Investing in Community: Unlocking Potential
A Three Year Strategy to Support Vibrant Neighbourhoods
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I. Forward from Chair

Tower Hamlets is a fast paced, fast growing and changing borough. Its economy is thriving, more homes are being built here than anywhere else in the country, more and more people want to live here, and large-scale and ambitious regeneration and infrastructure projects continue to bring fresh opportunities. The population is diverse, but there are many active communities who get on well together, with a thriving community and voluntary sector. The borough has seen unprecedented educational success, opening up more opportunities to the young people coming through school, and employment rates are rising.

Despite all this, Tower Hamlets still has challenges to face. Too many residents are not in work and struggle to make ends meet, especially as reforms erode the welfare state and costs of living rise. One of the biggest challenges the borough faces is ensuring that the benefits of growth and prosperity reach all parts of our community, with a fairer distribution of wealth and income across Tower Hamlets.

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 Tower Hamlets Homes on the front line of a community response.

Tower Hamlets Homes over the last six years has been playing its role, both in providing safe and secure homes, but also investing in our neighborhoods and our residents. Our Decent Homes Programme is bringing every property up to the Decent Homes Standards, as well as carrying out other vital works to the housing stock. We have also been investing in our residents, by supporting them into training, jobs and apprenticeships; developing community food gardens to create healthier and cohesive communities and by supporting those being impacted by the welfare reform changes, to name a few activities.

This new Community Investment Strategy will inject vital support to create vibrant neighborhoods, where vulnerable residents receive our help and people are proud to live in. It will help empower communities to become more self-reliant and be more resilient, caring about their neighbours and the neighborhoods in which they live.

Ann Lucas
Chair of Tower Hamlets Homes Board
II. Introduction

Tower Hamlets Homes is an ALMO (Arms Length Management Organisation), a non-profit organisation set up to provide high quality housing services for residents living in 22,000 Tower Hamlets Council Homes. The Council is owner of the homes that THH manages. Tenants are Council tenants and leaseholders are Council leaseholders; THH manages tenancies and leases on behalf of the Council.

Our investment of close to £200million in the Decent Homes programme along with the development of new council housing for the first time in a generation has and will have a profound positive impact on the quality of lives of our residents. However, a good safe and secure home is only the start of improving the quality of life. We need to invest beyond the bricks and mortar.

A major part of our role is to provide services beyond housing. Our aim is to make THH neighbourhoods a pleasant, safe and attractive place to live. We recognise the need to acknowledge the impact that social, economic and environmental conditions have upon a community in order to add value to our neighbourhoods and communities. This strategy sets our approach to Community Investment; being there for residents when they need us and investing in communities where they live.

This strategy has been informed by what we know about our residents and the neighbourhoods that they live in using the wealth of data that is available internally and externally, via open data sources. It has also been influenced by our residents, our partners, and our staff, and thus represents our commitment to investing in our communities and to supporting vibrant neighbourhoods.

Our Business Plan has as one of its objectives commits us to supporting vibrant neighbourhoods and this is the vision for our new Community Investment Strategy. We are not beginning from a standing start and we are proud of the successes we have had to date - key achievements so far include:

- As part of our ‘Growing Communities’ initiative, we have helped residents across THH neighbourhoods to develop 26 community food gardens, with over 500 growing beds and 1500 residents using them regularly. The Community Food Garden programme has benefited communities in terms of helping reduce ASB related crime, improving health and wellbeing amongst residents and contributing towards community cohesion. The project won the UK Housing Awards 2015 in the category of ‘Empowering Communities’.
- We have supported over 200 residents into employment and apprenticeships working in partnership with our contractors and a range of community partners.
- We have further supported over 250 residents into training, to both improve their life skills and employability skills.
- We have supported activities targeted at young people including study groups as well as sports and community projects, including our award winning ‘Bling my Hood’ project, which saw decreases in ASB-related crime in those target areas.
- We have supported a number of cross-community activities, namely; 23 Diamond Jubilee events were held across THH, with over 5,000 residents taking part in the celebrations; 14 multi-faith events were held in seven neighbourhoods, with 2,000 residents attending the various celebrations, leading to this project winning a TPAS Award. The level of satisfaction in ‘rating neighbourhood as a place to live’ has increased in six out of the seven neighbourhoods where multi-faith events were organised.
- We supported the establishment of two new nurseries, providing fundraising support to secure the funds, some funds towards purchasing equipment and in-kind support in CAD drawings and advice on planning for one organisation. These nurseries once open will help increase affordable childcare provisions, helping to remove one of the key barriers to employment.

