

Best Value Improvement Plan July- September 2018 update

1. Introduction

The council is pleased to provide an update on the progress made in implementing the Best Value Improvement Plan (BVIP) as required under the Directions of March 2017. A total of 14 actions have been carried forward from the 2017/18 action plan against the five priority areas of: Elections, Communications, Property, Grants and Organisational Culture.

This report notes that a large number of milestones in the BVIP have been completed and where any are overdue or delayed a revised plan has been developed to ensure delivery. This demonstrates the focused determination of the council in delivering continuous improvement and provides the council with momentum as it works to deliver the remaining milestones in the plan.

2. Summary of key achievements

A summary of key achievements to date is detailed below:

- The council successfully delivered the 2018 Local and Mayoral election.
- Successfully delivered a Postal Vote Scheme Pilot for the Cabinet Office
- Development and agreement of a Communications Strategy for 2017-18 and 2018-19, which has strengthened the council's internal and external communications infrastructure.
- Conducted a Media Consumption Survey which has allowed the council to develop a greater sense of how residents access information and tailor key messages based on their preferences. A weekly staff newsletter was launched which enhanced internal communications through providing spotlights on staff contributions and highlights of council activity and key campaigns.
- Developed asset management procedures with a strong focus on delivering value for money of the property portfolio whilst meeting the local housing and community needs using the Corporate Landlord model.
- Two Community Hubs sites have been opened, with work underway to deliver a further two Community Hubs in early 2019.
- Planning consent granted and work underway to convert vacant community buildings to residential use for transfer to Tower Hamlets Homes/Homelessness Services;

- Comprehensive Review of the Third Sector Team completed to achieve greater transparency and enable appropriate monitoring of the extended grants program;
- A framework for management of grants was agreed in March and the council is currently developing an outcomes based funding programme of grants and commissioned contracts for the Voluntary and Community Sector to replace the current Mainstream Grants programme by October 2019.
- A Grants Determination Scrutiny Committee was established to provide a cross party elected members review and challenge to the grants decision making process and mainstream grants monitoring reports.
- All Community Cohesion contracts have been mobilised and are delivering with a view to bring successful contract timelines in line with mainstream grants, enabling them to be considered and co-produced as part of the future grants/commissioning process;
- The system mapping of requirements to improve management reporting, information management and analysis of the new GIFTS software was completed. Implementation of the software is on target for the end of August.
- Year one of the Smarter Together Programme completed as planned. This included a restructure of the council's top three tiers of management
- The 'TOWER' values of Together, Open, Willing, Excellent and Respect were introduced by senior management and have been communicated to staff through a range of engagement events across different council sites.
- A restructure of HR and Organisational Development service has been completed to provide a greater focus on organisational and cultural development and embed new ways of working.
- A refreshed constitution is now in place to support better governance arrangements.
- Revised Council Procedure Rules and Member/Officer Relations were approved by Council.
- The Whistleblowing Procedure was updated to ensure there is a structured and effective process in place for staff to raise concerns.
- Staff Wellbeing Survey conducted to identify any areas of need or where support could be improved.

Best Value Improvement Plan Summary

Elections: Progress Summary

The council has delivered a number of successful elections and referendum since 2015 which include:

- UK Parliamentary election May 2015
- Election of Executive Mayor June 2015
- Election of Mayor of Tower Hamlets and Greater London Authority elections May 2016
- EU Referendum June 2016
- Whitechapel ward by election December 2016
- UK Parliamentary Election May 2017

All BVIP actions in the area of Elections have been achieved. The council has already commenced work to strengthen election procedures further beyond the instructions of the BVIP. This is detailed below.

BVIP Key Achievements BVIP

- The council successfully delivered the 2018 Local and Mayoral election.
- A review of count procedures and paperwork was undertaken in consultation with the Electoral Commission and a comprehensive count plan was published.
- The location for the count and enhanced security measures for all polling stations was agreed with the Police. This included exclusion zones around the entrance to polling stations, and police officers positioned outside every one of them.
- The council completed a Cabinet Office Postal Vote Pilot which tested the postal vote process and improved guidance and security.

