

Transformation & Improvement Board 10 th June 2019	
Report of: Sharon Godman, Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance	Classification: Unrestricted
Title: Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan 2018-2022	

Lead Member	Mayor John Biggs
Originating Officer(s)	Afazul Hoque Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy Daniel Kerr Strategy and Policy Manager, Corporate Filuck Miah Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate
Wards affected	All Wards
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	People are aspirational, independent and have equal access to opportunities. A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in. A dynamic outcomes-based Council using digital innovation and partnership working to respond to the changing needs of our borough

Executive Summary

This report provides a progress update on the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan.

Recommendations:

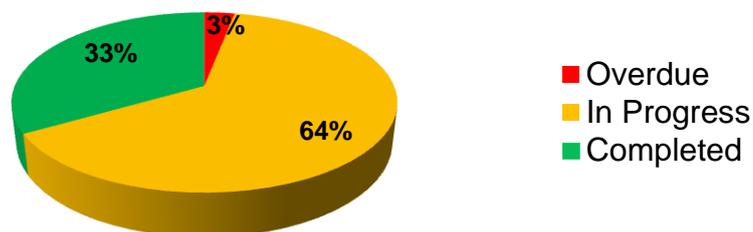
The Transformation & Improvement Board is recommended to:

1. Consider and comment on the progress of the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan

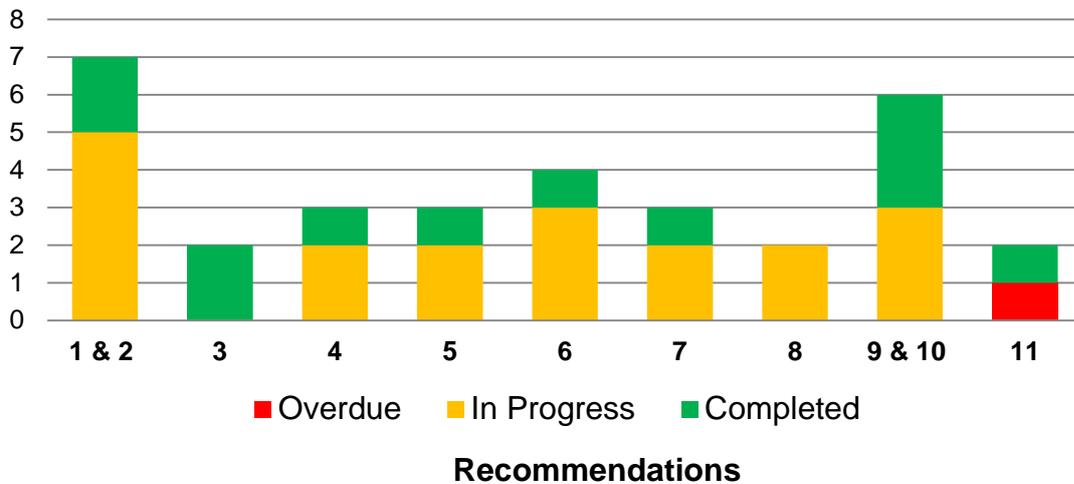
1. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. In June 2018, the Council took part in a LGA Corporate Peer Challenge. The purpose of the review was to firstly obtain an independent review of the Council's achievement against its Best Value Improvement Plan and to learn from best practice. The Peer Challenge represented a significant milestone in the Council's improvement journey and offered a fresh insight into the Council's strengths, weaknesses, and ability to deliver the ongoing improvements required to improve services for residents.
- 1.2. The Corporate Peer Challenge had identified a number of areas where the Council can continue to improve. There are still large areas in the Council in need of modernisation with some services continuing to operate under traditional and paternalistic model of delivery. The Council needs to increase the pace of change in the borough and remains currently too risk averse as a result of past decision making. Furthermore, the Council should focus on taking a more proportionate risk based approach and empower officers to be less cautious and bureaucratic in order to drive through improvements at a faster rate. To ensure that the Council moves forward quickly, the Council needs to have an unrelenting focus on the areas of failure including those identified by Ofsted in Children's Services.
- 1.3. This report captures the significant transformation and improvement activity being undertaken by the Council in order to become a modern and efficient Council, and achieve the recommendations of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge.
- 1.4. This progress update of the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan represents the second quarterly submission of the plan to the Transformation and Improvement Board (TIB). The TIB will continue to have oversight of the plan.

