


Cabinet 29 July 2020	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Will Tuckley, Chief Executive	Classification: Unrestricted
Refreshed Strategic Plan 2020-23	

Lead Member	Executive Mayor
Originating Officer(s)	Adam Boey, Senior Strategy and Policy Manager Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy & Policy Thorsten Dreyer, Head of Intelligence & Performance
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	No
Forward Plan Notice Published	June 2020
Reason for Key Decision	N/A
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	All

Executive Summary

This report presents the council's refreshed Strategic Plan 2020-23 and sets out the council's three core priorities and the action we will take to achieve eleven core outcomes between now and 2023.

The Strategic Plan has been reviewed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact this has had in almost every area of people's lives. It sets out how the council will address both challenges and opportunities identified in the 'Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 in Tower Hamlets' report. As a result, some of the actions in the Strategic Plan have been re-prioritised and others have been reshaped.

Running through the Strategic Plan is a recognition that we need to do things differently in order to meet the financial challenges we are facing as a council. To help address both this and the impact of COVID-19, we will need to work ever-closer with partners and with residents. We know from the response to the pandemic that much can be achieved here, and we will continue to build on this as we go forward.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the refreshed Strategic Plan for 2020-23 (Appendix 1), including:

- a. renewed actions that ensure delivery of outcomes for ongoing response to COVID-19 and recovery plans; and
- b. revised measures that allow an understanding of impact (Appendix 2).

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- 1.1 The 2020-23 Strategic Plan was agreed by the Mayor on 25 March 2020, after the UK was placed in lockdown by the government in response to the coronavirus pandemic. This report follows previous reports to Cabinet setting out the Council's response to the pandemic and our approach to recovery. The pandemic has meant the Council had to reprioritise and reshape se quickly and do whatever it takes to respond to the needs of our local residents and stakeholders.
- 1.2 It has been refreshed in light of the far-reaching impact of the pandemic, as identified in the 'Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 in Tower Hamlets' report. It also considers the financial impact on the council both from loss of income and expenditure to support our local response to the pandemic. It considers feedback from local people through the COVID-19 resident survey ensuring their priorities are reflected in the plan.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Strategic Plan could remain as agreed in March 2020. This means the council's planned activities would not be reflective of the impact of the COVID-19 (both pandemic and subsequent lockdown in response) on Tower Hamlets residents and communities, or the necessary recovery efforts in place, and planned.
- 2.2 The Mayor and Cabinet may choose to further amend the Strategic Plan. If the Plan is amended, regard would need to be given to the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, as well as any impact arising from the changes.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 The Strategic Plan remains arranged around three priority areas and a set of 11 corporate outcomes:

Priority 1 - People are aspirational, independent and have equal access to opportunities

1. People access a range of education, training, and employment opportunities.
2. Children and young people are protected so they get the best start in life and can realise their potential.
3. People access joined-up services when they need them and feel healthier and more independent.

4. Residents feel they fairly share the benefits from growth and inequality is tackled.

Priority 2 - A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in

5. People live in a borough that is clean and green.
6. People live in good quality affordable homes and well-designed neighbourhoods.
7. People feel safer in their neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour is tackled.
8. People feel they are part of a cohesive and vibrant community.

Priority 3 - A dynamic outcomes-based council using digital innovation and partnership working to respond to the changing needs of our borough

9. People say we are open and transparent putting residents at the heart of everything we do.
10. People say we work together across boundaries in a strong and effective partnership to achieve the best outcomes for our residents.
11. People say we continuously seek innovation and strive for excellence to embed a culture of sustainable improvement.

3.2 In March 2020, Cabinet adopted a revised Strategic Plan for 2020-23. It is a central part of the council's Performance Management and Accountability Framework and is the main strategic business planning document of the council. It sets out the corporate priorities and outcomes, the actions that will be undertaken to deliver the outcomes, as well as the measures that will help us determine whether we are achieving the outcomes.

3.3 Undoubtedly, COVID-19 is the most significant issue our residents have faced in recent years. It has impacted on every aspect of our everyday lives and as of 24th June, 280 local residents and staff had sadly died. In light of COVID-19 the Strategic Plan has been refreshed to ensure our high level actions reflect our on-going response to the pandemic and support the borough's social and economic recovery. Alongside this refreshed Strategic Plan we have also updated our Medium Term Financial Strategy (separate agenda item on Cabinet agenda) to ensure our budget can support delivery of our priorities and address the financial challenges facing the council. This will be supported by a revised Communication Plan, Transformation Programme and a Workforce and Wellbeing Strategy. Through on-going engagement with our partners we will refocus our priorities to ensure we can collectively support the recovery of the borough and empower our partners to take a greater lead on delivering our collective priorities.

