

<b>Committee:</b> Cabinet	<b>Date:</b> 10 September 2008	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>Agenda Item:</b>
<b>Report of:</b>  Chief Executive and Corporate Director, Children's Services		<b>Title:</b>  Outcome of Corporate Assessment and Joint Area Review		
<b>Originating officer(s)</b>  Alan Steward, Service Head, Strategy and Performance, Chief Executive's Natalie Parish, Service Head, Strategy, Policy and Commissioning, Children's Services		<b>Wards Affected:</b> All		

## 1 Summary

- 1.1 The report submits formally the outcomes of the Council's recent Corporate Assessment and Joint Area Review. It summarises the main findings and notes the action being taken to address the areas for improvement identified by the inspections.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to note the successful outcome of the Council's Corporate Assessment and Joint Area Review.

### **Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended) List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report**

Brief description of "background papers"	Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection.
File held on Corporate Assessment in Strategy and Performance Service	Alan Steward 0207 384 3186
File held on Joint Area Review in Strategy, Policy and Commissioning Service	Natalie Parish 0207 384 4187

### 3 Background

#### Corporate Assessment

3.1 The Council's Corporate Assessment was conducted in April 2008. It was preceded by the submission of a self-assessment on 4 February 2008 and a tour of the borough at the end of February 2008. The review team was led by the Audit Commission and as well as the Commission's inspectors included both an officer and member from other councils. The assessment was based around the self-assessment, analysis of our performance indicators and an extensive range of strategies, policies and other documents, and two weeks onsite conducting focus groups with staff, partners, residents and other stakeholders and an intensive programme of interviews with councillors and senior officers.

3.2 The Corporate Assessment judges the Council along five different themes:

- Ambition
- Prioritisation
- Capacity
- Performance Management
- Achievements broken down by
  - Sustainable Communities and Transport
  - Safer and Stronger Communities
  - Healthier Communities
  - Older People
  - Children and Young People (drawn from the JAR)

3.3 For each theme the assessment gives the Council a score between 1 (inadequate) and 4 (performing strongly). As part of the self assessment, we scored the Council as follows:

Ambition	4
Prioritisation	4
Capacity	3
Performance Management	4
Achievements	4

#### Joint Area Review (JAR)

3.4 The Joint Area review (JAR) was conducted concurrently with the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA). The review team was led by Ofsted and included inspectors from both the audit commission and the health care commission. The inspection followed a similar format to the CPA with analysis of files and documentation taking place in February followed by on-site fieldwork in April. However, unlike the CPA, the JAR had a very specific focus on tracking and evaluating outcomes for specific vulnerable young people, which led to a more detailed scrutiny of how services performed for named individuals, in addition to the higher level judgements of the strength of performance overall.

3.5 The JAR had three main areas of investigation: Safeguarding, outcomes for Looked After Children, and outcomes for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. In addition the JAR inspection considered the strength of overall service management and the

organisation's capacity to improve. These areas of investigation are common to all Joint Area Reviews and were not particular to Tower Hamlets. Like the CPA, the JAR findings are scored on a 1-4 scale, where 1 is inadequate, 2 is satisfactory, 3 is good and 4 is outstanding.

3.6 Tower Hamlets JAR was unique in that we took the decision early on to include Young Inspectors in the inspection process. A diverse team of 12 young people undertook two days of fieldwork and developed conclusions and recommendations alongside the main inspection team, and under the guidance of an Ofsted inspection lead. The process was challenging, particularly in terms of the time commitment required to make it successful, but ultimately rewarding. It was a fantastic learning experience for both the young people and the inspectors, and gave us a very clear insight into how young people view the services that they receive.

