



Strategic Plan 2015/16

A Message from the Mayor

I am pleased to present the Council's Strategic Plan for 2015/16. This plan incorporates delivery on my manifesto commitments, and sets out our key priorities for the year and the major activities to deliver them.

I remain ambitious for Tower Hamlets at a time of significant financial challenge. The Council has delivered over £100 million of savings since 2010/11 whilst protecting frontline services and this Strategic Plan aims to continue to support residents and help protect them from ongoing central government funding reductions.

We have strong ambitions to build more affordable housing, continue to improve our education results, support more people into work and make the borough cleaner, greener and safer. The Strategic Plan sets out how we will achieve our ambitions and track our progress.

Despite the challenges we face, I am sure that the council can continue to support our residents and reduce the inequalities that we see around us. The Strategic Plan incorporates our Single Equality Framework objectives which set out the council's approach to tackling inequality and promoting cohesion.

I also recognise the financial difficulties that many households in Tower Hamlets face, which is why we've frozen council tax again, are supporting free school meals for primary pupils and are delivering the Mayor's Education Allowance and Higher Education Award.

Lutfur Rahman
Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Introduction: the 2015/16 context

This outline Strategic Plan describes the council's overall aims, objectives and the outcomes we want to deliver. The Strategic Plan action plan details the milestones planned in 2015/16 to achieve those outcomes.

The Strategic Plan is informed by the Mayor's key priorities including:

- Housing and Regeneration;
- Jobs and Local Economy;
- Cost of Living;
- Young People and Schools;
- Older People and Health;
- Community Safety and Community Cohesion;
- Environment and Public Realm; and
- Arts, Heritage, Leisure and Culture.

The Strategic Plan 2015/16 takes into account the continued impact of the government's reductions in funding to local authorities. A key area of focus in 2015/16 will be the continued work to design and deliver savings that will be required in future years. The council continues to prioritise front-line services.

National Context

The Coalition Government is continuing to implement significant changes to the services which our local residents rely on. This includes:

- Significant reform of welfare – a key focus for the government in 2015/16 will be implementation of Universal Credit.
- New expectations and requirements, for example in relation to supporting carers and children with special educational needs.
- A reduction in local authority remit in key areas, such as education, with the continuing encouragement of free schools and academies.

The outcome of the national general election, scheduled for 7th May 2015, and subsequent government policy is likely to have a significant impact on the context within which the council operates.

Council Finances

The prolonged real term reduction in public spending faced by local authorities has been a continuing challenge for the council. The 2013 Spending Review and subsequent statements from the Office for Budget Responsibility have seen extensive and ongoing reductions in central government funding - both revenue and capital. The council has already made good progress in achieving savings, however further cuts now mean that there is a budget reduction of approximately £70 million to achieve in the next three years. The protection of the quality of front line services is a fundamental principle for the Mayor and council.

Population growth and change

The estimated resident population of Tower Hamlets is 272,000. Over recent years, the borough has seen the highest population growth in the country.

Tower Hamlets remains a relatively young borough, with almost half of the recent population rise concentrated in the 25-34 age range. The profile of the borough is one of increasing diversity, with 43% of the population born outside of the UK. There are sizeable Bangladeshi (32%) and White British communities (31%) and an increasing number of smaller ethnic groups in the resident population.

Employment and the economy

Tower Hamlets is one of the highest economic and employment growth areas in the country. There are already over 253,000 jobs in the borough: equating to 1.3 jobs for every working age resident. The economy has important financial, communication and retail sectors with 81% of all employment in the borough based in Canary Wharf and the City Fringe.

Supporting residents to benefit from the borough's strong economy is still a key challenge. Only 15% of jobs within the borough are taken by local people. Although the borough's employment rate was recently recorded at its highest ever level, it remains below the London average. Effective employment services, to support more local residents to gain the necessary skills and access London-wide opportunities, will be central to maintaining the upward trend.

Work with local business, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs), to create growth remains an important priority. This will be supported by a range of measures including business engagement events, town centre development, marketing campaigns and local procurement initiatives.

Education

Outcomes for local children and young people are good; local Key Stage 2 and GCSE results are now consistently above national averages. The Mayor's Education Award has helped more young people continue in further and higher education, and A-Level grades are getting better year-on-year. The Children and Families Act is now in force, which includes a focus on support to children with special educational needs.

Housing and Environment

A fast growing population, low income levels for many households and high house prices makes housing a key local challenge. The borough has a strong track record of building large numbers of affordable homes for residents – amongst the best in the country.

