

<b>Title:</b> Community Investment	<b>Meeting:</b> Board	
<b>Report authorised by:</b> Gavin Cansfield, Chief Executive	<b>Date of the meeting:</b> 27 <sup>th</sup> April 2015	<b>Item No.</b> 7
<b>Report author:</b> Sarah Pace, Head of Business Development and Investment Planning	<b>Classification:</b> Open – published	<b>Report type:</b> Discussion
<b>Business Priorities</b> This report wholly relates to the Business Plan priority supporting vibrant neighbourhoods.		
<b>Impact for Customer</b> We are committed to supporting vibrant neighbourhoods where people feel part of a community and care about their neighbours and the neighbourhood in which they live. The work we have done, through neighbourhood planning, to understand the issues residents face within each neighbourhood has enabled us to identify four potential THH wide strategic themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- create safer neighbourhoods</li> <li>- support physical and mental wellbeing</li> <li>- increase financial resilience</li> <li>- build resilient communities</li> </ul> By targeting our work and that of partners towards these we can make a positive impact to the lives of residents. To maximise the impact we can make ,the intention is to focus interventions to provide help to residents who need it most		
<b>Diversity Impact</b> Through our work we aim to support residents who are vulnerable or at most risk of becoming so.		
<b>Cost and Income Implications</b> Work to progress the development of a new community investment strategy is covered by existing budget authorisation. The approach we are taking seeks to provide value for money and social value outcomes.		
<b>Risk Management</b> 3.0 Making a difference		
<b>Summary</b> This report provides the Board with an overview of the work being carried out to enable THH to refresh and prioritise the investment we make in communities to		

help create vibrant neighbourhoods. Since 2008, resident satisfaction with 'rating neighbourhood as a place to live' has increased from 58% to 71%. Our work to invest in communities, we believe, has played a significant part in this success.

Work to develop the new Community Investment Plan is well underway – this work needs to ensure that we really understand the issues in neighbourhoods, what the telling interventions will be and how we will measure the impact of those interventions.

**Recommendations**

That the Board notes and comments on the progress that has been made and the steps to be taken to conclude work on developing a new community investment strategy.

**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Since inception THH has recognised the need to invest in the communities that live in the neighbourhoods we manage and has sought to add value to the lives of residents beyond providing good housing management services. At its heart, community investment is about helping to build strong communities that can increasingly become more self-reliant; communities that care about their neighbours and the neighbourhoods in which they live. Our Business Plan objective to support vibrant neighbourhoods provides the vision for community investment.
- 1.2 The current economic climate makes it increasingly important to ensure the decisions we make to commit resources are underpinned by a sound strategy. A strategy that is based on a firm understanding of needs and the impact of actions we take. Significant work has already been done in developing a new community investment strategy and this report outlines the progress we have made, together with some past successes.

**2 Community Regeneration Plan**

- 2.1 In 2011, Tower Hamlets Homes launched its first Community Regeneration Plan, to support residents beyond their immediate housing management needs. To deliver the plan, we worked with a range of community partners, contractors, the Council and corporate organisations. Some headline outcomes are shown below, these are set out under the plans objectives:

**Creating successful neighbourhoods to improve quality of life for everyone**

- Over 150 community events bringing communities together, with over 10,000 people taking part
- 23 Community Food Gardens, with over 500 growing beds and up to 1,500 people using them regularly
- Over 200 residents have participated in a range of empowerment training programmes

- Innovative 'interfaith' celebration events recognised with a national award for bringing people together

### **Improve the economic and financial position of our residents**

- Over 1,500 residents attended jobs fairs & targeted employment road shows
- 250 residents received 121 Information, Advice & Guidance sessions
- Over 200 residents supported into employment & apprenticeships
- Over 100 residents supported with training, work-experience & work-placements
- Supporting the development of two new nurseries in the borough, providing much needed childcare
- 20 Women trained as home based child-minders / crèche workers

### **Investing in Young People**

- Two successful youth conferences, engaging over 350 young people
- 33 Youth ambassadors recruited, with many taking part in neighbourhood & borough-wide projects
- Three study support groups supported with 85 young people per week benefiting
- 120 young people taking part in our award winning 'Bling my Hood' projects
- Various sports groups supported, engaging hundreds of young people in regular sports activities

### **Investing in Older People**

- Nine residents recruited as Older Peoples champions, who have led on a range of different community initiatives – e.g. 'File in the fridge'
- 'Shared Lives' Intergenerational project, bring young & older people together to break down barriers
- Outreach and engagement work to help reduce isolation
- A range of Older people's groups supported & funded to provide day trips, social activities, Christmas events and outreach work

2.2 Since 2008, resident satisfaction with 'rating neighbourhood as a place to live' has increased from 58% to 71%. Our work to invest in communities, we believe, has played a significant part in this success. Our work in this area has been widely recognised by TPAS; we have won and been short-listed for several awards :

- 2013 Regional Excellence in the Community Award – Interfaith project
- 2012 Youth Engagement Award – Bling my Hood
- 2012 and 2014 Excellence in Equality and Diversity awards - Somali Tenants Engagement Project and the LGBTeas Engagement Project

- Three residents shortlisted for Resident of the Year and Young Person of the Year
- 2015 shortlisted for Community Empowerment –community food gardens