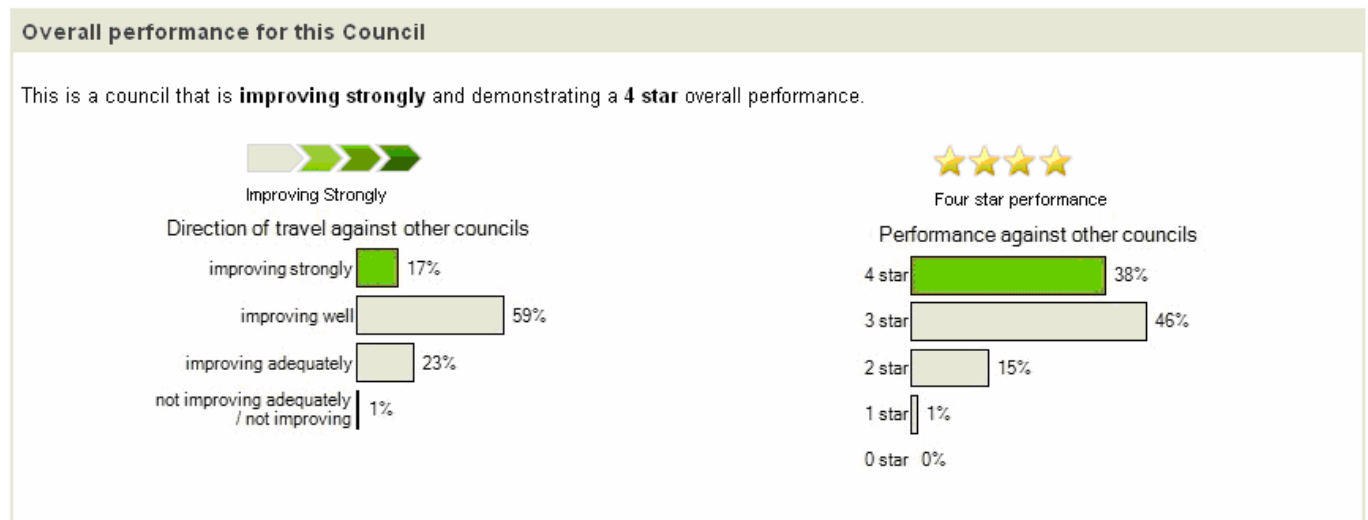
#### 4 Corporate Assessment: The Outcome

4.1 The Council performed exceptionally well in the Corporate Assessment. The inspection team judged us as 4 (performing strongly) in all areas except capacity where we were judged a 3 (performing well). It is worth noting that this matches our own self-assessment and it was commented on by the Inspection Team that we were a very self-aware organisation. Only one council has scored straight 4s across all themes (Camden) and only one other council (Westminster) scored as strongly as we did.

4.2 Under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime, the award of a 4 for our Corporate Assessment also means the Council moves into the top-rated band overall. The Council is now a 4 Star Council. Our CPA scorecard is:

#### London Borough of Tower Hamlets Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) scorecard 2007

Scorecard updated on the 22 July 2008 following publication of the July 2008 corporate assessment report.



4.3 The individual service scores are:

Children and young people	4	Benefits	4
Social care (adults)	4	Culture	3
Use of Resources	3	Environment	2
		Housing	3

4.4 There are only 9 other councils in the country that are both 4 Stars and Improving Strongly. Recognising this excellent achievement, the Chief Executive decided that all staff members would get an additional day's leave for 2008/09.

4.5 This positions the Council well for the move into the Audit Commission's new inspection regime: the Comprehensive Area Assessment. This places greater emphasis on both outcomes and how all partners in an area are working to deliver the priorities for local people. Our judgements – particularly around ambition, prioritisation and partnership working - put us in a strong position as we move into this new regime.

4.6 During the assessment, the team were impressed by the ambition of the council and its partners, the strength of partnership working but particularly the confidence with which everyone spoke about not only our achievements but also the challenges we face and where we need to improve. The full report is attached at Appendix A, but a short summary of the key strengths is set out below:

4.7 Overall, the assessment judges Tower Hamlets Council as performing strongly. "As a result of its challenging ambitions for its diverse communities, sustained focus on service delivery, and exceptional partnership working, it has achieved significant and continuing improvements in performance."

