



# Community Engagement Strategy 2024 to 2028

**'Listen to communities to build a borough that works for everyone.'**



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## Foreword

I am delighted to introduce our new Community Engagement Strategy. 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.

This council has an ambitious vision to fix Tower Hamlets and deliver change for the community. However, we cannot do this alone. Our residents are our biggest asset and to change Tower Hamlets we need to harness the power of the community.

I have seen first-hand the crucial role that residents and our partner organisations play in shaping the future of the borough. Therefore, I want the council to play a leading role in empowering the next generation of community leaders.

The council I lead will work with residents, the voluntary and community sector, faith organisations and local businesses to identify shared goals, come up with solutions, and take action together.

Our diversity is our strength. We will always involve our diverse communities and seldom-heard groups in the issues that matter

to them, using the most innovative methods. I will make sure the council acts on what the community tells us and always lets those who take part know about the influence their involvement has had.

I invite all our residents and partners to join us on this journey. By doing so, we will make sure decisions are based on the community's best interests, making Tower Hamlets an even better place to live and work.

**Lutfur Rahman**  
**Executive Mayor Tower Hamlets**



## Our vision

Our vision is to create '**a council that listens to communities to build a borough that works for everyone**'.

We perform vital work that improves our residents' quality of life. However, to truly meet the community's needs, we must work with residents and partner organisations to make decisions that result in better outcomes.

That is why we worked with 328 residents, staff, partner organisations and councillors to develop this Community Engagement Strategy.

Community engagement gives people a say over the decisions that affect their lives. We will listen to our diverse community and give people more power to make decisions on the issues that matter to them.

This Community Engagement Strategy builds on our [Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2026](#)

When we involve the community in decisions, we aim to make sure they have a positive experience and that our staff are always helpful and polite. This allows us to build trust with the community and make decisions that residents support. It will also encourage local people to get more involved in shaping their neighbourhoods and leading change in the things that are important to them.

This strategy sets out our vision for community engagement over the next four years and a plan for how we will achieve it. Our aim is to deliver the following objectives.

- A joined-up approach to co-ordinating and planning community engagement leads to better outcomes.
- We work together with the community to make decisions that improve the borough.
- We know how to reach the community and make sure seldom-heard groups can fully take part in community engagement.
- The community understands how their involvement has influenced decisions.
- Our staff have the knowledge, skills and resources needed to engage with the community effectively.
- Residents get more involved in their community.

This strategy sets out:

- what community engagement is and why it is important;
- our principles for community engagement; and
- our objectives and how we will achieve them.

It describes a new kind of relationship where the community is seen as an equal partner, as we work together to change Tower Hamlets for the better.

# What is community engagement, and why is it important?

## What is community engagement?

Our definition of community engagement is:

'A planned process, which has the specific purpose of working with residents and groups of people, whether they are connected by place, interest or identity, to encourage them to actively take part in making decisions about their community.'

Community engagement can range from encouraging communities to share their views and influence the services we provide, to giving communities the power to make decisions and provide services with us.



## What are the benefits of community engagement?

There are many benefits of involving the community, including the following.

- Involving communities in the decisions that affect them will help us make better decisions about policy and services.
- When communities are involved in shaping our decisions, the decisions are more likely to have support in the community
- If communities feel able to take action on the things that are important to them, it will increase the number of residents taking action to improve their communities.
- Community engagement builds trust between us and the community, and moves away from a 'them and us' situation to one of 'working together'.

## Defining our communities

Communities are usually defined as groups of people who have the same or similar characteristics. They can be broadly categorised as follows.

- **Communities of place** – people living in the same location, such as a street, a ward or a borough
- **Communities of interest** – people having a shared interest, such as using the same service, being a student, being a local business or being involved in the voluntary or community sector.
- **Communities of identity** – people sharing a characteristic, such as ethnicity, faith, age, disability, gender or sexuality.

## What are the levels of community engagement?

There are **five levels** of community engagement.

### Providing information

Telling the community what is going to happen.

### Deciding together

Encouraging the community to provide ideas and options and come to decisions together.

### Supporting independent community action

Helping the community do what they want.

### Consultation

Offering the community different options and listening to the feedback.

### Acting together

The community and us deciding together, and forming a partnership to put the decision into practice.

