Independent communications review

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

October/November 2015

Report

1. Background and scope of the independent communications review

It was a pleasure and privilege to be invited in to Tower Hamlets to deliver the recent communications review. The team very much appreciated the participation of elected members, staff and partners in the process.

The team who delivered the review was:

David Holdstock, Director of Communications, Local Government Association
Councillor Mehboob Khan, Royal London Borough of Greenwich
Hayley Lewis, Head of Communications and Engagement, London Borough of Croydon
Matt Nicholls, Head of Local Government Communications Support, Local Government Association
Chris Bowron, Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association
Richard Pearson, Marketing and Business Development Manager, Southampton City Council
Darren Caveney, co-creator, Comms2point0
Dan Slee, co-creator, Comms2point0

The LGA's Research and Information team also provided in-depth support to the review.

The scope of the review included the following requirements:

- Look at the council's communications priorities and key audiences
- Consider the council's approach to communications, including some comparative analysis
- Consider how the council manages its reputation and promotes the borough
- Consider the council's digital communications strategy
- Consider the opportunities and challenges around 'East End Life'
- Provide SMART recommendations for improvements

Although not originally in scope, it was agreed that the review would also consider the council's approach to internal communications and resident engagement.

Following meetings with the council to agree the scope, the review consisted of:

- Thorough analysis of the council's existing communications strategies, plans and insight

- Consideration of the findings from previous communications-related reviews
- Independent research into how residents access information about the council and the local area
- An appraisal of the council's digital strategy using a team of experts from local government, including one day on-site
- Four days of onsite work with the council, including discussions with residents, elected members, partners and staff
- Presentations to the council's leadership and to key stakeholders involved in the review

This report sets out our findings and suggested recommendations for the future of communications at Tower Hamlets Council. Included as Appendix A is a separate analysis of the council's approach to digital communications, and recommendations for how activity in this area can be accelerated. The results of the research carried out by Populus into how residents access information about the council and the local area, commissioned by the LGA, are attached as Appendix B.

2. Executive Summary

Tower Hamlets Council has had an extraordinarily turbulent year. The scale of the upheaval within the authority has undoubtedly taken its toll on staff and impacted upon its public standing more widely.

During the course of our discussions, people indicated that the council is now starting to feel different and has come a long way quite quickly. The best example of this was the Cabinet meeting held during our review. There is an increased sense of stability and there are high expectations of the new political and managerial leadership. There is a strong desire on the part of the Mayor and Cabinet to establish clear priorities and to reflect these in both a corporate narrative and a place-based narrative for the borough. The council also retains some relatively high satisfaction levels. Our research found that 60% of local residents trust the council, and 61% feel that it keeps them well informed. This is only slightly below the average for similar councils.

There are good partnerships in place and a willingness to use these to improve communications in the borough.

It is acknowledged within and outside the organisation that the historic and on-going focus of communications has been on reacting to media issues and producing East End Life. The decision to commission this independent review is a welcome recognition that the way in which the council communicates needs to change.

East End Life polarises opinion both within the council and in the borough itself. Whilst the publication has played a significant role in helping to keep people informed since it was established in 1993, our research found that residents would prefer to find out about the council and the services it provides from a range of sources. Although East End Life's non-compliance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity has largely prompted the debate about its future, this research demonstrates there is a strong local desire from some groups of residents for the council to utilise alternative ways of communicating with its citizens. This provides the council with opportunities.

The council has recognised the need to develop its digital communications, and there is an ambitious programme of work being undertaken to make improvements in this area. Digital exclusion is seen by some within the council to be a particular problem in Tower Hamlets, but we could not find any compelling evidence to suggest this is the case. Research shows that Tower Hamlets appears to be well placed to drive digital communications – the borough fares better than average on all drivers of digital inclusion.

There has been a considerable amount of debate regarding what channels the council uses to communicate. It is important this does not attract disproportionate time and attention. There is a current lack of clarity regarding council priorities, and this makes it difficult to determine what the communications priorities should be. The council does not yet demonstrate a sufficiently corporate approach, there is

ambiguity regarding communications protocols and communications is seen too often as an 'add on'.

Many parts of the organisation operate in silos – which impacts upon the ability to deliver joined-up communications. These cultural issues will need to be addressed.

The Mayor and the Cabinet have a stated desire to establish a clear set of council priorities and values. Whilst there is some sense of the priorities emerging, nothing has been articulated yet. It is also important for the Mayor and the council to develop a narrative about the place – a compelling story about why Tower Hamlets is such a vibrant, popular and increasingly prosperous place to live, visit and do business. It is from that vision, aligned with clear corporate priorities that good communications can follow.

