

Cabinet 31 October 2017	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Debbie Jones, Corporate Director of Children's Services	Classification: Unrestricted
Youth Service Scrutiny Challenge Session Action Plan	

Lead Member	Councillor Abdul Mukit, MBE, Cabinet Member for Culture & Youth
Originating Officer(s)	Afazul Hoque, Interim Service Manager, Strategy, Policy & Performance (Governance) & Ronke Martins-Taylor, Interim Divisional Director of Youth and Commissioning (Children's Services)
Wards affected	All Wards
Key Decision?	No
Community Plan Themes	A Great Place to Live & A Safe & Cohesive Community

Executive Summary

This report submits a report and action plan in response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Challenge Session on Youth Services.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

- Note the report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Challenge Session on Youth Services as set out in Appendix 1.
- Approve the action plan in Appendix 2 which sets out the Council's response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Challenge Session.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The Council's constitution requires the Executive to respond to recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The action plan within this report outlines the Executive response to the 8 recommendations from the Scrutiny Challenge Session on Youth Services.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the proposed recommendations are strategic, measurable and attainable. A timetable for delivering the recommendations has been agreed by the Directorate and is attached in appendix 2.
- 2.2 To agree some, but not all recommendations. All of the recommendations are achievable at little additional cost to the organisation.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 As part of its work programme for 2016/17 OSC agreed that it would hold a challenge session on Youth Services which was led by Councillor Julia Dockerill (Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services at the time).
- 3.2 The challenge session was carried out in the context of an ongoing consultation on a proposed reorganisation of the Integrated Youth and Community Service ("the youth service").
- 3.3 The challenge session was prompted by concerns about whether the significant changes made to the youth service (i.e. the interim delivery model put in place from July 2016) and the larger changes to come as a result of service review and reorganisation, adequately address the "lessons learned" from previous shortcomings in service delivery and provide the right service for local young people.
- 3.4 The challenge session aimed to ensure that the future plans for the youth service had properly absorbed "lessons learned" from past work and that innovative approaches had been explored to achieving the desired outcomes.
- 3.5 Three main areas of focus during the challenge session were:
 - the resilience of the service;
 - the staffing of the service; and
 - the approach to outreach.
- 3.6 The investigations and reviews carried out by, and into, the youth service had identified a range of practice issues that required addressing. These ranged from very serious allegations of fraud and malpractice; to poor communication with and engagement of young people in the youth service.
- 3.7 A number of these practice issues were discussed during the challenge session in addition to other related topics. The report appended sets out the practice issues, lessons learned, and summary of discussion in relation to them, and recommendations arising from this.

3.8 In summary the recommendations are:

Recommendation 1: The youth service should work with other Council departments, as well as other public and private sector employers, to take best advantage of potential apprenticeships as a means of offering work experience and career opportunities for all youth service users.

Recommendation 2: The youth service to work with the community and voluntary sector to develop a new performance and outcomes framework, that is aligned to the wider directorate and corporate frameworks, that includes activity, input, output, outcome and impact indicators; and which is more nuanced to the communities in which young people live and where youth activity is delivered.

Recommendation 3: The youth service should, as part of its regular consultation activity, ensure that the opinions and preferences of female service users are proactively sought.

Recommendation 4: Following implementation of the new organisational model in the youth service (and within a year), convene a focus group of service users to assess the impact of changes to the service with a view to them reporting back to Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation 5: The youth service should work with its own internal youth workers, commissioned youth activity providers and independent youth activity providers to produce a joint timetable of youth activity for the benefit of Tower Hamlets' young people.

Recommendation 6: The youth service should ensure that all mainstream and commissioned provision of youth activity and services is appropriately connected, through referral mechanisms and relevant fora, to the services supporting vulnerable children and families e.g. early help services and social care.

Recommendation 7: The youth service should build on the successful pilot of joint-working between the Police, the Council's Rapid Response Team and commissioned providers or Council youth workers, and have a more direct role in the Anti-Social Behaviour tasking group.

Recommendation 8: The youth service should explore alternative funding sources to supplement the existing resources available in order further develop facilities and expand its offer to young people.

- 3.9 A comprehensive action plan has been developed (Appendix 2) responding to the eight recommendations set out in the scrutiny challenge session report in Appendix 1. This includes a number of actions that the youth service has already taken and has agreed to undertake to meet the recommendations.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 The action plan is informed by the recommendations from the Scrutiny Challenge Session on Youth Services. Implementation of the action plan will be funded from within Youth Services 2017/18 budget of £3.8m. Assurances have been provided that these actions can be carried out within existing resources. The costs of implementing these works will be monitored monthly as part of the Council's budget management process.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Council is required by section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to have executive arrangements that ensure the committee has specified powers. Consistent with this obligation, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants and may make reports and recommendations to the Full Council or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions. It is consistent with the Constitution and the statutory framework for the Executive to provide a response and it is reasonable for the Committee to be provided with progress updates.
- 5.2 The recommendation set out in this report to approve the action plan is consistent with a number of general duties of the Council. The Council has a duty 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 by virtue of section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. This is known as its Best Value Duty
- 5.3 Pursuant to section 507B of the Education Act 2006 the Council has a duty to provide facilities for education and recreational leisure time activities for all 13 to 19 year olds and some 20 to 24 year olds. This duty can be achieved either by in-house provision or under contract. The Council also has a duty under section 10 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to exercise its functions so as to promote the effective participation of young people in its area who are under a duty to be in employment, education or training. The Council must ensure that when making decisions in respect of the design of Youth Services, it continues to comply with these duties.
- 5.4 When deciding whether or not to approve the action plan, Cabinet must also 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 characteristics and those who do not (the public sector duty). This must consider both the impact on service users, as well as the impact on staff.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The focus of this review has been to ensure a good quality service for all young people in the borough. The recommendations note the need to ensure user feedback is sought and used to ensure that the service offer is appropriate for all users, and makes particular reference to the needs of female service users being addressed more actively. These recommendations support the Council's duties under the Public Sector Equalities Duty.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Several of the recommendations and actions aim to achieve better value for the Council within the resources available. There are recommendations around the youth service exploring external funding and the use of apprenticeships which will assist the Council in achieving value for money and achieving its Best Value Duty.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 There are no direct greener environment implications arising from the report or recommendations.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

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

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The report considers the interface between the youth service and anti-social behavior and makes recommendations for how the service can support efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour

11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no direct safeguarding implications arising from the recommendations and actions.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Youth Service Challenge Session Report (including its own appendices)
- Appendix 2 – Action Plan

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

- List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.
- None

Officer contact details for documents:

- N/A