

Appendix B – Service Needs

Early Help

The Council owns a number of Children & Family Centres across the borough. These offer a range of services to families with children up to 19 years old (or up to 25 for children with SEND). The offer includes:

- Family support
- Early education training
- Child and family health services
- Childcare advice
- Employment advice
- Volunteering options
- Training Support

We are currently piloting a new government-supported approach in some of our centres called Family Hubs, which aims to integrate a wide range of early help services at a locality level.

Youth Facilities

As part of the Mayor's manifesto commitments, the Tower Hamlets youth offer was relaunched in 2023 under the name Young Tower Hamlets, with a total of £13.7m to be invested into the new service.

From a property perspective, this involves investment in seven Youth Centre projects. The aim is to deliver exemplar centres in each ward.

The project may change from refurbishment of existing centres to redevelopment aimed at providing state-of-the-art youth centres, increasing the capacity to accommodate far more users.

Community Premises

The Council owns a range of assets which are leased to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations and are organised into a defined set of buildings called the Community Premises Portfolio.

The standard form of lease for an occupier of one of these premises is a Community Lease, a 3-5 year lease with a fixed below-market rate rent.

In addition to the above, tenants may also be eligible for our Community Benefit Rent Reduction Scheme, which applies an up to 80% discount on the rent level, subject to criteria.

Our community buildings support the aims of our VCS (Voluntary & Community Sector) Strategy, in particular 'improving access to statutory sector buildings for the VCS'.

Idea Stores and Libraries

Idea Store (IS) is Tower Hamlets' unique offer of integrated library, adult learning and information services. There are five Idea Stores, at Bow, Canary Wharf, Chrisp St, Whitechapel and Watney Market. There are two Libraries at Bethnal Green and Cubitt Town, and a Local History Library and Archives Service at Bancroft Road.

As well as a very strong, modern library offer, customers can also enjoy 800+ courses for adults and families, book groups, art exhibitions, cultural celebrations, under 5s and 50+ sessions, access to the Council's online services and much more.

A range of improvements are being carried out, including:

- Creation of new Learning Labs at IS Watney Market
- A programme of works at IS Whitechapel as part of the Whitechapel Cultural Campus
- Remedial works to IS Chrisp St
- Improvement works to IS Bow
- Refurbishment works at IS Canary Wharf
- Refurbishment works at Local History Library and Archives

Delivery of these projects will enable us to continue providing an excellent service at all our sites in the years ahead.

Adult Residential

In early 2024, Adult Social Care (ASC) will launch a Housing with Care Strategy which will set out the requirements for bed-based care facilities over the next ten years (2023-32) across the full range of types of accommodation including care homes (both residential and nursing), Extra Care Housing (ECH), Shared Lives (adult placement), and Supported Living.

The draft projections show that there will be significant increases in ageing across the population of Tower Hamlets particularly in the age groups 65 + (65%) and 85+ (55%) over the next ten years (2023-2032) which is likely to lead to increased demand for care and support services. Alongside this, the population of those living with learning disability and/or mental health problem are also projected to increase significantly as children and young people transition into adulthood.

Whilst increased investment and transformation of the prevention and early intervention services and the introduction of Technology Enabled Care (TEC) in the community will mitigate some of the pressures on bed-based care settings, there will still be a need for additional accommodation.

The draft projections show that within the next ten years ASC will need a minimum of three additional ECH schemes (240 flats) to be built in the Borough to accommodate a greater proportion of those needing care and support across all disability and older age groups and to reduce the reliance on residential care homes over the same period. These ECH schemes could be provided using capital funds from the Councils programme or by attracting inward investment into the Borough from the private and independent sector. Typically, the development of a new ECH scheme will take from 3-5 years to develop from the initial planning and site acquisition/ identification stage.

The strategy also shows that we need an additional Nursing care home facility with between 25-30 additional beds over the ten-year period.