3. Detailed findings

3.1 Communications priorities and key audiences

The council currently has a plethora of different strategies and plans which impact upon communications to some extent. It is difficult to understand which of these documents carries the most weight in determining the strategic direction of the organisation. In addition, digital and community engagement strategies are also being developed. It would be useful for the council to rationalise these various plans and strategies for the next year into a single plan which can be easily understood by both internal and external audiences.

As the Mayor and the council's leadership seek to outline where the focus for the organisation should be and their vision for the borough itself, the communications team has a vitally important role to play. Communications must help the leadership articulate what the council aspires to be, how it will deliver on the pledges made by the Mayor at the last election and set out an ambitious set of goals and priorities within the context of the challenges the organisation faces.

The Tower Hamlets Publicity Plan 2015/16 sets out ten key communications goals. These broadly address the main issues facing the council from a communications perspective – including reviewing East End Life, a digital focus and refreshing internal communications. This demonstrates an appreciation and understanding within the authority of the areas where a different approach is required.

The information contained in the Tower Hamlets' Strategic Plan 2015/16 suggests that the council has a good understanding of the makeup of its local population. There does not appear to be a corresponding understanding of the most effective ways of communicating with specific demographics or particular geographical areas. There has been a reliance on East End Life, and the production of bespoke printed materials, rather than any attempt to understand the most appropriate communications channels to reach different audiences. This is pertinent when considering the Strategic Action Plan, which identifies a number of milestones that require consultation, awareness raising and other communications – often with

specific groups of people. Our research team identified at least 20 audience groups across the different milestones – which include campaigns to register children with GPs, awareness raising of Universal Credit, promotion of collective energy switching and other important pieces of engagement activity.

We would strongly recommend the council makes better use of available insight and data to ensure it is using the most appropriate channels to communicate with different parts of the local population.

There is limited evaluation of the effectiveness of the council's communications activity. Where it does take place, the focus is placed on outputs rather than outcomes – thus, for example, it is the amount of media coverage that is recorded, coverage in East End Life or how a campaign was conducted, rather than the impact – what changed as a consequence of the communication – that is measured. An example of this is the Taste Brick Lane campaign, of which many people spoke favourably. The metrics used to evaluate its effectiveness were outputs such as the use of a hashtag and number of restaurants that had put up posters to promote the campaign, rather than the number of additional visitors who had been attracted to the area and how much income they had generated.

The LGA commissioned Populus polling to ask Tower Hamlets residents how they would prefer to find out about the council and the services it provides. A quarter said they would prefer printed information provided by the council (25 per cent) and one in five said that they would prefer the council website (19 per cent). Fewer suggested East End Life (15 per cent) and council texts, emails and e-newsletters (13 per cent). Asian and White respondents had a similar preference for printed information from the council, although White respondents were more likely to suggest the council website as their preferred channel. Similarly, these two channels were most popular across all age groups, although 35-44 year olds were more likely than average to favour the council website; and 45-54 year olds were more likely than average to favour East End Life.

How residents would prefer to find out about Tower Hamlets Council and its services
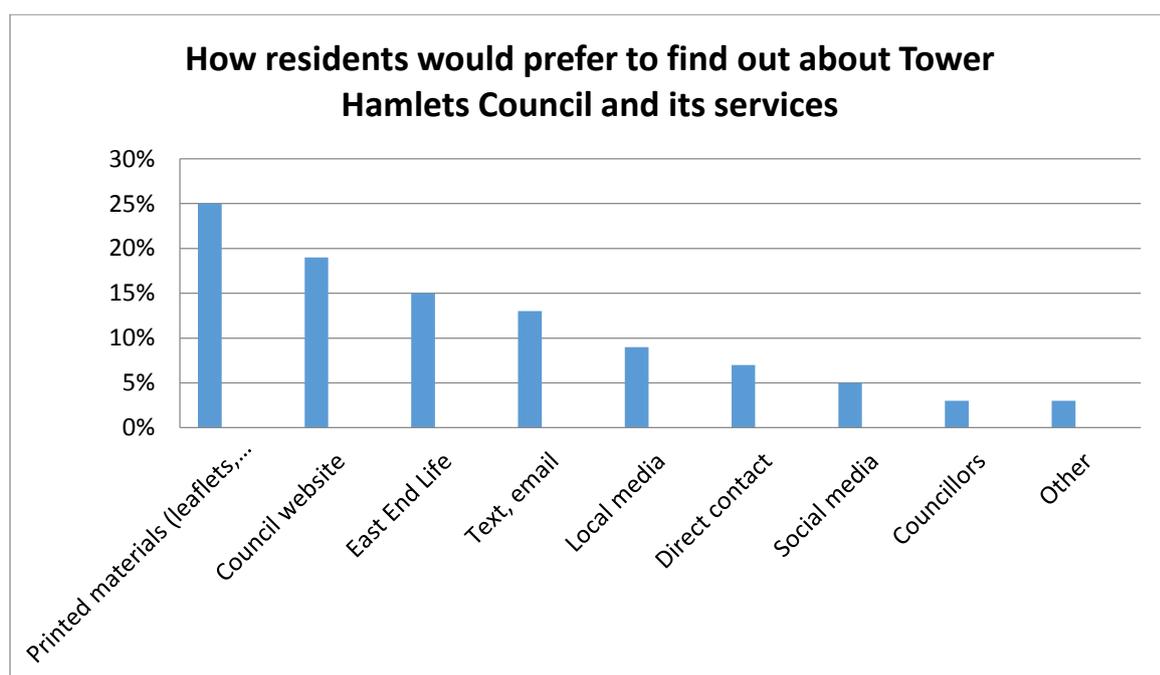
What this data tells us is that the residents of Tower Hamlets have a range of different preferences for receiving information about the council. It is interesting to note, given the importance and priority that has been attached to using East End Life as the council's principal communications channel, only 15 per cent cited the publication as their preferred method.

