

<b>Committee:</b> Overview and Scrutiny Committee	<b>Date:</b> Tuesday 6 <sup>th</sup> January	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted	<b>Agenda Item:</b> 7.3
<b>Report of:</b> Stephen Halsey, Head of Paid Service  <b>Originating officer(s)</b> Louise Russell, Service Head Corporate Strategy and Equality		<b>Title:</b> Refreshing the Community Plan for 2015  <b>Wards Affected:</b> All	

## 1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report sets out the approach so far to refreshing the Community Plan for 2015 onwards and proposed next steps. It proposes that, through the new Community Plan, the Partnership focuses on a number of high level and cross-cutting priorities, complementing the range of priorities already being progressed by the existing Community Plan Delivery Group structure. This report sets out potential cross-cutting priorities and asks Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on these.
- 1.2 An initial draft of the early sections of the new Community Plan, setting out key achievements, issues and current priorities for the partnership is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The report also sets out proposed steps for finalising the Community Plan by early in 2015/16.

## 2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the initial draft of the 2015 Community Plan and comment on the proposed high level and cross-cutting partnership priorities, as set out in this report.

### **Finalising the Community Plan 2015**

- 2.2 These proposed priorities have been considered by Community Plan Delivery Groups, the Partnership Executive, the council's Corporate Management Network with partner invitees, and Executive members. The next step is to develop a draft Community Plan, reflecting the feedback from all stakeholders. A formal external consultation will be undertaken on this draft. At the same time, we will seek, through the Officer Working Group and Executive members, to

develop some specific commitments and actions to take forward the proposals which will form an action plan to accompany the final draft.

- 2.4 The final Community Plan will need to be agreed by Cabinet and subsequently by full Council as part of the Budget and Policy Framework. It will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee again as part of the Budget and Policy Framework process.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 A process to review the Community Plan and refresh it for 2015 onwards began earlier this year and we have been consulting partners and residents alongside discussions on the budget saving proposals. Through this process we have identified a range of challenges currently being addressed by the existing partnership delivery structure – the Community Plan Delivery Groups (CPDGs) and their respective strategies and action plans.
- 3.2 These delivery arrangements were reviewed earlier in 2014 and found to be generally fit for purpose, although there is an outstanding issue as to how public realm issues are progressed through this structure and the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum is currently considering its role in this. Since that review, a number of delivery arrangements have been strengthened, for example the Economic Taskforce is now meeting regularly and has a set of priorities and action plan. Key bi-lateral partnership arrangements are also being progressed – for example through the Integrated Care Board and the Memorandum of Understanding between the council and Job Centre Plus.
- 3.3 Initial feedback from CPDG members for the Community Plan refresh stressed the need for the Community Plan to build on rather than supplement or replace these existing arrangements.
- 3.4 In the context of this approach, it is not proposed that we should significantly change our existing Community Plan themes, which are well embedded and where we have established clear alignments, although not directly in all cases, to our delivery structure.
- 3.5 The proposed themes for 2015 would be:
- A great place to live
  - A fair and prosperous community
  - A healthy and supportive community
  - A safe and cohesive community
- 3.6 The only proposed change to the current set of themes is the addition of ‘fair’ to the prosperous community goal. This reflects the intention agreed at Cabinet to embed the Fairness Commission recommendations within the Community Plan where possible. It also responds to feedback from consultation that in promoting

and supporting prosperity across the borough, we need to balance that by ensuring that local residents and existing communities do not get left behind and benefit from growth.

- 3.7 It is also proposed that the cross-cutting theme of One Tower Hamlets and promoting equality and cohesion is retained, although the new plan will consider how we move this vision forward given the achievements already made in relation to One Tower Hamlets. Rapid growth coupled with public sector cuts has the potential to undermine cohesion and it remains important that we seek equality for all members of our community.
- 3.8 Finally, in response to this initial draft it has been suggested that the new plan strongly articulates the borough's history, what has been achieved and how far the Partnership has come. The launch of the Community Plan will be tied to the activities to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the borough.

