



# TOWER HAMLETS PARTNERSHIP

Working together for a better borough

Tower Hamlets Partnership Review - Draft recommendations  
and actions

Cabinet

April 2024

# How the partnership maps onto LBTH priorities

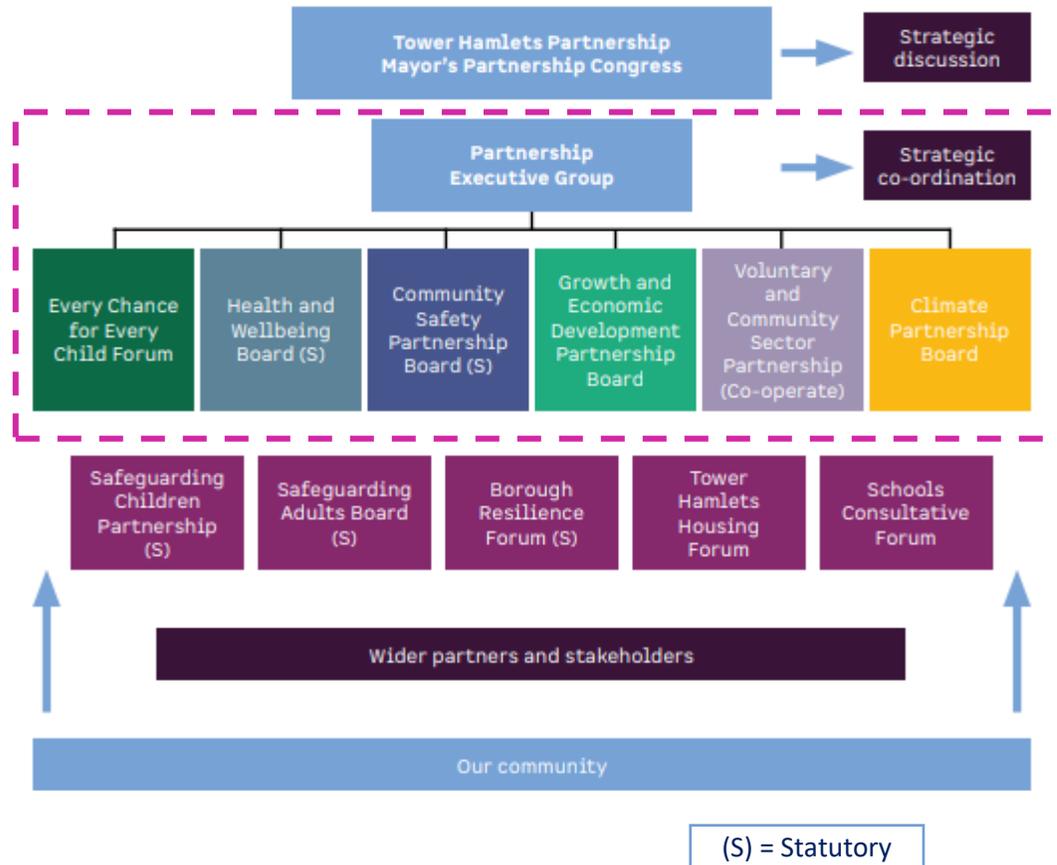
Existing partnerships align to some extent with the calls to action in the Partnership Plan 2023-28 ('A Tower Hamlets for All', but there are areas where the partnerships aren't set up to realise the ambitions of the new plan. ALL the Partnerships must contribute to all five cross-cutting calls to action.



# Why the Partnership needs to change

- Set ourselves up differently to achieve our new transformational vision
- Improve current ways of working to meet partner/council needs
- Review current partnership governance arrangements (LGA Corporate Peer Review recommendation)

**Our vision:** Residents and partners working together to improve quality of life, advance equality, opportunity, and empowered communities



A partner-led Task and Finish Group created to review partnership arrangements to:

- **simplify the structure**
- **improve focus**
- **strengthen accountability**
- **and promote transformational partnership working and collaboration**

The Review has focused on PEG and the thematic partnership layer directly underneath this.

Implementation of wider improvements will be down to thematic partnership chairs – this will be supported by principle-based guidance (annex 1).