3.2 The council's current approach to communications

Once the Mayor and Cabinet have established a clear set of council priorities and vision, it will be easier to determine what the communications priorities for the organisation should be. The current lack of clarity is making this difficult. In addition, a significant amount of communications activity under the previous administration was directed by the Mayor's office, which hindered the ability to take a consistent and corporate approach.

A common frustration expressed to us during the review was the lack of a corporate approach to communications amongst some service areas. Despite the existence of communications protocols, there is little understanding across the organisation about them. This means that, even where they are in place, they are not sufficiently well known about or not adhered to. This is reflected in instances of vehicle branding not complying with corporate requirements, and print and design activity being commissioned independently. There are no consequences for non-compliance. Whilst major issues, such as vehicle branding, are not picked up, the communications function is seen to overly control minor issues, such as the operating of official Twitter accounts and individual tweets.

Instances of poor communication on the part of service areas have an adverse impact on the perception of the council. We heard examples of consultation events and activities being organised by individual services that were poorly carried out. Another example was information about road closures not being sufficiently communicated to members and to the public. Whilst not the responsibility of the communications function alone, instances such as these do affect how the general public and ward councillors view the council's approach to communicating.

There is a need to review the basis on which the communications function is funded. The current approach is based on services' willingness and ability to pay for what they want to have provided. This means that the communications function's activities are often determined largely on a 'who can pay' basis. It also exacerbates the non-compliance situation, with services often going elsewhere if they 'can't get what they want'. A situation needs to be created whereby the communications function's activities are instead determined by, and aligned with, council priorities.

A system of internal re-charging to service areas (referenced above) is also the primary source of funding for East End Life (50 per cent of income comes from internal re-charges). This not only reduces the amount of external income but also raises questions about the amount of internal resources needed to manage such a system, given that it is effectively just moving council money between different budgets.

There are opportunities for a more strategic approach to income generation through advertising, sponsorship and other commercial avenues. Currently, things operate in a way that sees individual services trying to secure income for opportunities that they can offer, such as roundabouts, leaflets and filming locations. Expertise clearly exists in the council, within the communications function, when it comes to selling. There may be scope to expand this to cover a wider range of income generation opportunities and undertake it on a corporate basis.

An example of where a more streamlined and efficient system has been introduced across the organisation is within print and design. The adoption of a software system has rationalised the internal procurement process and is on course to achieve savings of £350,000 this year – a move by the communications team that is playing a role in contributing to the council's budget challenge.

People indicated to us that the organisation operates in silos, although the situation is improving. Operating corporately will make the task of the communications function easier, providing the opportunity to focus on a clear set of communications priorities, with which the wider organisation is aligned.

The organisation has been described as 'cautious' and 'safe' in its general approach. Demonstrating these characteristics is entirely understandable given what the council has been through over recent times. It means, however, that the approach to communications and the way the communications function operates is also 'cautious' and 'safe'.

People have reflected that the council is not particularly good at seeing things through to a conclusion. This is reflected in some of the observations people made around key communications vehicles that the council uses – particularly the website and the Intranet, with both being seen to carry large amounts of information that is out of date, which in turn undermines people's confidence in them. Communications is seen too often as an 'add on' within the council. A situation has developed where the function is largely seen as a delivery unit for issuing pieces of information, rather than offering strategic input into the decision making process. As examples, important issues for the council at the time we were onsite included a Cabinet decision on exploring the idea of a new civic centre and Coroner Inquests involving the authority. In neither instance had the communications team been involved early enough so that a planned and proactive approach could be taken. Some staff complained to us that they had discovered their offices could be relocated to Whitechapel by reading about it in Cabinet papers.