Despite this, housing need and demand continue to increase. For example, there are around 19,810 households on the housing waiting list with over 7,500 of these overcrowded. On average around 2,200 properties become available each year.

In addition, the Government's welfare reform changes are really taking effect. Many households have had their income reduced and there has been a rise in residents seeking advice: both to understand how the changes will affect them, and to get support in mitigating the impact of the reforms.

The development industry is continuing to submit proposals to redevelop in the borough. The Tower Hamlets Local Plan sets out the extensive physical renewal that is planned to meet the needs of the growing population. From 2015, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will detail how the supporting infrastructure required will be paid for including funding from development.

Health and Care

Despite strong progress in recent years, improving healthy life outcomes for residents remains a key priority in the Strategic Plan. Eight out of ten residents report that their health is good or very good; however, the proportion citing poor health is the fourth highest in London.

Health inequalities begin early and Tower Hamlets has one of the highest rates of childhood obesity in the country. The integration of public health functions into the council has provided a strong platform for further health improvements across all ages.

Social care is a strong local and national priority. In recent years, Tower Hamlets has focused on safeguarding and transforming social care services by giving users more choice and control. Nationally, the Care Act sets out a number of significant changes the council will need to focus upon including reform of how support is accessed and funded. Work to support the further integration of health and care locally will be taken forward by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Inequality and fairness

Underpinning the objectives of the Strategic Plan is the theme of One Tower Hamlets – reducing inequality, fostering community cohesion and supporting strong local leadership.

The effects of the economic downturn, coupled with the loss of funding for many public services, means that the council is operating in an environment in which there are risks that inequality will grow rather than reduce in the borough.

There has been significant progress in delivering the actions identified by the borough's Fairness Commission, including in addressing the 'poverty premium' in Tower Hamlets. The learning and research developed through the Commission has also informed the development of the borough's Community Plan.

Single Equality Framework

The Strategic Plan incorporates the council's Single Equality Framework (SEF) priorities. The SEF sets out the council framework for tackling inequality and promoting cohesion. SEF Equality Objectives are highlighted with a * in this document.

The council has identified a set of equality performance measures to help track performance against our equality objectives for 2015/16. These include existing performance measures that relate to equality and indicators which will be disaggregated by specific equality strands where we need to narrow the gap in terms of outcomes for specific groups. This approach demonstrates that we are meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty to prepare and publish objectives which demonstrate how the organisation will meet the aims of the Duty. The SEF measures are also highlighted with an *.

Best Value Inspection

During 2014/15, a Best Value Inspection of the Council was undertaken at the request of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. A key focus in 2015/16 will be responding to the inspection's findings, including implementing the Best Value Strategy and Action Plan agreed with the Secretary of State's appointed commissioners. A number of the activities with the Best Value Action Plan are reflected in the Strategic Plan's Action Plan.

From vision to performance

The Mayor and our partners have a clear vision for the borough *to improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in Tower Hamlets*. It is a vision that has been agreed by partners in the Tower Hamlets Partnership.

As part of this vision the Mayor developed a set of pledges which are articulated through the **Five Themes** of the Community Plan:

A Great Place to Live - Tower Hamlets will be a place where people live in quality affordable housing, located in clean and safe neighbourhoods served by well-connected and easy to access services and community facilities.

A Prosperous Community - Tower Hamlets will be a place where everyone, regardless of their background and circumstances, has the aspiration and opportunity to achieve their full potential through education and vibrant local enterprise.

A Safe and Cohesive Community - Tower Hamlets will be a safer place where people feel safer, get on better together and difference is not seen as threat but a core strength of the borough.

A Healthy and Supportive Community - Tower Hamlets will be a place where people are supported to live healthier, more independent lives and the risk of harm and neglect to vulnerable children and adults is reduced.

One Tower Hamlets – Tower Hamlets will be a place where everyone feels they have an equal stake and status. We are committed to reducing inequalities, supporting cohesion and providing strong community leadership.

Strategic Priorities

Sitting underneath the Strategic Plan's five themes are the council's strategic priorities. These priorities set out more explicitly the organisation's key objectives for the next year.

