

Overview & Scrutiny

Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

All Members of the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission are requested to attend the meeting of the Commission to be held as follows

Tuesday 9 March 2021

7.00 pm

Until further notice, all Council meetings will be held remotely

Contact:

Tracey Anderson

☎ 0208 356 3312

✉ tracey.anderson@hackney.gov.uk

Tim Shields

Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney

Members: Cllr Sharon Patrick (Chair), Cllr Anthony McMahon, Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone, Cllr Penny Wrouth and Cllr Anna Lynch

Agenda

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Agenda Papers | (Pages 5 - 124) |
| 2 | Minutes of the Meeting | (Pages 125 - 156) |

Access and Information

Getting to the Town Hall

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Further Information about the Commission

If you would like any more information about the Scrutiny Commission, including the membership details, meeting dates and previous reviews, please visit the website or use this QR Code (accessible via phone or tablet 'app')

<http://www.hackney.gov.uk/individual-scrutiny-commissions-living-in-hackney.htm>



Public Involvement and Recording

Scrutiny meetings are held in public, rather than being public meetings. This means that whilst residents and press are welcome to attend, they can only ask questions at the discretion of the Chair. For further information relating to public access to information, please see Part 4 of the council's constitution, available at <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/l-gm-constitution.htm> or by contacting Governance Services (020 8356 3503)

Rights of Press and Public to Report on Meetings

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and social media providing they do not disturb the conduct of the meeting and providing that the person reporting or providing the commentary is present at the meeting.

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<https://youtu.be/aeqzxSXw9wA>

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Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney

Members:	Cllr Sharon Patrick (Chair)	Cllr M Can Ozsen	Cllr Anthony McMahon
	Cllr Anna Lynch	Cllr Ian Rathbone	Cllr Penny Wrout

Agenda

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|---|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Apologies for Absence | 7.00pm |
| 2 | Urgent Items / Order of Business | 7.03pm |
| 3 | Declarations of Interest | 7.04pm |
| 4 | Thames Water Update | 7.05pm
(30 mins) |
| | 1. Update on the resident return to their properties (Thames Water) | |
| | 2. Customer Complaints (Thames Water) | |
| | 3. Information about how Thames Water has improved the process and communication with residents not supported by a council or a housing association. | |

5	<p>Lift Maintenance and Repair</p> <p>This item will cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) LBH's lift protocol b) The Lift maintenance contract c) Contract monitoring – response times, servicing arrangements and changes or enhancements being made to manage the new contract effectively. 	<p>7.35pm (30 mins)</p>
6	<p>Digital Divide and Hackney Council Housing Services</p> <p>This item will cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Housing services support to residents who are digitally excluded and connectivity for community halls. b) a presentation covering the council's work on digital connectivity, skills support and equipment access. 	<p>8.10pm (40 mins)</p>
7	<p>Resident Engagement</p> <p>An update on the structure and strategy for resident engagement.</p>	<p>8.50pm (30 mins)</p>
8	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p>	<p>9.25pm (5 mins)</p>
9	<p>Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission Work Programme</p> <p>The work programme for the municipal year 2020/2021.</p>	<p>9.30pm (5 mins)</p>
10	<p>Any Other Business</p>	<p>9.35pm (5 mins)</p>

To access the meeting please click in the link <https://youtu.be/aeqzSXw9wA>

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Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 9th March 2021 Item 4 – Thames Water Update	Item No 4
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Outline

At the Living in Hackney (LiH) meeting in September 2020 the Commission agreed to receive a further update in relation to Thames Water to ensure all residents have returned to their homes. Particularly homeowners managing the process alone. Concern was raised at the LiH meeting in September about communication with residents from the customer support team and the rise in customer complaints to Thames Water.

The Commission asked for Thames Water to provide an update and information on the following:

1. Update on the resident return to their properties
2. Customer Complaints
3. Information about how Thames Water has improved the process and communication with residents not supported by a council or a housing association.

Invited Attendees:

Thames Water

- **Operators Director, Steve Spencer**

Action

Members are asked to consider the reports, presentations and ask questions.

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Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 9th March 2021 Item 5 – Lift Maintenance and Repair	Item No 5
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Outline

This item is to look at how the council maintains its lifts and the service level agreement for repairs. The lift maintenance and repair are carried out by a contractor. Concerns have been raised about the Council's communication, response and service level to residents (particularly vulnerable residents) when a lift has broken down.

The current contract is going through a new tender process so this discussion will not cover on the performance of the current contractor or look at the current contract agreement.