To involve the community in decision-making, we will organise activities that enable us to engage with people. These could be face-to-face or online, or a combination of methods. Our community engagement handbook explains the range of methods and approaches we will use to engage with communities.

## Our principles for community engagement

We worked with residents, staff, partners and councillors to develop guiding principles for community engagement. These principles will help to make sure that we always deliver high-quality community engagement.

Staff will be clear on the standards they are expected to meet when planning, delivering, and using community engagement to

make decisions.

For the communities we engage with, the principles will make clear the standards they can expect from us, which they can use to hold us to account.

Our guiding principles for community engagement are as follows

What we will do	What we will not do
✓ Make sure there is adequate time and resources	✗ Rush community engagement
✓ Listen to communities to make decisions that work for everyone	✗ Make decisions for the community based on what we think is best
✓ Treat the community as equal partners	✗ Treat the community as service users who we consult only if we have to
✓ Be helpful and polite when engaging with communities	✗ Be rude and disrespectful
✓ Be open and honest about what the community can and can't influence and why	✗ Only involve the community after we have already made up our mind
✓ Use plain English and provide translation and interpretation services when needed	✗ Use jargon in council communications and at engagement events

<b>What we will do</b>	<b>What we will not do</b>
✓ Deliver events at times and places that suit residents' needs	✗ Organise events at times or places that the community cannot access
✓ Involve residents who have personal experience and represent the diversity of the community	✗ Engage with the 'usual suspects' and those who shout the loudest
✓ Provide a mix of online and face-to-face consultation methods to meet communities' different needs	✗ Deliver community engagement events only online or only in person
✓ Make sure those making decisions attend events to hear from communities first-hand	✗ Keep the Mayor, councillors and senior managers away from the public
✓ Listen to the issues that are important to the community and understand how we can help	✗ Only engage with the community on issues that we think are important
✓ Make it easy for the community to find out how they can be involved	✗ Fail to let the community know how they can have their say
✓ Spot opportunities for joined-up working and use the results of previous community engagement where appropriate	✗ Engage with the same groups, asking the same questions
✓ Make decisions based on what the community tells us	✗ Ignore what the community tells us
✓ Provide the community with feedback on the effect their involvement has had	✗ Fail to tell the community how their involvement has influenced our decisions

## National and local context

### National factors

Councils often engage with communities because they have a legal duty to do so.

- The Health and Social Care Act 2012 states that 'individuals to whom the services are being or may be provided are involved by being consulted or provided with information'.
- Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, created by the Equality Act 2010, councils must encourage people to take part in public life and other activities.
- Under the Local Government Act (1999) and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007), local authorities must inform, consult or involve the public.
- The Localism Act (2011) introduced new rights and powers for communities, allowing them to be more involved in the way local decisions are made and have more influence over the future of where they live.
- The 'Best Value Standards and Intervention' guide states that local authorities should have a clear understanding of the benefits that can be gained by working effectively with local partners and communities in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for local people.
- Under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, providers of social housing must involve tenants in decisions about the management of their homes, and involve tenants in an effective and meaningful way.

Due to legal or regulatory requirements, some individual council services may need to have a more specific engagement strategy that is in line with this strategy, but is more tailored to that service.

It is now considered important for councils to involve communities in significant issues that affect their lives, such as budget costs or substantial changes to services. There are clear rules about how councils must formally engage with communities. Those rules are called the Gunning Principles, and they state that community engagement activities:

- must happen before a decision is made;
- must give people all the information they need;
- should give people enough time to think things over; and
- should demonstrate that real consideration and thought is given to any feedback from communities.

## National research

The importance of effective community involvement is supported by significant research. In 2021, New Local, a think tank that promotes community engagement, produced a report called Community Power: The Evidence. It draws on existing evidence to demonstrate the effect of community engagement. It identifies that community engagement can:

improve people's health and well-being;

- improve a community's well-being and resilience (the ability to adapt and overcome difficulties);
- increase participation in the democratic process and boost trust;
- build stronger communities;
- prevent problems from happening in communities and tackle issues early when they occur; and
- produce financial savings.



## Local priorities

Our [Strategic Plan 2022-2026](#) sets a priority to be 'a council that listens and works for everyone'. The ambition is for residents to be involved in decisions that affect them.