Areas where work continues to progress

- Dedicated training and accreditation will be introduced for staff who want to work on future election counts. Future recruitment of count staff will be taken from a pool of trained and approved staff instead of through an open invitation.
- Work is underway to improve council systems in order to allow for greater integration of the elections software with the councils mapping system, and easier access to the electoral register for enforcement officers.

Communications: Progress Summary

Communications in Tower Hamlets had a history of being reactive with a heavy reliance on the Council's weekly publication,

East End Life. Many of the messages and activities being communicated were determined by services' willingness and ability to pay and there was little use of insight or data to identify appropriate communication channels and support the delivery of effective communications campaigns. Since the Best Value Action Plan was introduced there has been significant progress in reforming the way the Council deals with internal and external publicity management.

BVIP Key Achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and agreement of a Communications Strategy for 2017-18 and 2018-19, which has strengthened the council's internal and external communications infrastructure; • Conducted a Media Consumption Survey which has allowed the council to develop a greater sense of how residents access information and tailor key messages based on their preferences; • A weekly staff newsletter was launched which has enhanced internal communications through providing spotlights on staff contributions and highlights of council activity and key campaigns. This has been very successful with high open rates that continue to show increased growth in its readership and interaction with articles; • Dedicated poster sites and 12 plasma screens in the Town Hall ensure key messages and updates for staff are seen. • Sign-up to the council's e-newsletters has increased with over 19,000 residents currently included in the subscription list. • Research of requirements for new intranet has been completed. This included working with representatives from council directorates to understand business need for the new intranet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the new Intranet will begin shortly. Office 365 is being brought into the organisation in Q2 and Q3 and the council wants to explore the feasibility of using one of its programmes called SharePoint as a platform for the new intranet. The new system

Property: Progress Summary

The Council owns, occupies or maintains around 860 non-HRA properties, valued at £1bn, located within the borough. The Council also owns around £800m of HRA properties (the housing element is managed and maintained by Tower Hamlets Homes (THH), the Council's arms-length management organisation) as well as a further £50m of community assets.

BVIP Key Achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced a new governance structure to manage council assets and made more effective use of a number of vacant buildings for housing and commercial use. • Developed asset management procedures with a strong focus on delivering value for money of the property portfolio whilst meeting the local housing and community needs using the Corporate Landlord model; • First Community Hub opened in Christian Street. • Upgrade works have been completed at the Tramshed in Bethnal Green to create the second Community Hub. Bookings are being taken and an official opening event will take place in late-August. • Planning consent has been granted for a Community Hub at Granby Hall. • Planning consent has been granted for conversion to residential use for two vacant community buildings that will be transferred to Tower Hamlets Homes/Homelessness Services. An agreed programme of conversions is in place to convert vacant community buildings identified for housing use to housing and transfer to THH/Homeless Service. This will be an ongoing programme with further conversions added as they are identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is set to commence at Granby Hall in October and will be completed within 9 months. • Planning permission has been sought for works on the development of the Raines House Community Hub with works scheduled to start in October. • The action plan for validation of TRAs with Tower Hamlets Homes is almost complete and work to convert units into temporary accommodation in Bethnal Green is due to be completed in September. • A review of depot provision across the borough is almost complete. The feasibility study of Blackwell depot is near completion and is just waiting for Waste to confirm the numbers for staff and vehicles to be accommodated before proposals can be finalised.

Grants: Progress Summary

All actions in the original Grants Best Value Action Plan have been completed. Work has been undertaken to review and develop approaches to, and processes for, grant making with the Grants Determination Sub-Committee. The Grants Scrutiny Sub-Committee continues to provide cross party member review and challenge to the grants decision making process.

