

Best Value Improvement Board

TITLE	Author	ITEM NO	Date
Best Value Improvement Plan 2018 – 19 Quarter 2	Daniel Kerr, Senior Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer		17 September 2018

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 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;
 - 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;

- Worked with the LGA to deliver an independent review of achievement against the Best Value Action Plan and Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18. This review was undertaken in June 2018 and a report of the findings was submitted to the Secretary of State.

- 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. The Communications team is just waiting on the impending implementation of Office 365 to explore the possibility of using Sharepoint as a platform for the new intranet.

- 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. The second Community Hub was opened in August and the final two Hubs at Raines House and Granby Hall will open in early 2019, with works commencing in October. The action plan for validation of TRAs with Tower Hamlets Homes is complete and work is underway to convert units into temporary accommodation at Bethnal Green Cottage and is due for completion in September. There is a rolling programme of conversions in place and as more are identified they are added to the programme. The feasibility study on Blackwall Depot is due for completion in September. The feasibility proposals are just awaiting Waste Management to confirm 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 due 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. A review of the Grants Determination Sub-Committee was rescheduled to happen after the recent elections and progress is now underway to develop the scope and deliver the review in line with the target date by the end of September. The Voluntary sector Compact was agreed at Cabinet in March and reviews of the Council’s Grants Policy and contracts is scheduled to be completed in October and November respectively. Some grants for infrastructure support may be agreed in advance but, as MSG has now been extended to 30 September 2019, the main programme will be launched early in 2019 so that the first new grants will be awarded with effect from 1 October 2019 in parallel with the new community commissioning programme.
- 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. There are now only 7 outstanding cases of the Clear Up project remaining and two are ready for closure. The remaining cases are scheduled to be considered by the HR Policy Working Group in line with the completion date of September. External expertise has been commissioned to help amalgamate revised officer delegations and a revised corporate scheme of delegations for inclusion in Part 3 of the Constitution to reflect the Council’s corporate directorate structure and

the outcome of the review will be reported to CLT in November. Directorates will appoint a lead officer to work with Legal Services to agree and manage directorate delegations going forward. An audit of staff declarations has been completed. A revised management action plan has been agreed in response to the findings of the audit and will be subject to ongoing monitoring by Internal Audit. Progress against implementation of the outstanding actions will further be reported to the next meeting of the Audit Committee.

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. The implementation of the Best Value Improvement Plan demonstrates that the Council is continuing to fulfil this legal duty.
- 6.2. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report as it provides an update as to the current position.
- 6.3. 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. Equalities considerations have been taken into account when the decisions relating to each recommendation were at a formative stage.