These projections also show that there will be additional requirements for Supported Living for those with a learning disability (LD) and/or Mental Health condition. The current range of in-borough supported accommodation and registered care provision for people with LD is limited. There is a priority aspiration to support people closer to home as set out in the Adult Learning Disability (ALD) Strategy and most recent Market Position Statement, and for increasing a range of provision in order to achieve this; including registered care for people with high complex needs who are coming through transitions and for those who are in out of area placements due to limited local options. A mixture of provision is required so people have choice and can have the right level of support to meet their needs.

This includes provision in which personal care can be delivered. This could be met through scaling within ECH and smaller developments that meet Care Quality Commission (CQC) care standards.

Residential and nursing care requirements are also projected to increase over the strategy period. However, these requirements could be mitigated by additional expansion of ECH provision over and above the additional schemes mentioned above, alongside an enhanced 'home for life' care and support model within these schemes to support people through to End of Life Care with complex health interventions working alongside NHS partners and deployed through the locality based Primary Care Network (PCN) arrangements.

All of the above requirements need to be planned as far as possible as multi- purpose facilities and aligned with wider health and social care needs. For example, an ECH scheme could be provided on the same footprint as a primary care facility, day opportunities centre, dentists and health/ leisure provision and there are already many examples across the UK where this is working well as an approach.

Substance Misuse

As part of the work being taken forward by the Tower Hamlets Combating Drugs Partnership, a review of the substance misuse treatment and recovery system is taking place. While the Mayor's Six Priority Projects already include one project related to substance misuse, this review has the potential to identify other gaps which may have implications for our provision and how we use our buildings in relation to this area. The results of this work will be captured into the council's wider asset planning process as they both progress.

Education

The Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for the local population. The Tower Hamlets area continues to experience the fastest population growth in the UK. In the ten-year period between 2006 and 2016, the borough gained around 82,500 new residents and its population grew by 38%. This was more than double the rate of population growth seen in London as a whole (15%) and five times the growth in England (8%). During this period the borough's primary school provision was expanded to meet both this increase and the further anticipated rise in demand. However, from 2016 onwards the picture for schools has been changing with the continued growth in the borough's general population not translating into a need for additional primary school places.

As Tower Hamlets feels the impacts of a fall in birth rates, reduced child yield from housing developments and higher migration, it is evident we must consider how we might establish options and a process for addressing how we can make better use of assets with surplus accommodation. This must also align with the growing need for Special Education Need provision, which requires short- and long-term capital investment.

We have established a School Organisation Strategy Group to enable effective engagement with school leaders, with a key priority being to advise on the prioritisation/ implementation of capital projects to increase school places in areas of need (e.g. expansions, new schools) and to rationalise and improve the educational estate (e.g. amalgamations, refurbishments, site disposal).

Our current priorities for capital investment in schools are as follows, in order of priority:

1. Supporting growth to respond to increased demand for places in areas of the borough with demonstrable need;

2. Targeted investment in mainstream and special schools to increase/improve provision for pupils with SEND or other high needs;
3. Strategic improvement of the schools' estate, including funding projects to improve suitability, address health and safety issues, building compliance and poor building condition;
4. Changes to establish new modes of school organisation, aimed at sustaining high quality provision across a local planning area.

The principal source of capital funding for providing additional school places is the DfE Basic Need capital grant. Funding is allocated each year on a rolling basis. It is formula-based and does not reflect post-16 need or specific growth in numbers of pupils with high needs. Additional central funding is available to fund facilities for children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Further funding sources include Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Local Infrastructure Fund (LIF), reserves, capital receipts and prudential borrowing and development contributions in the form of Section 106 development contributions.

There are 95 schools in Tower Hamlets. This includes 66 primary schools (including 4 infant and junior schools), 18 secondary schools, 7 special schools (including 2 alternative provisions) and 4 LA-maintained nurseries. The council has an indirect relationship with others such as academies, faith schools and free schools.

In 2022, Central Government put forward a white paper policy including a 2030 academisation target for all schools. Although abandoned, external policies and government directives will have an impact on how we manage the education estate and sufficiency requirements, and we must be mindful of this. We must also acknowledge that our relationship with maintained schools is not static, and this may have implications on our asset portfolio. As financial pressures on schools deepen, many will see academisation as an option for sustainability, which requires the handing over, or long lease of assets to new responsible bodies.

