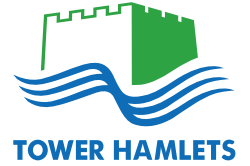


Tower Hamlets Continuous Improvement Plan



Our plan to become a high-performing resident-focused council with tight adherence to our policies and procedures and robust, evidence-based decision making embedded in everything we do.



Foreword from the Mayor

I am pleased to introduce this Continuous Improvement Plan. My vision is for us to be 'a council that listens to communities to build a borough that works for everyone'.

Tower Hamlets is the fastest-growing borough in London because it is such a wonderful place to live and work. However, we are a borough of contrasts. Although we have considerable strengths, our residents face significant challenges. I have an ambitious vision to fix Tower Hamlets and deliver real change for the community.

At a service level there is outstanding practice that we need to celebrate, integrate and scale e.g. Tower Hamlets consistently builds more affordable housing than any other London borough, and our strong prevention work and focus on keeping children with family or wider family is maintaining our children in care population significantly lower than many councils, while receiving an 'outstanding' Ofsted assessment for the quality of our support.

However we must also recognise the significant issues leading to this statutory support package and remedy these as quickly as we possibly can. For example I have made a strong, personal commitment to addressing negative political behaviours head on. I expect our collective focus and energy on addressing this issue to make a real change, not least for staff who I want to see having the support and environment they

need to thrive and deliver exceptional services to our residents and communities.

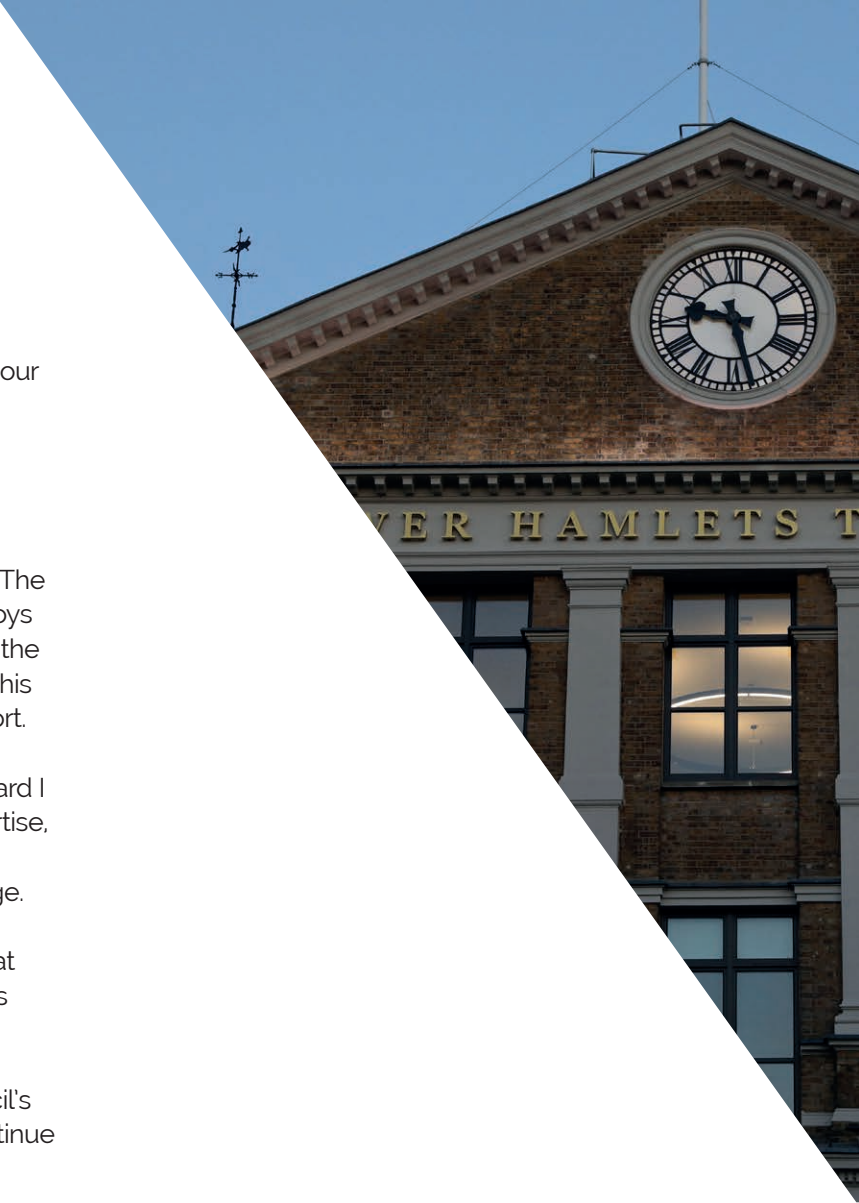
I am determined to address the issues raised in the Ministerial Directions in full. I accept the support package Government has put in place to accelerate Tower Hamlet's improvement journey. The collaborative way the Minister and Ministerial Envoys have engaged with me, elected members across the political spectrum and officers will help establish this new partnership-based model for statutory support.

As Chair of the Transformation and Assurance Board I can already see the strength of the external expertise, challenge and support the Council can now draw upon to realise sustainable and embedded change.

This Continuous Improvement Plan will ensure that we are set up to deliver one of the most ambitious agendas in local government. It is important to me to recognise that this plan builds on existing improvement work, and I want to thank the Council's dedicated staff for continuing to work hard to continue to deliver change.



Mayor Lutfur Rahman



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Section 1: Introduction

Purpose of this Plan

This Continuous Improvement Plan sets out how the London Borough of Tower Hamlets will respond to the Best Value failings around Culture; Partnerships; Governance; Leadership and Continuous Improvement identified in the 2024 Best Value Inspection that led to a statutory support package being put in place by the Government. It responds to the Ministerial Directions issued under Section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999, which require the Council to work with the Ministerial Envoys and TAB Leads to develop a Continuous Improvement Plan and fully costed Cultural Change and Political Mentoring programmes.

This plan is a roadmap for transformation and improvement, guiding the Council through the intervention period and ensuring that the requirements in the Ministerial Directions are delivered quickly and in full. It has been developed in consultation with the Ministerial Envoys, members of the Transformation and Assurance Board, together with early discussion with various member forums including the Councils Overview and Scrutiny committee. The Continuous Improvement Plan addresses the challenges we face while setting out the aims to achieve long-term and sustainable improvement for our residents. Delivering the Continuous Improvement Plan will provide assurance to residents; elected members; officers; partners; the Ministerial Envoys and MHCLG

that we have improved the way we operate as a Council.

At its core, the Continuous Improvement Plan provides a structured approach to tackling current challenges while laying the foundations for long-term success where improvement is required. It establishes a vision for a well-run Council with improvement effective governance, processes and controls that directly address the issues addressed by the Ministerial Directions.