The Commission asked for the Council to provide information about:

- a) Hackney Council's lift protocol
- b) A lift maintenance contract
- c) Contract monitoring – response times, servicing arrangements and changes or any enhancements being made to manage the new contract effectively.

Reports in the agenda:

To support this discussion the following report has been provided as background information.

- Report on Lift Maintenance and Repair – covering lift protocol, proposals for new contract and contract monitoring.

Invited Attendees:

London Borough of Hackney

- **Cabinet Member for Housing**, Councillor Clayeon McKenzie
- **Interim Director of Housing**, David Patfield
- **Head of Property and Asset Management**, Sinead Burke

Resident Liaison Group

- **Co-Chair of the Resident Liaison Group**, Steve Webster
- **Co-Chair of the Resident Liaison Group**, Helder da Costa

Action

Members are asked to consider the reports, presentations and ask questions.

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Scrutiny Committee

Lift Maintenance and Repair

March 2021

Introduction

The Council has more than 600 lifts in its residential housing stock. The maintenance and upkeep of these lifts is of vital importance to our residents - especially those who live in high rise dwellings, or those that have mobility problems.

The Council is committed to providing a high level of lift reliability and this is mostly achieved, with approximately 97% lift operation in the past year.

However, things do on occasion go wrong and this paper sets out the actions that Council officers will take when a block is left without a lift service for any length of time. The paper also updates LiH Scrutiny Commission on current plans to re-procure our lift maintenance contract and how we might use that process to introduce further improvements to the service.

Lift Protocol

When lifts break down, the Council has an agreed lift protocol that sets out how we will provide assistance to residents.

The current lift protocol puts an onus on Housing Management to contact residents when a lift breaks down. An emphasis has been placed on contacting vulnerable residents who are detrimentally impacted with the lift being out of action. There is also an onus on Housing Officers to continue to monitor the situation and update residents throughout the repair of the lift.

The impact of the cyberattack has made contacting residents more difficult but the work done around identifying vulnerable residents due to the Coronavirus has given us a better understanding of who they are and their contact details. At present this is a static document - so as time goes on will become more and more out of date. Accordingly, work is now being undertaken to get a system up and running which will store up-to-date information to help us implement the lift protocol. Longer term the new system being developed as part of our wider cyberattack recovery will allow for greater scrutiny of information and will pinpoint vulnerable residents.

When a lift is likely to be out of action for any period of time, the Housing Officer will use the vulnerable resident list to contact every resident listed. Based upon those discussions, a judgement is made on the level of support required.

The protocol, in its current form, is not prescriptive as to what support can be offered both by Hackney Council and other support agencies. This has been a challenge for Housing Officers in their discussions with residents. The Coronavirus pandemic has helped us with this. What was the Coronavirus Helpline and is now part of the 'Here to Help' project gives practical solutions. For those residents who don't need immediate help, the Helpline offers tailored and targeted support; arranging for deliveries of food; medicine; befriending services, etc. Those residents who are immediately affected to a significant degree will have a safeguarding referral made and the Housing Officer will work with their support network (social worker; friends; family; etc.). There still

needs to be further work done around an offer of support for those residents who need the lift to leave the building. No service, at present, provides this level of support - i.e. physically lifting someone down flights of stairs on a frequent and regular basis.

Within the current protocol there is an emphasis on letters and other written communication to inform residents on the update of the lift breakdown. There are two challenges with this approach. The first is, this is an inefficient way of dispensing information especially for a changing situation as a lift breakdown which may change daily. It is also not environmentally friendly and uses a disproportionate amount of Housing Officer time and energy. The team have therefore been experimenting with using mass text and email systems to send information to multiple people at one time. So far, this is working really well for planned shutdowns such as water or electricity. The second challenge is getting up-to-date, accurate information to send. The current lift protocol puts an onus on the lift company to carry out a significant amount of communications to residents. In future, it would probably be better for the Council to take full ownership of communicating to residents, but officers will need accurate information to do so. Officers are therefore working across the relevant teams to put in a robust, sustainable system so that information flows freely and to the right person in a timely manner.

Outline Proposals for the new Lift Maintenance Contract

In December 2019, the current lift maintenance contract service provider ELA, served a termination notice which will be effective from June 2021.

Initially the team are working to ensure an interim one year contract can be placed via a pre-existing framework, and approval for that has been secured at the February Hackney Procurement Board. Due to the limitations of Section 20 consultation arrangements for leaseholders this contract is limited to repair and maintenance work, and not lift renewals. However, where there are no leaseholders in blocks this contract arrangement could be explored for use for major capital works.