As we continue to experience a decrease in the demand for mainstream school places, our work with planning colleagues on s106 sites is essential. The Local Plan identifies a sustained development plan for the current period, including options for delivering education provision as part of s106 agreements. Our ongoing review of these options will enable us to effectively forecast the requirement of these sites, ensuring that they align with the fluctuating demands for pupil places and types of provision required. A careful approach to the allocation of sites for educational use is required, and decisions for non-education use will be bolstered by our pupil place planning and asset suitability findings. In addition, our work with colleagues in Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Alternative Provision (AP) is integral to address sufficiency needs in our borough. As we observe a steep demand for SEN and AP resources, our collaboration is crucial in how we invest in both new and existing assets. The increasing requirement for this type of provision has shifted our focus towards this area in the short and medium term. Creativity in how we utilise the limited funds we have is necessary and a suite of resource bases within existing provisions will be explored.

Alongside our own identified need we need to continue to work with partner organisations such as the DfE to ensure the site availability within Tower Hamlets can support where possible the wider educational need.

Considering the above, we must be smart in how we work with schools to make better use of assets and the potential for a higher level of surplus accommodation. We are seeing a shift in attitude amongst our schools and in some areas an urgency to identify third party income generation to

counter the loss of income from pupil placements. Whilst being supportive of this option, we must be careful that any arrangement does not create potential to cause a future shortage of accommodation for statutory age pupils. Tower Hamlets operates a surplus place policy of around 10%, which is crucial to maintaining parental choice and in-year movement.

Looking ahead, it may become necessary for placement reviews and schools may need to close; usually, in circumstances where there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area, which can accommodate displaced pupils and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium to long term. Once a school site has been declared surplus for education purposes, it goes through the usual asset management mechanisms to determine whether other council services can make use of the site. If it is then established that they cannot, the site will be put forward for disposal. There are limitations on the use of such sites for non-education purposes; these require a S77 application and Secretary of State approval.

Capital receipts from site disposal will be used support to the improvement of other parts of the council's education estate.

We will continue to deliver basic needs expansions across the borough where need arises. In addition to which there is a rolling programme of condition & improvements for our school estate to ensure the delivery of education for our pupils.

Schools Maintenance

Tower Hamlets is the responsible body for 54 schools, which includes 40 primary schools, 5 secondary schools, 5 Special/AP schools and 4 LA-maintained nurseries. Voluntary Aided, Academy Trusts, and Free Schools are responsible for their own asset strategies.

Each local authority maintained school receives funding as part of their core budget which is intended to contribute to capital maintenance activity. The expectation on each school is for them to directly fund their own planned preventative maintenance and capital improvement activities. Local authority maintained schools have an opportunity to bid for council funding to support works exceeding £10k.

On an annual basis the Council receives a ring-fenced School Condition Allocation (SCA) from the Department for Education (DfE), which is referred to in the capital programme as the Annual Rolling Conditions & Improvement programme. Over the past number of years the SCA allocation we receive has increased year on year from £2.7m in 2019/20 to £4.7m in 2023/24.

The capital programme allocates c.£3m per annum to address the necessary condition & improvement activity to keep our schools maintained to a baseline acceptable standard of safe and operational. The funding for the programme over the next three years is £9m 2023-26.

Given this limited budget, priority is given to maintained schools with the most severe condition need or significant improvement need to deliver education to an acceptable standard. Investment in our estate is expected to increase as assets age and elements reach end of life. The DfE recognises this in its capital maintenance methodology, as it accounts for location and condition band (based on high-level condition data it collects).

The schemes identified within the annual Condition & Improvement programme are considered high priority works based on data from the corporate asset management database, technical officer's recommendations and school's bids that have relevant supporting evidence.

Condition surveys help build a better understanding of items of repair and help the council identify and prioritise its resources. The Council is working to develop a revised rolling programme of condition surveys to better inform its investment and provide a greater clarity for forecasting future spend and highlight periods of significant need/resource. This rolling programme requires an annual revenue commitment which is currently not in place.

