

Tower Hamlets Strategic Plan 2020-2023 – DRAFT

Working together with the community for a fairer, cleaner and safer borough

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Introduction

The Strategic Plan 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 high level activities that will be undertaken to deliver the outcomes, as well as the measures that will help us determine whether we are achieving the outcomes. In line with the budget setting process, the Strategic Plan is a rolling three-year plan which is updated annually so that it accurately reflects the council's priorities.

We remain committed to ensuring Tower Hamlets is a fairer, cleaner and safer place to live for all our residents. We recognise COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on everyone's everyday lives from work, school, health, to the way we interact with each other. Sadly, many people lost their lives because of the pandemic including those living and working in the borough. Our thoughts are with their families.

The pandemic has exposed existing inequalities and we know some of our most vulnerable residents who use our social care services will need more support as a result. Many people will experience financial hardship, and the impact on employment, deprivation, mental health, education, and domestic abuse will continue to be felt by our residents going forward.

Studies have highlighted a disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) population which has served to expose the consequences of the structural disadvantage and discrimination faced by BAME communities. Also, the public death of George Floyd, and subsequent Black Lives Matters demonstrations, has brought race to the forefront of an international conversation.

We remain committed to tackling inequality putting our residents at the heart of everything we do. We want to understand the lived experience of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities so that with our partners we can act. That is why we are establishing a commission to explore the inequality experienced by our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities that will recommend practical interventions.

From our Annual Residents' Survey we know that the elderly, disabled, and those from lower-income households are more likely to have reduced or no internet access compared to the wider population. We also know that there are digital skills disparities across the borough. We will prioritise digital inclusion across the borough, and work with partners to improve digital access and skills for both residents and VCS organisations.

During this difficult time there have been opportunities which we would be keen to hold onto. We would like to maintain the progress made in tackling rough sleeping; and continue to promote healthier lifestyles especially more walking and cycling. Our communities have really rallied round each other and

worked with organisations across the borough, getting involved in the pandemic response in a variety of ways. More than 2000 residents volunteered to support people especially those who were isolating as well as local organisations delivering food, fundraising and befriending. This is something to be immensely proud of, and we want to continue this work going forward.

The pandemic has required us to work differently to adapt and meet the needs of our community, and we have rapidly developed new ways of delivering essential services. As part of our recovery journey we will need to consider how some of the new ways of working can be made permanent, to accelerate progress towards our vision, meet the needs of our community, and respond to the difficult financial position.

We are committed to delivering better outcomes for residents by using the opportunities from new ways of working, efficiency and effectiveness learnt through our emergency response. This Strategic 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. Alongside this refreshed Strategic Plan, we have updated our Medium Term Financial Strategy to ensure our budget can support delivery of our priorities and address the significant financial challenges facing the council.

The pandemic has compounded our financial challenges. The economic impact has reduced the amount of income that the council receives from business rates and council tax in 2020-21 and the forecast income for following years. The council has also experienced costs for the pandemic response, a decrease in income from fees and charges and slippage in previously planned savings. The government has announced grant funding of £22m towards costs and a contribution towards about 70% of reduced fees and charges income. The announcement of potential funding to support decreases in business rates and council tax income is awaited as part of the Chancellor's autumn statement. 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 calling on the government to deliver on its “whatever it takes” pledge to cover the cost of our response and the long term economic impact on income.

We welcome recent government spending announcements on recovery, including support for business, training, skills and the green economy. We will do all that we can to ensure we adopt these to ensure our residents can benefit as part of our recovery. However, we must be clear with our residents that should the government decide to go back on its pledge, the council will be forced into a position of having to make really difficult decisions about our

services. We are not complacent and continue to fight for our fair share of government funding to protect the essential services that residents need.

Our renewed Strategic Plan recognises the new journey the borough will be undertaking in recovering from the pandemic and reflects our priorities.

Our priorities and outcomes

The Strategic Plan is the main strategic business planning document of the council and central part of our Performance Management and Accountability Framework.

The council is looking to deliver the following priorities and outcomes over the next three years:

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.

The plan is a key link in the 'Golden Thread' and used to inform directorate, service and team planning. It also sets out how the council will deliver the objective and priorities set out in the new Tower Hamlets Plan developed by the Tower Hamlets Strategic Partnership.

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

Tower Hamlets is one of the most vibrant and diverse communities in the UK. More than two-thirds of the borough's population belong to a minority ethnic group – we are the 16th most ethnically diverse local authority in England. Over the past three decades our population has more than doubled and we are still growing: the population recently broke through the 300,000 mark and is projected to be over 380,000 by 2030. We are also a young borough – nearly half of our residents are aged 20-39.