3.4 The impact of the pandemic and 'lockdown' has been felt across the board. We know that financial hardship, and the impact on employment, deprivation,

mental health, social care, homelessness, education and domestic abuse will continue to be felt going forward (see separate Cabinet report on 'Understanding the impact of COVID-19 in Tower Hamlets). Overall, the pandemic has shone a light on existing inequalities, and we are committed to tackling this.

- 3.5 There are opportunities too: To maintain the progress made in tackling rough sleeping, for example, and to provide more opportunities for walking and cycling. The response from residents and from partner agencies and organisations to the pandemic is something to be immensely proud of, and we want to continue this work going forward. This is reflected in the positive feedback in our residents' survey with many highlighting a sense of belonging and improved relationship with neighbours.
- 3.6 The revised Strategic Plan places the social and economic recovery of the borough at the core of our priorities and outcomes. The plan sets out the actions we will carry out to meet local priorities. Some of these actions have been re-shaped by the pandemic, whilst others have been reinforced. We will need to be flexible and adapt to a changing environment due to the on-going pandemic and national and regional changes.
- 3.7 The pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges and inequalities and alongside the national recovery strategy, the Government will be moving forward the Social Care agenda and has announced a new cross-governmental commission on racial inequalities.
- 3.8 We believe that we can deliver better outcomes for residents by using the opportunities from new ways of working, efficiency and effectiveness learnt through our emergency response.
- 3.9 The pandemic has required us to work differently to adapt and meet the needs of our community. We have rapidly developed new ways of delivering essential services and moving out of lockdown we will consider how some of the new ways of working can be made permanent, to accelerate progress towards our transformation vision, meet the needs of our community, and respond to the challenging financial position.
- 3.10 We know the council alone cannot deliver the recovery of the borough and we will work with partners and residents to deliver this. This includes focusing on areas such as employment, health inequalities, poverty, local economy and understating and responding to the longer-term impact of the pandemic. We will build on the unprecedented response of our residents through formal volunteering with us and local voluntary and community sector organisations and also through local mutual aid groups and ensure we support access to volunteering opportunities especially on national programmes such as test and trace. We will support our voluntary and community sector to continue to support all sections of our community and help sustain a vibrant local sector.

Given the ongoing nature of the pandemic we will need to continue to work with residents and voluntary sector to ensure there is a coordinated response to future outbreaks.

- 3.11 The revised Strategic Plan also considers the significant impact on the council's budget which includes an estimated funding shortfall of £35.72m for April, May, and June 2020- equivalent to an additional £108 per resident. The funding shortfall is a combination of increased spending and loss of income - which has led to an estimated net additional spending of £55.12 million, with the government, so far, only committing to provide just £19.4 million from its COVID-19 support grant. Just like businesses and households across the country, who may be worried about how they will now pay their bills, we are not immune to the financial impact of COVID-19. We are therefore calling on the government to deliver on its "whatever it takes" pledge to cover the cost of our response. As part of the recovery we will consider how we become more efficient and areas of services that we are no longer able to continue to deliver or deliver in a more economical way.
- 3.12 We have also recently carried out a residents' COVID-19 impact survey and priorities from this will be reflected in the delivery of the Strategic Plan. In June, Cabinet noted the council's approach to the recovery of the council and the borough will follow these principles:
- We will ensure a safe transition out of lockdown, with a balanced approach to risk and recovery to ensure continued safety of our staff and community, whilst supporting the social, economic and health recovery of the borough
 - We will maintain a coordinated, multi-agency approach
 - Council services, democratic processes, and priorities will be updated as we reconstitute them to improve outcomes for the community
 - Transformation, change and value for money will be embedded
 - Budget implications will be managed and our income rebuilt
 - The effort and commitment of staff and community during the pandemic will be recognised
 - We will support the healing process
 - Learning from our experiences during the pandemic will inform our future work
 - There will be consistent and timely communication across the council and its partners
- 3.13 Our renewed Strategic Plan recognises the new journey the borough will be undertaking in recovering from the pandemic and reflects our priorities.