With increasing revenue pressures across the Council and significant alternative calls on the available capital financing required to drive service transformation, achieve revenue savings and to respond to other areas of need it is becoming increasingly challenging for the council to provide the additional funding required to keep ahead of the curve in ensuring our schools remain safe and operational.

Leisure

The council owns a total of seven leisure facilities across the borough, currently operated under contract by leisure provider GLL/Better. These comprise:

- John Orwell
- Mile End
- Poplar Baths
- Tiller
- Whitechapel
- York Hall
- St George's (closed for rebuilding)

More than half of the leisure centres are over 40 years old, which can make these buildings more expensive and challenging to keep in good repair. There is a backlog of condition issues estimated in 2022 at £11.3m needing to be funded over the next decade.

As part of the administration's plans, the leisure service will be brought in-house when the current contract expires in April 2024. In the short term we are focused on the achievement of a smooth transition from outsourced to in-house management of the service and its buildings.

As part of the council's investment in leisure, plans for a rebuilt leisure centre on the St George's site are also underway. The Culture and Leisure team are working with the Capital Delivery team to deliver this project, which is planned to include housing, providing state of the art facilities for the borough's residents. Completion is planned for 2026.

Parks & Open Spaces

There will be a comprehensive programme of upgrading the parks within the borough to ensure the health and well-being of residents, including funds to replace benches, bins, painting railings and lamp posts at sites across the borough. The parks programme includes upgrading sports facilities in parks. The programme is designed to refurbish sports areas across Tower Hamlets (kickabout areas, tennis courts, basketball courts) and installing outdoor gyms. In addition to this there is a programme of works for inclusive playgrounds which will renovate playgrounds across Tower Hamlets, making them accessible to children with a wide range of needs.

These programmes are planned to interlink, and address priorities across the borough's 120 parks. Extensive consultation has been carried out with residents and stakeholders since 2018, with all programmed for delivery across the 3 years of the Capital Programme (2023-26).

Given the recognised shortage of open space in the borough and the difficulty of providing new large areas of open space in such a built-up borough, the council's approach is to secure new areas of publicly accessible open space through the planning process.

The parks also host a local programme of outdoor events such as festivals and music concerts. In accordance with the need for savings we will be ensuring that we optimise the income generating potential of our outdoor spaces.

Many of existing parks include park buildings of varying uses, which require ongoing maintenance and management. These buildings are being actively managed to maximise income generation.

Waste Depot

The Blackwall depot facility is the council's main depot for waste, recycling, cleansing, passenger transport, fleet management and winter maintenance. It is considered not fit for purpose to meet all future needs, including statutory environmental requirements and operational efficiencies.

Options are currently under review for the redevelopment or relocation of the site, with the aim to develop or acquire a fit for purpose waste, recycling, cleansing, winter maintenance and passenger transport depot, office accommodation and welfare facilities.

Customer Service

In 2022, the council began to pilot a new face-to-face customer service offer – Residents' Hubs. These hubs bring together advice on council services such as housing and welfare benefits, along with key local partners such as DWP and voluntary and community organisations.

Following the pilot, the 2023 Budget approved funding for 5 Residents' Hubs to operate from a variety of sites, including Libraries, Idea Stores and the new Town Hall.

The Customer Service Strategy, published in September 2023, reaffirmed this commitment to ensure face-to-face access was widely available across the borough.

Commercial Estate

As well as holding property for direct social and community benefit, the council maintains an investment portfolio of commercial properties, with an income target of c. £5m.

These properties are held for the purpose of providing income either for services and facilities for the council's housing tenants, or for council services more generally.

The portfolio consists of approximately 260 shops as well as a small number of other spaces such as office workspaces and multi-occupied schemes.

A programme of commercial lease renewals and rent reviews is underway to maximise the income to the council from the commercial portfolio. In addition to maximising annual rental income, this also ensures income is secured, by locking tenants into current leases at market level rent rates.