The team is working to have this contract in place by June 2021. While ideally two contractors would be selected, there are some rules to the use of this framework, and these may or may not permit the selection of two contractors. The final details which will inform this are being sourced.

In the longer term the team will need to procure a new long term lift maintenance contract to cover servicing, repairs and capital works. The team are preparing to bring a business case to Cabinet Procurement Committee (CPC) in April 2021. The outline proposals at present are:

- 1) The form of contract would be a framework with 3-5 contractors. Hackney has a very large number of lifts and an initial review of the value of works, has indicated there is enough to attract a few contractors. This would have the advantage of having other options should one contractor not perform to the required standard.
- 2) The team are exploring how to award works under this framework, with one idea being that there are two contractors who are initially awarded the servicing and repair to half the borough each, with the others available to take on that work should one fail to perform. This approach means there aren't too many contractors working on repairs, which does complicate contract management, but still allows options where they fail to perform. By contrast capital works could be offered to all contractors, and those without servicing works would therefore maintain a relationship with the Hackney team.

- 3) There has been considerable work done in Property and Asset Management on procurement of other capital contracts. Several of these contracts are in the Mechanical and Electrical team and the discussions and decisions on approaches to contract management will be very beneficial and are likely to translate well into a new lift contract. For example the team are using the NHF (National Housing Federation) national schedules of rates and specifications; we hope that the clearer pricing structure, which is well understood by industry will lead to achieving clear and fair prices. The team has also reviewed entirely their approach to Key Performance Indicator (KPI) definitions within the contracts and developed stronger and more specific consequences for a contractor's failure to perform to the required standard.
- 4) The team have also begun a complete review of the wider lift service offering. This is being done in conjunction with the Head of Housing Management. The team is reviewing the entire lift service operation, to determine which aspects of the service are best delivered by the contractor and which should be delivered in other ways. Already the team is looking to put in place a direct contract for the maintenance of the lift monitoring system to ensure we have greater control over this essential system. The team are also exploring the potential greater role of housing services in using automated text communications with residents to keep them updated on lift breakdowns; this is somewhat complicated by the cyber attack, however, as systems are restored more practical application of these systems will be explored.

The outline programme is to award a new contract by June 2022. While that does sound like some time away, given the interval governance, leasehold consultation and tendering procedures that need to be followed, this is in reality an ambitious programme. The outline is below.

High Level Contract Research	Jan - Mar 2021
CPC Business Case Approval	Feb - Apr 2021
Detailed Contract Development	Apr - Jul 2021
Leasehold Notice of Intent	May - Jul 2021
Tender and Contract Evaluation	Aug - Nov 2021
CPC Contract Award Approval	Dec - Feb 2022
Leasehold Notice of Proposal	Feb - Apr 2022
Contract Signing and Mobilisation	May 2022
Contract Start	June 2022

A member drop in session on procurement is being arranged for March 2021. This will allow member input on this lift contract.

Proposals for new Contract Monitoring

Property and Asset Management have a dedicated lift contract management team in place. There is a service manager and a clerk of works, both of whom are specialists in lift works.

In response to the recent challenges, the team have begun to develop enhanced performance dashboards, gathering a range of figures which had previously been reported in disparate places. These place an emphasis on the performance of the lifts, as opposed to the contract Key Performance Indicators which essentially focus on the performance of the contractor. By doing so we place the team in a better place to challenge the contractor on performance, to target investment and potentially anticipate problems.

The report at present captures some basic figures, including the number of times the London Fire Brigade have attended trappings, the overall % lift availability, the number of lifts out of service for more than 24 hours, and the proportion of lift services carried out. There is some limitation at present to the complexity of reporting possible due to the IT outage, but once the repairs system is back operational, the team plan to use this in conjunction with remote monitoring to develop a fuller performance dashboard.

Note that lift availability usually runs at about 97-98% though this has dipped somewhat in recent months to about 95-96%. This dip is related to the reduction in the servicing regime due to Covid restrictions earlier in the year; this was manageable for a time, but as months wore on there was an apparent accumulation of issues due to the reduced servicing which is now showing as reduced lift availability. Nonetheless the overall availability is high, but obviously lifts being such a critical service to many residents, there is very little margin for tolerance of this anything but the highest standards of performance.

The team are also putting in place a few other improvements in information gathering which again will assist in strengthening contract management such as:

- Use of report software for Clerk of Works inspections
- Recording of a wider range of compliance information on the Resident Safety compliance database
- Developed a complete understanding of which buildings have multiple lifts and the permutations in which they are available; this is to understand better the impact of a specific lift outage. For example in some buildings with two lifts, all residents can access both lifts in the same lobby, but in others the second lift is on another floor or along a walkway which presents challenges to certain residents.

