

Cabinet	
29 November 2023	
Report of: Robin Beattie, Acting Director Strategy Improvement and Transformation	Classification: Unrestricted
Tower Hamlets Partnership Plan 2023 – 2028: A Tower Hamlets for All	

Lead Member	Mayor Lutfur Rahman
Originating Officer(s)	Abidah Kamali – Senior Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate Strategy and Improvement Service
Wards affected	All Wards
Key Decision?	No
Reason for Key Decision	N/A
Forward Plan Notice Published	21 April 2023
Exempt information	N/A
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	All

Executive Summary

The council's Strategic Plan (2022 – 2026) sets out our commitment to develop a new partnership plan in collaboration with our key stakeholders which includes residents, faith, businesses, voluntary and community sector, and public sector organisations. A 'Tower Hamlets for All' our new Partnership Plan 2023-2028 provides an opportunity for our local strategic partnership to seize current opportunities and address the most pressing challenges for residents and the borough through partnership collaboration and leadership.

A growing population and austerity has already hit our public services hard. High needs and service pressures are further exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic, a housing crisis, climate emergency, and the cost-of-living crisis on a population with high pre-existing health inequalities and poverty. The new Tower Hamlets Plan brings partners together to harness opportunities and promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the borough and our residents, supported by a set of shared partnership outcomes.

This report provides a new shared vision for the borough which is 'residents and partners working together to improve quality of life, advance equality and

opportunities and empower communities.’ The Plan sets out five key cross-cutting calls to action (priorities) which focus on the issues that matter most to residents and where the partnership can achieve most by working together. The Plan has been developed by a partnership Task and Finish Group and shaped by evidence and insight including key findings from the 2021 census data, a state of the borough paper and stakeholder and community engagement which included involvement of over 700 people through a range of mechanism including events and a survey.

The priorities in this plan will be delivered by the borough’s thematic partnership boards – with action plans developed supported by shared resources and identifying any costed delivery plans as appropriate. Thematic partnership boards will provide an update at least annually to the Partnership Executive Group, drawing out any opportunities or challenges which the wider partnership needs to come together to solve. Our success will be measured, and progress will be reported in an annual report.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Agree the Tower Hamlets Partnership Plan 2023-2028.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 Our local strategic partnership the Tower Hamlets Partnership brings organisations and communities together to improve services and outcomes for our residents. It aims to provide residents with opportunities to shape, influence and inform the development of the borough’s main partnership plans. It seeks to improve the way services are designed and delivered as well as achieving key outcomes.
- 1.2 The partnership's most recent Tower Hamlets Plan 2018-2023 to ‘build a stronger, more inclusive and fairer borough’ comes to an end soon. The council’s Strategic Plan (2022 – 2026) sets out our commitment to develop a new shared vision and ambition for the borough in collaboration with residents, businesses, faith, voluntary and community sector, and public sector organisations.
- 1.3 The Partnership is on a journey of transformation and improvement. A new shared vision and Tower Hamlets Partnership Plan for 2023-2028 will support a focused strategic partnership effort to seize current opportunities and address the most pressing challenges for residents and the borough through partnership leadership and delivery with the council. It will underpin effective collaboration across a range of partnership activities and extend and deepen relationships with residents and with community, voluntary and faith groups.
- 1.4 The new Partnership Plan demonstrates the council’s commitment to partnership and leadership of place and is also a starting point in making progress towards two recommendations made by the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, 2023.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Not developing a new Partnership Plan for 2023-2028 will leave the Tower Hamlets Partnership without a clear vision and focus for collaboration to deliver better outcomes for residents. This might also hinder the Tower Hamlets Partnership's ability to seek collective agreement from its strategic partners on borough priorities to 2028 and result in missed opportunities to tackle social challenges, for growth and socio-economic development.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 Community leadership is at the heart of the role of a modern local authority. The Local Government Act 2000 enables authorities to work in partnership with other bodies to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the local area, and its people. Whilst there is no longer a requirement in law for a local strategic partnership and a community strategy, most local areas have an overarching partnership and plan.
- 3.2 The Tower Hamlets Partnership is the borough's local strategic partnership. It is a coalition of public services (including council, health, police and education), voluntary and community sector, faith and business organisations committed to making Tower Hamlets a great place for all who live, work, visit and study here through a shared vision.
- 3.3 It brings together key stakeholders to improve outcomes for local residents, including through service redesign, and resident involvement in the development of the borough's main partnership plans. The Partnership is not a service provider in its own right. It works through the activities of all the partners, taking a systems approach, co-ordinating and facilitating improvements and joining up work where needed.
- 3.4 A new Partnership Plan helps us to extend our practical, community-oriented approach to seize new opportunities and address through partnership collaboration the challenges and ambitions of our residents. It also helps us agree on new shared system-wide improvement principles and priorities for partnership, including influencing decisions and holding each other to

account, and embedding the council's strategic plan priorities, where there is a cross-cutting partnership influence.