#### **4. BODY OF REPORT**

##### **Agreeing high level priorities**

- 4.1 Within the context of existing delivery structures and commitment to these long-standing themes, the Community Plan needs a purpose of its own. In particular, the plan needs to be more than a summary of all that is in the existing partnership strategies and plans. To achieve this, we are discussing with CPDGs, members and the Partnership Executive an approach which would see the new Community Plan identify some high level and cross-cutting priorities which would seek to galvanise and motivate partners to strengthen and deepen our focus on some of our biggest challenges with the aim of making a real difference in these areas over the next 3-4 years.
- 4.2 In looking ahead over the next 3-4 years, perhaps our most significant challenge will be about seeking to continue the progress we have made as partners against a backdrop of ongoing reductions in public sector funding. How we address this will need to be a key theme throughout the plan.
- 4.3 In determining the plan's high level priorities, it is proposed that they should:
- Focus on cross-cutting or 'bigger picture' issues, cross more than one Community Plan theme or a broad range of partners
  - Address new challenges, or ones which have been more resistant to improvement in the past
  - Enable us to accelerate progress by jointly harnessing effort of all partners around shared goals, adding value to existing work,
  - Reflect the need to respond to budget reductions
  - Promote One Tower Hamlets.

- 4.4 Based on these criteria, some suggested areas are emerging. The key ones are as follows:

***Responding to population growth***

- 4.5 There is clear data about the number of new homes and new residents projected within the borough. There is some evidence about the nature of this new population. This brings with it pressure on existing services and infrastructure which will require joint approaches to ensure that we can provide schools and health facilities for all residents, enable people to move around the borough safely and that we also protect open space and the environment through managing pollution and air quality.

***Ensuring the impact of economic growth is fair***

- 4.6 Economic growth, including new homes and new businesses, provides significant opportunities for those living and working here. However, the nature of new jobs and new homes can sometimes mean that existing residents feel excluded. Lack of affordability of house prices and rents, ‘gentrification’ of certain areas and housing used as investment or second homes can all militate against development and regeneration being perceived as fair. The Fairness Commission looked at how we can keep rent levels in the borough truly affordable to local people – there is no easy answer to this but it will be key to maintaining mixed communities. As partners, we can make limiting this impact a key objective of development and regeneration plans. In addition, there is the danger of a growing gulf between the high end businesses in Canary Wharf and the rest of the borough – there is the potential for the partnership to do more to engage with these businesses and harnessing their potential for corporate social responsibility at a time when public services are being squeezed.

***Empowering residents and building resilience***

- 4.7 What can we as partners do to enable our communities to better support themselves against a backdrop of reducing public sector resources? There is a need to reduce dependence on public sector services and move into a greater enabling role. Where are there opportunities for greater civic engagement and co-production with individuals and communities, and how can partners develop and support these? We have a dynamic voluntary and community sector in Tower Hamlets – what should be our collective approach to working with and building capacity to maximise its potential despite? Can we develop a stronger partnership wide focus on early intervention activities which seek to build resilience and reduce dependence?

***Reducing significant health inequalities and their impact***

- 4.8 Whilst there is progress on education, employment and reducing child poverty, health inequalities remain persistent and have a real impact on life chances. There are high levels of ‘lifestyle risk factors’ around obesity, smoking, mental health. Can we develop a borough wide focus on healthy living, with all partners considering their role, and seeking to make a reality of the ‘health in all policies’?

### ***Harnessing partnership resources to increase employment***

- 4.9 Whilst employment rates are improving, they are still among the lowest nationally, with particular issues for women and ethnic minorities. Unemployment due to ill health, including mental illness, is a significant challenge. The levers around improving employment rates involve a number of partners, including those on a regional and sub-regional level with whom the partnership might engage more directly. Whilst employment is already a key focus for the Economic Taskforce there is an argument that as employment underpins so many other outcomes and life chances, and in itself boosts resilience and reduces dependence, there could be real benefit from a partnership wide focus on this, seeking to engage with all local employers and build an employment focus throughout regeneration and development activity.

### **Enabling activity**

- 4.10 The above proposals include suggestions about what the Community Plan might aim to achieve. In addition there is scope for the Plan to consider the how – the enablers that will support and underpin joint action around these priorities. Some proposed enabling actions include;
- Joint work to understand and respond to the impact and interdependencies of financial pressures across the local public sector
  - Exploring the potential for greater sharing of services and assets across the partnership
  - Integration and re-engineering of key services – such as health, social care and increasingly housing – making every contact count
  - Understanding population growth, and the needs of the changing community including new communities

### **One Tower Hamlets**

- 4.11 The One Tower Hamlets focus arose from consultation with local people who identified how strongly they valued and wanted to protect the diversity and sense of community within the borough. Our approach to One Tower Hamlets has focused on:
- Reducing inequality
  - Promoting cohesion
  - Strengthening community empowerment and leadership
- 4.12 The review of the Community Plan has reinforced the importance of these issues. The priorities identified above will help retain this focus, for example
- A focus on fairness and ensuring that no community is left behind will be key in maintaining cohesion within the borough
  - A focus on empowerment and resilience will ensure that communities are engaged and capacity built for community leadership

- A focus on health inequality and employment will enable us to tackle some of the key issues which militate against equality

4.13 In addition, it is proposed that once priorities are determined, we ensure that programmes of work for partners, explicitly include a focus on particular disadvantaged groups, as identified through our Borough Equality Analysis.