The above mechanisms will be used in conjunction with the general contract terms as outlined in the section above.

Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 9th March 2021 Item 6 – Digital Divide and Hackney Council Housing Services	Item No 6
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Outline

The current pandemic (Covid-19) has had a significant impact on the UK, its economy and the daily lives of people. With the relocation of many services online there is concern about the growing digital divide, particularly those digitally excluded, being exacerbated by the pandemic. The Commission asked for the Council to provide information about how the Council's housing services are supporting residents who are digitally excluded and how the council working to reduce the digital divide.

This item will cover:

- a) Housing services support to residents who are digitally excluded and connectivity for community halls
- b) a presentation covering the council's work on digital connectivity, skills support and access to equipment.

Reports in the agenda:

To support this discussion the following report and presentations have been provided as background information.

- Avoiding Digital Exclusion During the Pandemic
- Presentation on Better Broadband.

Invited Attendees:

London Borough of Hackney

- **Cabinet Member for Housing**, Councillor Clayeon McKenzie
- **Strategic Director Customer & Workplace**, Rob Miller
- **Interim Director of Housing**, David Patfield
- **Head of Platform**, Henry Lewis.

Resident Liaison Group

- **Co-Chair of the Resident Liaison Group**, Steve Webster
- **Co-Chair of the Resident Liaison Group**, Helder da Costa.

Action

Members are asked to consider the reports, presentations and ask questions.

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***Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission - 9 March 2021
Avoiding Digital Exclusion During The Pandemic***

Report of David Padfield, Interim Strategic Director, Housing

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Covid-19 pandemic has, globally, led to many services shifting on-line. In many ways this is a positive acceleration of a pre-existing trend and has the potential to offer enormous benefits to many of our residents. However, in designing and offering Council services, we are always cognisant that a significant minority of our residents are “digitally excluded” and may not be able to benefit from these changes.
- 1.2. The size of this significant minority is the subject of some debate. Research as part of the Council’s wider customer services strategy tells us that 1 in 5 of our residents lack the tools and skills to confidently transact online. This ‘digital divide’ is particularly pronounced for our tenants where up to 40% tell our surveys that they will not use the Council’s online services. However, we have also found that designing simple, intuitive services can help reduce this reluctance.
- 1.3. This paper sets out some of the actions undertaken by Housing Services during the pandemic to mitigate the risks of digital exclusion and how these might shape our longer term thinking in this area. These actions obviously work in concert with and complement the Council’s ambitions for a full fibre roll-out as set out elsewhere on this agenda.

2. Telephony

- 2.1. Whilst the Council has successfully used its website throughout the pandemic to convey important information about services to residents, it was recognised early on that telephony services would be crucial in successfully managing relationships with residents. An early decision was made to temporarily merge the management of the Council’s main telephony contact centre with the two contact centres within Housing Services (the Neighbourhood Contact Centre and the Repairs Contact Centre). This was so that the rapid change to remote working could take place in a uniform fashion and resources could be pooled to maintain services at all times. The success of these changes has led to the temporary management change now being made permanent and appropriate changes to the management structure for the unified service are now under consideration.
- 2.2. We piloted the use of voice-activated services so that tenants could check their rent balances and make a payment by phone, 24/7 without needing to speak to a person. Whilst this service won’t be appropriate for everyone, the 2,000+ tenants that accessed the service reported high levels of satisfaction and this freed-up staff time to support more complex queries. We’re building the findings of this into the procurement of the new telephony system for 2021-23.

- 2.3. Throughout this period, the Council has made extensive use of voice messages on its telephony in order to convey important messages to residents concerning diverse issues such as the availability of the repairs service and the importance of Covid-testing. Staff have also made large numbers of outbound calls to elderly and vulnerable residents to check on their well-being. In total, officers called more than 7,000 tenants and 3,000 leaseholders. For those most in need, we launched the popular Let's Talk service where lonely and vulnerable residents were able to chat to specially trained Council officers about whatever issue was on their minds. Over 500 residents were supported by this service, with some residents linked into mutual aid groups who could provide practical support in their locality.
- 2.4. Customer services has helped develop the initial Coronavirus response into the Here To Help service which puts residents in need of support in touch with voluntary sector providers in the borough to provide whatever assistance they may require, such as the collection of prescriptions or help with shopping, and provides support and multidisciplinary working to council officers and other delivery partners (eg health) so that we can work better together to support our vulnerable residents.