BVIP Key Achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Review of the Third Sector Team completed to achieve greater transparency and enable appropriate monitoring of the extended grants program; • New outcome based grants policy agreed at Cabinet. This provides the council with a clear framework for managing grants. • Grants Scrutiny Committee established and met 6 times in 2017/18 to provide a cross party elected members review and challenge to the grants decision making process and Mainstream Grants monitoring reports. • The Grants Scrutiny Committee completed an in-depth review of recreation activities for children and young people, considering how grants support a more active lifestyle. • Commissioning of Community Cohesion theme completed with all contracts mobilised and delivering. • 	<p>Areas where work continues to progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The restructure of the Third Sector Team is almost complete with robust transitional arrangements in place. Assimilation and recruitment to new posts is set to be completed by the end of August and full implementation of the new team will be completed by the end of September. • Review of the council's Grants Policy and contracts is scheduled to be completed in October and November respectively. • There is on-going work to achieve greater involvement of voluntary and community sector in the co-production of commissioned services. • Full implementation of the web based 'GIFTS' software is on target for completion by the end of August and this will allow for greater transparency in the reporting of grants awards and performance. • Developing an outcome based funding programme of grants and commissioned contracts for the Voluntary and Community Sector to replace the current Mainstream Grants programme by October 2019. • A review of the Grants Determination Sub-Committee, and a Grants Determination Sub-Committee away-day, will be completed by the end of September as scheduled. The review will include development seminars for members.
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<p style="text-align: center;">Organisational Culture: Progress Summary</p> <p>Organisational culture is recognised as a key component in moving the Council forward. The aims of the Organisational Culture Plan are to: ensure that the culture of the organisation continues to be one which strives for continuous improvement; engages and invests in staff; ensures relationships between groups of members and between members and officers are professional, respectful, open and honest and rebuild trust in the areas where this has, or is perceived to have, broken down.</p>
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The key outcomes we are looking to achieve are:

- Staff engaged with and committed to delivering the Council’s vision and priorities;
- Improved clarity and understanding of formal roles and responsibilities of the Executive, non-Executive and senior officers of the Council in a Mayoral system;
- Effective working relationships between elected members, and between elected members and senior officers, to enable all to work together to achieve the best outcomes for Tower Hamlets and its residents;
- A shared commitment to a set of agreed behaviours and cultural values to underpin formal roles and responsibilities;

A sustainable approach to maintaining and refreshing this shared commitment.

BVIP Key Achievements	Measurable outcomes for existing work Areas where work continues to progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smarter Together programme set up with governance structures and framework in place. Year one of the Smarter Together Programme was completed as planned. This included a restructure of the council’s top three tiers of management. • The ‘TOWER’ values of Together, Open, Willing, Excellent and Respect were introduced by senior management and have been communicated to staff through a range of engagement events across different council sites. • Transformation Programme engaged staff through conversation groups and other wider staff engagement. • A restructure of HR and Organisational Development service has been completed to provide a greater focus on organisational and cultural development and embed new ways of working. • Revised Council Procedure Rules and Member/Officer Relations were approved by Council. • The Whistleblowing Procedure was updated to ensure there is a structured and effective process in place for staff to raise concerns. • Staff Wellbeing Survey conducted to identify any areas of need or where support could be improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Corporate Scheme of Management and Scheme of Delegations due to be completed by the end of November. • A working group comprising of HR, union and management representatives has been formed to review policies and to make recommendations for revisions to be presented to the corporate leadership team and where appropriate to members. This work will be on-going with a prioritised work programme to look at all HR policies, these include; Capability, Discipline, Sickness Management Procedure and Organisational Change. • All 5 outstanding cases from the Clear Up project are covered by 4 different recommendations which have now been referred to the HR Policy Working Group for consideration and action.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership development programme established, including online resources, peer to peer coaching, qualification training and external partnerships.• The Children's Services Improvement Board has met regularly and set a clear forward plan to focus on relevant thematic issues for each meeting. The Improvement Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 19 July 2017 and will be updated monthly.• LGA supported seminar for Members to increase understanding of their roles in Children's Services.• An audit of 2017-18 staff declarations of interest has been completed. | |
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