Our Continuous Improvement Plan recognises that we must learn from the issues identified in the Ministerial Directions and overcome the barriers that have previously slowed our progress on our improvement journey.

Governance

- We will embed a high accountability, high support model of oversight and assurance into our corporate governance and decision making with watertight evidence base and reporting that drives a single, trusted version of the truth around progress against the improvement journey that is embedded as BAU moving forward
- We will continue to ensure effective consultation, evidence and robust challenge are hardwired into our decision-making through effective Scrutiny, the 'Golden Triangle' (statutory officers) and an effective Internal Audit function

- We will make sure our decision making is transparent and effectively communicated through effective forward planning and clarity around decision making processes supported by an effective assurance infrastructure and regime

Leadership

- We will build trust, respect and co-operation between members across the Council Chamber to support a culture of genuine improvement
- We ensure that our improvement goals are shared and widely understood and will use this support package to further cement a one council approach
- We will develop our people to make the most of our biggest resource, ensuring that we have effective feedback mechanisms and issues with staff morale and experience are picked up quickly

Culture and Partnerships

- We will work with staff, members and partners to embed change that has been implemented since the Best Value Inspection report and ensure that issues around trust and respect are addressed to support our staff to thrive
- We will ensure that we have a positive, learning relationship with all our partners

A new statutory model for intervention

The Ministerial Directions recognise that the Council has already taken some steps to improve and the intervention model represents a new approach, implementing a genuine partnership working model based on trust and respect between local and central Government. The Council retains all its decision-making powers. The role of the Ministerial Envoys is to mentor, challenge, advise and support the Council to deliver its improvement work, as well as monitor and report progress. Additional expertise is offered via the Transformation and Assurance Board leads in key areas requiring improvement.

This new model for intervention is designed along some key principles that we will embed in our approach to continuous improvement and transformation:

A robust and inclusive evidence base for improvement activity:

We will build robust evidence to test our diagnostic and the impact of the measures we implement e.g. we will commission an externally conducted all-staff survey in October 2025 to baseline culture change work

A shared vision for what good looks like: The Ministerial Envoys and TAB Leads will support the Council to identify the right milestones and how success should be measured

Openness and transparency: We will ensure that a wider cohort of staff, members and partners have the opportunity to input into the Continuous Improvement Plan and that mechanisms are put in place to protect and support staff consulted. We will communicate progress against our improvement journey honestly through existing channels and events using TAB to challenge and assure progress

Nurturing a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability to new ideas:

This intervention model is based on accelerated improvement through testing and learning from feedback to improve design and delivery. We are grateful for the support of our peers, particularly Waltham Forest and Camden Councils who have been generous in sharing their insight and testing our early discovery work

Commitment to improvement:

Since publication of the best value inspection report:

- The Mayor in his role as Chair, has reconfigured the Transformation and Assurance Board in line with the Ministerial Directions to draw on the best sector expertise to support our improvement journey
- The Mayor and Council have welcomed the Ministerial Envoys and TAB leads to Tower Hamlets and are committed to working

collaboratively together to accelerate our improvement

- The Council has allocated significant financial resource for improvement in the MTFS to ensure that we build the right capability and capacity to support our improvement journey.
- Elected members have been engaged with the development of the plan e.g. a facilitated session with members of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to input to Continuous Improvement Plan priorities, and group briefings have been offered.
- The Mayor has ensured that all Cabinet Members are engaging with the new LGA mentoring programme to ensure that elected members in leadership positions have the support they need to lead this change. This has included Cabinet agreed introduction of Cabinet Member Performance Panels
- We have engaged in open conversations with staff, partners and members about the Best Value Inspection report:
 - The Chief Executive has spoken to over 1,700 staff in two-way forums such as Chief Executive Roadshows and Teams Live sessions.
 - The Chief Executive has also had enabling conversations with our strategic partners including senior leaders from: schools and Higher Education; the NHS and ICB, Police, Fire Service, community organisations and Chairs of

our Statutory Partnership Boards, the LGA and London Councils.

- The Partnership Congress on Monday 2nd December 2024, hosted by the Mayor brought together a wide range of partners to support the development of a new Strategic Vision for the borough, a need for which was recognised by both a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge in September 2023 and the Best Value Inspection in 2024.
- The Chief Executive has spoken and met with Chief Executives from other councils, including those subject to recent interventions, to learn from their experiences.

Building the Capability and Capacity to deliver change:

Government lacks confidence in our capability and capacity to deliver continuous improvement, no organisation is perfect, but we need to demonstrate that we can manage change against ourselves and to do this we need to show we are building the right resource and accountability to drive change against the Ministerial Directions and demonstrate grip across the delivery of this plan.

- We have created a new role of Strategic Director for Change and Improvement. This role will be the 'Improvement Lead' specified in the Ministerial Directions and will be fundamentally important to driving this agenda forward.

- We have commissioned an externally conducted review to align resources with the new TOM and ensure that we are set up to deliver against the Ministerial Directions. An indication of progress being made by the Council is evidenced by commissioning Roretti in 2024 to conduct a review Strategy, Performance, Transformation and Improvement support services, engaging with staff who work within and with the function(s) to understand what's working, what's not, and opportunities to improve capability and effectiveness across the Council.

Relationships with other plans

This Continuous Improvement Plan reflects progress the council has made and operates alongside other key plans, forming a comprehensive framework for the Council's ongoing improvement and transformation.

Together, these plans create a structured approach to achieving sustainable change and delivering better outcomes for residents.

Delivery against the Ministerial Directions

Exit Strategy

Ministerial Envoy and Council Reporting Requirements to the Department



The Continuous Improvement Plan responds to the Ministerial Directions

Continuous Improvement Plan
(including Culture Change and Political Mentoring Programme)



The Continuous Improvement Plan will support the Council to achieve its aims and ambition

LBTH 2035 Strategic Vision

Tower Hamlets for All Partnership Plan

Strategic Plan

Medium Term Financial Strategy

Section 2:

Our Future Council

Continuous Improvement Plan Mission and aims

Our Continuous Improvement Plan sets out clearly what we will achieve to address immediate challenges such as delivering improvements to process adherence for procurement and senior recruitment, while ensuring a focus on the future and how the Council will need to operate in all

areas outlined by the Ministerial Directions to best serve the needs of the borough, its residents and communities.

Fundamentally, the Continuous Improvement Plan has to support the Council to become a **high-performing resident-focused council with**

tight adherence to our policies and procedures and robust, evidence-based decision making embedded in everything we do.