There is a need to move to a position where the council's communications function is integral to the functioning of the organisation and, central to this, is respected and valued by the wider organisation and involved from the outset in key issues. The council is seeking to appoint to the post of Head of Communications. Getting this right, in terms of the role the position plays in the organisation and the profile of the successful candidate, is crucial.

Communication with Cabinet members is felt to have improved. However, there is a need for much better communication from the whole organisation with councillors

regarding ward-based issues. Examples include ward-based consultation and road closures. Information provided to ward members is described as 'patchy'. This is not the responsibility of the communications function alone – although it could potentially create a corporate mechanism if one was sought. It is much more about how individual services understand and act upon the need to ensure local councillors are informed, in a timely way, about issues that affect their area.

A community engagement strategy is currently being developed by the council, which elected members are attaching a lot of importance to getting right.

The council's approach to internal communications is not particularly highly regarded currently. The Intranet is one aspect of this, with a need to keep it up do date and make it easier to search. Staff appreciate the opportunity they have to attend employee conferences led by the senior leadership, including the chance to ask questions. There is a feeling amongst staff that internal communications around some of the high profile incidents affecting Tower Hamlets this year was poor, with many complaining that they found out about issues affecting the organisation they worked for through the media. At the heart of the issue with internal communications going forward is what seems to be confusion regarding 'ownership' – resulting in different functions delivering internal communications through different media in an un-coordinated way, with no overall narrative.

The council's communications function demonstrates energy and commitment, seeking to do the best it can to inform and engage local people. There are pockets of 'digital talent' within the organisation, whose skills and interests the council should look to ensure are fully tapped into. There is a need to move to a position where the council's communications function is integral to the functioning of the organisation and, central to this, is respected and valued by the wider organisation. The communications function requires strong leadership and management so that it plays a key role at the heart of the organisation.

Communications needs to shift its emphasis so that it is 'on the front foot' more and enables the council to operate through a wider range of channels. Currently there is too little strategic planning around communications and insufficient pro-activity. Staff told us that too much activity is 'tick box' – issuing a press release, putting an article in East End Life and sending a tweet – rather than properly planned and coordinated. As we have already highlighted, the council needs to make use of evidence and insight to ensure communications is targeted at the right audiences, uses the most effective channels and is properly evaluated.

When it comes to the links between council services and Communications Advisors, there are very mixed experiences. Some services value very highly the support and advice that they receive and the advisors are often part of wider discussions with directorates about issues. Where poor relations do exist, this is exacerbated by the lack of evidence underpinning communications activity. For example, if a service wants to use a certain channel (such as a press release) to promote a campaign and a Communications Advisor feels an alternative method might be more effective, they are often hampered by a lack of insight to support their professional advice.

There is a real desire on the part of the communications team to be engaged in determining the future of the service and the role they might play in it. Currently, and in a context of the function facing significant change, there is a feeling amongst the staff concerned that they are being kept poorly informed, they have little opportunity for engagement and, as a consequence, they have little stake in the future. This situation needs to be addressed.

There is little evidence of a learning and development programme having been made available to people within the communications team. Thus people are largely relying on their existing skills sets to fulfil roles that they are very accustomed to. This doesn't sit particularly well with the need for the communications function to shift its emphasis. Alongside this, our impression is that the strengths of people in the communications team are insufficiently aligned with responsibilities – meaning lost opportunities for the organisation and individuals. As an example, the 'pockets of digital talent' that we referred to previously could very positively be better used to help the council take forward its digital communications ambitions.

## 3.3 How the council manages its reputation and promotes the borough

During the course of our discussions, people indicated that the council is starting to feel different and that it has come a long way quite quickly. Perhaps the best exemplification of this was the Cabinet meeting that we observed, which demonstrated an openness and inclusivity in the way that it was conducted, with the Leader of the Opposition and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair being able to be actively involved.

Another of the ways in which things are feeling different is in terms of a greater sense of stability at the senior managerial leadership level of the council. Most of the people we spoke to said that things are 'more settled' than they have been. There are clearly high expectations of the new political and managerial leadership and so there will need to be an element of 'managing expectations' as the council's political and managerial leadership tackle the big agenda ahead of them.

The council has good partnerships with the likes of the police, health and housing. Those partners indicated a willingness to explore opportunities for joint approaches to communications. This is in a context of all of them needing to revise how they currently communicate with local people, particularly when it comes to printed media, as a consequence of the financial pressures they are facing. With the council also looking at revising its approach, there would appear to be scope for doing so jointly with others.