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.

Linking our work with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets & other key strategic partners is vital. In developing this strategy we have taken into consideration the Tower Hamlets Partnership’s emerging Community Plan 2015, which outlines the Partnership’s strategic priorities for the coming years. The Partnership is retaining its focus and themes from its existing plan into its new plan, as follows:

- A great place to live
- A fair and prosperous community
- A safe and cohesive community
- A healthy and supportive community

Our strategy and objectives link very well into the partnerships priorities and are complementary. This brings benefit and opportunity to work closely with the Partnership to deliver our shared objectives.
**III. Ethos**

We believe in investing in our communities so that we can build thriving neighbourhoods that people feel part of, are proud of and want to live in. As outlined in our Business Plan for 2014-2017, one of our main objectives at THH is Supporting Vibrant Neighbourhoods. A major part of this objective is the development of a Community Investment Strategy, which will provide a mechanism for co-ordinating community investment activities within THH and across delivery partners. It will also give us the tools to measure the social impact of our activities and prioritise areas with the greatest need or impact for future THH Plans.

THH pledges to invest in vibrant communities by:

- Anticipating need early;
- Developing innovative approaches to engage residents;
- Ensuring priorities are informed by evidence;
- Working in partnership; and
- Robustly measuring and reporting on impact.

We will link & embed the above ethos with our Here to Help business ethos:

- **Here for residents when they need us** – helping the vulnerable who need it most and communities to help improve their neighbourhoods
- **On the side of residents** – actively listening, showing empathy and being honest about what we can and what we are not able to do
- **Making services feel effortless** – delivering services and working together to make it feel effortless for residents

**IV. Understanding Our Communities**

THH is committed to understanding the communities who live in the neighbourhoods we manage in order to deliver the services, activities and support that will make a positive difference. As Tower Hamlets is a very deprived and diverse borough, with complex socio-economic needs, it is important for us to keep a strong focus on where there is greatest need and where we can have meaningful impact. In order to understand our communities, we need to combine data and insight from a variety of sources.

To inform our work, we draw upon data from a range of different sources including external data (open data, like Census data, Police and Crime data, and DWP data), data drawn from our own systems, and staff and resident insights —evidence gathered from engaging with THH residents and stakeholders. We have used this data to shape the Community Investment Strategy, using both a top-down and bottom-up approach, to converge in the middle around the principle of developing, supporting and maintaining vibrant communities.
There are a number of factors that impact upon quality of life – employment and financial status, health, crime, community and personal safety, community cohesion and participation in community and other activities. Exploring the unique challenges facing individual residents and communities in different contexts, we have identified the most prevalent issues affecting communities in our neighbourhoods and establish key priorities for community investment. Using Community Insight, a web-based tool developed by HACT and OCSI to enable housing providers to map their housing stock, we have been able to profile our neighbourhoods using various social and economic indicators. Heat maps produced using Community Insight illustrate the areas most affected by a particular issues. A focus upon the hotspot areas has enabled us to identify neighbourhoods experiencing high pressure with regards to a particular issue. The deep red highlights those areas affected most by the key indicator. Community Insight has been used to produce a matrix incorporating more than one area to facilitate a comparison between them on key indicators.
This matrix illustrates how our neighbourhoods compare with each other on key indicators.

There are a number of issues that affect THH neighbourhoods as a collective. In comparison, some issues are less widespread; where these issues are more disparate in terms of their impact, they will require a more local and nuanced approach. For example, the level of

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crime and numbers of people without qualifications across Tower Hamlets contrasts to a substantial degree.

