

## Best Value Improvement Board

| TITLE  | Author  | ITEM NO | Date       |
|--|---|---------|------------|
| <b>Best Value Improvement Plan 2018 – 19 Quarter 1</b> | Afazul Hoque,<br>Service Manager Strategy, Policy & Performance |         | 11 June 18 |

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the delivery of the Council's Best Value Improvement Plan for 2018. The report builds on last year's updates and submissions to the Secretary of State and details actions remaining on the five areas of Communications, Property, Elections, Organisational Culture and Grants.
- 1.2. A total of 14 actions have been carried forward from the 2017/18 action plan and there are 43 deliverable milestones due for delivery this year.
- 1.3. The Directions from the Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) requires the Council to submit quarterly update reports.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. The Board is asked to:
  1. Consider and comment on the draft update report and revised milestone deadlines attached as Appendix 1

### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The Council as part of its final submission to the Secretary of State for MHCLG 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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 fourth update submitted in March 2018;
  - 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. At the end of 2017-18, there were 14 actions carried forward for completion in 2018 to be delivered through the completion of 43 specific milestones. These actions and milestones have been mapped on to Pentana, the Council's Performance Management System, in order to monitor and manage their delivery effectively.
- 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.

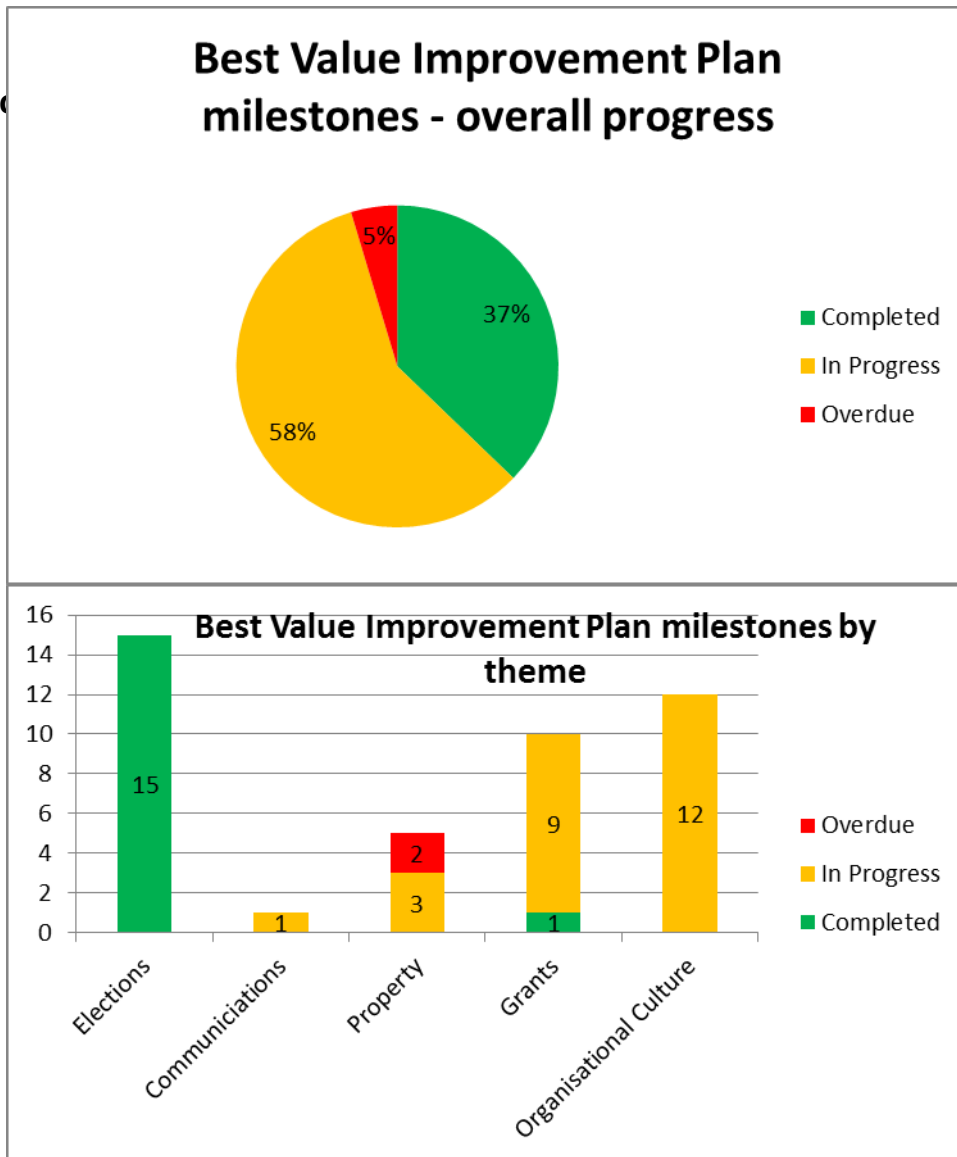
#### **4. 2018 PROGRESS AGAINST BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