COVID-19 has shone a light on the health, social and economic inequalities that exist in the borough. Our health and social care system, working with communities has played and continues to play a critical role in responding to the pandemic and is now moving to restore support to communities for non-COVID-19 issues, and looking to build on the public attention on health matters to promote public health improvement.

Restoring the quality and consistency of education provision is now a major focus at national and local level. The challenge going forward will be to provide the safest possible environments for education and learning in the borough. Some people have experienced unemployment for the first time in their lives. This has necessitated an unprecedented level of financial and direct support from both national and local governments, as well as support from the voluntary and community sector organisations and private businesses, small and large. The council will be maintaining focus on economic recovery – for individuals and communities – in the short to medium term, dovetailing economic renewal with national policy.

This priority provides a focus for our efforts to ensure that our residents can achieve their aspirations and gain from the benefits of living in a borough that is economically vibrant, resilient and diverse.

There are four overarching outcomes under Priority 1 that the council's actions for the coming year are focussed on achieving and these are described in more detail in the section that follows.

Outcome 1: People access a range of education, training, and employment opportunities.

Outstanding education and economic opportunity support people to thrive in our changing and challenging environment. We want to ensure that every child and young person in Tower Hamlets has every chance to have the best possible opportunities and achieve the best possible outcomes and life chances. We want every young person to achieve the best academic results they can, be prepared for employment and future success. Our schools achieve good results, and in some cases above national averages. However, there is still room for improvement, and through the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership, our schools operate as a family to support, challenge and encourage each other in their determination to do the very best for every child.

From our COVID-19 resident impact survey we know that schools reopening was one of respondents' top four concerns (24%) and the months of missed education caused by the pandemic will have severely impacted on our children and young people and set back the huge progress our schools have made. As schools reopen, we will need to work even harder to support them appropriately and ensure that the impact of this gap in education is addressed and mitigated. Our Young WorkPath service will continue to ensure that young people and those coming into the workforce have the support they need to make informed choices about their career path and access the skills, training and apprenticeships available to unlock their potential.

The COVID-19 resident impact survey shows more than 50% of residents identified there has been a negative impact (extremely negative or fairly negatively) on their employment status and work, and respondents named support for residents who are unemployed or reduced in income (35%) as their top concern. Many residents will be newly unemployed, in addition to those who were already looking for work and placed further away from the labour market. As the supply of jobs reduces labour market competition could push some residents even further away from accessing employment including those with limited skills or experience including young people who were looking to enter the workforce.

Supported by our Growth and Economic Development Partnership, we will continue our efforts to reach out to local businesses to understand their concerns around the impact of the pandemic and assist in their recovery. We have already responded through support and financial assistance including grants and rent reductions. A package of support will nevertheless continue, to help businesses in their recovery journey. Similarly, we will remain flexible in working with partners to provide employment and skills support for those residents, including young people and particularly those facing a prolonged period of unemployment. We will support access to roles in hard to fill sectors or those areas where job supply will grow or remain strong, for example the green economy which will support our objectives to mitigate climate change. In addressing the economic impact of the pandemic on our borough we will continue to deliver the priorities held within our Growth and Economic Development Plan which seek to support the foundation of economic prosperity within the borough.

What actions will we take?

1. Support schools' activity to improve attainment and address gaps in education
2. Provide access to entry point learning which promote personal development
3. Develop a programme to enhance young people's understanding of the world of work, including any changes to the landscape post COVID-19 lockdown
4. Understand the impact of the pandemic on the London labour market and progress a borough response
5. Provide tailored support for job seekers, in particular those with sustained periods of unemployment

6. Implement a programme of business outreach to extend our network and enhance our understanding of the impact of the crisis
7. Deliver a range of targeted interventions to support the recovery and growth of local businesses

What will we measure?

- Percentage of secondary pupils attending school regularly
- Percentage of Idea Store Learning learners who pass their course
- Percentage of 16-17 year olds in education, employment or training
- Number of SMEs and new enterprises supported through the council's business programmes
- Number of adults supported into employment by the Workpath service

Outcome 2: Children and young people are protected so they get the best start in life and can realise their potential

Children and young people are a priority for this council, and we know that the first 1,001 days of a child's life are crucial for healthy mental and physical development. We therefore remain committed to a system wide approach to improving outcomes for children in the early years with a focus on speech, language and communication skills. From the earliest years through to adolescence, children also need access to safe spaces to play and engage in physical activity. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to some of these safe spaces has been limited and may be for some time.

We know that the pandemic is likely to have impacted significantly on children and young people in the borough and that this impact is likely to be felt for a long time. Some children will have been in particularly vulnerable situations during the lockdown and we are expecting a rise in demand for our services over the summer and autumn. The longer-term impacts of potentially higher rates of poverty, less secure housing and work are all likely to lead to higher levels of stress for families and an increased demand in services across the council and partner agencies.