# Partnership Review: Headline Findings

- **Definition:** the partnership is broad and complex, we need to strengthen joint planning and senior representation to ensure horizontal co-ordination across the partnership, alignment and focus
- **Communication:** happens informally through multiple people attending the same meetings, partnership chairs need to support this through a clear engagement strategy
- **Accountability:** maintain informal, trust based partnerships rather than introducing a more formal accountability framework
- **Community representation:** This will look different for different partnerships, there is best practice to learn from in the Statutory Boards, the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy will be renewed shortly and is an opportunity to further develop our approach

# Transformational Partnership Working

In summary, we heard that transformational partnership working involves:

- senior commitment
- strategic prioritisation
- effective risk management
- research and evidence integration
- and the utilisation of existing resources

Workshop participants felt that our key barriers include:

- resource limitations
- conflicting priorities
- lack of sustained focus and
- equitable representation within the partnership.

# Summary Draft Recommendations: A sharper focus and transformational working

## R1: Reform the Partnership Executive Group (PEG)

- i. **Focus PEG on a small number of strategic issues** for transformational impact
- ii. Ensure close **alignment of the long-term strategic vision** and partnership priorities.
- iii. **Initiate engagement** for the Chief Exec and Mayor with partners to understand partner shared priorities and opportunities better.
- iv. Reinvigorate the **“Mayor’s” partnership congress** and **optimize the Mayor’s time for strategic engagement**
- v. Strengthen work with regional/national **strategic partnerships**

## R2: Tackle Duplication and Improve Focus

- i. **Initiate an annual joint work planning** promoting whole system working, and coordination
- ii. **Assess partnerships/sub-groups** to distinguish true partnerships from routine relationships, transition to time-focused task and finish groups and foster continuous improvement.
- iii. **Strengthen relationships** between health partnerships to ensure more efficient delivery of services.

## R3: Develop Distributed Leadership

- i. **A consistent elected member and partner co-chairing model** to empower shared leadership, foster stronger engagement, and define clear lead roles of board members and overall governance of partnerships.
- ii. **Consider a dispersed model** for non-statutory boards enhancing sector leadership, effectiveness and sustainability.
- iii. **Implement recommendations from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge** to improve partnership practice.

## R4: Create an Equitable, Inclusive, and Accountable Partnership

- i. **Improve resident voice and community representation** to address disparities and promote inclusive decision-making and equity, learning from what works and a community-first approach.
- ii. Ensure adherence to **statutory accountability frameworks**, risk management, and **spotlights on joint cross-cutting priorities**

## R5: Improve Communications and Engagement

- i. Investigate platforms for collaboration and **action outside of meetings.**
- ii. **Relaunch** the Tower Hamlets **TH\_IS Place campaign** and create a communications working group.
- iii. Rebrand the PEG and **improve internal communications.**
- iv. **Showcase partnership accomplishments** through external engagement, awards, and recognition

# Review recommendations

The review proposes five key recommendations to strengthen focus, and leverage partnership working in a more effective way to achieve transformational impact and the ambitions of our new partnership plan '[A Tower Hamlets for All](#)'. The Senior Responsible Officer is the Acting Director for Strategy Improvement and Transformation.