The Tower Hamlets Strategic Partnership brings together key stakeholders to improve services and outcomes for residents. The Partnership Plan '[A Tower Hamlets for all](#)' includes a commitment that 'everything we do is driven by community needs and has co-production and co-design at its core – supported by resources and built on trust, power sharing, and effective communications'.

Our [Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2026](#) sets out our vision for customer services. It states that we will 'listen and work collaboratively internally, with other agencies and in partnership with our voluntary and community services to design and deliver fit for purpose excellent services'.

Our Target Operating Model recently came to an end. This gave us the opportunity to develop a new model that is focused on the community and based on our strategic priorities. Our new Target Operating Model is to 'create a more efficient, effective, and responsible public-sector organisation that is better able to meet the needs of its communities'.

## Local characteristics

Tower Hamlets is a fast-growing, diverse and young borough in East London. The borough's population grew by 22.1% between 2011 and 2021, making it the fastest-growing local authority area in England and Wales.

The borough is also the most densely populated in England, with 15,695 residents per square kilometre. This is over 37 times higher than the national average. The average age of residents in Tower Hamlets is 30, making it the youngest borough in England and Wales. The borough also has the smallest proportion of people aged 65 and over.

Other than the UK, the most common countries of birth for Tower Hamlets residents are Bangladesh, Italy, India, China and France. 14% of residents were born in a current European Union country. Population turnover is high, with more than a fifth (20.8%) of residents having lived somewhere else a year before the 2021 Census.

Tower Hamlets has the UK's largest Bangladeshi population. Although this is a tremendous asset, it provides a challenge for us to reach all of the population. There can be language barriers and cultural issues that prevent some of our residents from engaging with us.

## Local views

Over the last six years, the number of residents who say they feel involved in the decisions we make has fallen.

To develop this strategy, we consulted 328 stakeholders, including residents, partner organisations and councillors. The aims of the consultation were to:  
understand what good community engagement means to the community and the issues they want to be involved in; and give people the opportunity to share their ideas on how to achieve our vision and objectives.

The community told us that some of the reasons for this reduction in involvement are perceptions that:  
they have not been adequately involved in decisions that have affected them;  
seldom-heard groups sometimes don't engage because of barriers, such as language;  
we engage with those who shout loudest and not always with people who represent the diversity of the community;  
when they get involved, they often don't hear back about how their involvement has influenced decisions; and  
engagement has often been online only, which excludes those without access to technology and without digital skills.

We used the insights from the community to develop our objectives and how we will achieve them.

What do you think the biggest priority for the new strategy should be?

Ensure representation  
Meaningful engagement  
Equity  
Co produced  
Open to individuals  
Links VCs with Council  
Accessibility  
Money money money!  
Sustainable development  
For it to be coproduced  
Working slowly with local  
Infrastructure  
Funding support  
Taking it easy

# Our objectives and how we will achieve them



## Objective one

### A joined-up approach to co-ordinating and planning community engagement leads to better outcomes

#### Overview

We will have a coordinated approach to planning activities and events to engage with the community. We know that our partners in the public, voluntary and community sectors also engage with communities, so we will identify more opportunities to work with them.

Each year, we will look at the big decisions we need to make to identify opportunities for community engagement and will make sure there are adequate resources to engage effectively.

We will create a calendar of community engagement activities and events, and regularly update it, so that council employees and the community know what is happening.

We will find opportunities for staff to share good practice and identify opportunities for working in partnership with other organisations and groups.

We will explore the use of technology to improve how we share and manage knowledge gained from previous community engagement activities.

#### What we will do to achieve this objective

- Bring together officers who are responsible for delivering this strategy to monitor and assess progress.
- Share information about this strategy, and the implications it has for services, on internal staff-communication channels and through team talks.
- Identify opportunities for communities to be involved in decision-making and include these opportunities in service plans.
- Develop a central calendar setting out details and time frames for all community engagement activities and regularly update that calendar.
- Bring staff involved in community engagement together to provide updates on their work, share best practice and help develop community engagement policy and practice.
- Use technology to store the results of previous consultations so they can be accessed by other services.
- Strengthen borough-wide partnerships for community engagement, including with Tower Hamlets Together and Housing Forum, and make sure partnerships represent the community.