**Crime** (and ASB-related incidents in particular) are prevalent across our neighbourhoods, having a huge impact upon the lives of numerous people and affecting how safe our residents feel in their own neighbourhoods.

(Police recorded crime figures)

In comparison to the prevalence of ASB-related crime, the proportion of people living in THH neighbourhoods with no qualifications varies, with more concentrations of these individuals in some areas than others.

(Census 2011)

Many THH residents lack skills. Although barriers to work can be multiple and complex (as explored in the Tower Hamlets Employment Strategy), skills are a key predictor. The Census 2011 revealed that almost a quarter of borough residents (22%) have no qualifications. In contrast, a third of Tower Hamlets residents are qualified to degree level or above, which is
consistent with the London average. With fewer residents at intermediate skill levels than is typical for London, there is thus a polarisation of skill levels within the borough. Borough residents at lower skills levels are significantly less likely to be in employment than the London average. (Tower Hamlets Employment Strategy, April 2011)

The overall crime rate across THH neighbourhoods is higher than the average across England.

As this heat map illustrates, ASB affects a large proportion of our neighbourhoods. The deep red highlights those areas affected by high rates of neighbourhood-level incidents of ASB.

(Police recorded crime figures)

By probing the data further and revealing the minutia of detail with a focus upon the hot spot areas, we can pinpoint some of the areas most affected by ASB and in need of intervention from THH.

(Police recorded crime figures)
34% of residents living across our THH neighbourhoods are economically inactive. These appear to be concentrated in particular neighbourhoods.

People are characterised as economically inactive if they are not in work and not actively seeking work in the week before Census.

(Census 2011)

Areas which all have a higher proportion of claimants than THH neighbourhoods as a whole include East India Dock, Limehouse and Birchfield. In addition, Poplar High Street, Ocean South, Sidney, Lincoln and Brancroft also have relatively high numbers of people claiming JSA.
The Census 2011 revealed that 71% of people living across THH neighbourhoods identify themselves as BME, in comparison to the national average in England (at 20%), further illustrating the diversity of the borough of Tower Hamlets.

7,930, or 7% of people living across THH neighbourhoods are aged 65+. Whilst this does equate to a low proportion of the total population, pensioners are a vulnerable group. Using Pensioners in Poverty as the key indicator, we can see that pensioners living across THH neighbourhoods experience a high rate of poverty.

(By probing the data further and revealing the minutia of detail with a focus upon the hot spot areas, we can identify areas that have a higher concentration of ethnically diverse communities.

(Output Area Classification, 2014)
Focusing upon the hot spots can identify those areas with higher concentrations of pensioners living in poverty.

(Department for Work and Pensions).

Households with multiple deprivation are households experiencing multiple need and are characterised as having four key measures of deprivation:

- All adult household members have no qualifications
- At least one household member is out of work (due to unemployment or poor health)
- At least one household member has a limiting long-term illness
• The household is living in overcrowded conditions

As we can see from both maps, there are a high number of homes with multiple deprivation across THH neighbourhoods.

By focusing upon the hot spot areas, we can identify areas that have a greater concentration of households with multiple deprivation.

(Census 2011)

In addition to open data sources, we have used our own neighbourhood profiles which present a wide range of statistical information about properties, the people who live in them and what residents in each neighbourhood have told us about the services we provide.

**Neighbourhood Plans**

As part of our Supporting Vibrant Neighbourhoods agenda, we have developed a unique plan for each of our neighbourhoods. The neighborhood plans, are designed to address each neighbourhood’s specific priorities. Each neighbourhood plan is informed by what we know about the property, people and places that make up the neighbourhood. Staff from across THH have been involved in compiling these plans and over 1500 of THH residents contributed to the development of individual plans relating to each neighbourhood through our neighbourhood consultation roadshows. The Neighbourhood Plans provide an overview of specific priorities for that area and will be reviewed annually to determine whether the current priorities outlined continue to be relevant.

Each Neighbourhood Plan has gone through a rigorous quality assurance process to insure that the issues identified are based on evidence and that the proposed actions are realistic and evidence led.