**Ambition - 4**

- A clear vision that is focused on improving quality of life and reducing inequality, underpinned by a detailed knowledge of our community that is reflected throughout our plans
- Improving day to day services, as well as taking action around broader strategic aspirations such as worklessness, Olympics and regeneration
- Set ambitious challenging targets that stretch the council and partners and contribute to driving up performance

**Prioritisation - 4**

- Council priorities are clear, reflect local needs, well-communicated and shared by partners and residents
- The Council responds well to change and shifts resources effectively to tackle new and emerging priorities
- The Council takes difficult decisions and there is good involvement of stakeholders around controversial decisions
- A strong focus on inequalities with a robust financial and management framework to deliver the priorities

### **Capacity - 3**

- The Council is well led by both councillors and senior officers and this has enabled the Council to deliver its vision and focus on continuous improvement
- Partnership working is exceptional with statutory partners, third sector and local people. Joint posts with the PCT promote close collaborative working, while effective working with commercial partners is delivering regeneration
- Overview and Scrutiny is effective and makes a real impact
- Financial standing is very good, the budget is managed effectively and good use is made of external funding
- There is a culture of high aspiration among staff, responding positively to challenging targets.

### **Performance Management - 4**

- Exceptionally strong commitment to improving outcomes for local people
- Highly robust performance management – linking ambition to delivery - that drives service improvement
- Good learning from performance and other information, benchmarking and collaboration with peers and from external evaluation
- The Council is self-aware and self-critical which again drives forward improvement

### **Achievements - 4**

- Performance is very good in most service areas, particularly within high priority areas such as children's services, adult social care and around creating a safer Tower Hamlets
- Effective schemes to deliver regeneration through action around skills and employment and the use of planning powers
- Resident satisfaction the quality of life in Tower Hamlets is increasing, parks and libraries are improving, reflecting the council's investment in Idea Stores, leisure centres, parks and green spaces
- Partnership working around crime and fear of crime is exceptional - at both strategic and operational level – and significant improvements in crime have been made
- The approach to and understanding of community cohesion is exceptionally strong and there are effective partnerships with ethnic and faith groups
- Council works very effectively with the PCT and other partners with a good understanding of the key health issues and targeted interventions to improve the health of local communities
- A very effective Older People as Citizens review, targeted care to specific communities and work to bring generations closer together.

4.8 The assessment also identified a limited number of areas that we need to improve. These are challenges that we are aware of and were already addressing. There is no formal requirement to respond to the Commission's findings but the improvement areas and actions we are taking are set out below:

Improvement Area	Action
Give high priority to improving performance on recycling and waste management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the borough's new Local Area Agreement, we have included ambitious targets around recycling.</li> <li>• Cabinet (30 July 2008) approved the Recycling Improvement Plan that set the target at 32% by 2010/11 and a range of measures – including a new promotional campaign, garden waste and food waste collections – to achieve this.</li> <li>• A dedicated subgroup of CMT is monitoring the implementation of the improvement plan to ensure robust and sustained focus. The LAA targets will also be monitored through the Tower Hamlets Partnership Great Place to Live Community Plan Delivery Group.</li> <li>• The Council is reviewing its Waste Management Strategy and it is intended to bring a report to Cabinet no later than December 2008.</li> </ul>
Give high priority to improving performance on achieving Decent Homes standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the borough's new Local Area Agreement, we have included ambitious targets around increasing decent homes. This is for social rented homes (council and RSL). Action and monitoring of performance will take place through the Tower hamlets Partnership Great Place to Live Community Plan Delivery Group.</li> <li>• The Council's ALMO – Tower Hamlets Homes – was launched in July and this may attract significant resources (upto £250m) to improve council homes upto and beyond the Decent Homes standard.</li> <li>• There are significant regeneration schemes that the Council is pursuing - such as Blackwall Reach - that will contribute toward increasing the number of Decent Homes and provide both social rented family housing and low cost home ownership.</li> </ul>
Give greater priority to environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the borough's new Local Area Agreement, we have included ambitious targets around reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the borough. Action and monitoring of performance will take place through the Tower Hamlets Partnership Great Place to Live Community Plan Delivery Group.</li> </ul>