## Objective two

### We work together with the community to make decisions that improve the borough

#### Overview

We will provide more opportunities to involve communities in decisions that affect the borough, including involving the community in producing the long-term vision for the borough.

To engage with communities effectively, we will use innovative engagement methods and improve existing approaches. We know that different people like to engage in different ways, so we will make sure our engagement methods offer a mix of face-to-face and online options that are accessible for our communities.

We will increase opportunities for the people who use services to work together with us to make decisions together. This is referred to as 'co-production'. It will be guided by good practice, such as the [Act Early Co-production Strategy and Framework](#), and staff will be provided with appropriate training.

There are complex issues that we cannot solve by ourselves. When this is the case, we will bring together our partners in the public sector and third sector to come up with solutions together.

We will continue to be open, upfront and honest. We will make



sure the Mayor is accessible to the community by delivering Ask the Mayor events and making sure the Mayor and councillors continue to hold regular surgeries.

By increasing local people's involvement in decision-making, we will build trust with the community and decisions will have the support of the community. It will help us understand the needs of the community and identify effective solutions, making sure we make good decisions about policies and services.

## What we will do to achieve this objective

- Make sure that changes to our Strategic Plan, our delivery plan and service plans are guided by community engagement and reflect the community's priorities.
- Review the tools we use to engage communities online, to make sure they are effective.
- Trial face-to-face events in places where members of the community can meet and talk to council staff and partners about the issues that affect them.
- Help and support the borough to have a co-ordinated approach to dealing with emergencies, and that those approaches enable individuals, businesses, community networks and voluntary organisations to support other members of the public.
- Provide a programme of 'resident perception' work to understand residents' views of the council and the borough, and whether they feel they have a say in the decisions that affect them.
- Work with the community to identify opportunities for research into health determinants (factors that affect the health of individuals and communities), involve communities in designing and carrying out research, and make sure the findings are used to influence council policies and services.
- Strengthen community-safety meetings held in the community with the police and other partners, to give residents the opportunity to speak to us about issues and get issues resolved.
- Work in partnership with Tower Hamlets Together to understand the health needs of individual areas and neighbourhoods, and bring partners and their communities together to act on the issues that are important to them.
- Adopt neighbourhood approaches to tackling health inequalities through long-term measures to prevent health conditions.
- Hold three Ask the Mayor events a year, each in a different area, to share information about us and listen to the needs of the community.
- Organise, support and attend community events so residents can speak with councillors, senior managers and council services.
- Hold partnership events on important issues to consult a wider range of local partners and residents on key council priorities.
- Establish Tenants' Voice, a group that enables landlords to engage with tenants and leaseholders.

## Objective three

### We know how to reach the community, and make sure that seldom-heard groups can fully take part in community engagement

#### Overview

Tower Hamlets has a diverse population. Our community engagement activities will always involve residents who are affected by the issue in question and make sure those we engage with are representative of the borough's population.

Tower Hamlet's has some groups who have been less likely than the wider population to take part in community engagement activities. Many residents do not know about the opportunities to get involved. To tackle this, we will make better use of local media and engage with communities through the voluntary and community sector, as well as faith networks.

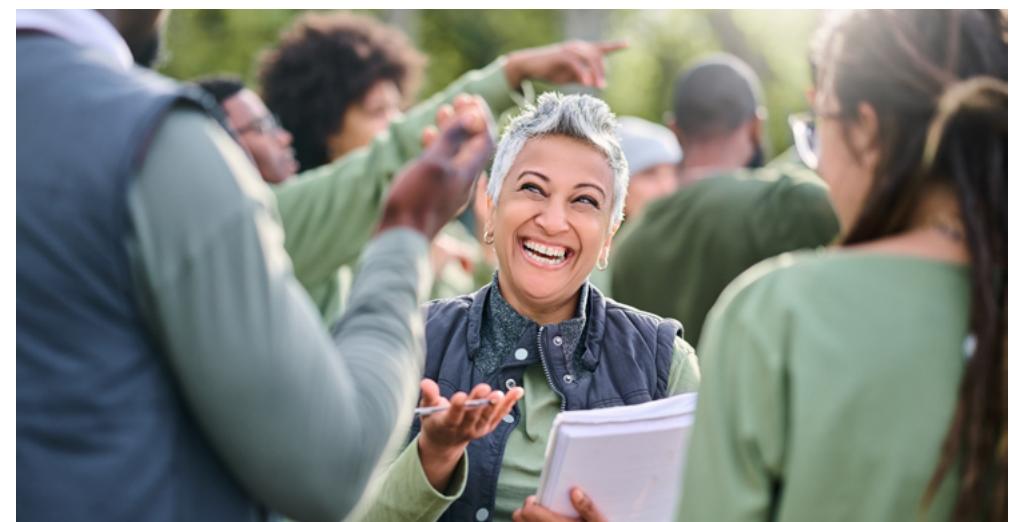
Technology has changed how people communicate, so we will use WhatsApp and social media, as well as traditional communication methods.