- 3.5 The 2021 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Revisit noted the importance of the partnership response to the pandemic and the partners' strong commitment to a shared ambition for Tower Hamlets. The most recent 2023 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge considered the local authority's 'Leadership of Place' role and its relationships with partners and external stakeholders, making two key recommendations.
- 3.6 The new Partnership Plan considers recent changes to bring policy and partnership arrangements into line with statutory, and national government requirements. For example:
- The role of the Tower Hamlets Together Board has evolved following the Health and Care Act 2022. An Integrated Care System is now in place in North East London. Tower Hamlets Together (THT) operates as a place-based partnership within this system, reporting into the borough's Health and Wellbeing Board. Additionally, the THT Board also functions as a sub-committee of the Integrated Care Board under the NHS Accountability Framework.
 - The Community Safety Partnership and its members will be expected to meet the requirements of a Serious Violence Duty introduced through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.
 - A local Combatting Drugs Partnership has been formed in line with the requirements of the Government's 10-year drugs plan 'From harm to hope'. This partnership reports into the Community Safety Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board.
 - The government published an Improvement plan for SEND and alternative provision in March 2023, but decisions to legislate new SEND standards will only be made after three years following policy trials. Local SEND and alternative provision partnerships are to be introduced.
 - Specific reviews and task forces are underway or proposed involving partners to look at priority areas including homelessness, damp and mould, and crime reduction.
- 3.7 In Autumn 2022, the council and Partnership Executive Group agreed on the process for developing a new Partnership Plan for the borough, supported by a partnership Task and Finish Group.

A new Shared Vision

- 3.8 The strategic vision for the partnership and plan that the partnership will strive to achieve over the next 5 years working with the community is '**Residents and partners working together to improve quality of life, advance equality, opportunity, and empowered communities.**' This is developed in the context of population growth and demographic changes, inequalities, and the social, health, economic, and environmental challenges and opportunities for our residents, the borough, and partnership over the coming years.

- 3.9 A set of shared values and system-wide improvement principles are introduced to guide the way we work, strengthen partnership working and collaboration and improve trust, accountability and outcomes for our residents and borough – these align with the most recent principles adopted for improving the health, care, and wellbeing of our residents.

System-wide improvement principles:

- Research-led and evidence-informed
- Data Sharing
- Better targeting
- Stronger networks
- Equalities and anti-racism
- Community first and coproduction
- Open and transparent
- Best use of assets and resources
- Celebrating place and promoting the borough (TH_IS)
- Sustainability and climate change

Our shared outcomes:

- Address inequalities between residents from different backgrounds reducing gaps in health, earnings, education, housing, and opportunity
- Improve our neighbourhoods, ensuring they are places for living, shopping and entertainment where communities feel safe and get on well together, and climate change is tackled

Our shared aims:

- More people are able to live, work, learn and play in ways that meet their needs in the borough
- Tower Hamlets has better neighbourhoods which support good health and wellbeing, and where all people feel safe, belong and get on well

Call to action 1: Tower Hamlets will be a fair, inclusive and an anti-racist borough.

What we will do together:

1.1 Work in partnership to reduce unequal life chances.

1.2 Fulfil our partnership ambition to make Tower Hamlets an anti-racist borough.

Call to action 2: Everyone in Tower Hamlets should be able to enjoy good mental health and wellbeing.

What we will do together:

2.1 Promote good mental health for adults, children and young people and our staff

Call to action 3: Everyone in Tower Hamlets should feel safe and live in good-quality homes and healthy, inviting neighbourhoods

What we will do together:

3.1 Support safer communities

3.2 A Public Health approach using guidance and insight

3.3 Address housing needs and improve our neighbourhoods

Call to action 4: Everyone in Tower Hamlets should have access to good work and skills and an income that meets their needs

What we will do together:

4.1 Promote inward investment and create wealth

4.2 Support skills development, good work and financial security

Call to action 5: A child-friendly borough where children and young people from all backgrounds thrive, achieve their best, have opportunities, and are listened to

What we will do together:

5.1 Improve the life chances and outcomes of our children and young people

Developing the Partnership Plan

- 3.10 A Partnership Task and Finish Group led work on developing the new Partnership Plan, comprising cross-sector representatives. The group met eight times to review evidence and insight, and discuss priorities, opportunities and options to add value to existing partnership work. This includes reviewing existing partnership strategies and benchmarking of neighbouring borough partnership plans, to help inform a shared vision and greater influence for the Mayor and partnership.
- 3.11 The group decided that the new Partnership Plan should focus on practical action that improves residents' lives. It has agreed on a 'call to action' approach – with a small number of cross-cutting priorities where the partnership can make a real difference working together. This will sit alongside the strategic priorities set by the thematic partnership boards.