Transformation and Improvement Plan Milestone - Overall Progress



Transformation and Improvement Plan Milestone by Recommendations



2. Progress of the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan

The following captures the key achievements the Council have delivered against the recommendations of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, as outlined in the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan. Additionally, it highlights some of the challenges faced by the Council and the remedial action taken to address these challenges. A comprehensive update on the progress of the Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan can be found at appendix 1.

2.1. **Recommendation 1: The Council now needs to grasp opportunities and drive the pace of change to achieve the potential of the place.**

Recommendation 2: Be forward looking and learn the lessons of the past but not be fettered by them.

2.1.1. Beyond the launch of the Tower Hamlets Brexit Commission’s report (Feb 2019) the Partnership Executive Group (PEG) has led on developing a partner-led Brexit Action Group which has identified actions to address the 24 recommendations from the Commission. The Council has been running a reassurance campaign to keep EU citizens informed about their rights under the EU Settlement Scheme. The ‘this is your home too’ campaign imagery continues to be displayed on poster sites across the borough, refuse vehicles and via social media channels. The Council has launched an online Brexit Partnership Toolkit for residents around settlement scheme and community cohesion. The Council continues to provide a Brexit Resource Hub for partner agencies allowing a central point to access information. The uncertainty factor in the national context has created its own challenges to anticipate what Brexit will look like and has somewhat limited planning effectively. To mitigate this, the Council continues to work closely with a number of partners and has set up an internal Brexit Planning Group chaired by the Chief Executive, monitoring the changes and preparing appropriately.

- 2.1.2. In addition, to addressing the negative perception of the Borough (through a series of high profile and positive communication campaigns), the Council launched its survey to capture the views of its own workforce (working or living in the Borough) and used the findings to shape the priorities for the communication campaign. In the longer term, the campaign ambition is to create a benchmark for all organisations in Tower Hamlets partnership to positively promote the borough.
- 2.1.3. In expanding the narrative for Smarter Together and the New Town Hall, lightboxes are being installed in Albert Jacob House and John Onslow House as part of delivering on engagement on Council transformation and raising awareness. Additionally, the Smarter together transformation programme has developed an eligibility checker for new residents parking, transferred 17 staff to IT management as part of ICT centralisation, and the new delivery model for Community Equipment Service has now gone live with early life support in place.
- 2.1.4. The Council has undertaken a strategic review of assets and confirmed an overarching project governance approach for key work strands. For Strand A – asset challenges, a review of the property portfolio within the Children’s Services Directorate has confirmed requirements. This approach will now be replicated in other directorates in the Council. For Strand B - asset optimisation, early opportunities were discussed with the Mayor (Shadwell and Brady Centres). Further assets are in the pipeline for consideration and will be reported on.
- 2.2. **Recommendation 3: Be confident and bold about the Council’s ability to be normal and even strive for excellence, review its risk appetite and take account of the role of Internal Audit in managing this.**
- 2.2.1. The Local Community Fund (LCF) programme was launched on 25 March 2019 with an eight week bidding cycle. There has been 19 training and support sessions delivered between the Council and Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services, engaging with 100 organisations. The key challenge at this stage of the delivery of the Local Community Fund was engagement with a wide range of local voluntary and community groups, particularly those outside the main VCS networks. To address the issue, extensive use of social media, linking to a wide range of networks, was carried out and specific briefings were given to councillors for them to disseminate information locally. This project is currently on target for the assessment process to be completed in the summer, with awards made and services mobilised by 1 October 2019.
- 2.3. **Recommendation 4: Increase the pace of decision making and implementation by removing bad bureaucracy whilst retaining good governance**
- 2.3.1. A review of the Council’s strategies and boards has been completed. Sixty one strategies have been identified and work is underway to amalgamate these into 47 discrete strategies – streamlining the array in strategies/policies

across the council. Further work on board rationalisation is continuing in order to make the largest possible gains and improvement to governance.

2.3.2. The new Constitution is currently being prepared in four sections (Parts A – D) and will strengthen governance arrangements and improve its accessibility. Part A was reviewed by General Purposes Committee in December 2018. Part B was considered in February 2019. Parts C and D will be considered in April 2019. The revised Scheme of Management will be combined with the full Constitution and be considered by Council in July 2019. The project remains on target.