Our engagement activities will be at times and places that suit the needs of the community and will be culturally appropriate. We will communicate in plain English, and provide translation and

interpretation services if necessary. We will develop innovative and appealing ways of engaging with children and young people. In some instances, we will help people to get involved by covering expenses and recognising and rewarding participation.

If our communities have a negative experience of engaging with the council, they will be less willing to engage in the future. When we engage with the community, we will always try to make sure they have a positive experience and that our staff are helpful and polite.

By doing this, we will increase involvement in community engagement activities and increase the diversity of those involved. This will lead to more representative decision-making and us not just hearing from the people who shout loudest.



## What we will do to achieve this objective

- Create a directory of local services and groups, and a database with contact details for key stakeholders, networks and forums we can reach out to.
- Develop a policy for recognising and rewarding community participation where appropriate.
- Strengthen the work of the Equalities Hub and Community Equality Networks to enable residents with protected characteristics to influence our decisions.
- Identify who seldom-heard groups are and measure how well we have managed to reach and involve them.
- Use different methods to communicate with people, including using WhatsApp, social media and local press, radio and TV.
- Continue to promote training and guidance for staff to help them create accessible communications, which are written in plain English, translated or interpreted where necessary, and culturally sensitive.
- Through our Youth Council and Young Tower Hamlets programme, involve young people in shaping services.
- Engage with faith communities through the Interfaith Forum and other faith networks to reach seldom-heard groups.
- Explore how local businesses and traders can be involved more effectively in decision-making



## Objective four

### The community understands how their involvement has influenced decisions

#### Overview

When we engage with communities, we will be open and honest about what they can and cannot influence and the reasons why. When we 'consult' communities, 'decide together' or 'act together', we will make decisions that are influenced by what the community has told us. When important decisions have gone through our decision processes, we will always tell the people who have given up their time about the effect their involvement has had.

To do this we will hold meetings and celebration events, and write to people, to say thank you and update them on what has happened. To increase openness we will also explain to the community how we came to our decisions. This will include providing not only 'you said, we did' feedback, but also explaining if there were ideas we could not adopt and the reasons why.

By keeping the community informed, we will build trust among community members. They will be able to see the effect of their involvement, making them more likely to engage with us again. Community members will rightly feel proud of their contributions and be more likely to become the community leaders of the future. Keeping the community involved will also improve our reputation and help us move away from an 'us and them' situation with the community to one of 'working together'.



#### What we will do to achieve this objective

- Give council services the opportunity to put a 'you said, we did' section in Our East End, residents' newsletters and Let's Talk Tower Hamlets so they can promote the outcomes of their community engagement.
- Include guidance in the community engagement handbook on how to update people on the influence their involvement had, such as by writing to them.

## Objective five

### **Our staff have the knowledge, skills and resources needed to engage with the community effectively**

#### **Overview**

To deliver effective community engagement, we need to develop and train staff so they have the appropriate ethics, knowledge and skills. We also know that the biggest challenge is staff having enough time and budget to engage with the community.

We will create a new Corporate Engagement and Consultation Service, based in the Corporate Communications directorate, to lead community engagement on important council decisions, engage more effectively with our diverse community, support the workforce in developing skills, and help co-ordinate community engagement across the council.

Staff will receive training and development opportunities to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need in connection with community engagement. They will also receive guidance which outlines best practice in planning, delivering and evaluating community engagement.

This objective aims to make staff feel empowered to deliver high-quality community engagement.

