


<b>Cabinet</b> 8 September 2015	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Service Head, Corporate Strategy & Equality	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
Tower Hamlets Partnership Community Plan 2015	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Mayor John Biggs</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Mark Cairns, Corporate Strategy & Equality
<b>Wards affected</b>	ALL Wards
<b>Community Plan Theme</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes

### **Executive Summary**

This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the new proposed Tower Hamlets Community Plan (Appendix 1).

The Community Plan sets out the long-term vision and priorities for Tower Hamlets. The Strategy is developed and owned by the Tower Hamlets Partnership, led by the Council.

The refresh of the Community Plan has been informed by assessments of needs in the borough and through consultation with local residents, organisations and partners.

### **Recommendations:**

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the process followed for refreshing the Community Plan;
2. Approve the Community Plan; and
3. Authorise the Service Head for Corporate Strategy and Equality to make any minor amendments to the Community Plan prior to publication following consultation with the Mayor.

## **1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 The Community Plan provides the long-term vision for the borough, articulating local aspirations, needs and priorities. As the high-level partnership strategy, it informs all other strategies and delivery plans of the Tower Hamlets Partnership, including the Council's Strategic Plan.
- 1.2 It outlines how the Partnership will work together to improve the lives of all those who live and work in the borough. The Plan continues the existing focus on tackling poverty and social exclusion in Tower Hamlets, as well as the overarching theme of One Tower Hamlets, emphasising equality, cohesion and community leadership. However, this Community Plan also incorporates a new set of high level and cross-cutting priorities, which will galvanise and motivate partners to focus their efforts jointly on some of our biggest challenges, with the aim of making a real difference in these areas over the lifetime of the Plan.
- 1.3 The Council's Policy Framework, referred to in Article 4 of the Council's Constitution currently contains an entry for "Sustainable Community Strategy, Section 4 Local Government Act 2000". The deletion of section 4 from the Local Government Act 2000 with effect from May this year means that the Community Plan (the name given to Tower Hamlets' sustainable community strategy) ceased to be part of the Policy Framework, and with it the requirement for approval by Full Council. Approval of the Plan is therefore an executive decision for the Mayor in Cabinet.

## **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Cabinet may decide not to approve the proposed Community Plan, in which case elements of the refresh process may need to be repeated.
- 2.2 Cabinet may also decide to make any amendments to the Plan as it sees fit.

## **3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 The proposed themes for 2015 are:
  - A great place to live
  - A fair and prosperous community
  - A safe and cohesive community, and
  - A healthy and supportive community.

- 3.2 The only difference from the themes in our previous Community Plan is the amendment of the second goal to include the word 'fair'. This change has been made to embed the recommendations of the Fairness Commission within the Community Plan. This was also echoed in the views of consultees that in promoting and supporting prosperity across the borough, we need to ensure that local residents and existing communities do not get left behind, and can benefit from growth.
- 3.3 A cross-cutting One Tower Hamlets theme has also been retained, reflecting the importance of equality, cohesion and community leadership in our vision for the borough. Over the next four years, our focus will be on fairness and ensuring that no community is left behind; on empowering our communities and making them resilient, by building their engagement and capacity to lead; and on tackling inequality through healthy living and employment.

#### New cross-cutting priorities

- 3.4 However, alongside the existing strategies and structures in place to achieve the vision for the borough, partners were keen that the Community Plan adds value to these. It therefore identifies a set of four additional cross-cutting partnership priorities, focusing on issues which cross more than one Community Plan theme or are faced by a broad range of partners. The aim is to enable partners to accelerate progress by focusing their efforts jointly around specific shared goals, and thereby making the most of shrinking public sector resources.
- 3.5 The priorities agreed by the Partnership are as follows:
- 3.6 **Priority 1: Empowering residents and building resilience**  
We will enable residents to better support themselves and each other, so that partners can maximise their impact with limited resources. This encompasses involving residents in the design and delivery of services, building capacity in the voluntary and community sector, and early intervention and prevention. Crucial to this is making it easier for all groups to engage with public sector organisations, both as citizens and as service-users.
- 3.7 **Priority 2: Promoting healthier lives**  
While life expectancy is increasing, we must address inequalities in health both within the borough, and between Tower Hamlets and the rest of the country. This will involve tackling the wider determinants of health, our environment, and promoting prevention and early intervention so that conditions do not deteriorate and require more intensive interventions later. This will require all partners to understand the impact they can have on residents' health, and to take a role in improving it. As part of this, we will also need to improve the evidence upon which we base our activities and interventions.