4.14 We have also identified as a key enabler the need to understand and plan around needs of a changing population, given the pace of change and growth in our community, which should explicitly consider how we can project and respond to the needs of new communities.

## **5. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

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

## **6. LEGAL COMMENTS**

6.1 The Community Plan contains the Council's sustainable community strategy within the meaning of section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000. The purpose of such a strategy is to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Tower Hamlets and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom.

6.2 As the law is presently framed, the Council is required to have a sustainable community strategy and may modify it from time to time. In modifying the strategy, the Council must consult and seek the participation of each partner authority and such other persons as the Council considers appropriate.

6.3 The Council must have regard to statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State in July 2008 in the document entitled Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities. The statutory guidance indicates that authorities need to consider how to consult with local people, local businesses and third sector organisations.

6.4 The Deregulation Bill, which is being considered by Parliament, proposes to remove the obligation on local authorities to prepare sustainable community strategies. It will do that by deleting section 4 from the Local Government Act 2000 with consequent impact on Article 4 of the Council's Constitution. At the time of writing, the Deregulation Bill had completed the last day of the committee stage in the House of Lords and was to proceed to the report stage.

6.5 The deletion of the obligation to have a community strategy will not have the effect that the Council is prevented from having a strategy for the purposes previously served by a sustainable community strategy. It will, however, make

such a strategy discretionary. There may be good reasons, having regard to the Council's statutory functions, why the Council may choose to continue to have a Community Plan which sets the overall objectives for the Tower Hamlets Partnership.

- 6.6 Whilst the sustainable community strategy forms part of the Policy Framework, the adoption of the Community Plan is governed by the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules. These provide that the Mayor has responsibility for preparing the draft plan for adoption by the full Council. Consultation is required with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.7 The Council is subject to the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010, which requires the Council to have due regard to the following matters in the exercise of its functions: (1) the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act; (2) the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (RPC) and those who don't; and (3) the need to foster good relations between persons who share an RPC and those who don't. The Council should consider these matters in the development of the Community Plan and some form of equality analysis should be carried out to support such consideration. It is likely that consultation will need to be carried out in order to give due regard to the public sector equality duty when setting the partnership objectives.
- 6.8 The Council is required as a best value authority 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 Council is required to consult for the purposes of deciding how to fulfil its duty. The Community Plan may contain objectives designed to deliver best value and, accordingly, the Council should ensure that any consultation is targeted to enable it to determine how best to fulfil its best value duty.
- 6.9 The Council is required by section 3A of the Local Government Act 1999 to take steps to ensure that local representatives are involved in the exercise of Council functions if it considers it appropriate they should be so involved. This provides another basis for the Council to ensure that local people and organisations are properly involved in the development of the Community Plan. It should be noted, however, the Deregulation Bill which is referred to in paragraph 9.7 above proposes to delete the duty to involve.
- 6.10 Any consultation carried out for the purposes of developing the Community Plan should comply with the following criteria: (1) it should be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage; (2) the Council must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and response; (3) adequate time must be given for consideration and response; and (4) the product

of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account. The duty to act fairly applies and this may require a greater deal of specificity when consulting people who are economically disadvantaged. It may require inviting and considering views about possible alternatives.

- 6.11 The objectives set out in the draft Community Plan are broad and high-level but appear to be capable of being carried out within the Council's statutory functions. Regard will need to continue to be had to the limits of statutory power as the plan is developed.

## **7. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 One Tower Hamlets remains a key underpinning theme of the Community Plan. Our approach to reflecting this in the Plan is detailed in this report in section 3.17 onwards. The Borough Equality Analysis has been updated and used to inform the development of initial proposals and ensure that in finalising the plan and accompanying action plans we show due regard to the requirements of particular equality groups and those with protected characteristics.

## **8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT**

- 8.1 This report has no environmental implications

## **9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

## **10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 These proposals do not contribute to the reduction of crime and disorder

## **11. EFFICIENCY STATEMENT**

- 11.1 This report has no implications for efficiency

## **12. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – 2015 Community Plan initial draft



There are no background papers

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