<b>Recommendation 1: Reform the Partnership Executive Group to strengthen its focus, and drive meaningful transformational outcomes across the partnership</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="53 456 2216 606">i. <b>PEG to address a small number of mission-focused strategic issues collectively agreed for transformation impact</b> – commencing with a scoping exercise to identify priorities bringing key stakeholders, academia, and policymakers together, developing a theory of change to address systemic challenges through research, partnership, and strategic interventions. A top priority suggested is the health determinants research collaboration priority of housing issues/wider determinants of health and housing so that strategic priorities, partnership activity and collaborative research can be aligned.</li> <li data-bbox="53 606 2216 749">ii. Ensure <b>close alignment of the council's new long-term strategic vision for the borough</b> (to be developed) <b>with the new partnership plan priorities</b>, strengthening the role of the Mayor and members in partnership activities. Fostering collaboration, enhancing accountability, and contributing to the success and well-being of the community.</li> <li data-bbox="53 749 2216 892">iii. <b>Develop a programme of engagement between the Chief Executive, Mayor/Deputy Mayor and partners to understand shared priorities and levers better</b>, thereby strengthening relationships, enhancing collaboration, alignment, and coordination efforts.</li> <li data-bbox="53 892 2216 1035">iv. <b>Repurpose and revitalize the “Mayor’s” partnership congress (incl. frequency) as a dynamic platform for political and partnership leadership</b> and engagement on community issues identified by thematic board chairs. While optimising the Mayor's time for strategic engagement and impact on complex issues aligned to the Mayor’s transformational priorities led by PEG and which focus on meetings/priorities where his participation is required.</li> <li data-bbox="53 1035 2216 1178">v. <b>Review the terms of reference and core membership of PEG</b> so that it is better equipped to steer collective efforts towards meaningful impact and sustainable outcomes. This includes a) a partner and Mayor co-chairing arrangement; b) representation from thematic partnerships; c) PEG's role in addressing complex cross-cutting issues that require a PEG steer; d) integrating young people/community (incl. community and voluntary sector and faith community) /multi-sector voice; and e) resources to address shared transformational objectives.</li> <li data-bbox="53 1178 2216 1360">vi. <b>Strengthen work across boundaries and with strategic partners, leverage cross-sector forums and partnerships to advance local interests and priorities</b>, partnership networking, advocacy and representation, and benchmarking of innovative/good practices to achieve meaningful progress on local priorities linking into the LBTH external engagement work also. For example, neighboring borough's, the GLA, London Council's, Thames Estuary etc.</li> </ul>	<p>May – July 2024</p>