The response to COVID-19 has enabled strong and effective partnership working in this area and we want to take the elements that have worked well with us into the future. We will support our children, young people and families to make informed choices about what good health entails, directing them towards the right support at the right time to address any concerns about both physical and mental health. We will continue to work to remove the stigma around mental health, encouraging children, young people and their families to talk to each other and share their needs.

We also want to ensure that there is a much stronger voice for young people in relation to making their environment feel safe, the development of youth services and in response to community safety issues. Our focus going forward will be on building resilience within families and between different communities to ensure that children are safe and secure.

What actions will we take?

1. Ensure that our early help and social care staff have access to training and development opportunities that are linked to the practice issues that are our most important and of greatest priority. This will enable us to respond to the immediate and longer-term challenges of our community
2. Coordinate our partnership response to the pandemic and other safeguarding issues via the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership ensuring the voice of children and families influences and shapes our approach
3. Create and map clear pathways into early help from social care and other universal services; and to develop consistent understanding of thresholds across services and agencies
4. Establish clearer information and agreed expectations for families to access health services such as CAMHS and SEND services
5. Continue to offer Family Group Conferencing to families in need at the earliest stage. This is an important element of being able to reduce the demand on expensive placements and emphasise family solutions
6. Further strengthen the ways that we collect feedback from children, young people, families and the wider community and use this to influence how we deliver our services. Embrace and develop innovative ways of reaching parents and young people by improving the use of social media and other online mechanisms
7. Engage with Schools, the Youth Service and the Voluntary Sector on how to strengthen access to high-quality activities outside of school for children and young people making the best use of our partnership approach
8. Continue to focus on our most pressing issues - neglect, domestic abuse serious youth violence and exploitation

What will we measure?

- Families who are seeing the benefits of being supported before problems escalate
- Percentage of pupils who are regularly attending primary school in reception year
- Percentage of pupils who are regularly attending primary school in Years 1-6
- Long term looked after children who are in stable placements
- Young people engaging with the youth offer who achieve a recorded outcome

Outcome 3: People access joined-up services when they need them and feel healthier and more independent

The quality of our lives is strongly dictated by the state of our health, which is in turn shaped by our genetics, lifestyles, living environment and access to quality health care. While Tower Hamlets is a great place to live, there remain challenges in relation to health and wellbeing and the 'wider determinants' of good health. Compared to other places, we tend to have higher rates of diabetes, mental health issues and substance misuse.

We know that people of a BAME background, older people and people living in poverty are more likely to die of COVID-19, and the pandemic has starkly demonstrated the consequences of inequality. In addition, it has had wider impacts on health and wellbeing. Many people have experienced stress and anxiety and we expect there to be an increase in people needing support with their mental health as a result. Our COVID-19 resident impact survey identified more than 50% of residents reported that the pandemic had a negative impact (extremely negative or fairly negatively) on stress and anxiety, their mental health, feelings of loneliness and their exercise route. At the same time, the social care system faces growing system and financial pressures which means we must make significant changes to what we do.

Public health and social care have been on the 'front line' of the pandemic, working with NHS partners through the borough's health and care partnership, Tower Hamlets Together (THT), to minimise infections, flex services in response to changing demands and ensure people get the support they need. Going forward, we will build on what worked well during the pandemic and continue to do everything we can to stop the spread of infection, support people with their physical and mental health, and empower people to be as independent as possible. Ongoing partnership work will enable us to address some of the financial challenges we face whilst maintaining our commitment to provide high quality, joined-up services.

What actions will we take?

1. Continue to address health inequalities including actions to mitigate the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on different groups and communities
2. Continue to provide public health & social care support to the COVID-19 pandemic response, including the roll-out of an effective Test and Trace system and support for residents who are 'shielding' due to their vulnerability
3. Run activities and programmes that encourage residents to have healthy lifestyles
4. Provide evidence-based early intervention and prevention, helping residents to be as healthy as possible for as long as possible and recognising health inequalities including those relating to ethnicity and economic circumstances
5. Continue to integrate health and care (including joining up our IT systems) so that residents get a better, more joined up experience, retaining and developing sustainable service innovations that have emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic
6. Join up the health and care information provided to residents, making it easier to get advice and help at an early stage, including COVID-19 advice and guidance
7. Make better use of technology in health and care, recognising its potential to improve how people manage their health conditions and care needs, stay independent and enable socially distanced service delivery

8. Understand and address the wider impacts of COVID-19 on Tower Hamlets residents, including mental health, and the impact on services - specifically looking to mitigate the disproportionate impact on those from BAME groups in the borough
9. Address the financial pressures faced by adult social care to ensure our care and support system is sustainable going forward.