Improvement Area	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have signed up to the Carbon Trust Local Authority Carbon Management programme to help us reduce carbon emissions from our services and facilities.</li> <li>• We are using East End Life to promote how local people can make their contribution and establishing Eco-teams - made up of local people - to demonstrate practically what can be done.</li> <li>• The energy database is being used to coordinate activity with RSLs and private landlords and improving data on the energy efficiency of owner occupied homes.</li> <li>• Progressing work with the commercial and industrial sector through the Green 500m programme and looking to establish a Carbon Reduction Partners Network in 2009.</li> <li>• The draft Core Strategy – that sets out the physical transformation of Tower Hamlets through to 2020 - includes sustainable development as one of its core principles and suggests a number of specific actions around reducing climate change. High sustainability standards are already set for all new development.</li> </ul>
Improve Value for Money through ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement an Information Management Strategy that improves the use of the Council's information assets and supporting systems. This will also consider options for the future of Council ICT systems.</li> <li>• Develop a new Channel Strategy that promotes cost effective customer access including better use of ICT.</li> <li>• Establish the ICT and Transformation Board to drive business transformation through the effective use of appropriate technology</li> <li>• Review the Council's telephone system to coincide with the contract renewal in December 2008.</li> </ul>
Improve efficiency gains through procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopting the London Centre of Excellence procurement performance indicators to provide improved benchmarking information and undertaking a detailed spend analysis to manage more effectively the Council's expenditure.</li> </ul>

Improvement Area	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing the vendor managed service for agency staff.</li> <li>• Undertaking a comprehensive review of the Purchase Card scheme to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.</li> <li>• Implement Tollgate process for all revenue contracts over £250,000 and capital works over £5m to ensure procurement is both efficient and effective.</li> <li>• Develop proposals for extending e-procurement and commence implementation.</li> </ul>
Enhance further the capacity of the Third Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new Partnership governance arrangements have been developed with the active involvement of the Third Sector.</li> <li>• The new LAA includes NI7 "Conditions for a Thriving Third Sector" and this will both draw together action and monitor progress through the Great Place to Live Community Plan Delivery Group.</li> <li>• We are developing a strategic commissioning approach to our Mainstream Grant Programme and other Third Sector support, taking part in the National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning and looking to establish a Tower Hamlets ChangeUp Consortium that will support Third Sector organisations.</li> </ul>

## 5. Joint Area Review: Outcome

- 5.1 The Council performed similarly well in the Joint Area Review. The inspection team found our performance to be outstanding (grade 4) for service management, capacity to improve and outcomes for looked after children. We achieved a good (grade 3) rating for safeguarding and outcomes for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The JAR is a harder and more in-depth scrutiny than the annual performance assessment of Children's Services. No authority has received a 4 in all areas of investigation under the revised JAR criteria, and only two authorities (Camden and Wandsworth) have achieved a higher score than Tower Hamlets.
- 5.2 During the fieldwork the inspectors were particularly impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm demonstrated by staff throughout the organisation and across our partners. The report, which is attached in full at appendix B, highlights a number of key strengths including:



## **Safeguarding**

- Successful, targeted work to promote community safety and safeguarding across the diverse community of Tower Hamlets.
- The range and impact of early intervention, preventative and parental support services, particularly the joint response to domestic violence.
- The good range of targeted Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and substance misuse services for vulnerable children and young people.
- Strong and effective multi-agency arrangements to track and monitor missing children.
- Secure arrangements for the safe recruitment and vetting of staff in local authority services and schools.
- Low levels of exclusion from school, supported by effective preventative strategies.

## **Looked After Children**

- Very effective multi-agency support, promoting very good health outcomes and raising educational achievement for looked after children placed within and outside the borough.
- Low numbers of looked after children as a result of very effective preventative services and exceptionally robust permanency planning.
- Comprehensive access to the placements service, providing significant placement choice, quality monitoring and market management.
- A holistic and comprehensive service for care leavers which is of an exceptionally high quality.
- Strong partnership with faith communities, which is significantly reducing the number of children who are looked after and is promoting kinship care.

## **Learning Difficulties and Disabilities**

- Good multi-disciplinary planning and protocols.
- Good funding policies for children in schools, leading to a reduced number of statements of special educational need being required; those that are required are timely and of good quality.
- Some outstanding work on inclusion, with very good provision in mainstream schools.
- Good involvement of parents, leading to generally high levels of satisfaction.
- Some excellent work to engage with the views of young people, leading to provision with which they are satisfied.
- Good transition arrangements at all stages of a young person's life.
- Developing provision post-16, with good and improving success rates at Levels 1 and 2, and increasing opportunities for those over the age of 19.