- 4.1. During the first year of the Best Value Improvement Plan the Council has delivered the majority of the short-term and medium-term milestones. 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. **Elections** - The Council successfully delivered the 2018 Local and Mayoral elections as well as the delivering the Postal Vote Pilot scheme with the Electoral Commission. All of the planned training and review milestones were met effectively and key learning points identified. The count venue required significant planning and administration before it could be signed off. The Xpress software module was introduced and used effectively for the count along with increased security measures and ongoing liaison with partners to ensure the integrity and security of the entire election process.
- 4.3. **Communications** – The only outstanding Communications action carried forward to 2018 is the launch of the new intranet site. The research phase which included working with representatives from council directorates to understand business need for the new intranet has been completed and a decision was taken to use Contensis as the CMS for the new intranet. Delivery of the project is projected to be completed by the end of September 2018.
- 4.4. **Property** – There were 2 actions carried forward for the Property theme –

“Implement Community Buildings Scheme” and “Asset Reviews and Service Delivery Plans”. There has been a revision in the order of delivery of the Community Hubs as the Raines House site that was originally planned as the second hub is a listed building and, as such, has a longer lead in time. A planning application for alterations at Granby Hall has been submitted. The action plan for validation of TRAs with Tower Hamlets Homes is almost completed and work is underway to convert units into temporary accommodation at Bethnal Green Cottage. The feasibility study on Blackwall Depot is almost complete and awaiting confirmed numbers for staff and vehicles to be accommodated to finalise proposals.

- 4.5. **Grants** – The review of the Third Sector Team is almost complete with assimilation into new posts and interviews expected to be completed by the end of August and full implementation of the new team by the end of September. Implementation of the web-based “GIFTS” software is on target for the end of August. Review of the Grants Determination Sub-Committee was rescheduled to happen after the recent elections and progress in this area will continue once the new membership has been confirmed. The Voluntary sector Compact was agreed in March Cabinet and reviews of the Council’s Grants Policy and contracts is scheduled to be completed in August and June respectively.
- 4.6. **Organisational Culture** – The HR Division restructure encompasses the review of employment policies and practices, involving stakeholder engagement to facilitate the implementation of changes by the end of September along with delivery of Year 1 of our Smarter Together programme. External expertise is being commissioned to help amalgamate revised officer delegations into a single corporate scheme with a revised due date of September 2018. Directorates will appoint a lead officer to work with Legal Services to agree and manage directorate delegations going forward. A follow-up audit on Officers Declaration of Interest is underway.
- 4.7. The charts below show the reported progress against the 43 milestones in the Best Value Improvement Plan. In order to ensure consistency in the reporting of the status of key milestones the following criteria have been applied:
- **Completed** – where the key milestone has been achieved
  - **In Progress** – where the key milestone will be achieved by the deadline
  - **Overdue** - where the key milestone has not been completed by the deadline date

BV Impro



## 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. These Directions were revoked by letter from the Secretary of State dated 28<sup>th</sup> March 2017 and which removed the MHCLG Commissioners on 31 March 2017. This letter set out fresh Directions and which are in force until 30 September 2018.
- 6.4. 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 the Board of progress and timescales.
- 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 Q1 Update