What will we measure?

- People who are more independent after being supported through reablement services
- Residents' self-reported level of physical activity
- Residents' self-reported level of health

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

While we want people to have positive associations about life in Tower Hamlets, we cannot deny that Tower Hamlets is a borough of contradictions. Despite the economic opportunities in our borough, many in our community do not benefit from them. The borough is the fiftieth most deprived local authority in England – with lessening deprivation on almost all measures relative to other parts of England. However, child and older people deprivation remains the highest in England. The employment rate of residents is below the national average and some people in our communities find it more difficult to find work than others. The borough is tackling some of the toughest health inequalities in the UK caused by deprivation and related housing and employment needs. We strive to achieve a borough where inequalities are reduced, and socio-economic challenges are less prevalent, many of which COVID-19 has exacerbated. Alongside this the death of George Floyd, and subsequent Black Lives Matters demonstrations, has brought race to the forefront of an international conversation. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) population has served to expose the severe consequences of the structural disadvantages and discrimination faced by BAME communities. We will challenge this status quo and are establishing a BAME Inequality Commission which will deliver tangible and practical actions with partners to address this.

The pandemic has already instigated a rise in the number of residents using food banks, accessing welfare and debt advice, claiming universal credit and further isolating residents who are digitally excluded. The post-pandemic economic landscape is also likely to see the levels of unemployment, deprivation and poverty (including child poverty) increase further. Our COVID-19 resident impact survey identified that 86% of respondents who were worried about the impact of COVID-19 on their life said they had a health problem or disability. 17% of respondents have had a detrimental change in circumstances (become unemployed, furloughed or reduced hours). Looking at this group White British respondents are underrepresented at 40%, while White Other (34%) and BAME (exc. Bangladeshi) (39%) respondents are overrepresented. 13% were Bangladeshi. Looking at the age profile of the same group, 38% of respondents are aged 35-44 and 27% are aged 25-34 –

higher than the overall % of overall survey respondents who fall into these age categories.

While the pandemic has caused a marked increase in the intensity of support required it has also provided opportunities in how the council can work with partners and the wider community to support the most vulnerable. We are committed to extend our work with partners to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable are met against a backdrop of reduced funding across the public and voluntary sector. We will continue to work with partners to deliver our tackling poverty programme, explore ways to reduce digital exclusion and are keen to maintain the gains achieved in working with partners to reduce rough sleeping during the pandemic.

What actions will we take?

1. Work with stakeholders to deliver a BAME Inequality Commission recognising the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities and understand the lived experience of our BAME communities and how the borough can address inequality
2. Explore options on the borough's approach to tackle poverty and address the additional impact of the pandemic in the borough
3. Support residents to access high quality welfare advice and reduce barriers to digital inclusion
4. Deliver initiatives to meet the additional impact of the pandemic on homelessness and rough sleeping within the borough
5. Develop a new Health and Wellbeing Strategy, working in partnership with communities to tackle health inequalities exacerbated by COVID-19
6. Utilise social value benefits derived from procurement activity to address the economic, community and environmental impact of COVID-19 on residents and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)
7. Review and improve the local childcare offer

What will we measure?

- Residents' self-reported level of health for groups experiencing health inequalities - BAME residents
- Residents' self-reported level of health for groups experiencing health inequalities - residents from C2, D, E socio-economic groups
- Number of women supported into employment by the Workpath service
- Number of residents from BAME backgrounds supported into employment by the Workpath service
- Number of residents who have disabilities supported into employment by the Workpath service
- Number of residents who come from deprived postcodes supported into employment by the Workpath service
- Households prevented from becoming homeless
- Average annual income increase for residents receiving benefit maximisation support
- Resident Universal Credit application support

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

Tower Hamlets is one of the most dynamic and exciting places in the country. It is a borough with a rich history; people are proud to be part of this community. Tower Hamlets is also a place of contrasts and contradictions, where a thriving economy co-exists with high levels of poverty, which is likely to further increase as a result of the pandemic. But above all, Tower Hamlets is a place where communities come together and work in partnership to deal with challenges. It is a place of growing opportunity, a place where we can build on the stories of our past, on the great progress we have already made and our many strengths, to ensure that this is a borough where people feel satisfied, inequalities are tackled and where all residents can thrive.

We want Tower Hamlets to be clean and well looked after, where our air quality is better and our streets and estates safer, a fairer place with more access to affordable housing and where more of our residents achieve their potential.

We know that strong and resilient communities are happier and healthier communities, when people look out for each other they benefit in terms of their health and well-being, from their connections with the people around them.