A Great Place to Live

- 1.1: Provide good quality affordable housing
- 1.2: Maintain and improve the quality of housing
- 1.3: Improve the local environment and public realm
- 1.4: Provide effective local services and facilities
- 1.5: Improve local transport links and connectivity
- 1.6: Develop stronger communities

A Prosperous Community

- 2.1: Improve educational aspiration and attainment
- 2.2: Support more people into work
- 2.3: Manage the impact of welfare reform on local residents
- 2.4: Foster enterprise and entrepreneurship

A Safe and Cohesive Community

- 3.1: Focus on crime and anti-social behaviour
- 3.2: Reduce fear of crime
- 3.3: Foster greater community cohesion

A Healthy and Supportive Community

- 4.1: Reduce health inequalities and promote healthy lifestyles
- 4.2: Enable people to live independently
- 4.3: Provide excellent primary and community care
- 4.4: Keep vulnerable children, adults and families' safer, minimising harm and neglect

One Tower Hamlets

- 5.1: Reduce inequalities
- 5.2: Work efficiently and effectively as One Council

Key Activities and Initiatives

The next section of this plan sets out the key activities and initiatives proposed in 2015/16 to enable us to deliver our vision and strategic priorities. The Strategic Plan Action Plan sets out further detail on these activities, including the more specific milestones planned in 2015/16.

A Great Place to Live

A Great Place to Live reflects the Council's continuing ambition to make Tower Hamlets a place where people are proud to live, work and visit.

In 2015/16 we will endeavour to maximise the number of new affordable homes delivered, increase the number of existing homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard and tackle fuel poverty. We will also continue to focus on securing transparent service charges for leaseholders and ensuring that Registered Providers deliver on their service agreements.

The council will maintain its leading role on significant regeneration developments, including at Blackwall Reach and in Whitechapel. Improving our public realm and promoting our heritage will remain a key focus. This includes, for example, continued support to enable the Stairway to Heaven memorial to be completed. The council will also take further steps to enhance its library and lifelong learning service, as well as our leisure facilities.

A key priority is to respond effectively to continuing housing and welfare reform, including homelessness prevention, as we seek to mitigate the impact on residents.

In 2015/16 our priorities are to:

Provide good quality affordable housing:

- Increase the availability of affordable housing including family sized housing*
- Plan effectively to deliver affordable housing and funding for infrastructure, (including for health and education)
- Support regeneration at Blackwall Reach and the Ocean Estate
- Deliver a programme of new build council housing
- Increase the pace of regeneration in Poplar
- Deliver housing, a leisure centre and community facilities at Poplar Baths / Dame Colet House
- Seek to mitigate homelessness and improve housing options*
- Deliver the Watts Grove project to time and within budget
- Hold a referendum on the future of Tower Hamlets Homes (THH)

Maintain and improve the quality of housing:

- Reduce the number of council homes that fall below a decent standard*
- Improve the quality of housing services
- Identify and target sub-standard homes through the introduction of a landlord licensing scheme
- Offer affordable fuel options through the Tower Hamlets Energy Community Power (Energy Cooperative)*

Improve the local environment and public realm:

- Progress the Carbon Reduction Plan for council buildings
- Deliver the council's Conservation Strategy
- Enhance and protect the borough's biodiversity providing residents access to nature

- Introduce a borough-wide vehicle anti-idling regime in order to protect and improve the local environment
- Implement and promote awareness of a borough wide 20mph limit
- Work in partnership to improve our public realm
- Increase household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting
- Improve our parks, playgrounds and open spaces

Provide effective local services and facilities:

- Manage national planning changes effectively to deliver local priorities
- Implement the Council's Markets Strategy
- Adopt the Tower Hamlets local Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
- Deliver the Whitechapel Vision
- Refresh the Borough Local Plan
- Represent the council and comprehensively input into the Isle of Dogs Opportunity Area Planning Framework
- Deliver a multi-faith burial ground*

Improve local transport links and connectivity:

- Provide fair parking arrangements for businesses, residents and visitors
- Support sustainable local transport, including cycle improvements

Develop stronger communities:

- Engage residents and community leaders in policy and budget changes*
- Implement a framework for engagement of borough-wide equality forums in the Partnership*
- Deliver locally appropriate services through the 4 Locality Hubs

A Prosperous Community

We aim to create a Tower Hamlets in which everyone, regardless of their background and circumstances, has the aspiration and opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Tower Hamlets aims to maintain its excellent performance in school improvement, supported by a strong local education authority and active parents and governors. The council will continue to invest in supporting young people across all ages and embed the provisions of the Children and Families Act 2014.

Fostering enterprise and employment is a key priority for the council. It is important that we continue to drive local economic growth by working effectively with business, including small and medium enterprises. Supporting more local people into jobs through effective employment services is also essential.