Our opinion polling asked local residents how much they trusted Tower Hamlets Council. Around three in five (60 per cent) said that they trusted the council either a great deal or a fair amount. Nearly two in five (38 per cent) however said that they trusted the authority not very much, or not at all.

Percentage who trust the council, overall
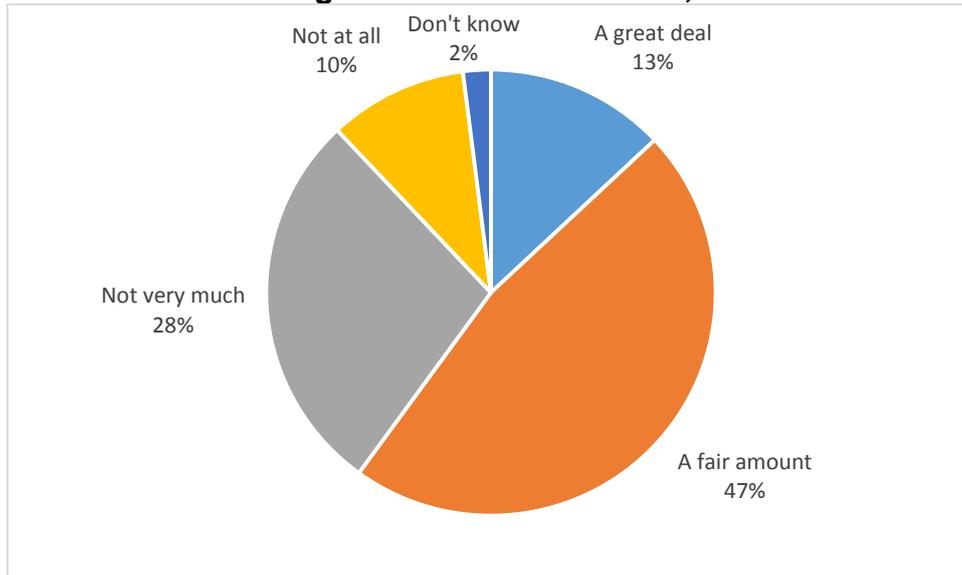
The proportions who trusted the council varied significantly by:

- social group, with managerial/professional (AB) workers less likely than average to say they trusted the council, and low-skilled and unemployed people more likely than average to trust the council
- age, with young people aged 18-24 more likely than any other age group to trust the council (77 per cent said they trusted the council a great deal or fair amount, compared to 60 per cent on average)
- ethnicity, with Asian people more likely than average to trust the council (66 per cent compared to 60 per cent overall)
- use of digital channels, with those who use them more likely to trust the council than those who do not (63 per cent compared to 49 per cent).

Percentage who trust the council a great deal or fair amount, by social group
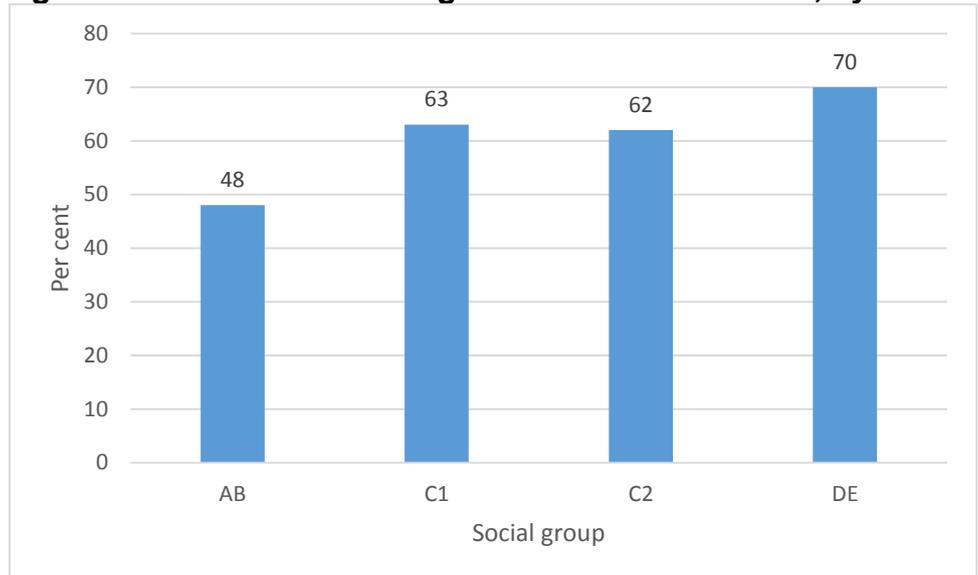
Respondents who said that they trusted the council not very much or not at all were asked to explain briefly why they provided that answer. The most frequently cited response was issues with the Mayor (30 per cent), this was followed by poor communications/lack of transparency (15 per cent) and the council being untrustworthy/corrupt (15 per cent).