To achieve this, our three strategic aims are:

| Strategic aim | Outcomes |
|--|---|
| 1. A Council that delivers change for Tower Hamlets. An operating model and transformation capacity aligned to the strategic vision for 2035, continuing to support an engaged, effective and empowered workforce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A clear vision, purpose and priorities that guide how the Council operates: Staff across the organisation understand how their work delivers our priorities and contributes to our transformation and improvement journey – Tackling social injustice in the Borough through developing a whole systems approach to our existing partnership forums – An effective corporate centre: In line with the Councils TOM, the centre is focused on strategic direction, clear priorities, and resident-centred outcomes – empowering Directorates to innovate and to work collaboratively to deliver a shared agenda – An engaged and empowered workforce: the organisation understands staff experience holistically and acts swiftly when issues arise |
| 2. A Council that is impactful in its engagement with strategic and statutory partners and residents to achieve the best outcomes together. Services are codesigned, where appropriate, with our residents and partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – We have the right partnership vision and outcomes, behaviours and support in place to drive transformational strategic and statutory partnership outcomes. – High impact community consultation, engagement and participatory approaches (where appropriate) that embed locally designed solutions that meet resident needs and priorities – A clear, consistent and effective customer experience and improved service and satisfaction – Open and transparent reporting and comms with inbuilt external challenge across change and improvement work. We won't always get things right, but we will identify mistakes and learn from them together |
| 3. A Council that is well-run with effective governance. Robust decision-making; and tight adherence to our senior recruitment and procurement policies and processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Effective governance that enables improved decision-making – Effective member interface with the improvement journey driving positive change in outcomes and behaviours – Effective overview and scrutiny where O&S scrutinises Cabinet and Mayor's decisions and risk with high quality debates |

Improvement priorities and programmes

The Ministerial Directions acknowledge that our improvement journey as a Council is already underway. This Continuous Improvement Plan builds upon and enhances existing programmes that are already delivering positive change for the organisation and our residents.

The Continuous Improvement Plan will be a living document and will be updated in response to engagement and consultation, and to reflect learning from the priority programmes we are designing with the Ministerial Envoys and TAB Leads.

The Continuous Improvement Plan is focused on a set of 11 priority programmes which align with our 3 strategic aims:

Aim 1: A Council that delivers change for Tower Hamlets

Aim 2 - A Council that is impactful in its engagement with partners and residents

Aim 3 - A Council that is well run with effective governance

Programmes required by the Ministerial Directions

Programme 1.
LBTH Vision 2035

Programme 4.
Transformational Partnerships and Participation

Programme 6.
Engaged, Effective and Empowered Workforce

Programme 10.
Political Mentoring Programme

Programme 2.
Empowering Services to ensure capacity to deliver

Programme 5.
Transparent and accessible to residents and communities

Programme 7.
Improve Governance

Programme 11.
Cultural Change Programme

Programme 3.
Collaborative, one Council approach

Programme 8.
Procurement Improvement

Programme 9.
Embedding an effective scrutiny programme

The Ministerial Directions require the Council to within three months of the date of these Directions, co-operate with the Ministerial Envoys and relevant TAB leads to prepare and agree with the Board:

- **'...a fully costed programme of cultural change to rebuild trust between officers and members.'**
- **'...a fully costed programme of political mentoring for members':** The aim of the political mentoring programme is to improve the quality of political understanding, capacity, and debate and how politicians interact with each other and officers

Together, the Cultural Change and Political Mentoring Programmes will support greater levels of trust and respect between members across the chamber and between members and officers through addressing behaviours, perceptions and relationships. Other programmes in the Continuous Improvement Plan invest in leadership and wider cultural change e.g. through investment in HR and OD Transformation.

Early Delivery Priorities

We will work with TAB Leads and Ministerial Envoys to develop a common understanding of 'what good looks like' for the improvement journey as a whole and for the priority programmes. The Council has started this process as we operationalise and mobilise the organisation to deliver the Continuous Improvement Plan. We will prioritise collaborative

effort for those activities that most need their support to achieve our objectives.

For programmes that are in delivery and approaching mobilisation, TAB Leads and the Ministerial Envoys will play a critical friend role to ensure: the plans deliver the requirements of the Ministerial Directions; that we have the right systems and processes in place to manage delivery and realise the benefits of these plans; that the monitoring, reporting and assurance we have built into our plans is robust and that the programmes are having the desired impact.

For programmes that are in design/ discovery phase TAB Leads and the Ministerial Envoys will play an active role in supporting diagnostic work and design, of these programmes. We have agreed that our initial collective focus for this joint design work will be:

- **Political Mentoring Programme:** where the TAB Leadership Lead and Lead Envoy will both play pivotal roles in changing our political culture. We need to ensure that the right systems, support and expectations in place prior to a generational shift with new members joining through the May 2026 elections.
- **Culture Change Programme:** discovery and planning phase to test hypotheses, understand staff experience and meet the requirements of

the Ministerial Directions to focus on improving trust and respect between members and officers.

- **Governance Improvement:** there is a programme of existing work that the Council will continue to deliver. The TAB Lead and Ministerial Envoy will support design of impact measures so the Council is in a position to sustain and deliver that change as well as supporting the Council to tackle a small set of high impact governance and decision making issues head on.

In addition to this, there are early delivery priorities that the Council must achieve quickly to enable the other priority programmes to achieve the desired outcomes:

- Ensuring that we have the right capability, capacity, accountability and controls in place to deliver this improvement work through appointing the Improvement Lead (Strategic Director for Change and Improvement), progressing the Empowering Services Review in line with the TOM and starting recruitment for a D HR and OD to lead transformation work.
- To ensure compliance with the Ministerial Directions, we will review Transformation activities in light of the Continuous Improvement Plan and ensure that there a robust framework, design principles and methodology to support change activity. This will be overseen by a new Strategic Design Authority to ensure that we maintain the model and controls we

are implementing. This will ensure that the Continuous Improvement Plan becomes a blueprint for the Council's wider transformation work beyond the requirements of the Ministerial Directions.

- Developing a robust evidence base for programmes in discovery phase including an externally delivered staff survey.

