

<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>First Annual Report- Hackney Council Strategic Plan- Working Together for a Better Hackney 2022-2026</b>
<b>For Consideration By</b>	Council
<b>Meeting Date</b>	17 May 2023
<b>Classification</b>	Open
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All
<b>Group Director</b>	Ian Williams, Acting Chief Executive

1. **Summary - Introduction from the Mayor**

- 1.1. In November 2022, Hackney Council adopted its Strategic Plan, 'Working Together for a Better Hackney'. The Plan sets out the ambitions for the Council for the next four years, as well as the challenges we face, and describes how as a Council we need to respond and change, working and co-producing with residents, the voluntary and community sectors, the business community and public sector partners.
- 1.2. The Council's Strategic Plan is framed by the priorities for my new term as elected Mayor of Hackney and reflects the 2022-2026 Manifesto commitments of the elected Labour administration. The Manifesto commitments are underpinned by the Council's corporate values and priorities.
- 1.3. I committed to bringing an annual report on the Strategic Plan to Full Council in May of each year at the Annual Meeting. This is the first update.

**Financial Challenge:**

- 1.4. The plan is being delivered during one of the most difficult times in post war memory; the Covid-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated the deep social inequalities both in our borough and wider society. In addition to this, the Council was the victim of a severe criminal cyber attack which disrupted many of its services and further eroded the Council's financial position.
- 1.5. Over the next three years this will make the challenge of delivering a balanced budget all the more difficult. Unfortunately, the prevailing consensus within Local Government is that a more favourable funding

settlement from Government, which matches the level of demand on the sector, is not on the way.

- 1.6. As set out in the Annual Budget Report on 1st March our mid-case scenario for the budget gap for the medium term period 2024/25 to 2026/27 is £57m. Although the Council will seek to meet this gap through a programme of corporate transformation, and continue to put residents first, we should not underestimate the scale of the challenge, it is almost inevitable that hard choices will be forced on us all.
- 1.7. Despite these challenges, our Hackney Labour Manifesto remains ambitious and presents a clear set of commitments for the Council and direction for the borough. In Hackney, we are not in the business of managing decline. Instead, we work with our residents and partners to find innovative solutions and ways of working, which meet the needs of our residents who require the most support in an increasingly complex and difficult environment.
- 1.8. The commitments describe what we will achieve but also how we will change the Council and the way we deliver services, through collaboration, co-design and co-production. Later this year, we will welcome peers from the Local Government Association to provide the critical professional challenge that is crucial to delivering a Council that serves our community and does it well.
- 1.9. This update focuses on what has been done to mobilise the activity that will be needed to ensure a positive impact on residents' lives, whilst being set against the backdrop of another challenging year for the Council and the local community since the Local and Mayoral elections in May 2022.

### **Cost of Living and Housing Crisis:**

- 1.10. The cost of living crisis is affecting more people, with inflation rates falling at a slower rate than expected and interest rates likely to increase again in coming months. Increased costs do not just affect residents, they put financial pressure on public institutions, the voluntary and community sector and businesses as well. All of this against the backdrop of over 10 years of austerity and cuts to Local Government funding, in Hackney we've seen a 41% reduction since 2010.
- 1.11. The cost of living crisis has led to an even greater demand for housing as the homelessness crisis worsens. We have seen an increase of 15% in the number of people presenting as homeless and as a result children in homeless families in temporary accommodation now make up 1.5% of Hackney's overall population. We are struggling to procure any new temporary or settled accommodation or place residents in London or the South East.

### **Improving housing:**

- 1.12. The Strategic Plan is clear about the areas of the Council that need improving, including housing management. The coroner's findings into the death in Rochdale of Awaab Ishak, who died in 2020 at only two years of age as a direct result of black mould, was incredibly upsetting and a defining moment for the housing sector. It has led to an even more focused response to improve repairs and tackle damp and mould in Council owned homes as well as introducing mechanisms to tackle damp and mould in the private rented sector.

### **Children's Services:**

- 1.13. Following the "requires improvement" rating in the 2019 inspection of Hackney Children's Services under the OFSTED framework, we have been progressing a comprehensive children's action plan. In September 2022, OFSTED visited again and found that there had been key improvements to the front door services.
- 1.14. Since then we have also engaged with a Joint Inspection of Youth Justice Services and we will receive the formal outcome soon.
- 1.15. Last March, an investigation into the strip-search of Child Q, a Black teenage girl, by police officers in a Hackney secondary school was published. The report found that racism and 'adultification bias' - where Black children are treated more harshly than their white peers - were likely factors in what happened. Sadly, we know that this is not a one off example of racism and we have worked relentlessly to ensure that these findings and our responses substantively influence work across the system to tackle institutional racism.