3. Face-to-Face Offer

- 3.1. Housing Services have always relied on a strong face-to-face offer to residents in order to deliver services. Obviously, this has been considerably disrupted by the pandemic and our local housing offices have now been closed for more than a year. Nonetheless, officers have maintained a presence at the HSC throughout this period and have also been out-and-about on estates to ensure that health and safety inspections are undertaken and any urgent issues are attended to. Although our property surveyors have developed a highly efficient and effective way of undertaking inspections via WhatsApp, a personal inspection is always available for those who might not have access to a mobile phone or tablet.

4. Written Communication Channels

- 4.1. Our Housing newsletter, Our Homes, has continued to be published quarterly throughout the pandemic in order to update residents on our services. This is delivered to every home as a supplement to the Hackney Today, which we have also used to convey important news to tenants and leaseholders and encourage input to key consultation exercises, such as priorities for the Resident Estate Improvement Fund. In addition to these publications, we keep residents updated via a regular Newsletter.
- 4.2. During the initial lockdown period, we distributed additional editions of Our Homes with dedicated information about the Council's pandemic response on top of the regular quarterly publication. Alongside specific Housing Services information in the Hackney Life and Hackney Today publications, this provided a monthly written update for Council tenants and leaseholders on the Council's pandemic response during the first lockdown period. The Resident Participation Team and Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) Client Team also sent out regular updates to keep TMO Chairs / managers and involved residents abreast of Housing and wider service developments and to promote key messages.

4.3. Although Housing Officers have spent less time on estates during the pandemic, they have tried to keep noticeboards up-to-date and we have published a number of posters to convey important information. This is in addition to the special posters and banners produced to communicate information about lifts, playgrounds and MUGAs. We are currently piloting a small number of digital noticeboards.

5. Text Messaging

5.1. Housing Services have recently been improving the ability to undertake either mass or targeted text messaging to residents. This was used for the first time this year to expand consultation on resident-led improvement works (together with Covid safe walkabouts for up to six participants organised in parallel). We are now looking at incorporating it into our lift protocol to convey information about lift repair dates and any planned shutdowns of electricity or water.

6. Resident Participation

6.1. Most of the Council's resident participation activities are built around face-to-face meetings. During the pandemic period, such meetings have not been possible. As well as utilising the various communications channels set out above, we have offered residents groups the option of having on-line meetings facilitated. Although only a minority of residents groups have taken up this offer, those that did have been able to hold successful meetings on-line, usually using Zoom. In some cases, this has enabled us to reach out to some communities which we have traditionally struggled to reach.

6.2. The team has also used its 55 community gardens and grow spaces to promote engagement. These have often provided safe spaces for residents to get together during the pandemic, and been a focus for some socially distanced TRA and other meetings. A number of new grow and garden projects have also been taken forward, with planning and liaison taking place outdoors. For many residents these spaces have provided much needed respite during the pandemic.

6.3. The Council's main housing consultation body, the Resident Liaison Group (RLG) has met on-line throughout the pandemic. Although meetings have been successful, there has been a notable decline in attendance. The Resident Participation team are currently undertaking an exercise to establish what barriers to on-line participation might be and how these might be overcome. Initial feedback suggests that other pandemic-related causes such as pressure of work and childcare have been a factor, and not just a reluctance to engage using digital platforms. The team have also linked TRAs to corporate ICT initiatives, such as the Digital Buddies scheme which provides online 'how to' guides and can link someone to a trained young person to help with their digital or technical issue over the phone.