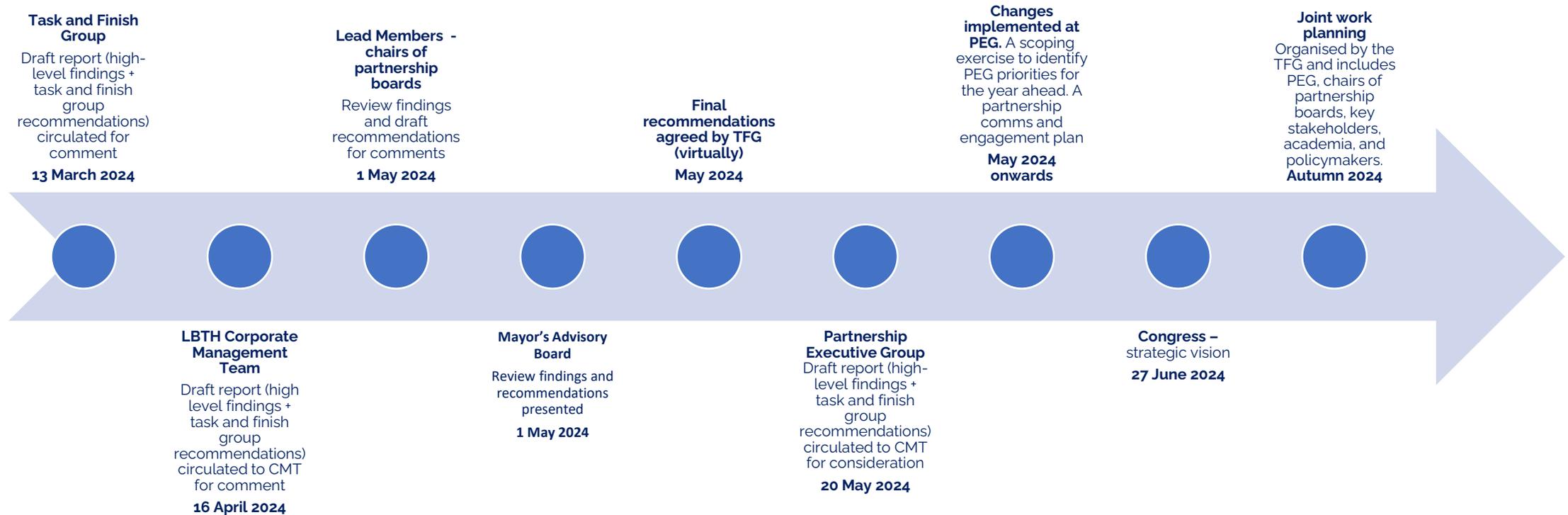
# Review recommendations ...continued

Recommendation 2: Tackle duplication and improve focus, impact, and collaboration on cross-cutting strategic issues	Timescale
<p>i. <b>A multi-agency</b> (including key stakeholders, academia and policymakers) <b>annual joint work planning session to strengthen a common vision and priorities</b>, embed system-wide improvement principles, and identify opportunities for long-term transformational outcomes across key priority areas of the partnership plan – <b>whole system working supported by evidence about the borough and a theory of change</b> that tests strategic priorities, deliverability/impact, and resources/effort required.</p>	November 2023
<p>ii. <b>Chairs of boards effectively review current thematic partnerships/sub-groups using the principles-based guidance (annex 1)</b> including reviewing terms of reference and membership, streamlining efforts and enhancing coordination and oversight, strengthening partnerships, leveraging assets, integrating community voice, research, and evidence, and maximising the impact of collaborative initiatives. This includes <b>transitioning from continuous meeting structures of boards/subgroups to time-focused Task and Finish groups addressing specific issues, overlap, or interconnection between issues</b>, thereby promoting focused efforts, realistic goals, and individual accountability.</p>	November 2023
<p>iii. <b>Strengthen the relationships between Tower Hamlets Together and the Health and Wellbeing Board</b> to enhance collaboration, reduce duplication, deliver statutory functions, and ensure a more efficient delivery of health and wellbeing services to the local community.</p>	March 2025
<p>iv. <b>Introduce an annual self-reflection of partnerships and foster a culture of continuous improvement</b>, shared resources and collaboration, benchmarking, learning to achieve goals and make a positive impact in the community.</p>	Ongoing
Recommendation 3: Develop a more distributed leadership and shared decision-making within the partnership	Timescale
<p>i. <b>Learning from what works in our statutory boards, ensure a consistent joint co-chairing arrangement with elected members and partners/council</b> across the Partnership Executive Group and thematic Partnership Boards which empowers shared partnership leadership, advancing collective interests, agenda planning, and actions outside of meetings, and strengthening clear lead roles and overall governance of the partnership.</p>	July 2023
<p>ii. <b>Consider a dispersed model for non-statutory partnership boards</b> where partners who are co-chairs use convening power and take over administrative functions of the partnership thereby <b>promoting shared and sector leadership</b> and collaboration and contributing also to impactful outcomes, the success and sustainability of the partnership.</p>	March 2025
<p>iii. <b>Implement the recommendations and actions from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge focused on partnership improvements</b></p>	Ongoing