### **Global Events:**

- 1.16. Global events affect our residents, both directly and indirectly. 15 months into the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there is no sign of an end to the conflict and to date Hackney has welcomed 350 people thanks to the generosity of our residents who signed up to the Homes for Ukraine scheme. A number of hotels have been commissioned by the Home Office to house asylum seekers and we are scaling up our efforts in response to these needs and more generally to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers.
- 1.17. The recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria have also affected many Hackney residents who are either from the region or have extended families caught up in this terrible natural disaster. Many have lost friends and family and many more are still involved in the relief effort.
- 1.18. At the time of writing we see yet another crisis unfolding in Sudan, with reports of Sudanese people fleeing their homes, with little clarity over what the international response might be.

## 2. **Recommendations**

### 2.1. **To note the annual update of the Strategic Plan**

## 3. **Background**

3.1. In November 2022, Hackney adopted its Strategic Plan, 'Working Together for a Better Hackney'. The Plan sets out the ambitions for the Council for the next four years, as well as the challenges we face, and describes how as a Council we need to respond and change, working and co-producing with residents, the voluntary and community sectors, the business community and public sector partners.

3.2. The Mayor committed to bring an update to Full Council in May of each year, linked to the Annual Meeting. This is the first update.

### 3.3. **This is a summary of the plan:**

#### **Vision for the next four years**

Working together with our communities and our partners to tackle the unprecedented challenges that we face, we will make transformational change, we will co-produce and co-design solutions with residents, we will campaign for a better deal for Hackney; we will deliver outstanding public services; we will drive a fairer economic recovery; and we will make a better Hackney for everyone who lives and works here.

#### **Mayoral Priorities**

##### **Working together...**

##### **FOR A FAIRER, SAFER HACKNEY**

We will tackle inequality through poverty reduction, and anti-racism, providing at least 1000 more Council homes as we improve standards of our existing homes, and creating pathways into decent jobs. We will improve our customer services. We will create safe, vibrant, and successful town centres and neighbourhoods and foster strong, cohesive communities and a more inclusive economy.

##### **FOR A GREENER, HEALTHIER HACKNEY**

We will continue to lead the way in the fight against climate change, working towards a net zero Hackney, with cleaner air, less motor traffic, and more liveable neighbourhoods. We will transform adult and children's social care, tackle physical and mental health inequalities and continue to support, value, and give voice to our older and disabled residents.

##### **FOR EVERY CHILD IN HACKNEY**

We will work to ensure every child and young person in Hackney has the best start in life; shaping a more inclusive and high performing education system, maintaining our early years and youth services, keeping children

safe and investing in their mental health and well being, providing access to outstanding play, culture, and sport, and opportunities; tackling child poverty, and supporting those families who need us most.

### **Tackling Inequality**

1. Tackling structural and systemic discrimination - embedding an anti-racist approach and ensuring accountability
2. Taking protective, preventative and positive action, that tackles underlying issues, recognising there is proven bias in the system
3. Promoting prosperity and wellbeing with targeted, positive action when needed
4. Building strong, cohesive communities that are part of the solution
5. Developing a workforce that is inclusive and anti-racist and reflects the diversity of Hackney, at all levels

### **How we will work**

### **OUR VALUES**

**We are...**

### **OPEN AND INCLUSIVE, AMBITIOUS AND PROUD ,PIONEERING AND PROACTIVE**

1. **Putting our residents first:** a Council that works for the people who live and work **here**
2. **Securing Hackney's future:** a Council that is financially sustainable and investing in what matters
3. **Changing Together:** a Council that is modernised, flexible, collaborative, and skilled to meet our future challenges.
4. **Comments of the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources.**
  - 4.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report.
  - 4.2. It is noted that the strategic plan is being delivered during one of the most challenging financial times in post war memory and it sets out how the Council plans to deliver its priorities in this very challenging financial environment. The delivery of the strategic plan is aligned with our medium term financial plan which is refreshed annually and takes account of both cost pressures, and funding expectations. Cost pressures arise from inflationary factors, such as the pay award and energy prices, but also from

the demand for our services where additional investment is required to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable residents. With the absence of multi-year funding settlements from Government, for a large proportion of the Council's income there is a great deal of uncertainty and assumptions are made based on experience and policy analysis.

4.3. Inevitably, we are estimating a budget gap for each of the years covered by the strategic plan. Through budget development work, the leadership team will aim to close these gaps through budget proposals which are focussed on working innovatively and transforming our services. However, inevitably some hard choices will have to be made. Although this is an annual process, we will look to plan ahead and identify proposals for both the next and subsequent financial years. This also means that new commitments in this plan will have to be delivered within existing service budgets through prioritisation processes.

**5. Comments of the Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services**

5.1. On 23rd November 2022 Council agreed the recommendations to adopt the Strategic Plan and agree to an annual cycle of progress updates to Full Council in May of each year, linked to the Annual Meeting (AM).

5.2. The update on the Strategic Plan in this Report is presented to Council pursuant to such recommendations.

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Update of the Strategic Plan

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