### 3.8 **Priority 3: Increasing employment**

Employment is up in Tower Hamlets, but we continue to have some of the lowest rates in the country, especially among women and some ethnic minority groups. This is crucial, as employment is a major factor in wellbeing and life chances for residents. With many unemployed residents needing support to become ready for work, all partners can play a role, engaging them in activities, programmes or learning. These can be built into healthcare pathways, for example. We will work to address the affordability and accessibility of childcare, a major barrier for many parents highlighted by the Fairness Commission. We also need to engage more local employers through our networks and supply chains, and use our own practices as employers to tackle unemployment.

### 3.9 **Priority 4: Responding to population growth**

Our population is forecast to rise from around 272,000 to 320,000 by 2022 (and further beyond this) with growth driven mainly by an increase in the number of young working professionals. This is putting increasing pressure on local services and infrastructure, including the supply of affordable housing. Our residents aged 85 and older are also growing in number, which increases demand for adult social care services. Therefore partners will focus on developing a Local Plan which considers how we can manage growth and ensure sufficient infrastructure to meet local needs. We will further need to use data more effectively, to learn more about the nature of our changing population.

### Consultation

- 3.10 Preparation for the new Community Plan began in summer 2014 and, as required by the Best Value Statutory Guidance, consultation was undertaken of representatives of council tax payers, those who use or are likely to use services provided by the council and its partners, and those appearing to have an interest in the area. This included initial discussions with the general public, Community Champion Coordinators (who facilitate Community Ward Forums), representatives of communities of interest, and service user groups. Following this, a draft of the Plan was put out to public consultation, and representatives of community and voluntary sector organisations also contributed to the development of the collaborative action projects for the new cross-cutting priorities. These elements of consultation, along with others, are expanded upon below.
- 3.11 Starting with the Borough Profile as the evidence base for the Plan, officers requested input on suitable themes and priorities from a wide range of stakeholders to help shape the Plan from its most formative stage, including:
- Community Plan Delivery Groups (CPDGs)

- Representatives of the third sector (through both the Third Sector Advisory Board and the Tower Hamlets CVS)
- Faith representatives, through the Interfaith Forum
- Community representative groups (such as HealthWatch, the Youth Council, and Local Voices)
- Service user groups (such as the Learning Disabilities Service User group)
- Partnership groups (such as the Mental Health Partnership Group)
- Council staff forums (including the LGBT and BAME forums)
- Partner organisations (including Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group)
- Community Champion Coordinators, and
- Members of the public (through Community Ward Forums, and stalls set up in markets around the borough).

3.12 Feedback indicated the need for the Community Plan to build on, rather than replace, existing arrangements. In response to this consultation feedback, the existing Community Plan themes, which are embedded and aligned to our delivery structure, have been retained.

3.13 Following the initial work to develop the themes and priorities in the Plan, members' views were canvassed through an all-party seminar, as well as through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which offered useful feedback.

3.14 A draft version of the Community Plan was put out to consultation on the Council's website, with the survey asking residents' views on the clarity of the Plan's purpose, the current commitments and proposed cross-cutting priorities, and the areas of focus for equality, cohesion and community leadership, as well as for any comments. This ran for 21 days from 27<sup>th</sup> February to 20<sup>th</sup> March, with the link publicised externally via the Council's homepage, and with a press release, as well as being tweeted from the Council's main Twitter account and featured in East End Life. Partner groups and stakeholders previously involved in developing the priorities were also invited to take part.

3.15 Overall, respondents felt the Plan was clear about its purpose, and agreed with the current partnership commitments, cross-cutting priorities and areas of focus for equality, cohesion and community leadership. Comments from respondents expressed views about areas requiring greater emphasis, and these have been taken into account in producing the draft appended to this report.

3.16 A Collaborative Action Day was also held, focusing on how partners could bring their resources and expertise together to tackle the four cross-cutting priorities identified in the draft Community Plan. The event was well-attended, with officers from across Council teams, as well as from partners across all sectors, and a set of collaborative action projects for each cross-cutting priority has been developed as a result of this.

- 3.17 Since the election of the new Mayor in June, the Plan has been reviewed to align with some of his key priorities voted for by local people.
- 3.18 The collaborative action projects identified within the Community Plan form the basis of discussions with members, officers and partners for developing a robust action plan to deliver on the cross-cutting priorities.

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

- 4.1 The cost associated with producing the Council's Community Plan will be met from within existing resources.
- 4.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report.