Evidence for the Partnership Plan

Stakeholder and Community Engagement

- 3.12 Our engagement of over 700 people has shaped the priorities for the new Partnership Plan. A full analysis report has been prepared as a background paper: this includes data from our stakeholder and community engagement, Annual Residents Survey 2023, new grants programme 2023, the Pupil Attitude Survey 2022, and other key sources of information about residents' and stakeholders' perspectives and priorities – 'What matters to residents', Appendix C.
- Around 24 engagement events were held involving more than 450 residents and stakeholders. These events have ranged from stalls in Idea Stores and Warm Hubs, to sessions with community, faith and youth groups, webinars for residents, and specific sessions with community equality networks.
 - A Tower Hamlets for All survey ran from 4 December 2022 to 30 January 2023, attracting 262 online and hard copy responses. 64% (168) of respondents are residents and 24% (63) work in the borough.
 - Additional engagements include with the Partnership Executive Group, chairs of partnership boards, council officers, cabinet members, a session

at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and discussions by request at management teams and partnership boards.

3.13 Through the various engagement residents have told us:

What people like most about Tower Hamlets

- The borough's diversity
- Arts, culture, shops, restaurants, and historical districts
- Tower Hamlets' location, transport connections to central London and proximity to River Thames and the canal
- Public spaces such as local parks and green spaces.

The issues people would like action on

- Housing conditions and the need for more affordable and family-sized homes
- Public spaces, air quality and transport
- Crime, violence, and anti-social behavior
- Poverty and the cost of living
- Access to health and GP services, better mental health and wellbeing, and reducing health inequalities
- More community spirit and neighborliness
- Opportunities for young people in education, employment and careers
- Equal access to opportunities for young people, women and all our residents from Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic communities to learning, skills and job opportunities and career progression
- Celebrating the borough and its people
- Fairness, cohesion and opportunities for all
- Building personal and community responsibility
- Sharing the benefits from regeneration, growth and economic opportunities

3.14 Housing, poverty and cost of living, air quality, equality, and community safety are running themes of importance for people. A large proportion of people have cited a clean and green borough and improved air quality as their vision for Tower Hamlets in 10 years' time.

3.15 In November 2022, senior officers from the council, cabinet members and the wider partnership participated in a prioritisation exercise to identify their top priorities for partnership. Young people were asked to do the same and identified a child-friendly borough followed by tackling the housing crisis and tackling poverty and the cost of living as their top 3 priorities. Other priorities around jobs and skills, health, environment, joining up services and community activism scored lower.

3.16 In July 2023 a partnership theory of change workshop was held to support the partnership plan development. This helped to further develop the shared partnership vision identifying key aims, outcomes and development of evidence bases linked to key partnership strategies.

- 3.17 Our residents and partners agree that this new Partnership Plan should concentrate on a core set of priorities. Our five cross-cutting calls to action (priorities) focus on the issues which matter most to residents and where we can achieve most by working together. Each can add value to current work and prepare us for the challenges and opportunities of the future, supported also by a theory of change attached at Appendix B and the strategic plans of partnership boards.
- 3.18 Other priorities identified will be picked up by existing strategies and partnerships and background evidence papers will be shared to help shape new strategies and plans. Where this new Partnership Plan can add value to our current sector-specific strategies and improve cross-partnership working and collaboration on specific strategic plan or partnership priorities, this has been prioritised.

Evidence for the Partnership Plan: A State of the Borough paper

- 3.19 A 'State of the Borough' paper (Appendix D) was prepared in March 2023 as a background paper for the partnership plan. This document uses data available from Census 2021, alongside the most recent publicly available statistics to provide a short, factual overview of the borough's population, housing, health and socio-economic characteristics together with a narrative that focuses on the borough's assets and opportunities. It identifies the most important changes the borough's population have experienced in recent years.