# Review recommendations ...continued

Recommendation 4: Create a partnership that is equitable, inclusive and accountable	Timescale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="53 361 2216 535">i. <b>Improve resident voice and community/partner representativeness to address disparities and promote inclusivity and equity within the partnership, learning from what works.</b> This includes resident, voluntary and community sector and faith community participation; exploring a shared reward and recognition approach for residents / VCS participation on key projects; making good use of data and collaborative research; and a shared effective community-first and co-production strategy built on trust, equal participation, and effective communications to create responsive, inclusive, and sustainable services.</li> <li data-bbox="53 568 2216 675">ii. <b>Partnership boards to ensure statutory accountability frameworks are adhered to, and spotlights initiated by PEG (as appropriate) focused on cross-cutting joint priorities</b> to help strengthen governance structures, enhance transparency, and drive collective action and continuous improvements towards achieving shared objectives for community development and well-being.</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="2216 361 2491 396">March 2025</p> <p data-bbox="2216 535 2491 571">Ongoing</p>
Recommendation 5: Improve communications and engagement across the partnership to strengthen relationships, build trust, and mobilise collective action towards shared goals and priorities	Timescale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="53 875 2216 946">i. <b>Investigate an appropriate platform that facilitates networking, communications, partnership join-up, and action outside of meeting structures,</b> testing options with the partnership.</li> <li data-bbox="53 979 2216 1118">ii. <b>Relaunch and accelerate the objectives of the Tower Hamlets TH_IS Place campaign</b> as an umbrella campaign for anything that promotes or markets Tower Hamlets, strengthening our brand identity, attracting investment, and enhancing our reputation as a vibrant and dynamic destination for residents, visitors, businesses, and investors. Create a Tower Hamlets Partnership communications working group to support this work, promote the 'no go' to 'go to' social media campaign, and showcase our partnership accomplishments widely.</li> <li data-bbox="53 1150 2216 1222">iii. <b>Rebrand the Partnership Executive and improve internal communications around its shared purpose and objective,</b> activities, and deliverables across key priority areas of the partnership plan.</li> <li data-bbox="53 1255 2216 1362">iv. <b>Raise awareness and inspire others through positive external engagement work,</b> by showcasing our joint accomplishments and demonstrating the strength of partnership in Tower Hamlets, including through <b>partnership entries for awards and recognitions</b> and sharing good practices of transformational improvement – for example in the children's safeguarding board.</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="2216 875 2491 911">March 2025</p> <p data-bbox="2216 979 2491 1015">July 2024</p> <p data-bbox="2216 1150 2491 1186">March 2025</p> <p data-bbox="2216 1255 2491 1290">Ongoing</p>

# Indicative Next Steps



# Annex

- 1) Principles-based guidance for thematic partnership chairs (slide 14)

## Principle based guidance to improve focus and minimise duplication

There were several practical suggestions that thematic partnership chairs could use to streamline and improve co-ordination of subgroups.

- 1. Assessment of Existing Partnerships/Sub-groups:** Evaluate the activity level of each thematic partnership/sub-group to determine if they are active and meeting regularly. Identify any duplication of work across different partnerships. Review the membership composition of each partnership/sub-group to ensure that it includes relevant stakeholders with the necessary expertise and representation from key sectors.
- 2. Transition to Task and Finish Groups:** Consider transitioning some thematic partnerships/sub-groups to Task and Finish Groups, especially if their work can be completed within a defined timeframe and does not require continuous meetings. Task and Finish Groups can focus on specific problem areas, set realistic goals, and establish individual accountability for achieving objectives within the specified time frame.
- 3. Distinguishing True Partnerships from Routine Relationships:** Differentiate between true partnerships, where stakeholders collaborate on common goals and share accountability and routine relationships or meetings that may not lead to tangible outcomes. Ensure clear and defined roles for each board member underpinned through the terms of reference and work programmes. Allocate support and resources based on the level of partnership engagement and the potential impact of their activities on achieving shared objectives.
- 4. Enhancing Coordination and Oversight:** Improve coordination and oversight among thematic partnerships/sub-groups, particularly in areas where there is overlap or interconnection between issues, such as domestic abuse, housing, and substance misuse. Facilitate communication and collaboration between relevant partnerships to ensure that efforts are complementary and not duplicative.
- 5. Inclusive Decision-Making Processes:** Establish conditions for making good decisions within partnerships, including involving diverse sources of input and perspectives from communities affected by the issues under consideration. Foster inclusive decision-making processes that prioritise equity, diversity, and inclusion to ensure that the needs and voices of all stakeholders (including the voluntary and community sector and faith communities) are heard and considered.
- 6. Leveraging Partnership Assets:** Identify and leverage the assets and resources within the partnership to address identified issues effectively. This may include expertise, funding, networks, and community relationships. Encourage cross-sector collaboration and resource-sharing to maximise the impact of partnership activities.
- 7. Effective Risk Management:** Implement effective risk management practices within partnerships to promptly identify and address emerging concerns or challenges. Establish clear processes for escalating key issues to the Partnership Executive Group (PEG) for decision-making and resolution.
- 8. Integration of Research and Evidence:** Integrate research and evidence from various sources, such as the Health Determinants Research Collaboration, into partnership activities to inform decision-making and program planning. Use data-driven insights to identify priority areas, assess the effectiveness of interventions, and guide continuous improvement efforts within partnerships.