


Cabinet 9 February 2022	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Sharon Godman Director Strategy, Improvement and Transformation	Classification: Unrestricted
Response to Overview and Scrutiny's Challenge Session on Empowering Communities – engaging our diverse community at a locality level	

Lead Member	Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment & Planning
Originating Officer(s)	Filuck Miah, Strategy and Policy officer, Corporate
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	No
Reason for Key Decision	This report has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.
Forward Plan Notice Published	25 October 2021
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	<p>Priority One Outcome 4 - Inequality is reduced, and people feel that they fairly share the benefits from growth.</p> <p>Priority Two Outcome 4 - People feel they are part of a cohesive and vibrant community.</p> <p>Priority Three Outcome 9 - People say we are open and transparent putting residents at the heart of everything we do</p> <p>Outcome 10 - People say we work together across boundaries in a strong and effective partnership to achieve the best outcomes for our residents.</p> <p>Outcome 11 - People say we continuously seek innovation and strive for excellence to embed a culture of sustainable improvement.</p>

Executive Summary

This report submits the Executive response to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) Challenge Session report recommendations which examines how the council can improve its engagement with the borough's diverse community at a locality level.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Consider the Overview and Scrutiny Challenge Session Report (Appendix 1) on Empowering Communities – engaging our diverse community at a locality level.
2. Agree the Service Action Plan (Appendix 2) in response to the scrutiny report recommendations.
3. Note the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 4.1.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 To provide a formal response to the OSC report and an action plan to cover any recommendations in line with council constitution requirements.
- 1.2 The attached report is the Executive's response to the scrutiny recommendations arising from the OSC challenge session's examination on empowering communities – engaging our diverse community at a locality level.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the Overview and Scrutiny challenge session provides an evidence base for improving engagement with the borough's diverse community at a locality level.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 Community engagement is the active participation of local residents and community groups in the decisions that affect their lives. Neighbourhoods can act as the catalyst for developing social connections, satisfying basic needs and place-based policy.
- 3.2 Neighbourhood Planning Forums (NPF) enable residents and communities to feed into their local infrastructure, capital and investment spend programmes via developing a Neighbourhood Plan. These forums empower residents and communities to play a key role in influencing how development will occur at a neighbourhood level.
- 3.3 Residents discussed the council's approach to local engagement with members and some of the challenges to these and how it sometimes does not engage those seldom heard. They also raised concerns around how their views do not lead to changes which has an impact on future engagement with the council. They informed members that it is difficult for active residents to find engagement avenues to improve their communities with the council.

3.4 Cllr James King, agreed to hold a scrutiny challenge session on 21 April 2021 focusing on empowering communities – how the council can improve its engagement with the borough’s diverse community at a locality level.

3.5 The scope set out the following key questions to be examined at the challenge session:

- How do current structures enable a diverse range of residents to engage at a locality level?
- Should LBTH consider establishing local governance structures to enable residents to shape their area?
- What would the resource implications of this be?
- What works well in other boroughs?
- What would the scope of these structures be?

3.6 The scrutiny committee made the following four recommendations to help the council improve its engagement with the borough’s diverse community at a locality level:

Recommendation 1

The council uses the South Poplar and Isle of Dogs Community Development Panel as a potential model for engagement in other areas of the borough with a focus on facilitating place-based priorities for regeneration and local investment in the local area.

Recommendation 2

The council strengthens the feedback loops (for regular dialogue with residents) into existing programme delivery including the Local Infrastructure Fund, the Capital Programme, regeneration schemes.

Recommendation 3

The council surveys / engages residents to determine local COVID-19 recovery priorities, for example: regenerating local highstreets, active business to the area or advocating the use of parks and open spaces to promote community benefit of public health.

Recommendation 4

The council develops a geography-based partnership approach that brings collaboration from the council, public and private partners, VCS and others to pick up local priorities.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The challenge session examined the level of representation of the pilot community design panels and suggested how this could be strengthened to ensure seldom heard groups participation on place shaping priorities. The recommendations from this session want to ensure that all residents are directly engaged and have the opportunity to shape local decision making.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

5.2 No additional statutory implications have been identified.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 The Council has the legal power to undertake the activities referred to in the action plan (Appendix 2)

7.2 Where the furtherance of the items detailed in the action plan require further expenditure, such expenditure may only be taken following separate approval in accordance with the Council's constitution.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- **Appendix 1:** Overview and Scrutiny Challenge Session Report on Empowering Communities – engaging our diverse community at a locality level
- **Appendix 2:** Service Action Plan (Executive Response)

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

- None

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