#### **5. LEGAL COMMENTS**

- 5.1. The Deregulation Act 2015 has amended the Local Government Act 2000 to remove the requirement for local authorities to have sustainable community strategies. This follows upon the changes made by the Localism Act 2011, which removed the well-being power (i.e. the power to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Tower Hamlets) and replaced it with a general power of competence.
- 5.2. The Tower Hamlets Community Plan previously contained the Council's sustainable community strategy. Accordingly, following the changes made by the Deregulation Act, one of the significant statutory supports for the Community Plan has been removed. This does not mean the Council cannot have a Community Plan, but if it is going to have one, the statutory basis must lie in securing the effective delivery of the Council's statutory functions.
- 5.3. The Council's policy framework lists "sustainable community strategy" and makes specific reference to section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000. As that section has been deleted by the Deregulation Act and there is no longer a requirement for a sustainable community strategy, the Community Plan no longer forms part of the policy framework. In the circumstances, there is a reasonable argument that adoption of the Community Plan is a matter for the Executive rather than full Council.
- 5.4. The Council is a best value authority within the meaning of section 1 of the Local Government Act 1999. Pursuant to section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 the Council is required 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 adoption of a plan in conjunction with the Council's partners to secure effective delivery of the Council's functions may be considered consistent with this duty. The duty is ongoing, however, and implementation of the various high level objectives will also need to comply with the duty.

- 5.5. The Council is required to consult for the purposes of deciding how to fulfil its best value duty. It must consult with representatives of council tax payer, business rates payers, persons likely to use services and persons appearing to have an interest in any area within which the Council carries out functions. The report indicates that this consultation has been carried out.
- 5.6. The Community Plan contains high-level objectives which cover a broad range of the Council's functions. In the absence of a detailed action plan, the objectives appear capable of being delivered within the Council's statutory functions. However, many of the objectives in the Community Plan involve express duties and are the subject of other Council or partnership strategies. It will be important to ensure that the setting and delivery of these objectives is in line with those duties and those strategies.
- 5.7. For example, a number of objectives in the draft Community Plan are concerned with the reduction of crime and disorder. The Council has a duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent the following in Tower Hamlets: (a) crime and disorder (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); (b) the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances; and (c) re-offending. The Council has adopted a crime and disorder reduction strategy in conjunction with partner authorities to achieve this objective.
- 5.8. One of the objectives in the draft Community Plan is to support development of a credit union and a community banking partnership for Tower Hamlets. The details of this project are not clear from the report, but the European Union has imposed restrictions on State aid and care must be taken that those restrictions are complied with when delivering the project.
- 5.9. When preparing and adopting the Community Plan, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (the public sector equality duty). A proportionate level of equality analysis is required in order to discharge the duty.
- 5.10. Any consultation carried out for the purposes of preparing the Community Plan or assessing its impacts 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. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 Our approach to One Tower Hamlets has focused on:

- Reducing inequality
- Promoting cohesion and
- Strengthening community empowerment and leadership.

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

6.3 In addition, it is proposed that programmes of work for partners explicitly include a focus on particular disadvantaged groups, as identified through our Borough Equality Analysis. This 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.

6.4 For example, this Analysis identifies the need to strengthen intergenerational cohesion, which is a key dimension of one of our collaborative action projects to respond to population growth. Another project seeks to address the affordability of childcare, which should help more working age women into employment.

6.5 Our current partnership plans also aim to address issues identified in the Analysis, such as tackling our high levels of childhood obesity, reducing violence against women and girls, increasing the numbers of disabled residents in employment, and providing more homes to meet the needs of disabled people. The shortage of social housing in Tower Hamlets has a disproportionate impact on families from Muslim and



black and minority ethnic communities, and so this is a key focus of the partnership under the theme of “a great place to live”.

- 6.6 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.

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

- 7.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the report or recommendations.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising from the report or recommendations.

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

- 9.1 There are no direct implications of crime and disorder arising from the report or recommendations.

## **10. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The Community Plan sets out the themes and priorities for partnership work. The Council will secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the course of its contribution to the actions which deliver these themes and priorities. These actions will be set out in an action plan which will accompany the Community Plan.
- 10.2 This report also sets out relevant consultation which has been undertaken in the course of developing the Community Plan.

## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- NONE

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Tower Hamlets Partnership Community Plan
- Appendix 2: Equality Analysis Quality Assurance Checklist
- Appendix 3: Borough Equality Analysis Summary

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

- Borough Profile
- Collaborative Action Event Report
- Public Consultation Response Summary

**Officer contact details for documents:**

Mark Cairns ([mark.cairns@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:mark.cairns@towerhamlets.gov.uk))