

<b>Title:</b> Community Investment Strategy Investing in Community : Unlocking Potential	<b>Meeting:</b> Board	
<b>Report authorised by:</b> Jamie Carswell, Interim Chief Executive	<b>Date of the meeting:</b> 23 <sup>rd</sup> July 2015	<b>Item No.</b> 6
<b>Report author:</b> Sarah Pace, Head of Business Development and Investment Planning Fokrul Hoque, Strategic Engagement Manager	<b>Classification:</b> Open – published	<b>Report type:</b> Decision
<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, care about their neighbours and the neighbourhood in which they live and are supported to fulfil their potential. By targeting our work and that of partners we can be there when residents need us; making a positive impact to the lives of vulnerable residents who need our help the most and investing in communities to improve the neighbourhoods in which they live.		
<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 delivery of the year 1 action plan strategy is covered by existing budget authorisation. The Strategy seeks harness resource from voluntary/3 <sup>rd</sup> sector organisations, private sector contributions through their corporate social responsibility and other public bodies.  THH hold a delegated budget to deliver neighbourhood plans. This has historically been used to invest in improving physical aspects that have been prioritised by residents. THH wishes to redirect a proportion of this budget to support community investment initiatives identified through neighbourhood planning. Further detail of this proposal is set out in paragraphs 2.6 to 2.8 of the report.		
<b>Risk Management</b> 3.0 Making a difference		
<b>Summary</b> This report presents the Board with the draft Community Investment Strategy (Appendix B) for approval. The insight we have gained through neighbourhood planning, and the analysis of THH-wide data, to understand the issues residents face has shaped four strategic objectives to frame the work we will do in investing in communities. These objectives will help THH: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- create safer neighbourhoods</li> <li>- Support mental wellbeing and vulnerability</li> <li>- increase financial resilience</li> </ul>		

- build resilient communities

### **Recommendations**

That the Board approves the Community Investment Strategy and associated Year One Action Plan.

## **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 With extraordinary demand for housing in Tower Hamlets, only those with high needs qualify to become new tenants. This situation is contributing to the already high levels of vulnerability, poverty, and ill-health among our residents. As cuts to public services deepen, there will be fewer support services available. This increasingly puts THH on the front line of a community response.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 In April 2015 the Board considered a report that outlined the progress that was being made to develop a new Strategy and that summarised some of the outcomes of the first Community Regeneration Plan. Since April further progress has been made, resulting in the strategy that is now presented to the Board for agreement.

## **2 Community Investment Strategy**

- 2.1 The previous report set out three main steps needed to conclude the work on the strategy. The first of these was to validate the evidence used to inform the then emerging priorities. This work has been completed. Appendix A is provided to illustrate how insight gained through neighbourhood planning has been used to derive the strategic objectives. In addition, data set out in the understanding our communities section of the Strategy evidences need.
- 2.2 The objectives for the Community Investment Strategy are:  
**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 community investment interventions, that complement our mainstream work to tackle ASB, in response to different needs.

**Support mental wellbeing and vulnerability:** Supporting vulnerable residents is essential to our social purpose and is also a crucial part of our risk management responsibilities. Many residents require help to sustain their tenancies and improve personal wellbeing. Without this, vulnerable residents may present a risk to themselves, their homes, their neighbours and our staff. As cuts to public services deepen and the demand for social housing increases the trend towards increased vulnerability is going to continue. THH has a much higher proportion of older residents (20% over 65) than the borough as a whole (only 6% over 65). Especially high concentrations of residents with poor health live in seven of the neighbourhoods we manage and feelings of low wellbeing are prevalent in five.

**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 and 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. Though residents live side by side in peace and harmony, residents would like to see more done to bring communities together to foster better understanding and dialogue. Helping communities take an active interest in their neighbours and neighbourhood is a stepping stone towards enabling communities to become more self-reliant. Residents have told us that they don't always want nor need us or others to come and help resolve local issues and often they can address local needs better, but would like us to help empower them with the skills and knowledge to do that.