#### **What we will do to achieve this objective**

- Establish a Corporate Engagement and Consultation Service that leads important community engagement projects, engages with seldom-heard groups effectively, supports the workforce to develop their knowledge and skills, and helps co-ordinate community engagement across the council.
- Keep track of teams and staff in the council who deliver community engagement, to understand roles and responsibilities and develop an effective approach to working together.
- Update our community engagement handbook to reflect the priorities in this strategy.
- Work with Tower Hamlets Together to develop co-production guidance which is adopted across the council.
- Develop and share case studies, for example from the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coproduction Charter, which we will use to work with professionals, parents, children and young people to ensure meaningful coproduction at strategic and individual levels.
- Provide training and development opportunities for staff who deliver community engagement to develop their knowledge, skills and capabilities.
- Arrange relevant external support to provide staff with advice and guidance.
- Offer councillors training and development opportunities on how to engage with communities effectively.

## Objective six

### Residents get more involved in their community

#### Overview

We want to help create communities where residents are active in tackling community problems and improving their quality of life. This could be people contributing to decisions that affect their lives, or people coming together to form groups and organisations that deal with common problems.

We will provide opportunities for young people to get more involved in their communities and take on leadership roles. Through Young Tower Hamlets and our schools, we will help more young people make a positive contribution to society.

Staff and volunteers from the voluntary and community sector will be able to get funding from our Capacity Building Fund to increase their confidence and skills.

We will review how women are (and are not) directly influencing policy through their personal experiences and develop a plan for making sure women's voices are heard.

We will continue to make sure that representatives from the voluntary and community sector are represented on strategic boards, and we will take steps to increase the diversity of



councillors by running a campaign to support this.

This objective aims to increase people's sense of belonging in the community, because people from different backgrounds will spend time and work together. It will help community members develop their skills and confidence. It will increase the number of community resources supporting residents and tackling local issues.

## What we will do to achieve this objective

- Elect a young mayor every two years. They will identify priorities for young people and work with the Mayor and Chief Executive to put them into practice. They will also chair important strategic partnerships.
- Support a community research network, through our Health Determinants Research Collaboration, to enable residents to gather evidence of what matters to them and use that evidence to influence decisions.
- Continue to run the youth council, where young people get involved in shaping council services, and plan and deliver projects for action on community issues.
- Ensure that children and young people views are heard on issues that affect them through our Let's Talk SEND Ambassadors, Children Living in Care (CLICC), Youth Justice and Young Carers groups.
- Provide funding for young people to design, deliver and evaluate their own projects through the Youth Empowerment Fund.
- Provide funding for voluntary and community organisations to access support to strengthen the roles and capabilities of local volunteers through the Capacity Building Fund.
- Support socially excluded groups from across the borough to become volunteers in local voluntary and community organisations.
- Review our partnerships and make sure voluntary and community organisations are represented in them.
- Identify residents and partners who are well connected and can promote council communications and support them to become community champions.
- Establish a Women's Commission to focus on reducing inequalities that women face, including being involved in local decisions.
- Deliver the Local Government Association's 'Be a Councillor' campaign to encourage a diverse range of candidates to stand at future elections.
- Develop and deliver the 'Street Leaders' scheme, which will support local volunteers to take responsibility for environmental issues.
- Provide training to council tenants so that they have the skills and knowledge they need to make their involvement meaningful and effective.
- Support existing tenant and resident associations (TRAs) and help residents set up TRAs in areas that do not have one, so that residents can work with their landlords to improve housing services.

## How we will monitor progress and measure success

We will establish a strategy delivery group of officers and partners from relevant departments and organisations to monitor, review and revise the Community Engagement Strategy.

We will use the Annual Residents Survey to measure residents' views on things such as trust in the council, getting involved, being listened to, being kept informed, and being satisfied with our community engagement activities.

Each year we will survey 100 residents to understand their experience of community engagement. We will carry out the first survey in 2024, and then every year, to evaluate our performance against our objectives.