The Neighbourhood Plans have played a central role in the development of our strategic priorities for Community investment. We have synthesised together the common themes
and issues that emerged in a number of neighbourhoods to further inform the priorities for this strategy.

A number of themes emerged from both the Community Investment Strategy workshops with stakeholders and a review of THH data that correlate with those issues identified as being prevalent across THH neighbourhoods:

- Employment
- Health and wellbeing
- Children and the right to play
- Empowerment and engagement
- ASB
- Youth facilities
- Apprenticeships and enterprise
- Partnership and use of space

Residents have also told us that they want us to focus our work on enabling and fostering ‘community spirit’ and a ‘can-do’ approach amongst residents, so that communities can increasingly come together and respond to local needs themselves. This emphasises the need to focus upon community empowerment & cohesion.

In developing our new Community Investment Strategy, we have involved as many people as possible, to insure that it reflects the needs of the business, residents and other stakeholders. This provides all with a sense of ownership and understanding of the strategy and helps insure that the plan is realistic in its ambitions.

- Over 1500 residents participated in neighbourhood roadshow consultation events to help inform priorities for their neighbourhoods
- We have engaged with residents, community groups and other stakeholders through a series of stakeholder meetings, which have contributed to our Neighbourhood Plans.
- We hosted a Community Investment workshop, to facilitate engagement with residents, stakeholders and other interested parties, ensuring that THH staff and residents were collectively involved with identifying the priorities and demonstrating that they have ownership over these priorities.

Using intelligence drawn from data analysis and resident and stakeholder consultation we are better able to understand priorities as well as the potential partnership support available to address these. The variability in terms of the services, activities and projects needed in our neighbourhoods also illustrates the importance of using data to inform our decisions and strategic priorities for community investment.
The Community Investment Strategy functions as an umbrella, bringing together Neighbourhood Plans at a more strategic level. Neighbourhood Plans provide the delivery framework for targeted community investment across the 27 neighbourhoods we manage.

V. Here When You Need Us: THH’s Strategic Priorities for Investment

In order to focus our investment and direct our resources to where they are needed, we have developed four headline priorities for community investment. Data along with staff, resident & partner feedback shows these are the greatest areas of need and where we are most likely to have the biggest impact:

1. Create safer neighbourhoods
2. Support physical and mental wellbeing
3. Increase financial resilience
4. Build resilient and cohesive communities

These priorities have emerged from synthesising data from the neighbourhood data analysis, our Neighbourhood Plans and the Community Investment workshop held with stakeholders, partners, staff and residents. These priorities will be reviewed annually as part of our neighbourhood plans to ensure that they continue to be relevant. An annual review will also check the suitability and relevance of the activities recommended and the extent to which they are having an impact. The Community Investment strategy has a three-year focus because this is the timeframe needed for the strategy to have any meaningful impact.

Priority 1: Create safe neighbourhoods

**We aim to support communities, so that residents are able to feel safe and secure in their homes and feel free and confident around their neighbourhoods.**

One of the key issues affecting our communities is crime. As illustrated by the earlier data analysis, many of the homes we manage are located in areas with high rates of ASB-related crime and therefore this is a major issue for THH residents. We recognise that ASB is a multifaceted issue and, as a result, our Neighbourhood Plans identify related issues within this broader themes including unemployment and community cohesion and communication.

Evidence indicates that community safety is an area of concern for residents across our neighbourhoods and as such is reflected in our strategic priorities. We will work across this area in a number of ways.
• We will further strengthen our partnership work with the local authority, Metropolitan Police and others to create safe and thriving communities across THH neighbourhoods.
• As part of our youth engagement programme, we will support a number of youth-related projects
• Increase our cross service work with the Anti-Social Behaviour team and the Borough’s Safer Neighbourhoods team, to address anti-social behaviour in our neighbourhoods.
• Developing pathways to success through a structured Resident Training Programme

Priority 2: Support mental wellbeing and vulnerability

We aim to be there when residents need us; making a positive impact to the lives of vulnerable residents who need our help the most

The link between decent housing and health is a well proven link and supporting vulnerable residents and improving mental wellbeing is an area of work we at THH have been developing for a number of years.