Against a backdrop of reducing public sector resources and increased confidence to report crime, we will focus more on crime prevention and reducing fear of crime. We will also work closely with communities to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

We will work together as a community to support greater integration and cohesion, helping to build bridges between different parts of the community, tackling social isolation and contributing to making the borough a safer place.

Voluntary and community sector organisations have played an integral role in the borough's response to COVID-19, with many adapting their services to respond to the needs of the community – the council will continue to work with the sector to engage with communities and support the most vulnerable in recovery.

There are four overarching outcomes under Priority 2 that the council's actions for the coming year are focused on achieving, and these are described in more detail in the section that follows.

Outcome 5: People live in a borough that is clean and green

Managing the impact of growth, traffic congestion, and the levels of waste produced presents a significant challenge in how we limit the impact of a growing population on our environment. We are committed to embracing green recovery and growth, working with stakeholders to embrace more sustainable, environmentally and economically friendly approaches to raise awareness and change behaviour. Tower Hamlets has the fifth highest levels of air pollution in London and around 40% of our residents live in areas that

breach EU and government guidance on safe levels of air pollution. Transport remains the highest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions, however, since the introduction of the COVID-19 lockdown, the borough has seen a noticeable reduction in air pollution from road traffic and it is crucial we build on this gain.

We will work with the local community, GLA, TfL and Government to act to support sustained lower levels of air pollution across the borough. This work will also be supported by the council's Air Quality Action Plan and activities to engage residents and partners across sectors, responding to the climate emergency as we progress to a net zero carbon council (by 2025) and borough (by 2050).

Our COVID-19 resident impact survey highlighted improvements to streets and pavements for social distancing (24%) in their top four concerns. The council will continue to work hard to accommodate and promote more sustainable modes of transport, for business, work and leisure. This includes supporting TfL's Streetspace Plan for COVID-19 recovery, to promote active travel and accelerate delivery of low traffic neighbourhoods, as well as delivering the Liveable Street programme.

We will put the wellbeing of residents, the borough and the planet at the heart of recovery. In doing so, we will support approaches to a circular economy, support ecosystems and enhance biodiversity across the borough. The impact of the pandemic has underlined the importance of accessible public and open space for the health and wellbeing of our residents. This being the case we will continue our programmes to make the local environment more appealing, increasing the cleanliness and quality of parks and public spaces to counteract the detrimental impact of the pandemic on physical and mental health of our residents.

What actions will we take?

1. Implement new arrangements to improve cleansing and the quality of the local environment
2. Deliver initiatives to encourage/enforce waste reduction and recycling amongst residents and businesses
3. Deliver the Liveable Streets programme and target our investment in streets and pavements including initiatives to make it easier for residents and visitors to observe social distancing
4. Deliver initiatives to maintain and improve existing parks and green spaces
5. Deliver the Air Quality Action Plan and initiatives to prevent pre-COVID-19 levels of air quality
6. Promote use of cleaner fuel types amongst residents and businesses
7. Through delivering Tower Hamlets Net Zero Carbon Action Plan tackle emissions from the council's own buildings and vehicles and other corporate emissions
8. Agree and deliver a Biodiversity Action Plan to protect and enhance wildlife across the borough.

What will we measure?

- Level of public realm cleanliness (litter)
- Level of CO2 emissions generated by the council's activities
- Level of household recycling (quarterly audited)
- Primary school pupils benefiting from a school street at their school
- Percentage of population that benefits from liveable streets projects

Outcome 6: People live in good quality affordable homes and well-designed neighbourhoods

Accessing good quality, affordable housing is an ongoing challenge in a borough which has a fast-growing population, low income levels for many households and a fast-growing private rented sector with high private rents and house prices. Pressures on the high demand and limited supply of social housing lead to complex challenges concerning overcrowding, homelessness and rough sleeping, while the expansion of the private sector as a source of housing presents challenges to ensure that this stock is in good condition and well managed.

While Tower Hamlets delivers amongst the largest numbers of housing and affordable housing for local authorities each year, we continue to have stretching housing delivery targets from the GLA and have three designated Opportunity Areas designated to accommodate projected population growth of about 25% by 2031. This level of growth within our borough's 2,157 hectare footprint present significant challenges to ensure the correct social, economic and physical infrastructure is in place to accommodate this growth, that residents have a vital say and role in regeneration and that opportunities that arise from growth are accessible for our residents.

The pandemic has created a range of additional challenges and opportunities concerning the social, economic health and wellbeing of our residents. Through our new Local Plan, emerging development documents and approach to regeneration, we will ensure that the correct social, economic and physical infrastructure is in place to not only meet our challenging targets but support us in our journey to recovery and growth. Our priority remains to ensure that residents have a vital say and role in regeneration and that opportunities that arise from growth are accessible for all those within our community.