It is clear from these responses that the events of the last year have had an impact when people are asked why they do not trust the council. However, as this is the first time this question has been asked in a Tower Hamlets resident survey, there is no benchmark to compare the findings against.

It is important to set the levels of trust with Tower Hamlets Council in the national context. The most recent LGA survey into satisfaction levels with local government, carried out in September 2015, found that 65 per cent of people trusted their council (although the average figure going back to 2012 is 61 per cent). This suggests the council still retains a relatively high level of trust amongst its residents, and gives a solid foundation to build upon. Improved communications can play an important role in increasing these levels, given that 15 per cent of those who said they did not trust the council cited poor communications and a lack of transparency as their main reason.

All available evidence suggests that the more informed people feel about their council and the services it provides, the more satisfied they are likely to be. Overall 61 per cent of respondents to our survey thought that Tower Hamlets Council keeps residents well informed about the services and benefits that it provides, this is compared to 37 per cent who did not think the authority kept residents well informed.

[1] Social group definitions: AB – higher and intermediate managerial/professional workers, C1 - supervisory, clerical, junior managerial workers, C2 – skilled manual workers, DE – semi-skilled and low-skilled manual workers, unemployed and not working

The proportions who felt well informed varied significantly by:

- age, with respondents aged 18-24 being more likely to say they were very or fairly well-informed
- use of digital channels, with those who used them to access information about the council or local area being more likely to say they were informed (65 per cent, compared to 52 per cent of those who did not use digital channels)
- social group, with those in the 'AB' group of managerial and professional workers being less likely than average to feel well-informed.

There was no variation by ethnicity.

Percentage reporting very or fairly well-informed, by age
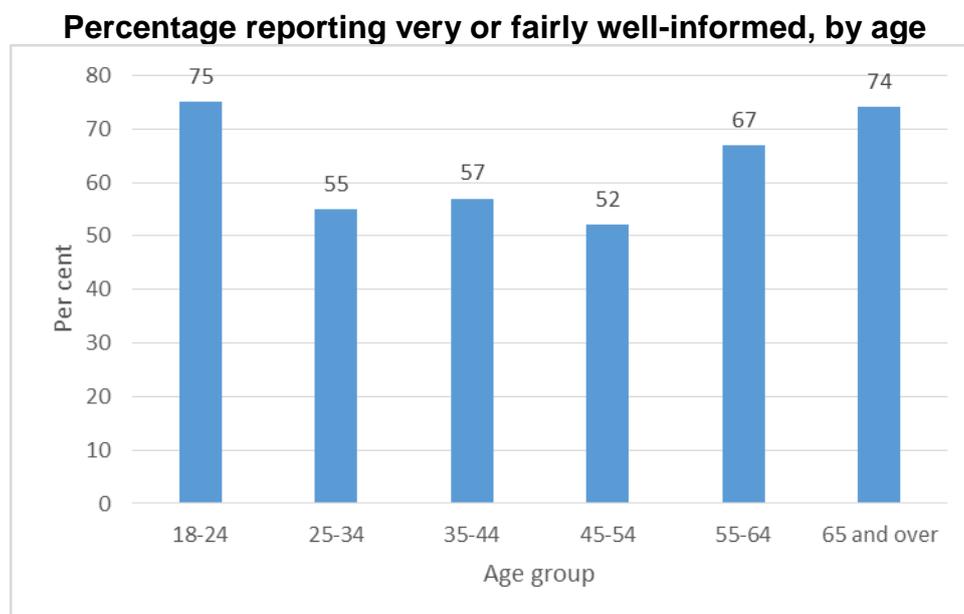
The most recent national LGA survey found that 63 per cent of respondents felt their local council kept residents well informed about the services it provides. So, again, Tower Hamlets is below the national average but only marginally so.

Tower Hamlets conducts an annual satisfaction survey, the most recent one took place in January/February 2015, which is before the previous Mayor left office but after the negative news coverage about him and the electoral process. It showed that around two thirds (65 per cent) of residents said they were satisfied with the way the council runs things, which was similar to previous years. Satisfaction with the council was five points lower in Tower Hamlets compared with the London-wide average (70 per cent).

The reputation of Tower Hamlets Council beyond the boundaries of the borough may have suffered as a result of the controversies over the last year. But all the available data shows that, whilst there are considerable challenges to gain trust amongst parts of the local population, resident perceptions of the council remain relatively strong. This was reflected in many conversations we had with residents and partners, who felt the name of Tower Hamlets had been tarnished but felt an enormous amount of pride in local services – particularly schools. Given the popularity of the borough as a

place to visit and live, the basis for developing a compelling narrative about the place (as highlighted earlier in the report) is very much there.