### 3 Developing a new community investment strategy

- 3.1 At the Away Day held in January 2015, the Board considered the work we have done on developing neighbourhood plans and how this links with the development of a community investment strategy.
- 3.2 To recap, neighbourhood plans are a plan unique to each neighbourhood – informed by what we know about the people, homes and places that make up the neighbourhoods we manage. Our Business Plan Roadmap for 14/15 committed us to strengthening our approach to neighbourhood planning by:
- Supporting and promoting a new role for Neighbourhood Champions
  - Making greater use of insight in Neighbourhood Planning
  - Making closer integration of Neighbourhood Plans into Business Plan
- 3.3 Under the leadership of neighbourhood champions [managers from across the business] 27 neighbourhood plans have been developed. The plans have very much been shaped by insight drawn from national and THH data sets, and direct feedback from residents. In the course of consultation we heard from 1500 residents. An example of one of the neighbourhood profiles used is included as **Appendix A**. Each plan has been through a quality assurance process to make sure that proposed actions respond to the needs of each neighbourhood. A final validation exercise is underway.
- 3.4 The degree of scrutiny given to the plans is ensuring that we have a greater understanding of the community investment needs of each neighbourhood and in consequence the community investment work we deliver this year will be far more tailored than in previous years.
- 3.5 The evidence led approach we have taken to neighbourhood planning means not only are we able to respond to specific neighbourhood priorities but that we are now have a more strategic understanding of the issues across THH as a whole. By drawing together the needs identified within each neighbourhood we are able to see the common themes that can provide the strategic framework for community investment.
- 3.6 Our work to date suggests that to help build strong communities we should prioritise work to help:-
- **Create safer neighbourhoods:** crime and ASB continue to be a problem for many neighbourhoods and of all the issues raised through consultation this was often the ‘stand out’ priority for residents. Our independently conducted residents’ survey shows that 50% of neighbourhoods rate this amongst the top three issues they want us to address. Through neighbourhood planning we have identified where issues appear to be most acute and the nature of this. This means we can tailor interventions in response to different needs.

- **Support physical and mental wellbeing:** Poor physical and mental health and wellbeing impacts the lives of many residents. For example, Census data tells us that especially high concentrations of residents with poor health live in seven of neighbourhoods we manage and five neighbourhoods exhibit high concentrations of residents experiencing low wellbeing. Tower Hamlets has the highest or second highest mortality rates in London for the major long term conditions: coronary heart disease (CHD), stroke and chronic respiratory disease and the prevalence of diabetes is highest in London. With this context health presents as a priority.
  - **Increase financial resilience:** Data tells us that over 1/3rd of working age residents are not in employment and several of our neighbourhoods are hot spots for numbers who claim Job Seekers Allowance. Low paid employment is prevalent in many neighbourhoods and low educational attainment is also an issue. We can see the effect of these factors in levels of crime and ASB, fuel poverty, arrears across neighbourhoods. Welfare reform is likely to have an increasingly negative impact on residents, helping residents cope with this is therefore important.
  - **Build resilient communities:** Feedback from residents indicates that feeling part of a community and that our work in this area is valued. Helping communities take an active interest in their neighbours and neighbourhood is a stepping stone towards enabling communities to be more self-reliant.
- 3.7 To make a meaningful and sustained impact requires longer-term focus. Having a three year strategy that clearly articulates our strategic priorities will ensure we are able to take informed decisions to target resources more effectively. The themes are not mutually exclusive. Inevitably there will be some degree of crossover, for example, work that we may do in helping those most at risk of the impact of welfare reform could have a positive impact on wellbeing, equally help to improve health may have a positive impact on getting closer to employment.
- 3.8 The profile of tenants means the extent of physical, mental and financial vulnerability being experienced is likely to increase, a new strategy must take account of this and target support towards those who are or at high risk of becoming vulnerable.
- 3.9 Good partnership working is an essential ingredient of successful community investment. How we leverage the contribution partners can make in helping us to create vibrant neighbourhoods is fundamental. We have worked fairly extensively with partners from voluntary, statutory and business sectors. To date our success could be viewed as somewhat opportunistic and our challenge going forward is to make sure we direct partner activity in a more strategic way.

- 3.10 In parallel with the work we have completed on neighbourhood plans we have been working with HACT, an industry focussed charity specialising in innovations that to help housing providers deliver more effectively in their communities. As part of this work, we are seeking to introduce a model of evaluation by which we can measure the social impact/ value of the community investment we make.
- 3.11 An initial strategy has been drafted that draws on the insight we have from the neighbourhood planning process, including analysis of THH-wide data.
- 3.12 There are three main steps we need to take to conclude our work to develop a new community investment strategy and these are summarised below:
- **Evidence validation:** complete final validation of neighbourhood plans and test validity of emerging strategic priorities
  - **Partner provision:** gap analysis of the capacity of partners to deliver against strategic priorities and identify areas that are uncovered to target our resources
  - **Impact measurement:** conclude work to introduce model to evaluate social impact.

## 4 Implications

- 4.1 **Legal Implications;** There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 4.2 **VfM Implications:** Implications are three-fold. Using evidence to target community investment will ensure that resources are directed to where need is the greatest. Maximising the contribution that partners make toward the neighbourhoods we manage will secure greater value and through the introduction of impact measures will be able to assess and demonstrate the value of investment made.

## 5 Conclusion

- 5.1 Work to invest in communities will help achieve the creation of vibrant neighbourhoods. The needs of residents are often complex and through taking an evidence led approach to planning community investment we can make a positive difference beyond providing housing management services. Through understanding the needs of each neighbourhood and the capacity of partners to meet these, we can effectively target our resources and measure the impact we are having. It is anticipated that this work is likely to take approximately six months.