2.4. **Recommendation 5: Address the barriers to sustainable change such as the over use of interims and agency staff, some of the practices of the Human Resources department and the problems with the ICT systems**

2.4.1. A HR Policy Working group has been established to review existing and develop new policies and procedures, and ensure HR is at the forefront of delivering change. A policy working group meets monthly with trade unions and managers to discuss policy reviews and amendments. To date, the Grievance Policy and Draft Market supplement policy has been completed, and a review of the Council's sickness policy is underway.

2.4.2. In January, the Council launched a consultation about a proposed package (TOWER Rewards) including changes to terms and conditions and benefits to support staff and reward excellence. Staff briefing sessions will continue into June including ongoing discussion with trade unions.

2.4.3. In Children's Social Care, the service has reduced the vacancy gap from 35% to 26%. They have converted 10 agency staff as well as recruiting 16 permanent social workers. Additionally they have recruited 35 Newly Qualified Social Workers and launched the Social Worker Academy. Sickness has decreased and workforce stability has improved with turnover decreasing by 11%. Caseloads are close to or at target levels. To further address some of the challenges, SLA's have been set for the Resourcing Team and Social Care Managers to improve on recruitment timescales and contribution has been made to the development of the national social work apprenticeship scheme and this will be promoted to existing employees to join the scheme.

2.4.4. ICT systems continue to be improved with the entire LBTH LAN network replaced and upgraded. This has improved system speed, productivity and convenience for users. Additionally, the Council has deployed secure, stable, fast WiFi to corporate and public users at 51 Council locations.

2.5. **Recommendation 6: There needs to be an unrelenting focus on the previous areas of failure including Children's Services.**

2.5.1. Children's Services Improvement continues to be given the highest priority both corporately and politically. The Children's Services Improvement Board continues to meet every other month and there is strong engagement from senior corporate and political leaders as well across the wider partnership.

There continues to be regular contact with Ofsted including quarterly monitoring visits and their recent visit focused on Family Support and Protection Teams. The Improvement board continues to provide oversight and challenge to the improvement journey and the focus this time round has been on Early Help and the new Through Care Service. Additionally, colleagues from Bexley supported the Council's preparations for the final Ofsted inspection by performing a review of the Council's position; identifying areas for improvement and sharing good practice.

2.5.2. A programme of service reviews has been agreed for 2019/20. These reviews will focus on improving the pace and effectiveness of service delivery and will build on existing activity and transformation programmes. In 2019, reviews will cover areas of Markets, Community Safety, SEND and HR.

2.5.3. The Council has carried out a review which focused on strengthening local democracy in Tower Hamlets. It has established a task and finish group which receives evidence from a range of stakeholders. A framework has now been developed to support Councillors and this is scheduled to be presented to the General Purposes Committee in June 2019.

2.6. **Recommendation 7: Reform the services that are still traditional and paternalistic**

2.6.1. A programme of reviews has been scheduled in the Transformation & Improvement Board's 2019/20 work programme. These will focus on cleaner Streets and our local environment, new vision for regeneration, Safer communities and ASB, Work and greater prosperity, Housing and capital delivery.

2.6.2. The Adult Social Care (ASC) Improvement Programme has resulted in real and measurable benefits for the social care workforce and for the people who use social care services. The Improvement Programme has significantly improved workforce culture, practice and stability, strengthened integration of health and adult social care, and improved the experience of adult social care users and carers. Some of the actions contributing to the above can range from bureaucracy busting initiatives, recruitment campaigns and a renewed focus on safeguarding and strength-based practice, 77% of service users say they "receive respectful, considerate care from social care staff" which is up 2 from last year. 93% of service users say "social care helps to improve their quality of life; this is higher than the London average. An ASC quality assurance board has been established to address future challenges on culture change, recruitment, data quality and improving information and advice, and will continue to build on the improvements delivered by the ASC improvement programme.

2.6.3. The Customer Services Transformation Programme is currently being implemented to empower residents to use accessible online services and improve the Council's approach to customer services. Capital improvements to the 5 Idea Stores have been approved and configuration has commenced. Additionally work has been completed to centralise customer access and this

includes Parking Permits, Registrars, Bulky Waste, Pest Control, Housing Options, Benefits and Council Tax. Phase one of the programme is on target to be delivered by the end of May 2019. Moving to a single number for the council and specification for the Customer Relations Management system are completed so a system can be procured. Products have been tested and are at a soft launch stage.

