

Cabinet 24 March 2021	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Will Tuckley, Chief Executive	Classification: Unrestricted
Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission – Report	

Lead Member	Councillor Asma Begum, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children, Youth Services and Education
Originating Officer(s)	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy Daniel Kerr, Strategy & Policy Manager
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	No
Reason for Key Decision	3 February 2021
Forward Plan Notice Published	This report has been assessed as not meeting the key decision criteria
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	Priority 1 - People are aspirational, independent and have equal access to opportunities Priority 2 - A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in Priority 3 - A dynamic, outcomes-based council using digital innovation and partnership working to respond to the changing needs of our borough

Executive Summary

This report sets out the findings and recommendations from the work of the Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission which took place between September – December 2020.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the work the Commission has undertaken during the four-month period and agree the recommendations set out in the report.
2. Comment on how the council can play a leadership role in taking forward the recommendations including changes in policy within the council.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 This report provides recommendations to improve the inequalities of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities. The report highlights a number of areas where the borough's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities are experiencing poorer outcomes including in the areas of employment, health, and community leadership.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Not consider the findings and recommendations from the Commission but this is not recommended as the Commission has been established by the council and provides an opportunity to address inequalities faced by our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. The Commission has undertaken work over a four month period and has developed a solid evidence base to support the need for the recommendations put forward.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The shocking and public killing of George Floyd, and subsequent Black Lives Matter demonstrations across the world has brought the subject of race inequality to the forefront of personal and political discussions. The council is committed to creating cohesive communities that are strong, fair and equal. We recognise that we can only do this by working in partnership with our communities to advance equality, promote good relations and tackle discrimination.
- 3.2 Equality is embedded in our partnership plans and addressing inequalities is a core part of our outlook and the way we deliver public services. Tower Hamlets is a place that has for generations welcomed people from all over the world, and has come together in solidarity to stand up to racism and fascism from those who wish to divide our community.
- 3.3 However, we understand that for all off our success and progress there remains much room for improvement to achieve greater equality in the borough. We know that racial discrimination means some people have neither had equal access to public services or employment, nor fair treatment and life chances.
- 3.4 In addition to the Black Lives Matter movement, the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic population has served to expose the severe consequences of the structural disadvantages and discrimination faced by these communities. Public Health England's review of disparities in the risk and outcomes of Covid-19 found that imbedded inequality means that the likelihood of testing positive and dying with Covid-19 is higher for Black and Asian ethnic groups when compared to White ethnic groups.

3.5 In recognition of the high level of concern raised about the longstanding levels of racial inequality in the borough, the council established a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Inequality Commission. The Commission's areas of focus were influenced by an engagement event during the summer in which over 40 stakeholders attended. The Commission was tasked to deliver tangible and practical actions which will deliver real change to the lives of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, and allow the council and its partners to champion the enormous impact these communities can contribute to the borough.

3.6 The key aims of the Commission were:

1. Engage and operate at the heart of Tower Hamlets' communities to hear about people's lived experience and solutions, specifically Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women and young people who experience higher levels of inequality.
2. Work with institutions to advance and prioritise race equality to achieve an inclusive, cohesive, thriving and representative Tower Hamlets.
3. Influence local, sub-regional and regional leaders who have significant influence on Tower Hamlets, particularly in the development of policy and strategy practices and the allocation of resources.

3.7 The Commission focused on the following areas:

1. Community leadership
2. Health
3. Education
4. Employment

3.8 The Commission comprised of the following Commissioners:

- Cllr Asma Begum, Chair (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Youth and Equalities)
- Cllr Mufeedah Bustin (Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion)
- Lord Simon Woolley (Director of Operation Black Vote)
- Safia Jama (Director of Womens Inclusive Team)
- Dr Kambiz Boomla (Senior Lecturer in the Institute of Population Health Sciences at Queen Mary University of London)
- Ian Parkes (Chief Executive, East London Business Alliance)
- Vivian Akinremi (Deputy Young Mayor Tower Hamlets)
- Edwin Ndlovu (Director of Operations for East London NHS Foundation Trust)
- Pam Bhamra (Chair of the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum)
- Graeme McDonald (Managing Director of Solace and Solace in Business)

3.9 The Commission undertook the following activities:

- Held 4 formal Commission meetings;

- Engagement with partner agencies through PEG, THHF, THT , Health & Wellbeing Board, Children's and Families Partnership Board
- Engaged 27 witnesses
- Received 71 responses to call for evidence
- Captured 87 lived experiences through 6 focus groups with school governors, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women, teachers, patients, public and private sector employees and young people
- Dedicated web pages for Commission and regular social media updates

Key Findings

- 3.10 It was clear that there has been significant progress in the borough, most noticeably in educational attainment, and the Commission heard many examples of best practice. However, the pace of change has not been quick enough, nor has it been radical. Much of the evidence suggests that institutional and structural racism is a key barrier in accessing services and progression in life and employment. Many Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents do not have access to same social capital as their White peers and the impact from this permeates into many areas of their life.
- 3.11 Tower Hamlets is a borough which celebrates its diverse communities, but it needs to do more to understand the nuanced and divergent experiences of different Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups. This is particularly relevant when considering data, targets and representation which emerged as a reoccurring theme across the Commission's areas of focus. Many organisations are not collecting comprehensive, disaggregated ethnicity data which would allow them to understand their progress and deliver services which accurately responds to the needs of those who use them. Furthermore, the lack of representation in many areas of public life, or ambitious targets to increase representation, has a profound impact on the way residents perceive, interact and experience services. Every organisation in the borough must engage in ethnic minority pay gap reporting and be transparent about the composition of their boards and structures to help drive targets.
- 3.12 It is clear there is real commitment and passion to improve outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. Whilst the Commission makes many important recommendations, it is the intention to prioritise to **make Tower Hamlets an anti-racist place**, where there is a shared vision and delivery plan by all organisations to make changes at pace. In practice, this will be showcased by an anti-racist pledge which will include tangible actions to drive improvement through establishing a race equality network, setting challenging targets, collecting and publishing disaggregated ethnicity data, increasing representation and better utilisation of organisations buying and influencing powers.