The negative impact of the pandemic on income levels within the borough continue to mean that the delivery of genuinely affordable housing continues to be a key area of focus. As a council we are committed to delivering affordable homes in way which maximises value for money and ensures that resident need is better met.

What actions will we take?

1. Work with housing associations and other partners to improve the supply of affordable housing
2. Identify sites for new council homes and commence delivery
3. Implement the Local Plan and produce robust development strategies and policy guidance which underpin the council's recovery ambitions

4. Deliver a borough programme for regeneration which enhances the council's approach to recovery
5. Deliver the council's programme of estate renewal and initiatives to improve housing conditions
6. Negotiate and deliver strategic infrastructure

What will we measure?

- Residents' satisfaction with the area as a place to live
- Level of affordable homes completed
- Homeless households moved into permanent social housing
- Lets to overcrowded households
- Number of affordable homes permitted

Outcome 7: People feel safer in their neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour is tackled

Tower Hamlets is a vibrant, diverse and exciting place to live, work and visit and we want everyone to feel safe and enjoy all that it has to offer. Crime and ASB has a major impact on residents' sense of wellbeing and tackling the interlinked issues of violence, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and drugs and alcohol is a significant challenge.

The pandemic has resulted in novel trends with unprecedented falls in crime rates across most major categories due to lockdown but increases in ASB reports driven by concern over adherence to social distancing rules and increased provision for complex homeless clients following the 'Everyone In' initiative. Our COVID-19 resident impact survey showed Crime and ASB (25%) is in the top four concerns for respondents.

As lockdown restrictions ease there is a risk that certain crime types like domestic abuse and serious youth violence will surge, and the large number of homeless clients housed in Tower Hamlets by the GLA may turn to rough sleeping in the borough.

The council will make use of all the tools and powers available to it to prevent issues re-emerging and will continue to work closely with the Community Safety Partnership and local residents to take robust enforcement action against perpetrators, whilst also seeking to reduce the harm caused to communities by offering support to victims and safeguarding people at risk of abuse or neglect.

What actions will we take?

1. Deliver a new Community Safety Partnership Plan, collaborating with stakeholders to identify key borough priorities and develop solutions
2. Provide education and awareness-raising to prevent and tackle issues including violence against women and girls, safeguarding and exploitation, including the impact of COVID-19 on domestic abuse
3. Run a new specialist substance misuse project and get more people into treatment programmes, so that more people get the help they need

4. Review the delivery of ASB services with Tower Hamlets Homes to ensure the full range of ASB resources are deployed in the most efficient and effective way
5. Implement an upgrade of the CCTV infrastructure network and utilise the CCTV assets to deter, detect and investigate crime and ASB
6. Hold perpetrators of crime and abuse to account, using the full spectrum of our enforcement powers when needed
7. Provide personalised support for victims, including specialist support to victims of knife crime at the Royal London Hospital

What will we measure?

- Young people entering the youth justice system for the first time
- Residents' concern about crime and anti-social behaviour
- Residents' feeling of safety in their local area
- Drug users (opiate users) successfully completing treatment
- Victims of violence against women and girls who feel safer after engaging with victim support

Outcome 8: People feel they are part of a cohesive and vibrant community

Tower Hamlets is a culturally rich and diverse area which faces unique challenges as it moves from a place of deprivation to become an extension of the Central London economic powerhouse and a vibrant borough in its own right. We are also one of the most vibrant and diverse communities in the UK. Local people are proud of the high levels of community cohesion, and value the rich cultural offer that comes with this mix.

Our COVID-19 resident impact survey told us that the pandemic has a negative impact on loneliness for 52% of people. However, relationships with neighbours and feelings of belonging to the community were areas of positive impact for 46% and 43% respectively (with most others saying that it had no impact). In terms of cohesion, whilst there have been some tensions in relation to neighbours and social distancing, there has been a general sense of coming together.

Our voluntary and community sector has been at forefront of response to COVID-19 providing a range of support including food delivery, information and advice, befriending support and reaching out to vulnerable and hard to reach communities. We know they will face challenges going forward, such as remodelling to accommodate social distancing, and we will continue to support and work with them to ensure we maintain a thriving voluntary and community sector in the borough.

There is an opportunity from the pandemic to do more with volunteers and residents feeling more empowered. The rise in Mutual Aid Groups and volunteering (2,000 local people volunteered through our local volunteering hub) has outlasted the initial phase of the pandemic and the number of volunteers remains higher than pre-COVID. While the numbers may decrease as people return to work, it is right we recognise the contributions of volunteers and ensure going forward we are able to build on this goodwill and enable local people to support their community through volunteering.

What actions will we take?