With extraordinary demand for housing in Tower Hamlets, only those with higher needs are qualifying to become new tenants. This is contributing to the already high levels of vulnerability, poverty, and ill-health among our residents. As cuts to the local authority deepen, there will be fewer support services available. This increasingly puts THH on the front line of a community response.

In addition to our social responsibility, THH also has a legal responsibility to assist with the safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults. Whilst tenants require extra help for many different reasons, and only a few of our vulnerable residents require formal safeguarding, it is essential to link these related activities.

Supporting our communities also involves enabling them to live happy and healthy lives. We will continue to support resident’s live healthier lives through:

• Further developing and creating stronger partnerships to support our vulnerability action plan
• Increasing the knowledge and awareness of THH staff of vulnerability and our safeguarding duties
• Reducing social isolation by involving vulnerable residents in local initiatives, such as community food growing and social / community activities
• Promoting healthy lifestyles initiatives and providing access to relevant advice, support and activities
Priority 3: Increase financial resilience

We aim to support residents who need our help the most to get into or nearer to employment and avoid financial exclusion

The need to provide support in term of facilitating access to job opportunities and training is evident. Over a third of people living in THH neighbourhoods are economically inactive. The proportion of people receiving Job Seekers Allowance does vary across our neighbourhoods, with higher concentrations of these individuals living in particular areas in comparison to THH neighbourhoods as a whole. This indicates that unemployment and financial wellbeing does have an impact upon the lives of many of our residents.

For many unemployed people, problems are multiple, entrenched and often passed down through generations. Our experience also shows that although practical skills, like literacy and numeracy are necessary, there very often is another set of personal skills without which many people are unable to sustain and progress their employment chances – the ‘soft skills’. This includes an understanding of work cultures, etiquettes and discipline, timekeeping and attendance, appearance, reliability, motivation, commitment, team working, customer handling and communications skills. We will help enable our residents to develop these softer skills to enhance opportunities for employment.

THH already support a range of projects that promote financial wellbeing and a positive employment status. We have supported over 200 residents in employment and apprenticeships as well as supporting 150 into training. In addition, we have an established specialist team that have taken a proactive approach towards helping people manage their money. As the impact of the Welfare Reform, introduced by Government in 2013, increases so does the need for us to support the financial wellbeing of residents.

Continued work in this area will include:

- Financial education and literacy classes
- Welfare benefits advice
- Employment advice and support
- Enterprise development & support
- Digital Inclusion – including preparation for Universal Credit
- Accredited and non-accredited training, targeted at those furthest away from the job market
- Apprenticeship and work experience placements
Priority 4: Build resilient and cohesive communities

We aim to empower residents to become more active in their neighbourhood and help build social capital.

Tower Hamlets is one of the most ethnically diverse and multicultural areas in the country. 71% of people living across THH neighbourhoods identify themselves as being a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and there are over 110 different languages spoken by school pupils in the borough of Tower Hamlets. 88% of THH neighbourhoods characterised as ‘ethnicity central’ indicating high ethnic diversity and high proportions of rented accommodation. There are many new communities moving into the borough that will contribute to a continually changing community profile. The diversity of these neighbourhoods can impact upon community cohesion and communication between different elements of local communities. For example, 63% of residents living across our neighbourhoods indicated that people from different backgrounds interact well with each other (also lower than the national average in England). This highlights the need to develop community-specific activities and provide support to particular groups.

The majority (69%) of people living across our neighbourhoods as a whole were satisfied with their local area as a place to live (according to the Place Survey, 2008) – lower than the national average in England (79%). We recognise the prevalence of deprivation in homes across THH neighbourhoods and vulnerability of particular groups and that this can also have an impact upon community cohesion.

In order to promote community engagement, we have been working in partnership with our residents to support a number of activities and projects in order to instil more of a sense of community so that people living in THH neighbourhoods are proud of the area in which they live.