Community Leadership

- 3.13 Engagement from the community is vital to ensure Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic voices shape decision making. Many are unaware of the opportunities available to them. For others, they are disheartened by the lack of representation and feel that the opportunities are not for people from their community. Moreover, many people from these communities are from

disadvantaged backgrounds and feel that they do not have the time or skillset to effectively engage. Further work is needed to develop the infrastructure which grows and supports people to engage with their community. In order to do this, community leadership needs a long-term commitment and investment. There needs to be a systemic plan on how this can be resourced and a clear objective and commitment which states what the borough wants to achieve.

Health

- 3.14 The constraints of structural racism are most apparent when considering health outcomes of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents which are worse than those of White residents in many areas, with many Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents suffering from a higher burden of multimorbidity. A considerable emphasis needs to be placed on improving the partnership approach to tackle the wider determinants of health, with too many Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents experiencing poorer employment and housing conditions. Furthermore, access to health services needs to be improved by ensuring services meet the cultural needs of our diverse communities and developing strong and effective relationships with these community. Digital exclusion is a prevalent access barrier, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside ineffective communication and inadequate translation services. The need to work with our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities should be at forefront of our recovery agenda ensuring we deliver real improvement in health outcomes.

Education and Employment

- 3.15 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children are achieving good academic success however this has not translated into good employment. There are clear limitations in social capital, with many children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic families lacking the confidence and networks to compete with their White peers. Too many young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic families are unfamiliar with the testing and recruitment processes employers undertake, and have not been exposed to the professional, corporate world. Pipelines from primary schools through to university and into employment need to be strengthened and there must be a considerable obligation placed on employers in Canary Wharf and the City of London to engage. Large employers must consider how they can develop pipelines, structures and support to engage Black, Asian and Minority young people and how they can accelerate the pace of change. Representation in these organisations must significantly improve and the structural barriers must be removed. Efforts to increase the capacity of young people in education settings will not succeed so long as the structural barriers remain.
- 3.16 The Commission spent a lot of time speaking to the leading organisations in the borough and the lack of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic representation, particularly those from Black African and Caribbean groups, was shocking. The Commission calls for the development of a leadership programme to nurture the next generation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic leaders. Alongside this, organisations must embrace a cultural shift at all levels. The need for a safe space to have open and honest discussions about race is vital.

- 3.17 Based on the Commission's findings and recommendations the Commission developed the following vision and outcomes:

Vision

By 2025 Tower Hamlets is an anti-racist borough where organisations work together to make radical changes that close inequality gaps by advancing opportunities and ensure the experience of racism within structures and institutions is eradicated.

The Commission makes recommendations which aim to ensure:

- Organisations in Tower Hamlets are publicly committed to addressing race inequality in access to their services, employment, and decision making boards
- Organisations in Tower Hamlets are using disaggregated data and targets to identify and address inequalities;
- Organisations in Tower Hamlets are using their spending power and influence to ensure their suppliers and partners deliver against race equality commitment;
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in Tower Hamlets are empowered and have access to digital skills and equipment to access services and employment;
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in Tower Hamlets are skilled and supported to access community leadership positions and progress in employment;
- The Tower Hamlets Partnership speaks with one voice locally, regionally and nationally on race equality;
- The Tower Hamlets Partnership operates effectively and addresses wider determinate of health inequalities;
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents are engaged in the design and delivery of services which impacts them;
- Local employers are undertaking positive active actions to diversify their workforce at all levels;
- The Tower Hamlets Partnership holds to account local organisations on progress on race inequality.

Next Steps and Delivery

- 3.18 The recommendations set out in this report will be delivered through the Tower Hamlets Partnership Executive Group. The council will assume a lead role and will act as a facilitator to engage and support partners in both the public and private sector to respond to these recommendations. However, achieving true equality in the borough is not a feat the council can achieve alone and the collective efforts of all partners is critical in ensuring the successful implementation of these recommendations. The Commission therefore recommends that a sub group of the Tower Hamlets Partnership Executive Group be established to lead on delivery of the recommendations and work with

the voluntary and community sector Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Network to ensure the voice of the community is reflected in the delivery.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The focus of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic inequalities Commission was to explore inequalities facing our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. The findings and recommendations reflect this. The Commission noted the importance of intersectionality of inequalities facing different protected characteristics such as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women, different groups within Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and deprivation. The recommendations from this Commission if taken forward by the Tower Hamlets Partnership will help to address inequalities in Tower Hamlets and provide a platform to ensure equalities remains at the forefront of our collective work.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

- 5.2 [Report authors should identify any other specific issues relevant to consideration of this report. Including, but not limited to, the issues noted above. This section of the report can also be used to re-emphasise particular issues that Members must have considered before taking the decision (for example issues that may come up if an objection was taken to court). Note – Paragraph 5.1 MUST NOT be deleted.]

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 Agreed recommendations are expected to be implemented within the existing resources of the partner organisations. Funding would be need to identified prior to undertaking any initiatives that require extra resources.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 This report provides the Mayor in Cabinet with the outcome of the BAME inequalities commission and makes recommendations based on those findings. There are no specific legal implications arising from the report.
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Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- **Appendix 1 – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission Report**

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

- None.

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A