Alignment with existing Transformation work

The Continuous Improvement Plan will accelerate delivery against our People First transformation journey. People First (2024) makes a series of commitments to our residents and staff that are well tested and understood, creating a compelling platform for change. There is strong alignment between the core aims of People First and delivery

against the Ministerial Directions.

| People First | Continuous Improvement Plan Aims |
|---|--|
| <p>Putting our residents first, by working with them to deliver the best outcomes. We will engage with partners and residents to achieve the best outcomes together. We will offer accessible services that are easy for people to use, with support if they need it, and embed innovation across delivery.</p> | <p>A Council that is impactful in its engagement with partners and residents to achieve the best outcomes together. Services will be (where appropriate) codesigned with our residents and partners.</p> |
| <p>Putting our staff first by supplying the tools for them to deliver excellent services. We will empower officers to 'make it happen' by simplifying and streamlining processes such as recruitment, finance and procurement, whilst ensuring that everyone takes responsibility for compliance and pulling in the same direction. We will put the support in place to grow our own talent.</p> | <p>A Council that delivers change for Tower Hamlets. We will ensure our operating model and transformation capacity are aligned to the strategic vision for 2035, continuing to support an engaged, effective and empowered workforce</p> <p>A Council that is well run with effective governance. We will deliver stronger and more effective governance and decision-making with tight adherence to our senior recruitment and procurement policies and processes.</p> |

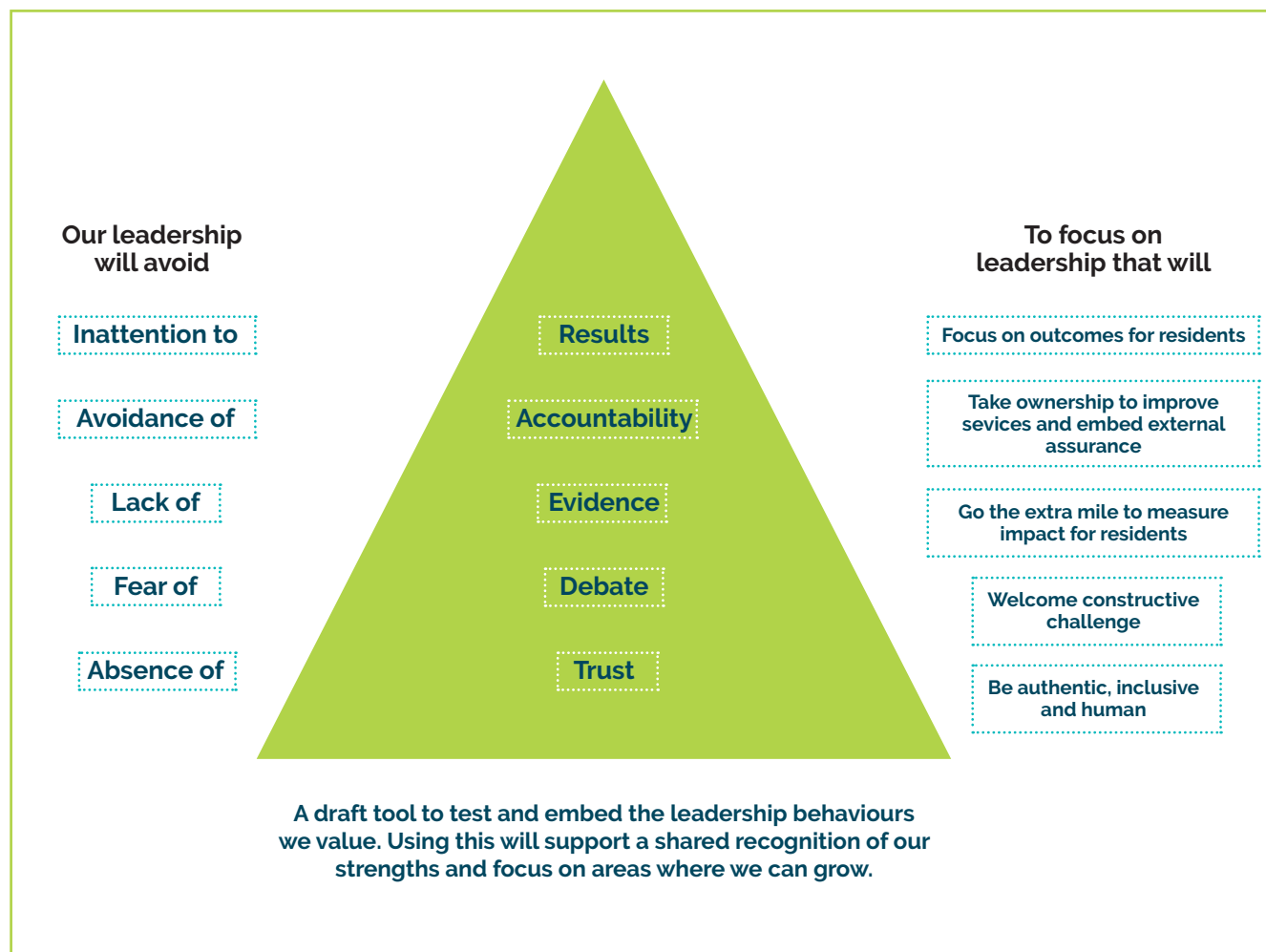
Section 3:

Delivering the plan

Sponsorship and Accountability

Each priority programme in the Continuous Improvement Plan has a Senior Sponsor and Senior Responsible Officer (SRO). Sponsors are accountable for developing and delivering these programmes and ensuring they have the impact required by the Ministerial Directions and will:

1. Work collaboratively with the Ministerial Envoys and TAB Leads to ensure that we maximise the benefits of the statutory support package Government has put in place
2. Hardwire robust, appropriate and agreed evidence base and internal and external assurance into programme plans
3. Ensure that appropriate Programme Governance is followed and that decisions regarding the future of the project in line with organisational expectations and processes
4. Present quarterly performance reporting to the Internal Assurance Board and TAB, and deep dives where required
5. Ensure we have the capability and capacity to deliver programme in place through establishing a programme team to deliver the necessary work, this will include nominating a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO). This leader, at Director or in exceptional cases Head of Service Level, will be responsible for delivering the programme.



Governance and Reporting

The Ministerial Directions set clear requirements around engagement, reporting and transparency and the Council will establish new cross-cutting improvement governance in addition to the Transformation and Assurance Board.

Transformation and Assurance Board

The Ministerial Directions recognise the work of the Transformation Advisory Board established by the Council in 2023 to provide expert advice and strategic guidance around the Council's improvement journey, communication and community engagement. The Directions require the Council to reconfigure the Board in order to drive the improvement and assurance journey.

As per the Ministerial Directions, the Transformation and Assurance Board (TAB) will report to Full Council. TAB will sign off the Continuous Improvement Plan and hold the Council to account for delivery and impact of its programmes. To ensure timely and accurate reporting and decision making this Board will meet monthly during project set up (first 6 months) at which point the frequency of meetings will be reviewed.

The Transformation and Assurance Board (TAB) will focus on assuring delivery and impact against the Ministerial Directions. TAB will be responsible for ensuring that we have a common view as an organisation around expectations and what good looks like and providing strategic leadership and support to accelerate delivery against the improvement journey.