### Service Management and Capacity to Improve

- Strong cross-partnership commitment to children and young people, excellent leadership and outstanding capacity to make further improvements.
- Very challenging ambitions, with an excellent focus on the diverse needs of the community.
- Partners work together very effectively to target need and improve outcomes.
- A strong focus on prevention and early intervention, which is having an impact.
- Excellent involvement of children and young people in prioritisation and performance management.
- Good value for money.
- Robust and very effective performance management, targeting underperformance.

5.3 The inspection also identified a small number of areas where further improvements are needed. These are challenges that we had recognised ourselves. The areas for development, and actions taken to date, are set out below:

Area for development	Progress to date
Underdeveloped monitoring by the LSCB of some aspects of the partners' wider actions and accountabilities, including Multi-agency public protection arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report discussed at LSCB in July (check). This set out the key issues for MAPPA, made recommendations for improvement and set out how to strengthen the interface between LSCB and MAPPA in the future.</li> <li>• Work is ongoing through the LSCB to ensure that Safer Recruitment practice is embedded throughout the partnership. Progress in implementation was reported to the Board in July and in preparation for this asked all partners to self assess progress, including information about safer recruitment training and CRB checks.</li> </ul>
Variation in the timeliness of initial and core assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of assessments processes have been undertaken and actions are being implemented.</li> <li>• Processes have been put in place to maximise the efficiency of work flow through the system including working with schools and other agencies on the quality of referrals, and resolving issues of transfer and transition between social care teams.</li> </ul>

Area for development	Progress to date
Care pathways to support integrated working for children and young people with disabilities are at an early stage of development or implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings have been held with partners during July and August to agree all outstanding care pathways that will be fully implemented from September onwards.</li> </ul>
Limited uptake by families of direct payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have taken immediate action to improve the take up of direct payments by families, dedicating one worker in our children with disabilities team full time to this task. As a result we have 10 new direct payments set up by the funding panel since the JAR.</li> </ul>

5.4 We are required to make available a copy of the JAR inspection report to partners and local media within 30 days of publication, and to submit and circulate an action plan within 70 days of publication. This is in preparation and will reflect the actions highlighted above.

## 6. Comments Of The Chief Financial Officer

6.1 The achievement of high levels of performance should increase confidence in the authority for Government, partners and investors, and thus has the potential to attract greater levels of resources to the Borough and greater freedom and flexibility in managing those resources.

6.2. If resources continue to be managed effectively, the financial plans considered by Cabinet in July should enable the authority to continue to improve performance while responding to tighter finances and less predictable financial conditions.

6.3. The assessment of use of resources, and especially value for money, is a key component of CPA and JAR, and will remain central to the CAA assessment when it is introduced next year.

## 7. Concurrent Report Of The Assistant Chief Executive (Legal)

7.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

## 8. Equal Opportunities Implications

8.1 There are no direct equal opportunities implications of the report. The Corporate Assessment and Joint Area Review noted however, that the Council is very successful in its approach to embedding equal opportunities throughout all of its work and its work with partners.

## **9. Anti-Poverty Implications**

- 9.1 There are no direct anti-poverty implications of the report. The Corporate Assessment and Joint Area Review noted however, that the Council is tackling significant issues that contribute toward poverty and inequality including worklessness, educational attainment and increasing access to services.

## **10. Sustainable Action For A Greener Environment**

- 10.1 The corporate assessment notes that sustainability is an area that the Council needs to improve on. The report notes the ambitious plans and strategy and argues that the Council must sustain this focus. The action plan from the Corporate Assessment highlights the action that is already in place to make sure that this happens.

## **11. Risk Management Implications**

- 11.1 The Corporate Assessment and Joint Area Review are significant, independent and rigorous reviews of the Council's services. They enhance significantly the Council's reputation with Government, peers, other agencies and local communities. If the Council does not sustain the performance and the key improvement findings from the reviews, there is a risk to the Council's reputation and standing as it moves in to the Audit Commission's new inspection regime: Comprehensive Area Assessment.

## **Appendices**

1. Audit Commission Corporate Assessment Report: Tower Hamlets Council
2. OFSTED Joint Area Review of Services for Children and Young People