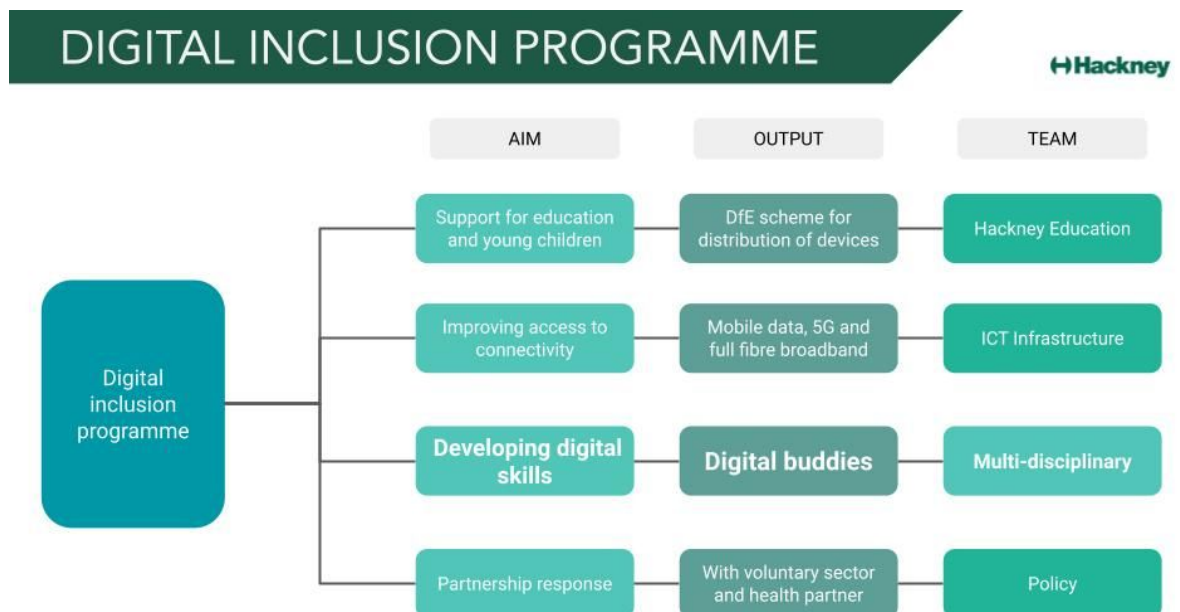
6.4. We have made use of our community halls and participation funding to deliver services which have offered important support to tenants and leaseholders. For example, over 350 children and young people on our estates were engaged through Resident Participation funded summer projects, with many sessions delivered outdoors and /or in small groups

in indoor settings. We have also accommodated seven food poverty projects within five Council-run community halls across the borough, providing meals and food support for many residents in need.

- 6.5. As part of the development of the Resident Engagement Strategy, we will explore in more detail how we can better promote digital inclusion with options including inter-generational and peer support schemes, silver surfer training sessions, and online guides, as well as mixed virtual /physical meetings.

7. Digital Inclusion

- 7.1. We have a number of complementary pieces of work underway to narrow the digital divide through providing equipment to residents and support their skills. The diagram below shows how these fit together.



- 7.2. The work to develop digital skills has produced a number of instructional videos to help people access online services (for example, how to use a QR code). These have reached over 23,000 people since they were created during lockdown. We are also using these to help residents understand how to stay safe online.

- 7.3. We have developed a 'digital buddies' scheme so that residents who are interested but nervous about using online services can get support from someone more confident. Buddies are currently either 17-18 year old students or ICT apprentices.

- 7.4. The roll out of the full fibre programme to estates and - in particular - community halls clearly presents us with huge opportunities to address digital inclusion amongst tenants and their children. This work will be taken forward through the full fibre roll out and the development of the new Community Halls Strategy.

REPORT ENDS

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Living in Hackney

Introducing the better broadband programme

Henry Lewis - Head of Platform
9 March 2021



Presentation content

- Context:
 - Strategy and vision
 - Why is connectivity important
 - manifesto commitments
 - What our tenants think
- What is the better broadband programme?
- Benefits we will deliver
- Next steps



The context

- The Council lacked an overarching strategy to improve connectivity in the borough - the Mayor asked ICT to provide one
- [Our vision for connectivity in Hackney](#) was agreed by Hackney Cabinet in December 2018
- The vision included a commitment to “use Council assets to deliver and maximise social value and economic opportunities for the residents and businesses of Hackney instead of using assets to maximise income”
- These assets include our buildings. The better broadband programme is focused upon leveraging our housing stock to provide more affordable, high performing broadband services for social housing tenants



Why was connectivity important before the pandemic?

- Job search - easier access to jobs and support online to make applications
- Education - access to the internet is a vital tool to support learning
- Shopping - people shopping online save money
- economic development - lots of SMEs in digital and media services
- And lots more reasons besides....



And why is it even more important now?

- Home schooling
- To keep in touch with families and friends
- So people can work from home
- A source of entertainment



Our manifesto commitments

Our core commitment: - “Push the market to provide Hackney with fast consistent internet connectivity, including using the borough’s assets to encourage suppliers to invest in improved connectivity across the borough”

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Other relevant commitments: “We will continue to invest in and develop our temporary accommodation provision in Hackney, **including improving facilities**, support and consulting with residents on their priorities”

“We will improve Hackney’s digital inclusion; increasing the number of digital skills training courses available to supporting residents getting online for the first time”



What do our tenants think?