The TAB will bring together:

| | |
|---|--|
| The Mayor | The Mayor will chair the TAB |
| The Chief Executive | |
| The three Ministerial Envoys | |
| The three TAB leads | We have appointed the TAB Lead roles required by the Ministerial Directions and will work with Carolyn Downs, Jenny Rowlands and Sir Steve Bullock to accelerate our improvement journey and build robust assurance into the delivery of our Continuous Improvement Plan. |
| Councillor representatives | The Ministerial Directions require that there will be two opposition members on the TAB, setting the expectation that it is important that everyone across the chamber has a stake and voice in our improvement journey. |
| | There will be one member representing the Labour Group, one member representing ungrouped members, and an Aspire group representative. |
| A Community Representative | We will appoint a Community Representative Independent Member of TAB to ensure that the evidence base for improvement is inclusive of all our communities and that community voice and appropriate channels for communicating our improvement journey to widen reach are embedded in our Continuous Improvement Plan plan. |
| A representative from the Local Government Association | A representative of the LGA will provide a link to sector-led improvement and assurance support. |

Though the Ministerial Envoys will each have a primary area of focus, they will act as a team and will gain a holistic understanding of the Council's workings.

The primary areas of focus for TAB Leads and Ministerial Envoys will be:

| Best Value Theme | Ministerial Envoy Focus | TAB Lead |
|------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Leadership | Kim Bromley-Derry | Sir Steve Bullock (political leadership) |
| Partnerships | Kim Bromley-Derry | Jenny Rowlands |
| Governance | Shokat Lal | Carolyn Downs |
| Culture | Pam Parkes | Jenny Rowlands |

The Board will be linked to the Council's 'business as usual' governance via a new Internal Assurance Board (see page 20) and regular reporting via public meetings. TAB papers will be published unless a matter is taken to the board that is exempt from publication under the Council's usual rules.

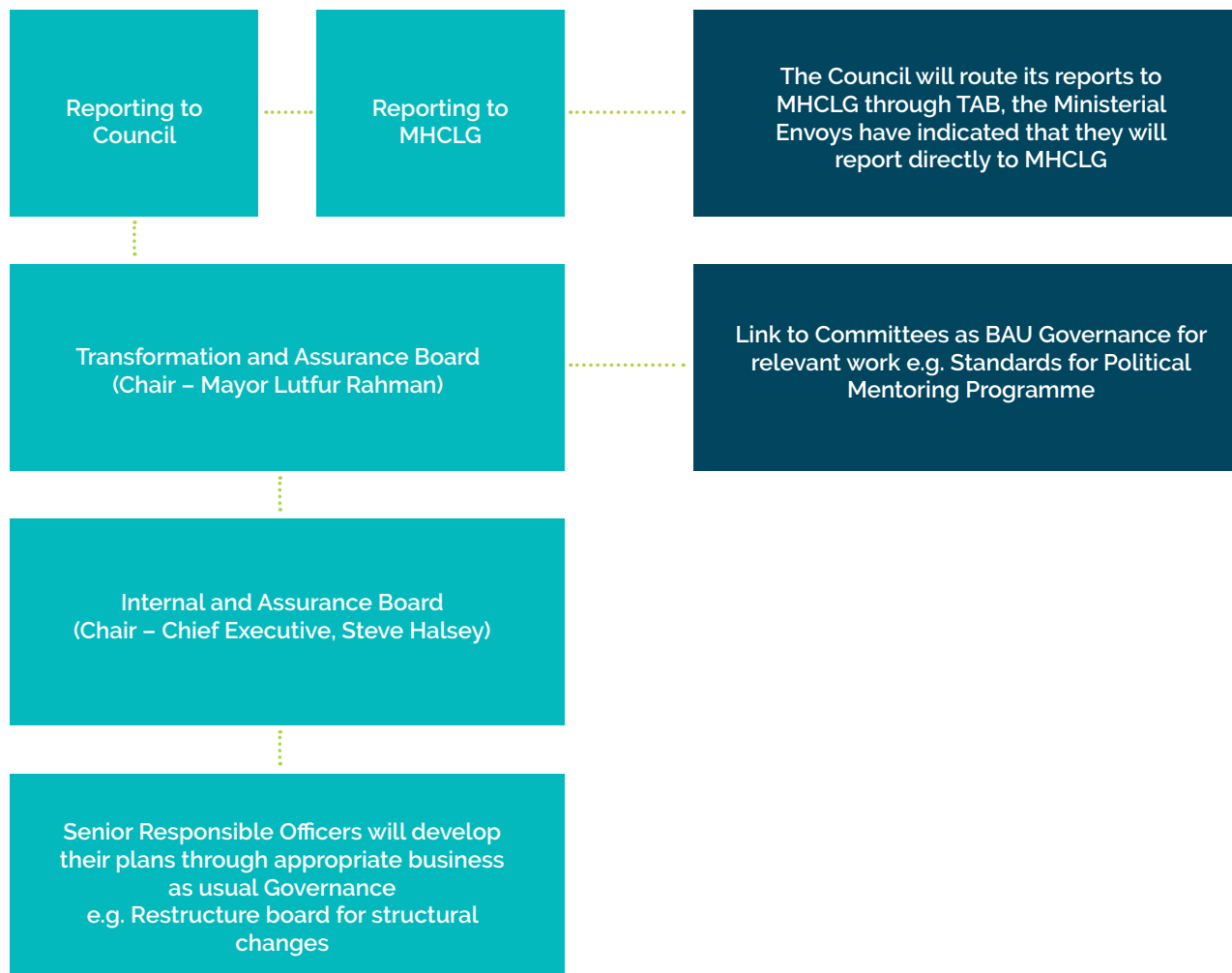
As we operationalise the Continuous Improvement Plan, we will integrate planning and the TAB forward look with key committees and business as usual governance. For example:

- The Political Mentoring Programme will be owned and monitored by the Standards Advisory Committee who will then play a key role in monitoring and assuring delivery and impact of the plan

- The Internal Control Framework will be owned and monitored by the Audit Committee
- Risk, O&S Improvement and measuring impact are the remit of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- HR Committee will be notified and will monitor Senior Recruitment and HR Transformation plans
- The Council's update reports to MHCLG will be considered at Full Council

Other Continuous Improvement Plan programmes will go through the appropriate officer governance, for example restructures will be taken through the appropriate processes and governance; new systems investment will come to Corporate Management Team via Directorate Leadership Team meetings.

Improvement governance and reporting



Internal Assurance Board

The Internal Assurance Board is a new officer Board, chaired by the Chief Executive, with Senior Sponsors (Corporate Directors), the Monitoring Officer and Strategic Director for Change and Improvement in attendance and Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) for improvement programme delivery invited for relevant agenda items. This Board will hold Sponsors to account for delivery and act as a forum through which escalations are made, significant changes to projects agreed and additional resource provisionally allocated. It will be responsible for commissioning and assuring the evidence that goes to the TAB. The Internal Assurance Board will ensure we are able to demonstrate grip and pace on:

- Mobilising the plan
- Delivery against the directions
- Evidence base for improvement
- Robust and embedded assurance
- Capability and capacity gaps
- Risks to delivering improvement
- Reporting to TAB and Government
- Response to TAB and Ministerial Envoys

The Internal Assurance Board will also oversee delivery against the improvement plans for the three Statutory Audit Recommendations received in February 2024.