3.4 The council's digital communications strategy

The council's digital communications strategy, and other activity being undertaken across the authority, sets out a clear aim to promote the channel shift to digital and improve the digital communications offer.

Staff, residents and partners all expressed concerns to the review team about digital exclusion in Tower Hamlets and the need to cater for those who have no internet access or skills. The council's Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan shows that that Tower Hamlets has high levels of internet access and use, with no significant differences across broad ethnic groups. Figures from ICM reveal that 90 per cent of residents had access to the internet in 2014 – although only 38 per cent of the older population did so.

Analysis from Go ON UK's digital exclusion heatmap concludes that Tower Hamlets is in a strong position to advance digital communications – in part due to its young population, good income and good digital infrastructure. It is clearly important that those who remain digitally excluded, particularly older people, are still able to access information about the council and its services. However, all the available data suggests there is scope to increase digital communications to the majority of residents. It is encouraging that the council is already working closely with similar authorities to learn how they have successfully driven digital communications with a diverse local population.

There are seen to be major IT issues in the organisation. This is impacting on the council's ability to fully exploit the opportunities around digital communications, and should be addressed.

Our detailed analysis of the council's approach to digital communications, along with recommendations, is attached as Appendix A.

3.5 East End Life

There are deeply opposing views within and beyond the organisation regarding East End Life. For many, it represents a vital and popular means of communicating with local people and the council's primary community cohesion tool. For others, it is described as 'toxic' and is tainted by recent experiences and should be dispensed with as soon as possible as a consequence. What is clear is that there is an organisational-wide dependency on East End Life.

Although East End Life has become the default mechanism for everything that the council wishes to communicate, at least 20,000 households in the borough do not have the publication delivered to them. With other forms of resident communication, such as the use of social media and email marketing, in their infancy in Tower

Hamlets, this leaves a significant gap. Several people remarked that the bulk of the people not receiving East End Life live are affluent inhabitants of apartment blocks, and therefore not a priority audience due to their low reliance on council services. Whilst this may be true to some extent, it is a concerning approach given one of East End Life's primary functions is to promote cohesion and bring communities together.

There is also the issue that producing the publication on a weekly basis means that the council currently does not comply with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity, which came into force last year.

Quantitative and qualitative research shows that East End Life is well regarded by a significant proportion of the local population. However, readership levels are declining. According to ICM research in 2014, 61 per cent of those surveyed said they read East End Life, which represented a significant drop over the last five years (down 10 percentage points from 71 per cent in 2009). The most recent annual residents' survey in 2015 reports a readership figure of 51 per cent.

As previously highlighted, when asked how they would prefer to find out information about Tower Hamlets Council and its services, East End Life was the third most popular option amongst respondents. When people were asked from which sources they would prefer to find out about the local area and local issues, responses were slightly more favourable. The most popular channel, with 19 per cent of respondents selecting it, was East End Life; 16 per cent cited printed sources (other than a local newspaper), 13 per cent the council website, and 10 per cent said local newspapers.

Preferred channel for finding out about local area and local issues, overall
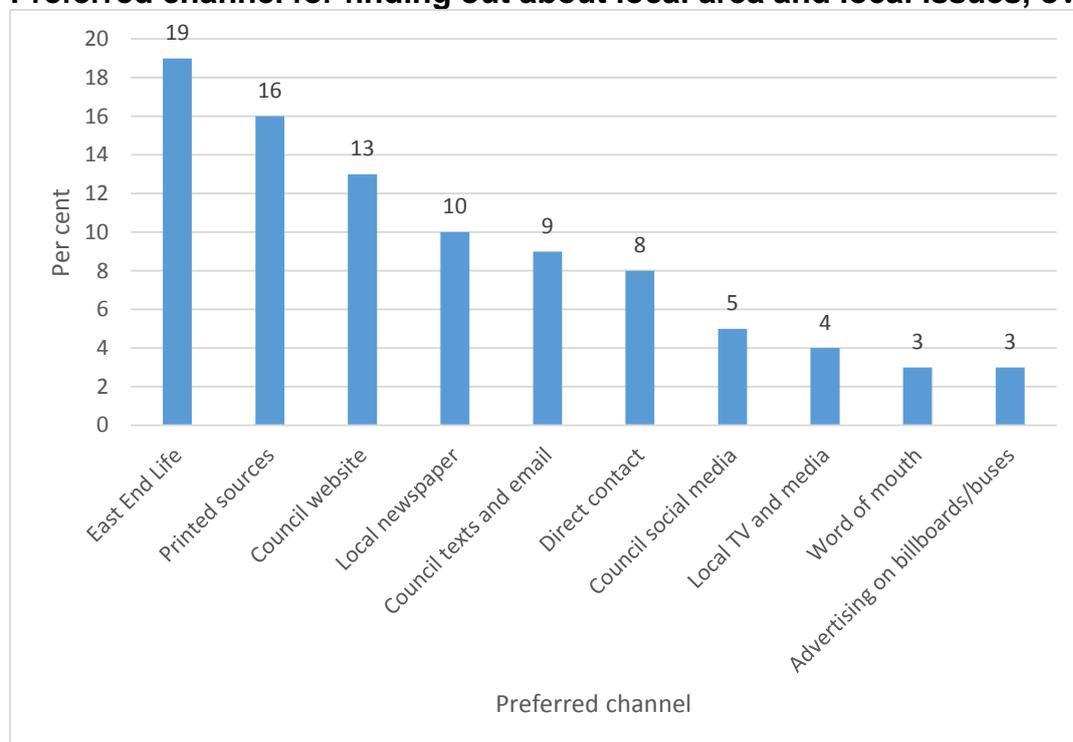
East End Life is clearly a valued source of information for many people in Tower Hamlets, although our research clearly indicates the need for the council to make