Positive responses received from:

- **Our tenants** - we surveyed tenants in the Autumn of 2019 and received an overwhelmingly positive response to these proposals. Tenants prioritised:
 - Higher performing services
 - Affordable services
 - Digital inclusion

The [consultation report](#) is online

- **The tenants liaison group**



Summary of the programme

- New connectivity providers will be implementing high performing, more affordable broadband into our housing blocks and street properties
- They will do this at no cost to the Council - they are funding new roles in Housing to support the management of the programme
- Tenants will have a choice about whether to sign up or not
- We will also receive a range of social value benefits from the providers to support some of our most vulnerable residents
- Programme will run for between 2 and 3 years



More affordable broadband

Provider	Cost per month (including VAT) by average download speed (mbps)			
	50 - 150 mbps	150-300 mbps	300-520 mbps	900-1000 mbps
Full fibre provider (average)	£21	£31	£41	£49
Virgin Media (cable)	£29	£34	£46	N/A
BT (Openreach copper network)	£32	N/A	N/A	N/A



Social value benefits

- Free full fibre internet in perpetuity for key council services:
 - temporary hostels
 - Housing with Care schemes
 - Housing community halls
 - Childrens' centres
- Each provider to prove 40 free connections
- Council and/or RSLs will deliver free WiFi to these sites



Social value benefits (cont)

- Vouchers to one in ten of every households that are connected
 - Vouchers to be targeted by the Council to households in financial hardship
 - Further, free connections may now be available for 12 months to vulnerable households with school age children
- Digital skills training
- Apprenticeships and employment opportunities



Why this is a good deal for Hackney

Benefit	Southwark	Brent	Tower Hamlets	Camden	Croydon	WCC
Free connections	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Voucher scheme	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Digital Skills training	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Local Employment benefits	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Subsidised connectivity for Housing services	N	N	N	N	N	N

Next steps

- Signing up more providers
- Agreeing the roll out schedules
- Delivering the comms plan for the programme
- Further discussions with RSLs
- Agreeing criteria for targeting vouchers
- Further liaison with voluntary sector partners

Questions and Discussion



Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 9th March 2021 Item 7 – Resident Engagement	Item No 7
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Outline

This item is an update to the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission on the approach to supporting resident engagement and participation for tenants and leaseholders within Housing Services. Providing information about the structure and strategy for resident engagement.

Reports in the agenda:

To support this discussion the following report has been provided as background information.

- Housing Services resident participation and engagement – update report.

Invited Attendees:**London Borough of Hackney**

- **Cabinet Member for Housing**, Councillor Clayeon McKenzie
- **Interim Director of Housing**, David Patfield
- **Interim Head of Resident Participation, TMOs and Communities, Housing Services**, Sara Kulay
- **Head of Tenancy and Leasehold Services**, Gilbert Stowe

Resident Liaison Group

- **Co-Chair of the Resident Liaison Group**, Steve Webster
- **Co-Chair of the Resident Liaison Group**, Helder da Costa.

Action

Members are asked to consider the reports, presentations and ask questions.

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<p>Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission</p> <p>9 March 2021</p> <p>Housing Services resident participation and engagement – update report</p>	<p>Item No</p>
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1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 This report presents an update to the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission on the approach to supporting engagement and participation for tenants and leaseholders within Housing Services.
- 1.2 It includes an overview of the work of the Resident Participation Service during the Covid-19 pandemic, and highlights progress on many of the issues raised by the Commission to the Cabinet Member for Housing Services in the letter of 14 August 2019. This includes our work to widen involvement, to improve alignment with the delivery of wider Council policies and strategies, and to promote digital engagement.
- 1.3 An update is also given on the progress of the re-structure of the service and development of a new Resident Engagement Strategy for Housing Services.
- 1.4 As the Commission will recognise, 2020/21 has been a challenging year for the service and our residents, with many of the usual ways of bringing people together not possible due to the restrictions in place. However, the service has adapted well and continued to deliver important benefits for our residents. The restructure of the service and development of the Resident Engagement Strategy is designed to drive further improvements in promoting strong and meaningful engagement with tenants and leaseholders, and improve the take up of participation funds.

2. RESIDENT PARTICIPATION IN LOCKDOWN

- 2.1 The introduction of lockdown measures in March 2020, and their continuation through much of the financial year, has inevitably reduced the range of resident participation activities that we could deliver safely. However, it has also provided a springboard for the development of new initiatives and ways of working, including work to: support more vulnerable tenants and leaseholders; provide summer activities for children and young people on our estates; widen participation and engagement; and promote more digital engagement. An overview of some of our key initiatives is set out below.