1. Work with stakeholders and communities to tackle emerging tensions and issues within and between communities including those generated by hate crimes or extremism
2. Develop a new Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) strategy that supports the recovery of the VCS from the pandemic and helps them to mobilise to provide services to the most vulnerable in the community
3. Utilise our assets and services in new socially distanced and safe ways to support the Voluntary and Community Sector, build on the community cohesion brought about by the pandemic and mitigate the impact of the pandemic
4. Build on volunteering during the pandemic, empowering people to be active in their local community, in order to address the impacts of COVID-19
5. Utilise new ways of working to champion our diverse communities in a safe and socially distanced manner

What will we measure?

- Residents' level of volunteering
- Level of hate crime
- Residents' perception of people from different backgrounds getting on well
- Percentage of Idea Store learners who pass their English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course
- Proportion of residents who have friends from other ethnic backgrounds
- Service user satisfaction with the council's online service offer

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

Tower Hamlets is the UK's most dynamic, innovative and exciting place. Change is happening at a faster rate than any time in our history. We are seeing a rapid expansion in the number of homes and jobs and a changing, growing population. The vast majority of residents (92%- Annual Residents Survey 2019) have access to the internet.

Our response to the pandemic and ongoing pressures and reduced funding means we need to embrace our recent learning and use technology, working with residents and partners to make the most of our resources. We will continue to operate some of our more flexible ways of working and will maintain dedicated operational COVID-19 metrics which will help us track the progress of the recovery phase and will enable us to make data driven decisions.

To get the best outcomes, the council needs to be more agile, leaner and strategic, and cannot deliver everything. We will commission services when other organisations are in a better position to provide them and work in partnership with stakeholders.

Smarter Together is the council's blueprint for transformation setting out how the council will work by 2022. Smarter Together will make us become a dynamic, outcomes-based organisation using digital innovation and partnership working to respond to the changing needs of our borough. Our transformation is shaped by three lenses – Partnership, Outcomes and Digital.

Partnership: Collaboration with residents, businesses and partners at the earliest stage is at the heart of our approach, sharing resources to become more than the sum of our parts.

Outcomes: We will be agile in responding to issues and finding solutions inside and outside the council, measuring the difference we are making in people's lives. Services will be delivered by organisations that offer the best outcomes for our residents, and we will work across traditional team and service boundaries.

Digital: Accessing most council services will feel similar to the best online experiences. Smart technology will allow people to transact, feedback and measure services with ease, in the way that best meets their needs.

Outcome 9: People say we are open and transparent putting residents at the heart of everything we do

Our residents are varied and have a range of needs. Everyone who lives, works, studies, visits or does business in Tower Hamlets will use a council

service in some form, whether they are visiting one of the council's parks, applying for a parking permit or simply walking down one of our streets. Every resident should feel that they have received excellent customer service when dealing with us and should be able to easily connect with us whenever they want. In most cases we should be able to meet their needs first time around. To do this, we will need to work with our residents to get feedback, as well as analysing the information provided by people using our services.

Our COVID-19 resident impact survey told us that 6.9% of people surveyed were accessing and 10% needed to access but weren't currently getting information about what is on offer in their community. People also told us they were more digitally active, including 16.7% saying they were using the internet more confidently. Helping our residents to become confident in dealing with us online helps them to become more independent financially, socially and practically. This will help them in other areas of their lives, such as getting information about jobs, or getting a better deal from their energy provider.

The importance of staff and resident interaction is a significant cross-cutting theme that has been identified in considering the impact of the pandemic. We will build on digital provision and access during the pandemic and move to be 'digital by default' (which means that this will generally be the main way that people contact or do business with us for straightforward matters) maximising this shift and the opportunities it provides.

The council and its partners collect and store large amounts of data on our residents, businesses and communities that we use as part of our everyday service delivery and transform into intelligence to inform service planning. However, much of this data is fragmented and underused and as highlighted by the pandemic we need to unlock the potential of our data giving staff the power to make better informed decisions to deliver better outcomes for our residents and communities. We will ensure that we fully adhere to data protection laws and best practice, and continue to take these responsibilities seriously.

What actions will we take?

1. Embedding the use of our new consultation hub: Let's Talk Tower Hamlets, along with new consultation standards, to support greater resident participation in the development and cocreation of projects
2. Building on our learning from COVID-19 further improve customer experiences by increasing digital access to services
3. Continuously improve systems and processes to support democratic participation by local communities
4. Delivering objective one of the Communications Strategy – telling our story
5. Publish information which empowers local residents and stakeholders to understand council decisions, performance and spend

What will we measure?