Some of the messages arising from the paper about Tower Hamlets include:

- Fastest growing population in England (22 per cent rise between 2011 and 2021)
- Most densely populated area in England (15,695 residents per square kilometre)
- Youngest median age of any area (30 years)
- Disproportionately comprised of working age adults (71% of all residents were aged 20-64)
- Ethnically diverse with the largest Bangladeshi population in the country (107,333 residents, 34.6% of the population). A growing Somali population.
- A relatively large proportion of residents identify their sexual orientation as Lesbian Gay, Bisexual or other (7.2%) compared to England and Wales as a whole (3.1%) and about one per cent of residents have a different gender identity to their sex registered at birth.
- 70% of dwellings are rented, split roughly equally between social renters and private renters, with significant levels of overcrowding
- Lessening deprivation but highly deprived populations of older people and children, with significant need for support services
- Healthy life expectancy at birth increased by 11 percentage points for males and 2 percentage points for females between 2011-13 and 2018-2020, although this data pre-dates the pandemic
- A larger economy than the cities of Birmingham, Manchester or Leeds, with more jobs (291,000) than working age residents

Further detail also available in the Partnership Plan.

Partnership Plan Implementation

- 3.20 The priorities in this plan will be delivered by the borough's thematic partnership boards – with action plans developed supported by shared resources and identifying any costed delivery plans as appropriate. Thematic partnership boards will provide an update at least annually to the Partnership Executive Group, drawing out any opportunities or challenges which the wider partnership needs to come together to solve. Our success will be measured, and progress will be reported in an annual report.
- 3.21 We will communicate and challenge each other as organisations and partnership boards to raise standards and tackle the most difficult issues.
- 3.22 Every organisation in the partnership will contribute to delivering the priorities by building partnership objectives into their own strategic and corporate plans.
- 3.23 Twice-yearly Mayor's partnership congresses are also planned. The congresses will bring together a wide range of residents, stakeholders and partners to find solutions to the biggest issues that face Tower Hamlets, by leveraging partnership working in a more effective way. The first Partnership Congress was held on 14 November 2023, with a focus on community safety. Participants worked together to shape a set of tangible commitments and charter to improve outcomes around crime and anti-social behaviour.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Inequality and poverty is at the heart of the challenges and social issues that our residents face. The Tower Hamlets Partnership is determined to tackle this head-on, putting our communities first and placing equality, fairness, and justice at the heart of everything we do. We will work together so that everyone can benefit from the social, cultural and economic wealth of the borough.
- 4.2 The Tower Hamlets Partnership Plan is a broad plan of action which will help to reduce inequalities and ensure that partners fulfil their duties under the equality act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations. It will also support the fulfilment of the council's equality objectives set out in priority six of the council's Strategic Plan 2022-26.
- 4.3 Its focus is on reducing inequalities and meeting the needs of our diverse communities, through five key cross-cutting calls to action (priorities), that are most important to residents and where the partnership feels it can empower action. It is also informed by two background evidence papers which include data and insight about groups with protected characteristic (where this is available) and about inequalities faced in the borough.
- 4.4 Action areas in the Partnership Plan to address inequalities include:

- A fair, inclusive and an anti-racist borough
- Tackling poverty and the cost of living
- Reducing health inequalities and improving healthy life expectancy
- Reducing the employment rate gap for women and other protected groups
- Reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training
- Delivering more affordable homes, tackling overcrowding and its wider impact and implications
- Adopt a local community wealth-building approach
- Supporting the needs of our SEND and care experienced young people, safeguarding, and increasing family resilience
- Tackling childhood obesity

4.5 An equality impact assessment is attached at Appendix E.

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 Best value authorities are under a general Duty of Best Value 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 Partnership Plan supports this duty through leadership of place, partnership collaboration and review and implementation of system-wide improvement principles to improve the sharing of resources, and information, creating efficiencies for the council and across the partnership, whilst delivering better outcomes for the borough.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 Delivery of the Partnership Plan will be met through existing resources. Should any additional resources be required, these will need to be approved through the appropriate governance route.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1. In furtherance of the proposed plan the Council will need to comply with all

Relevant equalities legislation and with its best value duties to ensure continuous improvement. Partnership working may require the development of contractual relationships which may require formal documentation or appropriate memorandums of understanding to be drawn up.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- List any linked reports

Appendices

- A: Tower Hamlets Partnership Plan 2023-2028
- B: Theory of Change
- C: Background Paper: What matters to residents
- D: Background Paper: State of the Borough
- E: Equalities Impact Assessment

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

- NONE.

Officer contact details for documents:

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