Since 2008, resident satisfaction with ‘rating neighbourhood as a place to live’ has increased from 58% to 71%. Our work on investing in communities, we believe, will have played a significant part in this success.

The Community Investment Strategy will enable us to address issues affecting community cohesion in a more strategic way and further develop this area of work. As part of this strategy we will:

- We will develop a community empowerment programme for both individual residents and also for community groups and organisations, so they are better able to organise and address local issues that emerge and build resilience, through co-production with larger organisations.
• We will develop a programme of community cohesion events and activities that help bring communities together to foster better understanding of each other’s faith, culture and background.
• We will work with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, who manage the community buildings within our neighbourhoods, and local community groups, to create community hubs that are welcoming to all and utilized to help build vibrant neighbourhoods.

**VI. Working in Partnership**

Our approach to the delivery of this strategy will be through working in partnership with the statutory organisations, third sector and the private sector. We have had great successes in the past with this approach. By continuing to work with partners, stakeholders, staff and residents, we will determine where existing service provision exists, as well as where there is a need for further service provision, to allocate resource efficiently and to avoid duplicating services. There are a wide variety of partners working across Tower Hamlets and it is vital we understand existing service provision and work with partners to coordinate activity and maximise the impact of the contribution they make.

When trying to reach those residents furthest from employment, it is critical that we work with our partners providing employment advice and training. Likewise, where there is high demand for existing service provision, particularly around responding to welfare reform through benefits advice, working with partners is key.

This approach means understanding what our partners do well, understanding what we do well, and working together to:

• Review and improve current service provision;
• Expand where there is greatest demand;
• Ensure gaps are addressed; and
• Avoid duplicating by fostering relationships with new partners already working to deliver those services.

The current economic climate indicates that raising funds will continue to be difficult and we recognise that this may threaten the community and voluntary sector group’s ability to invest in our communities. A key focus for us going forward will be to build on the partnerships that we have established with the local authority, voluntary organisations and corporate organisations. By joining our efforts with others we will be able to make the best use of scarce sources of funding.

We have sought to develop a multi-agency approach to address the low awareness of residents to the wide range of available services and resources that they can access in our
neighbourhoods. We continue to develop partnership working amongst agencies to facilitate effective working practices and effective use of THH resources and community buildings. In line with this, we continue to work with a range of service providers to develop a holistic service involving:

- Developing a partnership between local agencies to offer a robust referral and delivery system governed by a formal agreement.
- We will further develop and enhance our relationships with organisations that are in receipt of council mainstream funding as to avoid reinventing the quality assurance checks that the council carries out before and during the grants process.
- A tailored service to residents aimed at removing barriers so they can reach their potential (across a range of cross cutting issues).
- Providing access to partner organisations to community facilities managed by London Borough Tower Hamlets
- Providing partners with in-kind support in terms of specialist advice, support and access to our in-house resources such as PR to promote services

THH is fortunate to be working in a borough alongside many other organisations and agencies with shared goals and aspirations for the communities we serve. Acting as an enabler, we have worked in partnership with local organisations to achieve objectives, share skills and resources, support existing delivery partnerships with a range of non-financial resources, including premises, capacity building and due-diligence support, minimising duplication.

These partners have included:

- Tower Hamlets Youth Services;
- Tower Hamlets Employment and Enterprise;
- Tower Hamlets Third Sector Team;
- Third and community sector organisations;
- Community and resident groups;
- Other local registered providers; and
- The private sector.

There are a range of benefits to this strengthened partnership working:

- A “neither pays either” working arrangement established between THH and four recognised community organisations, wherein we exchange expertise and resources at no financial cost, but to our collective advantage. We want to further enhance this and include other partners as this provides a foundation to start from.
• Since April 2013, a strengthened relationship with THH Welfare Reform Team supporting each other’s referral processes for tenants seeking employment advice and guidance, helping to counteract the impacts of welfare reform.
• Strengthened relationships with partners as a result of our employment support programmes, helping to support more residents into work.
• New working relationships with Linkage plus older people organisations as a result of our response to ageing enquiry recommendations.