- Service user satisfaction with the council's online service offer
- User satisfaction with libraries and Idea Stores

- Residents' perception of being involved in decision-making
- Residents' perception of being kept informed by the council
- Residents' perception of council transparency

Outcome 10: People say we work together across boundaries in a strong and effective partnership to achieve the best outcomes for our residents

The Tower Hamlets Strategic Partnership (THP) is the borough's Local Strategic Partnership bringing together key stakeholders to provide and improve services and outcomes for local residents. In particular, it gives residents more powerful input in the way services are provided and ensures that all aspects of the community work together to achieve the objectives of a borough plan.

Working with our partners we responded rapidly to the pandemic. Senior leaders across the borough met regularly and enabled the delivery of a range of work streams to support our community, including establishing the Integrated Discharge Hub and enabling the deployment of more than 2,000 volunteers across the borough. The COVID-19 resident impact survey found generally respondents were satisfied with the way the council and partners are managing their response to the pandemic.

Addressing the broader impact of the pandemic, such as that on employment and health, we have been able to use existing partnership structures, such as the THP's Partnership Executive Group, who have met fortnightly and are continuing to provide a system-wide view as we enter recovery.

We need to review our investment in partners, and will build on this way of working with the council as convenor, empowering partners to lead on prioritised areas where we can add value, and focusing our partnership resources to enable the social and economic recovery of the borough. We are working with our partners to address many of our key challenges in Outcomes one to eight of this Plan.

What actions will we take?

1. Continue to promote Tower Hamlets as a place and community cohesion through partnership working and campaigns such as #TowerHamletsTogether
2. Develop a clear set of priorities for partnership working that focuses on social and economic recovery of the borough
3. Work with partners to mitigate impact of Brexit on communities and stakeholders in Tower Hamlets
4. Improve collaborative working and integration with partners to drive improvements against the four priority areas of the Tower Hamlets Plan

What will we measure?

- Children & young people accessing mental health services
- Residents supported into employment by the Workpath partnership
- Resident satisfaction with council and partner response to anti-social behaviour (ASB)

- Residential and nursing admissions (over 65s)

Outcome 11: People say we continuously seek innovation and strive for excellence to embed a culture of sustainable improvement

Our improvement journey has seen us take massive strides forward, resulting in the removal of Government Directions and withdrawal of Commissioners, and more recently turning around Children’s Services in just two years to achieve of an Ofsted Good rating.

Improvements made by our transformation agenda enabled us to respond swiftly to the impact of the pandemic. We had to learn very quickly to deliver services in a new way, including through redeployment and with large numbers of staff working at home. While staff sickness did increase, this peaked on 1 April and has steadily declined and now stabilised. A survey of staff undertaken at the end of April saw high numbers of staff reporting good mental health at that time. Our response also saw the introduction of virtual decision making ensuring we maintained good governance of the council.

We will build upon our pandemic response to review the delivery of our services, ensuring we can make continuous improvements. The pandemic has and will continue to have an impact not only on our residents, but also on how services are configured to meet their needs. Simultaneously, it has also presented opportunities in how we have been agile, where possible delivering remotely. We are keen to further review the configuration of services and how they are delivered. We as civic leaders will need to increase our efforts and ensure a greater coherence of approach across our organisations.

We are calling this a ‘whole system’ approach to change in Tower Hamlets, and it will require us to work together in new ways, build better alignment of our respective efforts in service of our shared aims, and put the interests of the borough above those of our individual organisations.

What actions will we take?

1. As part of our Smarter Together Transformation programme, modernise our core support and enabling functions to improve effectiveness and efficiency
2. Deliver improvements to how we use our land and buildings, supporting the council’s wider ambitions of recovery and transformation
3. Implement modern infrastructure to remove the technical barriers to the council’s ambitions
4. Enable colleagues to work reliably and securely from anywhere
5. Drive and support digital inclusion in the borough including enabling residents to access our services
6. Develop and deliver a Workforce & Wellbeing Strategy
7. Realign our budget to the council’s revised priorities during the ongoing response to the pandemic and the post COVID-19 environment
8. Continue the programme of service reviews and transformation projects to improve operational effectiveness

What will we measure?

- Council staff sickness absence rate
- Council staff turnover rate
- Residents' perception of the council doing a better job than last year
- Budget variance for the general fund
- Media and press view of the council

How to get involved

Our Community Engagement Strategy sets out our vision for transparency and openness by encouraging active participation of our residents to influence and shape the borough in which they live and work. We want communities to lead the way in making Tower Hamlets a great place to live and we want communities to have the power to influence issues that affect them the most.

Find out about the latest council news and events by visiting our website:

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk

Check out our calendar of meetings to find out about upcoming council and committee meetings:

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/meetings

We regularly consult our residents and local businesses about proposals that are likely to impact them:

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/consultation

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