2.7. Recommendation 8: Maximise the potential, ability and enthusiasm of all members

2.7.1. The Council is currently in the process of completing personal development plans (PDP) for Members which are tailored to the specific needs of the Councillors and the Council. All councillors were invited to complete a PDP and to date, 36.6% of Councillors have completed and returned their PDP, 6.7% have attended a 1:1 meeting to discuss their personal development, and more than 1/3 of Councillors have actively contributed to the programme of L&D that is being developed for 2019/2020.

2.7.2. Additionally Members have been supported in their role at Scrutiny through the delivery of formal and informal training. The Council have worked closely with the Centre for Public Scrutiny to provide training covering budget scrutiny, effective questioning, and children services. Additionally, a scrutiny workshop was held with members to consider the effectiveness of scrutiny in the Council, role of Members and how they can be better supported to perform their roles. The Council has also consulted the Chair of the independent Children's Safeguarding Board to develop Members understanding and ability to scrutinise Children Services as this was identified as a priority area for Scrutiny. At the first Overview and Scrutiny meeting of the new municipal year it was agreed that a new Children's and Education Sub-Committee will be established and new scrutiny lead portfolio areas will be created which are in line with the Cabinet portfolios. This will help improve the effectiveness of scrutiny and ensure that it is better aligned with the council's key strategic priorities.

2.8. Recommendation 9: Further break down silos and embed cross organisational working.

Recommendation 10: Continue to promote, cascade and embed the behavioural and cultural change by engaging the whole organisation

2.8.1. The Organisational Culture Programme Board continues to drive behavioural and cultural change and improvement. The Board has overseen the development of a new outcomes framework which underpins the Council's strategic plan and ensures plans are more outcomes focussed. The Board have also supported the development of a new Target Operating Model (signed off by CLT in February 2019) for the organisation to help develop people, processes and structures and enable the Council to meet the needs of the borough. Furthermore, the Board implemented a cultural change plan to align organisational culture to the TOWER values. This included improving communication and engagement of staff, better visibility of senior leaders and

implementation of the TOWER behaviours framework. The achievement of the Investors in People silver status in January 2019 provided positive evidence of the effectiveness of the Council's organisational culture change plan.

2.8.2. In addition to breaking down internal silos, the Council is also strengthening its collaboration and integration with key partners through the Partnership Executive Group (PEG). In March, the Partnership Executive Group held an appreciative inquiry on the *good jobs and employment* theme of the Tower Hamlets Plan. The Appreciative Inquiry has helped to inform the planning of the June Partnership Summit, which will focus on the Council (and partners)'s relationship with the business community. In May, The PEG held an appreciative inquiry on *better health and wellbeing* theme of the Plan, focussing on social isolation and loneliness. The Council is on track to deliver the two Partnership Summits in its first year, as identified when the Tower Hamlets Plan was published in July 2018. These were Children and Young People and Jobs and Skills Summit. This provided the opportunity to consult with wide range stakeholders on key issues and collect valuable feedback and plot a path for further improvement.

2.9. **Recommendation 11: Maximise the advantages of the Council's financial standing whilst instilling more robust financial discipline and delivery of efficiency and value for money.**

2.9.1. Work is underway to strengthen the organisation's financial discipline in terms of the delivery of savings targets and balanced budgets, with a focus on budget holders accountability. A new structure is currently being implemented to deliver cultural change, and the financial system is being upgraded with additional reporting functionality that will support stronger discipline and self-service along with a revision to the financial regulations. The 2019/20 budgets will be signed off by each budget manager to ensure accountability is understood and clear at the outset, and financial training has been organised for May to strengthen the discipline needed. A need for refinement of the requirements has been identified in order to embed Outcome Based Budgeting across the organisation this has resulted in being out of timescales and has now been scheduled for end of May 2019.

6. **COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

6.1 The reports forms part of the Tower hamlets improvement plan and recommends number of proposals to increase the pace of change in the borough and empower officers to be less cautious and bureaucratic in order to drive through improvements at a faster rate.

6.2 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The schemes identified in the report have been subject to separate legal advice and are all within the Council's legal powers to undertake.
- 7.2 The nature of the report is an update and therefore there are no further legal issues arising from the report.
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Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Tower Hamlets Improvement Plan

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

Or state N/A