use of a wide range of different channels to communicate with its diverse local population. All of this suggests the council needs to move away from the current position.

The 2014 ICM survey revealed that residents aged 65-plus had the greatest readership levels of East End Life (77 per cent). With this section of the local community also most likely to be digitally excluded, the council needs to consider the potential consequences of making East End Life formally compliant with the publicity code (no more than four publications a year). An alternative approach would be to produce a publication aimed specifically at this age group. The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham took this course of action after dispensing with its weekly newssheet, using Freedom Pass data to target recipients. Such an approach would not breach the publicity code, and would allow the council to communicate directly with residents who are harder to reach through other means.

The Mayor has indicated to the Government his intention for East End Life to be code compliant. It is important the timescales on which such a shift is made are realistic. They need to be ambitious because of the issue of non-compliance with the Code but at the same time, as other channels are not yet fully developed, there is a danger that the progress the council has made on issues such as transparency will be set back.

There is a need, as a priority, to ensure that alternative means of communication are being utilised by the council so that local people are effectively communicated with and have access to all of the information that they require. Given the Mayor's commitment to openness and transparency in his administration, it would also be advisable to ensure more progress has been made with developing digital channels of communications before any move to reduce East End Life to a code compliant frequency. Thus a 'managed transition', in discussion with the Commissioners and DCLG, is required in our view.

4. Recommendations

The following sets out some recommendations which, if implemented by the council, would make a big difference within three months and demonstrate to elected members, staff and others that the council's leadership are responding quickly to the review findings:

- Establish the 'corporate narrative' and 'place-based narrative'
- Focus on communicating all that is good about the borough of Tower Hamlets, in-line with agreed narrative
- Undertake a council-wide audit of the resources (both posts and spend) being committed to communications
- Resolve the situation regarding 'East End Life' with appropriate consultation, use of data and drawing on best practice
- Ensure communications and campaigns are underpinned by audience insight
- Explore with partner organisations the opportunities for joint approaches to communications
- Accelerate the implementation of the digital strategies – and, in doing so, draw on best practice in local government regarding digital communications **(our detailed recommendations are attached as Appendix A)**
- Establish clear ownership and responsibility regarding internal communications
- Undertake a staff survey to inform an internal communications strategy
- Rationalise the number of strategies and plans regarding communications
- Communications Advisors to attend the whole of their Directorate Management Team meetings
- Have cross-party representation on the Appointments Panel for the new Head of Communications
- The Head of Communications to meet weekly with the Mayor and be involved in the Mayor's Advisory Board
- The Head of Communications to meet weekly with the Chief Executive

The following recommendations should be considered during the course of 2016:

- Establish a set of targets and key performance indicators for the council's communications activity and report these regularly
- Develop a campaigns plan, agreed by the council's political and managerial leadership
- Ensure campaigns are effectively evaluated with a focus on outcomes rather than outputs
- Establish a corporate approach to income generation
- Improve communications with all elected members

Through this review we have sought to highlight the positive aspects of the council's approach to communications, but we have also outlined some challenges. It has been our aim to provide some detail on them through this report in order to help the council understand and consider them. The council's senior managerial and political leadership will therefore undoubtedly want to reflect further on the findings before determining how they wish to take things forward.

It is acknowledged within the organisation that the historic and on-going focus of communications effort on the part of the council has been on reacting to media issues and producing East End Life. There is now recognition that there needs to be a new approach, and there is help and support available from the LGA on this should the council wish to take up the offer.