- 2.3 The second area of activity previously reported concerned understanding the capacity of partner organisations to meet the needs of our residents. Whilst a full review and gap analysis of potential partners to provide services aligned to our strategic objectives is desirable, in the shorter term we need to make sure we avoid a complete lack of provision from 3<sup>rd</sup> sector agencies. THH has historically worked with a range of 3<sup>rd</sup> sector partners, the most significant of these are Account3, Limehouse Project, Osmani Trust and Stifford Centre. Successful working with these organisations played a large part in delivering the outcomes reported previously to the Board.

- 2.4 We have recently worked alongside these four organisations to help co-ordinate their funding applications to the Council for Mainstream Grant. Working with them in this way has placed us in a position to influence their applications to have a focus on issues that are of strategic importance to THH. With our support a total of four funding applications have been submitted, that if successful will give THH residents access to help with managing the impact of welfare reform, securing employment, becoming more active in the community and work with young people and young adults to address ASB. The Council are expected to announce the outcome of the bids on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015 with project delivery starting from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015.
- 2.5 Having agreed strategic objectives for community investment also enables us to maximise our potential to lever in resource from other public sector agencies such as the Council, Health Authority and Police. Additionally we can align contributions coming through the private sector companies as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities.
- 2.6 The HRA delegated expenditure budget for 2015-16 includes £540k (£20k per neighbourhood) of repairs budget designed to target small physical improvement projects prioritised by residents. The report to Board in April 2015 covered how neighbourhood planning has now moved beyond this and the intention is to direct some of this budget to support community investment initiatives. Whilst our starting position will always be to endeavour to deliver without the need to call on THH resources, through maximising the input of 3<sup>rd</sup> sector, statutory organisations and private sector contributions such as those made by our decent homes and repairs contractors, there will always be a need for 'top up' funding. Invariably 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations look for some element of match funding; using THH funding in this way in effect doubles the amount of investment that can be made in support of our residents.
- 2.7 Through neighbourhood planning for 15/16 we have identified a need for expenditure on physical changes in the region of £250K. We wish to make the remaining £290K available to support community initiatives that have been identified through neighbourhood planning. These projects are subject to a worked up business case showing need, cost and impact to insure funding is targeted appropriately.
- 2.8 The neighbourhood plan budget forms part of our delegated expenditure; redirecting funds from this budget requires the support of the Client and our intention is to enter into dialogue with them to gain an ongoing commitment to fund community investment year on year. Without such approval our ability to meet strategic objectives will be significantly curtailed.
- 2.9 The action plan which accompanies the Strategy identifies the need to undertake a full gap analysis to understand the capacity of 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and statutory agencies to provide services. With over 2,500 3<sup>rd</sup> sector agencies operating within Tower Hamlets this is complex and labour intensive exercise to complete. We are currently sourcing some additional resource to complete this exercise which will be conducted between September 15 and March 16. To make the analysis more manageable, we plan to focus on identifying partners

to work with us on creating safer neighbourhoods and increasing financial resilience in quarter 3 with work on the remaining objectives in quarter 4..

- 2.10 The final area of work detailed in the earlier paper was to conclude work to measure the impact of investment. We have in place a requirement that when scoping community investment projects this year an assessment of the likely impact and methods of measurement must be made. Beyond this type of measurement we continue to work with HACT, a specialists housing charity that helps providers deliver more effectively, to introduce a model of evaluation to measure the social value of the work we do. Measuring social value is desirable in the longer term as it will provide us with data that can help inform how resources are targeted to maximise impact. Concluding this work is within the Strategy Action Plan and scheduled for completion by December 15.

### **3 Implications**

- 3.1 **Legal Implications;** There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 3.2 **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 (3<sup>rd</sup> sector, public and provide) 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.

### **4 Conclusion**

- 4.1 Work to invest in communities underpins our ambition to support 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.

