed in the next few months.

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 2017/18	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Community Buildings previously used by THH caretakers formerly handed back to Housing Management. • Property inspection audit completed and all actions for regularising occupations allocated to asset managers to progress as BUA. • 4 new Community Hub locations identified with the second due to be delivered in April 2018. • Planning consent has been granted for conversion to residential use for two vacant community buildings that will be transferred to Tower Hamlets Homes/Homelessness Services. • Temporary community use agreed for a vacant community building by the Mayor (12 months). • Tender process underway for additional specialists' consultancy advice for a complete review of depot provision across the borough. • Template for new governance arrangement prepared. • Vacant building in Watney Market ready for marketing with evaluation of offers scheduled for March. • Specialist consultants appointed to conduct feasibility study on plans for depot provision across the borough. • On-going work to agree occupation agreements with building occupiers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads of terms agreed for leases to 5 of the 8 nursery / playgroup properties within the CB portfolio • 4 Community Hubs identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of the remaining Community Hubs. • 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 now due to be completed by April 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. • Remaining regularisation work as a result of the audit of assets due to be completed in June 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 2017/18	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-going delivery of the Action Plan of the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy. • The Grants Determination Sub-Committee (GDSC) and Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee continue to meet every six weeks. • External evaluation of the MSG Programme which has engaged a range of stakeholders. • Audit of grants monitoring completed. • New Third Sector Team structure developed with full implementation due to be completed in April 2018. • 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. • Commissioning of Community Cohesion theme completed with all contracts mobilised and delivering. 	<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. • Development of a voluntary sector Compact to be finalised with the new Compact to be considered alongside the new grants policy and replacement programme for the current mainstream grants. • Co-production programme to produce new grants policy is underway 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 in 2018 with a view to launching the new programme early in the summer. • Engagement has been undertaken with Commissioners across the Council and also research on best practice examples for the comprehensive review of contract and grants and approach to commissioning. A working Group has been formed which will take forward this work and align to the development of the wider Grants Policy.

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 2017/18	Measurable outcomes for existing work	Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised core values agreed by senior management and communicated to all staff through range of engagement events across different Council sites. • Reorganisation of the top 3 tiers implemented. • Independent review of industrial relations completed with actions recommended. • Leadership development programme established, including online resources, peer to peer coaching, qualification training and external partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58% of managers registered with online leadership development tools • 14 senior managers trained as facilitators for peer to peer coaching • 180 managers inducted onto Chartered Management Institute accredited courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Corporate Scheme of Management and Scheme of Delegations due to be completed in 2018. • Planning for Corporate Peer Challenge underway and on schedule to deliver independent review by June 2018 and reporting to Secretary of State in August 2018. • Refreshed Member/Officer Protocol being cascaded to all staff and will form part of induction for new staff and members. • Ongoing communication to members and officers about revised whistleblowing arrangements with the related mandatory e-learning module to be added to the Learning Management System.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work completed with on-going monitoring of the Mid-Term Financial Savings plan is now in place. • Smarter Together programme set up with governance structures and framework in place. • Corporate Project Management Office (PMO) set up and resourced to deliver MTFS savings. • The Children's Services Improvement Board has met regularly and set a clear forward plan to focus on relevant thematic issues for each meeting. The Improvement Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 19 July 2017 and will be updated monthly. • LGA supported seminar for Members to increase understanding of their roles in Children's Services. • Refreshed Member/Officer protocol agreed by Full Council which also included Member to Member conduct. • Transformation Programme engaged staff through conversation groups and other wider staff engagement • Revised whistleblowing framework agreed by general Purpose Committee and implemented. • 2017 Annual residents Survey completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 750 employees attended the Staff Conference and staff awards presentation • 80% of staff say that they are proud to work for Tower Hamlets • 60 staff trained in Outcome Based Accountability methodology • Programme Board and Smarter Together Governance agreed and Boards meeting monthly • Smarter Together Programme plans agreed and progress monitored by Transformation Board 	
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