Improvement is everybody's responsibility

We will use existing two-way communication channels to ensure that staff understand the improvement journey we are on and have opportunities to share their ideas. These include inviting TAB Leads to participate in a panel discussion around the improvement journey at April's Leadership Conference (c700 attendees), July's all Staff Conference (c4000 attendees) and regular sign-up opportunities to ask the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors questions directly (Teams Live and Chief Executive Roadshows).

We have scheduled a POD Session hosted by the Chief Executive to invite staff reflections and contributions to the Continuous Improvement Plan and will use the feedback from this session to plan future events.

We will regularly update the organisation on the plan via the intranet and member newsletters. We will communicate honestly and openly around the improvement journey with staff, members, partners and residents. We won't get everything right, but we will identify issues early, address them transparently and adapt in response.

Monitoring Delivery

| Governance structures | |
|--|--|
| Transparency | <p>The Ministerial Directions to the Authority set out that the Authority must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Report publicly to the TAB on the delivery of the Continuous Improvement Plan, the cultural change programme and the political mentoring programme at three monthly intervals, or at such intervals as the Board may direct. – Have regard to and respond promptly and in public to any recommendations from the Board with respect to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Continuous Improvement Plan and its implementation. – Report to the Secretary of State on the delivery of the Directions, with these reports having been considered by Full Council, at six monthly intervals, or at such intervals as the Secretary of State may direct. <p>This means that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Council will provide three monthly updates to the TAB on the delivery of our plans – The recommendations that TAB provide and the Council's response to these will be recorded and reported to Full Council – The Council will report on a six-monthly basis to the Minister. It is expected that these reports cover the breadth of the Directions and will include, the work of TAB. <p>The Ministerial Envoys report directly to the Minister on whether the Authority has made sufficient improvement to be able to comply with its Best Value Duty on a sustainable basis. Government will publish the Ministerial Envoys reports alongside the Department's response.</p> |
| Monitoring Delivery | <p>We will establish and agree a standardised quarterly dashboard to ensure that regular reporting to the TAB is timely, consistent and accurate. Reporting will be supplemented by thematic 'deep dives', at first focused on establishing the programmes that are in discovery phase, then to assure delivery is on track. Early products will be tested and iterated to ensure that they meet the Board's requirements.</p> |
| Effective member interface and scrutiny | <p>The elected members on TAB will play a full and active role in TAB matters and will be the key contact and conduit in their respective political Groups for the improvement journey, giving and receiving feedback and representing the political Groups in TAB discussions. This will ensure that members across the Council are kept informed and engaged in the improvement journey and decisions.</p> <p>The Council's reports to Government will be discussed at Full Council prior to submission. O&S Committee will scrutinise the Continuous Plan and its delivery to ensure it is fit for purpose. We will work with relevant Committee Chairs to establish an effective, integrated work programme to provide robust oversight and assurance for the Continuous Improvement Plan.</p> |

Resourcing the Plan

Delivery against the Ministerial Directions and embedding sustainable change will be supported by a new post of Strategic Director for Change and Improvement. This new role will be the Improvement Lead specified in the Ministerial Directions and will strengthen corporate leadership for strategy, policy, culture change, research and insight functions.

For existing programmes, such as Procurement Improvement and the Empowering Services Review, there is already resource secured and in place to support delivery that is well underway. For other programmes, resource requirements will be defined as the programme is scoped. Senior Sponsors and SROs are responsible for considering how 'business as usual' capacity can be re-prioritised and redeployed, and for assessing additional resource requirements. The Strategic Director for Change and Improvement will provide an overview of the Council's requirements for transformation and change work and will inform Internal Assurance Board decisions about the deployment of resources.

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Internal Council resource | A refocussing of internal resources (e.g. the Transformation Management Office) to support the development and delivery of transformation and change programmes. Identification of capacity from across the organisation that can potentially be redirected and/or deployed to support the Continuous Improvement Plan delivery. |
| Interim external capacity | Short-term capacity and technical expertise to support development and delivery of priority programmes. |
| Transformation partners | Support from agencies such as the LGA (as the sector's membership body and improvement agency) for some elements of the Plan, including the Political Mentoring Programme. |

The Council will ensure robust oversight and assurance against the Statutory Audit Recommendations:

In February 2025, the External Auditor EY gave LBTH 3 Statutory Recommendations relating to:

1 Timely & Statutory Financial reporting, 2 Internal Audit & Assurance and 3 Procurement & Contract Management. The external auditor found that council had made progress against Statutory Financial reporting, but the last unqualified set of accounts were in 2017.

The Statutory Audit Recommendations were considered in public and accepted by the Audit Committee on 13th March 2025. The committee agreed the action plan for recommendation 1. The action plans for recommendation 2 & 3 will be presented to the next audit committee in April 2025 following consideration by CMT on the 1st and 15th of April meetings. At CMT on the 1st April 2025 a new protocol for internal audit reports was agreed and CMT also agreed the Internal Assurance Board will oversee and provide assurance to the audit committee re progress of CMT against the agreed Statutory Audit Improvement Plan.

Continuous Improvement Plan Performance Framework

Each aim of the Continuous Improvement Plan will be delivered through a series of priority programmes with clear outcomes. We are working with the Ministerial Envoys and TAB Leads to test and agree success measures and will iterate the Continuous Improvement Plan to include this shared understanding of what good looks like by September 2025.

Risks to the delivery of the Plan

Alongside the risks and dependencies identified within individual improvement programmes and projects, there are a number of key overarching risks and dependencies to the delivery of the Continuous Improvement Plan which need to be considered and mitigated against. These are set out in the tables in Appendix A. Risks and mitigations will be kept under review.