Next steps

- 3.14 The revised Strategic Plan for 2020-23 sets out our plans until March 2021 and will be used for business planning and performance management by revising service plans by September 2020. We will undertake a light touch

review of the Strategic Plan and Service Plans from March 2021 to ensure we capture changes to national, regional and local priorities.

- 3.15 Prior to adopting the Strategic Plan in March 2020, all key performance indicators were reviewed with outcome delivery teams and services. At the time of adopting our new outcome-based indicator set, we recognised that some indicators would be proxy indicators until more suitable indicators could be identified. We also recognised that some indicators were new and untested and may need to be refined following a period of bedding in. Throughout the year several suggestions were also received from officers and members (Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committee) for additional or replacement measures. This review led to a revised indicator set included in the plan adopted in March 2020.
- 3.16 As part of the refresh of the Strategic Plan considering the pandemic, the indicators have again been reviewed, ensuring they remain relevant and reflect the changed environment in which we now operate (Appendix 2). The review has resulted in some minor amendments to the strategic outcome indicators, reflecting that the outcomes in the Strategic Plan remain unchanged. The strategic indicators assess the extent to which we are achieving our outcomes rather than measuring specific activities.
- 3.17 We recognise that alongside our more long-term strategic outcome indicators, there is a need to take a data driven approach to responding to the recovery in the short and medium term. The operational and tactical nature of the recovery means that we will be taking a more flexible approach to the data that inform and help us monitor our recovery. Our COVID-19 specific data and metrics will be used operationally by our pandemic and recovery command groups.
- 3.18 From 2020/21 we had intended to report progress on the delivery of our strategic plan actions and performance of our strategic indicators to our Cabinet for the first three quarters of the financial year and then produce an annual report at year end. Because of the pandemic, in the current year, we will not be producing a report on the first quarter. Instead, in June Cabinet received a report on the council's pandemic response. Our first quarterly performance report for 2020/21 will be for the second quarter and will report on this revised Strategic Plan.

3 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The revised Strategic Plan has been informed by the COVID-19 Equalities Impact Assessment and the overall impact assessment of COVID-19 and Tower Hamlets. A key focus on inequality is present throughout the outcomes in the plan.

- 4.2 One of the main messages arising from the analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on Tower Hamlets is that whilst the virus may have shone a light on existing inequalities, there is a real risk these will be further exacerbated going forward. People from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, older people, young people, women, people with a disability and people from lower socio-economic groups have been highlighted as being particularly affected by the direct and/or indirect consequences of the pandemic. The Strategic Plan seeks to tackle these inequalities, setting out the high-level action that the council will take with partners and with residents.
- 4.3 The Plan also includes the council's obligation to publish an annual equality objective as defined by the Public Sector Equality Duty.

4 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 5.1 The Strategic Plan 2020-23 is a core planning document and provides a framework for allocating and directing financial resources to priorities over the next three years.
- 5.2 In the event that, during the implementation of individual projects and schemes, financial implications arise outside the current budget provision, officers are obliged to seek the appropriate financial approval before further financial commitments are made. This report has no other financial implications.

5 LEGAL COMMENTS

- 6.1 The Strategic Plan specifies how the council will prioritise delivery of its functions and thus ranges across the council's statutory powers and duties. The proposed priorities are capable of being carried out lawfully and it will be for officers to ensure that this is the case.
- 6.2 Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 requires best value authorities, including the council, 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 development of a Strategic Plan, together with its delivery and subsequent monitoring will contribute to the way in which the best value duty can be fulfilled. Monitoring reports to members and actions arising from those reports will help to demonstrate that the council has undertaken activity to satisfy the statutory duty.
- 6.3 In all aspects of the strategy there are clear implications for persons who have a protected characteristic for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, not only should an Equality Assessment occur (and potentially a number of them as parts of the strategy are implemented) but a clear strategy on an equalities consultation may be necessary whilst some of the decisions relating to the actions under the strategy are still at a formative stage. This is to ensure that the council informs itself properly of the effects of the decisions

on such persons. It will then be in a position to properly comply with the Equality Duties under that act.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1. Draft renewed Strategic Plan 2020-23.
- Appendix 2. List of Strategic Measures

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

- NONE

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