The council will maintain its support to residents as welfare reform continues, including the introduction of Universal Credit. An extensive information programme, supported by employability and other assistance, will remain important throughout 2015/16.

In 2015/16 our priorities are to:

Improve educational aspiration and attainment:

- Ensure sufficient places are provided to meet the need for statutory school places
- Expand free early years education places of high quality for disadvantaged two-year-olds*
- Raise attainment of all children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and narrow the gap between all children and those that receive Pupil Premium (EYFS)*
- Increase the number of children achieving 5 A*-C GCSE grades including English and maths*
- Bring A Level results above the national average*
- Embed the UNICEF UK Child Rights programme across the Children and Families Partnership*
- Assist more people into further education and to university, and continue to deliver the Mayor's Educational Allowance (MEA) and the Mayor's Higher Education Award (MEHEA)*
- Maintain investment in youth services and provision for young people*
- Provide effective support for parents and governors*
- Implement the Children and Families Act 2014 to support children with special educational needs*

Support more people into work:

- Create a new integrated Employment Centre
- Support residents into jobs through cross Council employment and skills programmes*
- Provide high quality support and training to assist young people into sustainable employment*
- Maximise local employment and economic benefits from the council's processes and capture these opportunities

- Deliver the Women and Health employment programme focusing on the priority of Maternity and Early Years*
- Optimise use of existing funding and maximise prospects for future funding
- Support English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)*

Manage the impact of welfare reform on local residents and maximising incomes:

- Drive the ongoing partnership-wide programme around welfare reform*
- Implement the Digital Inclusion Strategy*

Fostering enterprise and entrepreneurship:

- Support local businesses through information sharing, training and events
- Develop opportunities for growth and sustainability in local commercial districts
- Work collaboratively across London to enhance investment and opportunity

Safe and Cohesive Community

Ensuring that everyone feels safe and confident in their homes and on the streets of Tower Hamlets remains a key Mayoral priority. There will be a continued focus on crime and anti-social behaviour, with effective and visible enforcement.

The council will continue to invest in Police Officers and uniformed THEOs. We also recognise the need to go beyond simply tackling crime and ASB to also address people's fear of crime and perceptions of personal safety through better information, community engagement and an improved local environment.

Tower Hamlets is rightly proud of its diversity. The council remains committed to bringing all of its communities together to foster understanding and support cohesion. Supporting events which celebrate the diversity of the borough and its people play an important role in this respect.

In 2015/16 our priorities are to:

Focus on crime and anti-social behaviour:

- Deliver the partnership 'Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) programme'
- Tackle and prevent hate crime through a zero tolerance approach
- Manage the night time economy
- With our partners, deliver the Partnership Community Safety Plan*
- Work with the Police and Mayor for London to maintain and improve enforcement
- Work with partners in the community to target resources to reduce crime and tackle ASB

Reduce fear of crime by:

- Improve the responsiveness and visibility of our ASB services*

Foster greater community cohesion:

- Strengthen community leadership to enable key individuals and organisations to challenge extremist ideology
- Celebrate our diversity with community events every month*

A Healthy and Supportive Community

Our aim is to support residents to live healthier, more independent lives and reduce the risk of harm and neglect to vulnerable children and adults.

Within this theme, a key emphasis is on promoting healthy lifestyles and ensuring fewer residents require long-term care for avoidable health needs. The council is also committed to protecting the interests of residents in the context of significant health reforms. The successful transfer of public health responsibilities to the council has provided a solid foundation on which to build.

The council is committed to ensuring that Tower Hamlets is one of the top performing councils in the country with responsibility for social services. A key priority will be implementing the Care Act and using this to help improve our services. Supporting our most vulnerable residents is important to us; Tower Hamlets continues to be the only borough in England that still provides free homecare for example.