Appendix A: Priority Programme Summaries

| Programme | Purpose and description | Sponsor/ SRO/ Lead Member | Key Activities | Start | End |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|----------|----------|
| 1. LBTH Vision 2035 | The purpose of this existing programme is to create a shared vision for the future of the Council to help everyone understand the Council's role and purpose. | CEO (Steve Halsey) | 1.1 Develop and present a LBTH 2035 Strategic Vision statement, that summarises the impact we want to see across the Borough by 2035, and how the organisation needs to change to realise these opportunities. | Mar 2025 | Jul 2025 |
| | The programme includes the development of a new Borough Partnership, a new, strategic place-based partnership to improve outcomes for local residents. | S.D Change and Improvement (when in post) | 1.2 Review and test the Strategic Plan and Supporting Core Strategies to ensure alignment with the 2035 vision document. | Jul 2025 | Oct 2025 |
| | The programme will review the current Transformation Programme to ensure transformation activities are aligned with the Continuous | Mayor (Lutfur Rahman) | 1.3 Build on the LBTH 2035 approach and programme to engage partners, residents and workforce to ensure that the Continuous Improvement Journey captures this ongoing conversation about priorities and the borough we want to see in 2035. | Jul 2025 | Oct 2025 |

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| | <p>Improvement Plan and future vision for the Council.</p> <p>A new Strategic Design Authority will provide organisational coherence and rigour as we review current transformation and change activity, agree new programmes/ close others and ensure there are robust programme management arrangements in place.</p> | | 1.4 Create a new, strategic place-based partnership, supported by Tower Hamlets Council and its Mayor, local businesses and the third sector, all working together to improve outcomes for local residents. | Oct 2024 | Oct 2025 |
| | | | 1.5 When LBTH 2035 vision is agreed, ensure that improvement and transformation activity across the organisation are aligned to the Continuous Improvement Plan. | Jul 2025 | Dec 2025 |
| | | | 1.6 Create a new Strategic Design Authority, chaired by the Strategic Director Change and Improvement to improve corporate grip, prioritisation and coherence across transformation and improvement projects and provide transformation projects with the right corporate challenge and oversight of Directorate's change activity. | Dec 2025 | |
| | | | 1.7 Develop and agree new transformation proposals, informed by LBTH Strategic Vision, improvement priorities with engagement and | Jan 2026 | May 2026 |

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| | | | agreement from the new Strategic Design Authority. | | |
| | | | 1.8 Co-ordinate and ensure we are maximising the benefits of our learning from other local authorities including network membership, practice visits and learning conversations. | Ongoing | |
| 2. Empowering Services to ensure capacity to deliver | Continue to create an effective corporate centre and empowered directorates which are configured to drive and deliver the next stage of our Transformation Programme and delivering against the Ministerial Directions. The 'empowering services' model relies on a strengthened internal control framework, which will be developed as part of this programme to ensure that empowered Corporate Directors operate within a structured and consistent suite of processes, overseen by appropriate controls and assurance. | CEO (Steve Halsey) S.D Change and Improvement (when in post) Mayor (Lutfur Rahman) | 2.1 Build best practice senior capacity to deliver change: a. Recruit a Strategic Director for Change and Improvement b. Bring forward and implement new leadership structure for Strategy, Improvement, Transformation, Insight and Culture Change functions | Jan 2025 | Aug 2025 |
| | | | 2.2 Implement a new structure for these functions: a. Design future state and launch consultation b. Establish HR templates, JDs etc c. Implement new structure | Apr 2025 | Sept 2025 |
| | | | 2.3 Deliver Mayor's Office Restructure: a. We have committed to reducing overall size of the Mayor's Office from 36 to 9 staff | Apr 2025 | Sept 2026 |
| | | | 2.4 Design and implement clear internal control framework to | Apr 2025 | Apr 2026 |

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| | | | support the TOM, ensuring consistent processes, checks and assurance and governance to manage cross cutting risks. | | |
| 3. Our leaders take a collaborative, one council approach that takes accountability for the required change | The Internal Assurance Board, comprised of the 5 Corporate Directors, the Monitoring Officer and new Strategic Director for Change and Improvement are key players in delivering against the Ministerial Directions this work. The purpose of this programme is to ensure this new team develop a collaborative, one council approach that takes accountability for delivering change. Whilst delivering on the immediate requirements of the Ministerial Directions, there is also a need to look to the longer term and ensure improvement is sustainable and embedded. This programme is supported by a range of activities in the Cultural Change Programme | CEO (Steve Halsey) S.D Change and Improvement (when in post) Mayor (Lutfur Rahman) | 3.1 Identifying and rectifying leadership capacity gaps to deliver against the Ministerial Directions | Apr 2025 | Dec 2025 |
| | | | 3.2 Support package for the Internal Assurance Board members, to lead this complex change programme including: corporate ownership, accountability, delivering on expectations and leading across boundaries. | Jun 2025 | Oct 2025 |
| | | | 3.4 Action Learning Sets to develop and embody the leadership framework as well as peer support to deliver the Continuous Improvement Plan. | Oct 2025 | Apr 2026 |
| | | | 3.5 A specific, mandatory training and development programme for Head of Service level officers focused on change management; working in a political environment and robust | Oct 2025 | Oct 2026 |

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| 4. Transformational Partnerships and Participation, working to support the best outcomes for our residents and communities | | | evidence-based decision making | | |
| | <p>This programme supports transformational partnership working and effective participatory approaches to policy design and implementation through partnership working, research and engagement with residents.</p> | <p>CD HASC (Georgia Chimbani) and CD Housing and Regeneration (David Joyce)</p> | <p>Map existing activities across partnership and community engagement and develop an evaluation and evidence plan. Work with Ministerial Envoys and TAB Lead for Culture and Partnerships to establish a shared baseline.</p> | <p>Apr 2025</p> | <p>Aug 2025</p> |
| | <p>There is a significant amount of work underway for this programme and as well as continuing to deliver our plans we will review, test the impact of work already completed and develop the strategic evidence base before moving into discovery phase.</p> <p>This programme will build on areas of existing strength e.g. partnership data, research and insight assets through the HDRC programme and successful integration of lived</p> | <p>Dir Housing Policy and Regulatory Assurance (Karen Swift)</p> <p>Mayor (Lutfur Rahman)</p> | <p>Continue to deliver existing partnership and community engagement work and develop cross cutting plan to test impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Build on a comprehensive partnership review to enhance strategic alignment; rebuild and strengthen key partnership relationships b. Strengthen protocols and decision making around community assets c. Embed the Community Engagement Strategy, agreed last year and ensure it realises its objectives: d. Ensure effective work with local VCS and Civil Society, | <p>Apr 2025</p> | <p>Oct 2025</p> |

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| | experience and children's voice in Children's Services. | | including finalising the VCS Strategy e. Finalise the Cohesion Plan and realise the vision 'Together, we will create a Tower Hamlets where everyone belongs, connects, and takes pride in their community | | |
| | | | Define priority areas for participatory approaches and partnership policy development ensuring alignment with corporate objectives and community needs. | Oct 2025 | Apr 2026 |
| | | | Pilot a co-designed solution for a key issue, working with academic partners to develop innovative and effective approaches | Oct 2025 | Apr 2026 |
| 5. A Council that is and feels open, transparent and accessible to our residents and communities | <p>This programme will ensure that the Council meets the evolving and diverse needs of customers and residents.</p> <p>To ensure that we are customer focused and data led, we will commission a comprehensive review to ensure that our approach to customer access is aligned</p> | <p>CD Resources (Julie Lorraine)</p> <p>Dir. of Customer Services (Leah Sykes)</p> <p>Mayor (Lutfur Rahman)</p> | Comprehensive Customer Access Review | Jul 2025 | Dec 2025 |