## Delivery plan

Action	Service or person responsible	Deadline
<b>Objective one: A joined-up approach to co-ordinating and planning community engagement leads to better outcomes</b>		
Bring together officers who are responsible for delivering this strategy to monitor and assess progress.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	May 2024
Share information about this strategy, and the implications it has for services, on internal staff-communication channels, and through team talks.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	June 2024
Identify opportunities for communities to be involved in decision-making, and include these opportunities in service plans.	Heads of service	March 2025, then March each year
Develop a central calendar setting out details and time frames for all community engagement activities, and regularly update that calendar.	Corporate Strategy and Communities, Communications	March 2025, then March each year
Use technology to store the results of previous consultations so they can be accessed by other services.	Corporate Strategy and Improvement	March 2025
Strengthen borough-wide partnerships for community engagement, including with Tower Hamlets Together and the Housing Forum, and make sure partnerships represent the community.	Corporate Strategy and Improvement	June 2024, then three-monthly reviews

## Delivery plan

Action	Service or person responsible	Deadline
<b>Objective two: We work together with the community to make decisions that improve the borough.</b>		
Make sure that changes to our Strategic Plan, delivery plan and service plans are guided by community engagement and reflect the community's priorities.	Corporate Strategy and Improvement	March 2025, then March each year
Review the tools we use to engage communities online, to make sure they are effective.	Communications	June 2024
Trial face-to-face events in places where members of the community can meet and talk to council staff and partners about the issues that affect them.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	March 2025
Help and support the borough to have a co-ordinated approach to dealing with emergencies, and that those approaches enable individuals, businesses, community networks and voluntary organisations to support other members of the public.	Community Safety	May 2024, then ongoing
Provide a programme of 'resident perception' work to understand residents' views of the council and the borough, and whether they feel they have a say in the decisions that affect them.	Corporate Strategy and Improvement	October 2024, then October each year
Work with the community to identify opportunities for research into health determinants (factors that affect the health of individuals and communities), involve communities in designing and carrying out research, and make sure the findings are used to influence council policies and services.	Public Health	October 2027
Strengthen community-safety meetings held in the community with the police and other partners, to give residents the opportunity to speak to us about issues and get issues resolved.	Community Safety	December 2024, then ongoing

## Delivery plan

Action	Service or person responsible	Deadline
Work in partnership with Tower Hamlets Together to understand the health needs of individual areas and neighbourhoods, and bring partners and their communities together to act on the issues that are important to them.	Integrated Commissioning and Strategy	March 2025
Adopt neighbourhood approaches to tackling health inequalities through long-term measures to prevent health conditions.	Public Health	Develop plans by September 2024, deliver from October 2024
Hold three Ask the Mayor events a year, each in a different area, to share information about us and listen to the needs of the community.	Mayor's Office	Deliver three times a year
Organise, support and attend community events so residents can speak with councillors, senior managers and council services.	Arts and Events	Various events throughout the year
Provide options for residents and voluntary and community sector organisations to get more involved in scrutiny activities, including giving evidence to scrutiny committees.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	September 2024, then September each year
Hold partnership events on important issues to consult a wider range of local partners and residents on key council priorities.	Corporate Strategy and Improvement	Twice a year
Establish Tenants' Voice, a group that enables landlords to engage with tenants and leaseholders.	Housing	May 2024

## Delivery plan

Action	Service or person responsible	Deadline
<b>Objective three: We know how to reach the community, and make sure seldom-heard groups can fully take part in community engagement.</b>		
Create a directory of local services and groups, and a database with contact details for key stakeholders, networks and forums we can reach out to.	Communications, Corporate Strategy and Communities	July 2025, as long as we have established a Corporate Engagement and Consultation Service
Develop a policy for recognising and rewarding community participation where appropriate.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	October 2024
Strengthen the work of the Equalities Hub and Community Equality Networks to enable residents with protected characteristics to influence our decisions.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	September 2024
Identify who seldom-heard groups are and measure how well we have managed to reach and involve them.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	April 2024
Use different methods to communicate with people, including using WhatsApp, social media and local press, radio and TV.	Communications	As required
Continue to promote staff training and guidance for staff to help them create accessible communications, which are written in plain English, translated or interpreted where necessary, and are culturally sensitive.	Communications	May 2024
Through our Youth Council and Young Tower Hamlets programme, involve young people in shaping services.	Youth & Commissioning	April 2024 and ongoing
Engage with faith communities through the Interfaith Forum and other faith networks to reach seldom-heard groups.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	September 2024
Explore how local businesses and traders can be involved more effectively in decision-making.	Growth and Economic Development	April 2025, then ongoing