**Appendix A  
Community Investment Objectives – Neighbourhoods At a Glance**

	<b>Headline Insight</b>	<b>Help Create Safer Neighbourhoods</b>	<b>Help Support Mental Wellbeing &amp; Vulnerability</b>	<b>Help Increase Financial Resilience</b>	<b>Help Build Resilient Communities</b>
<b>1. Chicksand</b>	Addressing ASB prioritised by residents Overcrowding prevalent Unemployment is high	✓			✓
<b>2. Avebury</b>	Addressing ASB prioritised by residents Satisfaction with the neighbourhood is low High home ownership and sub-letting	✓			✓
<b>3. Bethnal Green Road</b>	Satisfaction across most measures is low Poor health concentrated in parts Child density is high				✓
<b>4. Dorset</b>	Impact of welfare reform is high Poor health and wellbeing predominant High level of vulnerability		✓	✓	
<b>5. Boundary</b>	High level of single occupancy Home ownership is high Satisfaction with the neighbourhood is high				✓
<b>6. Hollybush</b>	Addressing ASB prioritised by residents Opportunities to get involved rated low High % of residents do not speak English	✓			✓
<b>7. Approach</b>	Poor health and wellbeing predominant Opportunities to get involved rated low Arrears levels are high		✓		
<b>8. Old Ford Road</b>	High level of lone households Some pockets of overcrowding Leasehold ownership is high		✓		✓
<b>9. Cranbrook</b>	Addressing ASB prioritised by residents Satisfaction levels are high Pockets of overcrowding & single occupancy	✓	✓		✓
<b>10. Roman Road</b>	Addressing ASB prioritised by residents Overcrowding is high % without formal qualification is high	✓		✓	
<b>11. Collingwood</b>	Addressing ASB prioritised by residents High level of arrears Poor health and wellbeing predominant	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>12. Globe Town</b>	Addressing ASB prioritised by residents Satisfaction with the neighbourhood is low Half of residents have lived for 10 years or more in the neighbourhood	✓			✓
<b>13. Malmesbury</b>	Over half of homes are owned Over half of homeowners sub-let Rate of teenage pregnancy is high		✓		✓
<b>14. St Stephens</b>	Over half of homes are owned High % of tenants require extra support Concentration of older residents		✓		✓

	Headline Insight	Help Create Safer Neighbourhoods	Help Support Physical & Mental Wellbeing	Help Increase Financial Resilience	Help Build Resilient Communities
15. Poplar High Street	Unemployment hot spot Addressing ASB prioritised by residents % homeowners in arrears is high	✓		✓	
16. East India Dock Rd	Addressing ASB prioritised by residents Youth unemployment is high High % of residents do not speak English	✓		✓	
17. Barley Mow	Poor health and wellbeing predominant % homeowners in arrears is high Overcrowding and under occupation higher than average		✓	✓	✓
18. Locksley	Addressing ASB prioritised by residents Unemployment and low paid employment are issues Opportunities to get involved rated low	✓		✓	✓
19. Ocean North	Rent and service charge arrears are high Highest incidence of lone pensioner households Rate of vulnerability is high		✓	✓	
20. Ocean South	Unemployment is high Service charge arrears are high Concentration of poor health		✓	✓	
21. Limehouse	Addressing ASB prioritised by residents Unemployment, particularly for 16 to 24 year old is high	✓			
22. St Dunstan's	Impact of welfare reform is high Low wellbeing is prevalent High % of residents do not speak English		✓	✓	✓
23. Sidney	Addressing ASB prioritised by residents Poor health is prevalent High % of tenants require extra support	✓	✓		
24. Shadwell	Impact of welfare reform is high Over half of homes are owned & overcrowding in the leasehold sector is high			✓	✓
25. Berner & Royal Mint	Addressing ASB prioritised by residents Over half of homes are owned Over half of homeowners sub-le	✓			✓
26. Wapping	High numbers of lone pensioner households Satisfaction with the neighbourhood is high Satisfaction with opportunities to get involved is low		✓		✓
27. Lincoln	Poor health and wellbeing predominant High % of tenants require extra support Wide variance in satisfaction between tenures		✓		✓

## **Appendix B**

### **Community Investment Strategy (to be attached)**