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| | with the new Target Operating model that reorients the Council to prioritise resident and customer needs and ensure wherever possible that actions are implemented and decisions are taken at the nearest point to the customer | | | | |
| 6. Engaged, effective and empowered workforce | <p>In the first phase, we are prioritising the Recruitment Transformation programme, that will address the specific concerns about record keeping and Senior Recruitment processes raised in the Ministerial Directions and BV Inspection Report.</p> <p>We are committed to building the subject matter expertise and senior leadership required to drive an HR Transformation programme of this scale and will ensure that this is in place before we deliver the next phase of the programme.</p> | <p>Dir. of Resources (Julie Lorraine)</p> <p>D HR & OD (when in post)</p> <p>CLlr (Saied Ahmed)</p> | 6.1 Senior recruitment transformation to include: a. A new structure establishing central controls and accountability for senior recruitment. b. Implement move to a new 'best in class' recruitment system that has been agreed and funded. | Sept 2024 | July 2025 |
| | | | 6.2 Securing the expertise to design and deliver the new structure including recruiting a permanent Director for HR and OD | Apr 2025 | Oct 2025 |
| | | | 6.3 Develop a People Strategy, built on a robust diagnostic to ensure that we have the capability capacity, skills, talent and dynamic resourcing to deliver our priorities, manage risk and create a 'one council' focused workforce able to | Autumn 2025 | Spring 2026 |

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| | | | adjust to a dynamic and pressured environment now and in the future. | | |
| | | | 6.4 A new People Function to drive forward the People Strategy | Autumn 2025 | Spring 2026 |
| | | | 6.5 People Transformation Programme ensuring that the BAU and new service elements integrate utilizing technology, AI, self-service and management / leadership skills and confidence to manage performance. | Spring 2026 | Autumn 2026 |
| | | | 6.6 An OD Strategy, anchored in the People Strategy that is focused on ensuring we have the skills we need for the future | Spring 2026 | Autumn 2026 |
| 7. Improve Governance | This programme will ensure that robust decision making, strong process adherence and good governance are consistently embedded in our approach across the Council. The programme will include: embedding the new Corporate Code of Governance; designing a model that increases strategic governance capability and capacity across the whole organisation; external challenge and review | CEO (Steve Halsey) | 7.1 Commission an external provider to conduct a comprehensive Governance Review to benchmark against other Local Authorities and contribute to establishing a new baseline for the next phase of improvement work | TBC | |
| | | Monitoring Officer (Shupriya Iqbal) Mayor (Lutfur Rahman) | 7.2 Build effective structure and senior capacity to support robust governance and good decision making, consider additional leadership capacity at | Mar 2025 | Oct 2025 |

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| | to benchmark our governance challenges and rate of improvement; ensuring the highest standards of conduct for both officers and members; the importance of 'whistleblowing' and compliant handling to ensure in our continuous improvement journey and work with Officer Leadership through key forums such as CMT and CELT as well as elected Members to ensure that good governance is at the heart of our culture and behaviours. This workstream will consider the scheme of delegations for the authority as per the Directions. | | Director level to ensure that growth in Legal Services and this governance improvement programme have the right senior support | | |
| | | | 7.3 Forward planning tool being developed to strengthen oversight and corporate grip on reports. | Oct 2024 | Apr 2025 |
| | | | 7.4 Ensure that standards of conduct for members and officers are managed consistently with right thresholds for action and the importance of 'whistleblowing' and complaint handling and adherence to these processes are embedded | Mar 2025 | Oct 2025 |
| | | | 7.5 Review of Audit function including ensuring that Audit recommendations are prioritised by services | Oct 2025 | Mar 2026 |
| | | | 7.6 Strengthen CMTs role: in ensuring that professional criticism and challenge is always sought and heard to inform robust decisions | Jul 2025 | Dec 2025 |
| 8. Procurement Improvement | We have significantly improved procurement service performance and reduced | CD Resources (Julie Lorraine) | 8.1 Review impact of pilot and agree next steps | May 2025 | |

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| | compliance risk through successful implementation of the procurement improvement plan and the introduction of a suite of new controls and contractual terms. Phase 2 will improve contract management and outcome monitoring | Dir. of Finance (Abdulrazak Kassim) Cllr (Saied Ahmed) | 8.2 Embed the new Procurement Delivery Model 8.3 Assuring the action plan for External Auditor Recommendation Three around Procurement and Contract Management | May 2025 | Dec 2025 |
| 9. Embedding an effective scrutiny programme | The purpose of this programme is to continue to embed the effectiveness, transparency, and engagement of the scrutiny function. It will continue to foster understanding of scrutiny's role among members, officers, and residents; improve collaboration with the Executive; and ensure scrutiny adds value to governance and strategic priorities through adopting best practices from other councils. | CD Children Services (Steve Reddy) Head of Dem Service (Matthew Mannion) Mayor (Lutfur Rahman) | 9.1 Implementation and transition to new structure with focus on supporting stronger Overview and opportunities to contribute across the life cycle of policy and implementation | Jan 2025 | Aug 2025 |
| | | | 9.2 Continue to embed and review progress against the delivery of the Scrutiny Improvement Plan | Ongoing | |
| 10. Political Mentoring Programme | The Council will focus on the political mentoring programme already in place and the creation of 'best in class' political development framework. The aim of the political mentoring programme | CEO (Steve Halsey) Monitoring Officer (Shupriya Iqbal) | 10.1 Programme scoping in collaboration with TAB Leadership Lead and Ministerial Envoys | Jan 2025 | Apr 2025 |

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| | is to improve the quality of political understanding, capacity, and debate and how politicians interact with each other and officers. We will take a universal approach and will be clear upfront around expectations of members and which elements of the evolving training and development programme are mandatory. | Mayor (Lutfur Rahman) | | | |
| 11. Culture Change Programme | The Cultural Change Programme aims to rebuild trust between officers and elected members, foster a positive and collaborative organisational culture, and create an environment where all individuals feel respected, engaged, and empowered. By addressing underlying issues and strengthening relationships, the programme will aim to ensure that mutual respect, transparency, and shared commitment impact the Council's priorities. | CEO (Steve Halsey) S.D Change and Improvement (when in post) Mayor (Lutfur Rahman) | 11.1 Programme scoping in collaboration with TAB Culture and Partnerships Lead and Ministerial Envoys | Jan 2025 | Apr 2025 |