## Delivery plan

Action	Service or person responsible	Deadline
<b>Objective four: The community understands how their involvement has influenced decisions</b>		
Give council services the opportunity to put a 'you said, we did' section in Our East End, residents' newsletters and Let's Talk Tower Hamlets so they can promote the outcomes of their community engagement through social media.	Communications	As required
Include guidance in the community engagement handbook on how to update people on the influence their involvement had, such as by writing to them.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	October 2024

## Delivery plan

Action	Service or person responsible	Deadline
<b>Objective five: Our staff have the knowledge, skills and resources needed to engage with the community effectively..</b>		
Establish a Corporate Engagement and Consultation Service that leads important community engagement projects, engages with seldom-heard groups effectively, supports the workforce to develop their knowledge and skills, and helps co-ordinate community engagement across the council.	Communications	January 2025
Keep track of the teams and staff in the council who deliver community engagement, to understand roles and responsibilities and develop an effective approach to working together.	Communications, Corporate Strategy and Communities	November 2024, as long as we have established a Corporate Engagement and Consultation Service
Update our community engagement handbook to reflect the priorities set out in this strategy.	Corporate Strategy and Communities, Communications	October 2024
Work with Tower Hamlets Together to develop co-production guidance which is adopted across the council.	Adult Social Care	July 2024
Develop and share case studies, for example from the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coproduction Charter, which we will use to work with professionals, parents, children and young people to ensure meaningful coproduction at strategic and individual level.	Education	April 2024 and ongoing
Provide training and development for staff who take part in community engagement, to develop their knowledge, skills and capabilities.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	March 2025
Arrange relevant external support to provide staff with advice and guidance.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	July 2024
Offer councillors training and development opportunities on how to engage with communities effectively.	Democratic Services, Corporate Strategy and Communities	April 2025

## Delivery plan

Action	Service or person responsible	Deadline
<b>Objective six: Residents get more involved in their community.</b>		
Elect a young mayor every two years. They will identify priorities for young people and work with the Mayor and Chief Executive to put them into practice. They will also chair important strategic partnerships.	Young Tower Hamlets	Every two years, next election 2025
Support a community research network, through our Health Determinants Research Collaboration, to enable residents to gather evidence of what matters to them and use that evidence to influence decisions.	Public Health	October 2027
Continue to run the Youth Council, where young people get involved in shaping council services, and plan and deliver projects for action on community issues.	Young Tower Hamlets	Ongoing
Ensure that children and young people's views are heard on issues that affect them through our Let's Talk SEND Ambassadors, Children Living in Care (CLICC), Youth Justice and Young Carers groups.	Children's Social Care & Supporting Families, Education	Ongoing
Provide funding for young people to design, deliver and evaluate their own projects through the Youth Empowerment Fund.	Young Tower Hamlets	Three times a year
Provide funding for voluntary and community sector organisations to access support to strengthen the roles and capabilities of local volunteers through the Capacity Building Fund.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	Three times a year

## Delivery plan

Action	Service or person responsible	Deadline
Support socially excluded groups from across the borough to become volunteers in local voluntary and community sector organisations.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	November 2023
Identify residents and partners who are well connected and can promote council communications, and support them to become community champions.	Communications	Within 18 months
Establish a Women's Commission to focus on reducing inequalities that women face, including being involved in local decisions.	Corporate Strategy and Communities	October 2024
Review our partnerships and make sure voluntary and community organisations are represented in them.	Strategy, Improvement and Transformation	December 2024
Deliver the Local Government Association's 'Be a Councillor' campaign to encourage a diverse range of candidates to stand at future elections.	Democratic Services	December 2024
Develop and deliver the 'Street Leaders' scheme, which will support local volunteers to take responsibility for environmental issues.	Public Realm	May 2024
Provide training to council tenants so that they have the skills and knowledge they need to make their involvement meaningful and effective.	Housing and Regeneration	May 2024, then ongoing
Support existing tenant and resident associations (TRAs) and help residents set up TRAs in areas that do not have one, so that residents can work with their landlords to improve housing services.	Housing and Regeneration	May 2024, then ongoing



For more information or to get in touch:

**[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/communityengagement](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/communityengagement)**

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