THH remains committed to fostering, developing and maintaining new and existing relationships with vital partners in the local area to ensure high quality, local service provision for our residents.

VII. Delivery & Governance

In order to ensure that we are successful in how we deliver support for residents and communities through the Community Investment Strategy, we aim to establish appropriate structures and work with a range of partners who deliver excellent services for our residents. As part of this, we will:

• Continue to work with existing partners and strengthen relationships to ensure we are delivering the best services for our residents;
• Seek out new partners to add to our partnership work and strength;
• Work with residents and resident groups to empower residents and enable them to address local issues;
• Ensure we are delivering value by working with suppliers to maximise potential opportunities for our residents;
• Support local business and social enterprises wherever possible;
• Work with partners to assist them in targeting our residents through the ‘neither pays either’ model;
• Utilise existing funding and contracts from partners;
• Ensure that services are not delivered in isolation with buy-in and delivery by all sections of the business including the ASB team, Rents on Welfare Reform, Neighbourhood team on Cohesion; and
• Ensure neighbourhood planning continues to target community investment initiatives to where there is greatest need.

We will set-up or amend the terms of reference of existing cross service working groups and include delivery partners to oversee the delivery of each theme area. The Financial Wellbeing group is already in place, in the form of the Welfare Reform Working group. There is also a small group overseeing the work on vulnerability. The Vibrant Neighbourhoods Delivery Group is the overarching group responsible for oversight of the
Community Investment Strategy. This will also insure that the Community Investment work is embedded into the other areas of the business, as opposed to it being discreetly delivered in just one service area.

This governance structure will be reviewed after one year to assess how effective is has been in achieving desired outcomes.

Being able to commission projects at a borough wide level will be crucial to achieving our strategic objectives identified as part of the Community Investment Strategy. There are certain areas of work we know effects residents in all parts of the borough of Tower Hamlets. We will work in the immediate term with organisations that are in receipt of council mainstream funding as to avoid reinventing the quality assurance checks that the council carries out before and during the grants process and insure we have a clear and transparent process for working with these organisations.

VIII. Community Investment and the Business

Community Investment is no longer an add-on, but sits alongside our traditional bricks and mortar activity. These activities are about the double bottom line: supporting people and communities and, in doing so, protecting the business. Community Investment creates vibrant, cohesive, sustainable communities, with residents who are economically active, who take pride in their local area, and who feel safe and comfortable in their neighbourhoods.

THH is looking, through community investment, to help strengthen communities, making them more sustainable and more self-reliant. Importantly, the context in which we operate has changed dramatically; in particular, changes in government subsidy for new homes; an
end to top-down regulation; radical welfare reforms; the emergence of localism; and direct competition from the private sector.

A key business driver for us is welfare reform, as this has the potential to disrupt the amount of finance available. Previously, we have been able to rely on stable and predictable benefit cash flows and welfare reform has undermined this. In the long-term, we cannot safely make assumptions about future levels of benefit or approaches to its delivery. This means that supporting tenants into enterprise and employment, for example, is not just about moral mission— it is also about de-risking Tower Hamlets Homes’ business.

By investing in ASB prevention and early intervention, residents feel safer, but there is also a decrease in pressure on Housing Officers and other THH staff, freeing them up to deal with more pressing issues. Likewise, investing in financial inclusion advice for residents means that residents will feel more confident in managing their money and more able to make the right decisions about priority debts, ultimately contributing to a reduction in rent arrears.

THH is increasingly becoming more focussed and strategic in the projects and activities we support. This strategy will shape our decisions going forward and help ensure the investment we make in communities is driven by need and outcomes are evidenced. Outcomes anticipated as a result of the investment we make in communities include:

- decreasing the amount of staff time spent on dealing with ASB
- reducing rent and service charge arrears;
- reduced levels of ASB
- increased resident satisfaction
- more residents in employment
- greater number of residents actively involved in work to support their community.