In 2015/16 our priorities are to:

Reduce health inequalities and promote healthy lifestyles:

- Ensure every child has a healthy start*
- Support people to lead healthier lives*
- Improve the support available to people with mental health conditions*
- Improve early detection and awareness of long-term conditions and cancer*
- Use Public Health expertise within a Council and Partnership-wide approach to reduce health inequalities for all sections of the community*
- Invest in the borough's leisure centres and playing pitches
- Deliver free school meals for all primary pupils in the borough*
- Work with people with drug and alcohol dependencies, commissioning effective treatment provision, to break the cycle of substance misuse*

Enable people to live independently:

- Improve support to carers*
- Enable personalised support for the borough's most vulnerable residents*

Provide excellent primary and community care:

- Develop further integrated working between health, social care and housing*
- Implement the Care Act*

Keep vulnerable children, adults and families' safer, minimising harm and neglect:

- Work with partner agencies to protect vulnerable adults*
- Provide proportionate support to vulnerable children and families*
- Introduce improvements to the adoption system*
- Improve identification of, and response to, victims of child sexual exploitation*

One Tower Hamlets

Underpinning the Community Plan vision is the aspiration to build One Tower Hamlets – a borough where everyone feels they have an equal stake and status. The council is committed to reducing inequalities, fostering cohesion and supporting strong community leadership.

The over-arching aim of One Tower Hamlets takes on added importance in the context of considerable budget reductions. As part of this, we will continue our work with partners to help address the recommendations arising from the Fairness Commission.

This theme also reflects the key projects we are delivering to make our council more lean, flexible and citizen-centred. Over the next year, we intend to better use our assets, work smarter and buy better.

A key focus will be delivering the council's Best Value Strategy and Action Plan, following the inspection of the council that was undertaken in 2014/15 and the subsequent Directions from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

In 2015/16 our priorities are to:

Reduce inequalities:

- Employ a workforce that fully reflects the community it serves*
- Refresh our strategies around diversity and cohesion*

Work efficiently and effectively as One Council:

- Implement the Best Value Strategy and Action Plan
- Deliver the Communications Action Plan
- Create an environment that fosters a healthy and effective workforce
- Develop the strategic ICT partnership
- Maximise potential income from our rate base and our council tax base
- Develop progressive partnerships to further the Mayor's social objectives*
- Develop the Council's approach to procurement*
- Maintain high levels of customer satisfaction with residents when they contact the Council
- Make better use of our buildings and other public assets
- Tackle misuse of public assets and generate income from pro-active anti-fraud work
- Prioritise frontline services whilst delivering the council's budget strategy during a period of declining resources*

Measuring our Performance

We use a basket of performance measures to track whether we are delivering on our strategic priorities. The proposed measures are set out below.

A Great Place to Live

- Number of affordable homes delivered
- Number of affordable social rented housing completions for families (gross)*
- Level of homeless prevention through casework*
- Number of overcrowded families rehoused*
- Percentage of overall housing stock that is not decent*
- Satisfaction with parks and open spaces
- Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling & composting
- Improved street & environmental cleanliness
- Satisfaction with local neighbourhood

A Prosperous Community

- Early Years Achievement - Percentage of children achieving a good level of development*
- Percentage of children achieving Level 4+ in Reading, Writing and Maths at Key Stage 2*
- Achievement of 5 or more A*- C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths*
- Average point score per A Level Student (FTE)*
- Percentage of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)*
- Employment rate (gap v London)*
- Jobseekers allowance claimant count (gap v London)*
- Number of job starts for Tower Hamlets residents*
- Child Poverty rate

A Safe and Cohesive Community

(MPOAC 7 and Community Safety Partnership priority measures – to be confirmed through the CSP planning process)

- MOPAC 7 crimes (total)
- Burglary offences
- Robbery offences
- Theft of a motor vehicle offences
- Theft from a motor vehicle offences
- Theft from the person offences
- Total number of criminal damage
- Number of total notifiable offences
- Local concern about ASB and crime
- Number of people killed or seriously injured
- Number of children killed or seriously injured
- Extent to which residents feel the police and other local services are successfully dealing with ASB*
- Proportion of residents who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area*

A Healthy and Supportive Community

- Life expectancy at birth (male/female)*
- Smoking prevalence (overall)
- Smoking cessation*
- Under 18 conception
- Excess weight in 4-5 year olds*
- Percentage of CAF reviews with an improved score
- Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support, and those receiving direct payments*
- Social care-related quality of life*
- Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family
- Percentage of ethnic minority background children adopted*

One Tower Hamlets

- Proportion of staff that are LP07 or above who have a disability*
- Proportion of staff that are LP07 or above who are from an ethnic minority*
- Proportion of staff that are LP07 or above that are women*
- Working days lost due to sickness absence
- Customer access satisfaction
- Proportion of residents that agree the council involves residents when making decisions
- Proportion of residents that agree the council is doing a good job
- Percentage of council tax collected (budgeted)
- Percentage of non-domestic rates collected (budgeted)

*Denotes SEF equality objectives / performance measures