**IX. Measuring Impact**

THH is committed to implementing a robust, evidence-based Community Investment Strategy that contributes towards supporting vibrant neighbourhoods. To ensure we are delivering services effectively and efficiently, we will track and measure the impact of our community investment works. Not only are we compelled to do so by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, but we also want to ensure we are putting resource to best use by reinvesting in or scaling up those projects that deliver good value, and rethinking those that do not.

THH will work with HACT to use their Wellbeing Valuation methodology and associated tools. Over the last several years, HACT has been working with social value experts and leading housing providers to develop approaches and tools to equip the sector to meet the challenges associated with evidencing impact.
HACT is the ideas and innovation agency for the social housing sector, working across a range of areas to support the sector to run more effectively and efficiently to ultimately deliver more for communities. Working with Daniel Fujiwara, a leading econometrician, HACT has developed the Social Value Bank; the first set of methodologically consistent and robust social values derived using the Wellbeing Valuation approach. Wellbeing Valuation is recognised in the HM Treasury Green Book as an approach to value goods not traded in the market.

The Social Value Bank focuses on values associated with community investment in order to help housing provider’s measure and demonstrate the social value they generate through various activities. The values can provide a basic assessment of social impact, provide evidence of value for money, and compare the impact of different programs. The values can also be used within a full social return on investment (SROI) or Cost-Benefit Analysis.

Wellbeing Valuation judges the success of a project by how it affects people’s wellbeing. Rather than asking people about how much something has improved their life, which can introduce psychological complexities and extensive data collection, Wellbeing Valuation analyses existing datasets of national surveys that quantify effects on wellbeing in a robust way.

Alongside measuring social value, we will also carry out individual project impact assessments using our project management framework, to look at how the projects have supported business objectives, such as reduction in the number of ASB reports or reduction in arrears. We will also continue use monitor the impact on satisfaction levels.

**X. The Future of Community investment**

This Community Investment Strategy is primarily aimed at the THH board, council and other partners to guide our work in this area. Using data from a range of sources including our own internal systems, external data sources and engagement with stakeholders and residents we have identified the priorities. Using this evidence, this Strategy also outlines the business case for supporting community investment and how this will make a postive difference in neighbourhoods.

Insuring that we match our ambitions and objectives of our new community investment strategy, with the allocation of suitable resources will ultimately determine the success or otherwise of the impact of our work.

We are committed to ensuring the future of our Community Investment work by annually reviewing the priorities outlined in this Community Investment Strategy. This annual review process will:
• ensure that they continue to be the most relevant;
• help shape the development of the annual Neighbourhood Plans; and
• check the suitability and relevance of the activities recommended and the extent to which they are having a meaningful impact.

We will also provide an annual report in order to engage with all stakeholders and keep them informed on the progress and development of our approach to Community Investment.

The Community Investment Strategy provides our strategic approach and direction, with some ‘Strategic Priorities’ that need longer-term commitments. Neighbourhood planning will provide an annual refreshed delivery plan with new emerging needs identified in neighbourhoods alongside the strategic projects. The Strategy will also help guide how we monitor and measure the impact of this work. Diagram below shows the cycle of review and priority setting.
## Community Investment Strategy
### Year 1 Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Area</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>By end of Qtr 2</th>
<th>By end of Qtr 3</th>
<th>By end of Qtr 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governance</strong></td>
<td>1 Agree strategy and communicate internally</td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Agree and set-up clear internal governance framework with reporting lines and timeframes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partnership</strong></td>
<td>3 Review contractor CSR commitments to align with Community Investment priorities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4 Review ‘Neither pays either’ commitments and contracts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5 Review LBTH Mainstream grant awards to select partners for each delivery theme</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 Using information from LBTH MSG funding outcomes and interviews with key organisations carry out an analysis of gaps in provision</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery</strong></td>
<td>7 Develop and agree a partnership delivery framework</td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8 Neighborhood projects for delivery 15/16 complete</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 Neighborhood project business cases complete and approved for delivery 16/17</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Measuring Impact</strong></td>
<td>10 Develop using best practice and agree impact assessment framework and reporting timeframes</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>11 Produce first end of year outcome and impact report</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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Community Food Gardens
Creating Successful Neighbourhoods