Supporting Vulnerable Residents

- 2.2 Early in lockdown, we recognised that some tenants and leaseholders would be isolated, anxious and vulnerable during the pandemic, especially those in the shielding group. In response, the Resident Participation Team launched the ‘Let’s Talk’ project on 4 April 2020. This gave residents a chance to chat to a team member to highlight any support needs and/or talk to them on a regular basis to reduce feelings of isolation. A referral route was established, allowing housing officers contacting residents to signpost them through to the project. The project

was also promoted extensively through e-newsletters, Our Homes, myhackney.org, and twitter.

- 2.3 Engagement with the project exceeded early expectations, with 517 residents engaged and over 1,500 support calls made between April and August 2020. Of those engaged: 413 were tenants and 104 were leaseholders; 36 per cent were over 70; 56 per cent were single person households; over half had a health condition or disability; and 75 per cent were in receipt of housing benefit and /or Council tax support.
- 2.4 In many cases, problems experienced by residents had often been exacerbated by the pandemic and support provided through the programme varied, but included:
- Helping residents who had missed food deliveries, run out of food or were in need of medication get what they needed.
 - Making referrals to adult social care, where residents support needs had changed during lockdown, or if there were safeguarding concerns
 - Putting residents in touch with local mutual aid groups who could help with shopping, paying bills and charging electric and gas meters.
- 2.5 Delivery of the project has strengthened relationships with Council services and partner agencies. For example, the service manager has represented Housing Services on a multidisciplinary group set up corporately to deal with complex cases, and worked with Public Health staff to ensure that learning from 'Let's Talk' fed into the development of the corporate approach that has evolved to support residents in later lockdown phases. Resident participation staff have also benefited from training provided by Public Health - for example in 'making every contact count' (MECC) and mental health and domestic violence modules, helping to strengthen their capacity to support, and signpost, residents more effectively.
- 2.6 The project has equally highlighted the immense challenges some tenants and leaseholders face, with existing inequalities in health, income, and employment, and the impact of overcrowding, often exacerbated through the impact of Covid-19. Learning from this work will play an important role in shaping the approach to the resident engagement strategy, with a focus on developing approaches which promote inclusivity, and on new opportunities to invest participation funds to maximise benefits to our diverse communities.

Children and Young People Summer Programme

- 2.7 With schools closed from March to June and early research indicating that children and young people from deprived areas were more likely to be impacted adversely by the pandemic, we commissioned a summer programme for children and young people on our estates.
- 2.8 The programme, which was developed in conjunction with Young Hackney to prevent overlap and duplication of resources, was targeted across 12 estates, plus Hackney Marshes and Victoria Park, with five providers offering a range of activities over eight weeks. This engaged over 350 children and young people, and there was some success in reaching communities that we often fail to reach, including Jewish children on Sandford Court and those from Muslim communities on Nelson Mandela Estate. The youth projects at Nisbet House, Frampton Park, Jack Dunning, Nightingale, Kings Crescent, Hackney Marshes,

Victoria Park and Hawksley Court were also well attended across a range of age groups.

- 2.9 While the level of investment made in 2020/21 is unlikely to be sustainable in future years, we are looking to see how we can build on this work and respond to Young Future Commission 'asks' for young people to have a stronger voice in our formal resident engagement structures and for a young people's project fund. We are currently working with Young Hackney and the Young Futures Commission Officer Lead to progress this, including the development of a pilot peer research project on the Nightingale Estate.

Widening Resident Involvement

- 2.10 While there is an ongoing need to prioritise support and empowerment of currently under-represented estates, this year's focus has been on supporting our **78 registered tenants and tenant and resident associations (TRAs)**, with all contacted through spring/summer so we could better understand their support requirements and tailor our offer to the new operating environment. We have nonetheless made progress on widening involvement through a number of work areas highlighted below:

Residents' Estate Improvement Fund (REIF)

- 2.11 This year marked a significant shift in the way we promote engagement in making decisions about residents' estate funding, with a focus on widening involvement in the process.
- 2.12 Following consultation with the Resident Liaison Group (RLG), we agreed to rename the Resident Led Improvement Budget (RLIB), with its new name - the **Residents' Estate Improvement Fund (REIF)** - better reflecting that this £1 million pot of funding is earmarked to improve Hackney's estates and deliver the sort of improvement residents want to see. We also supplemented the traditional programme of estate walkabouts with a much wider programme of consultation, developed in partnership with other areas of Housing Services and the Council's Communications, Culture and Engagement Team. This included:
- Sending out an online survey form to encourage more residents to make suggestions and rank potential areas for improvement in order of importance, with a link to the survey text out to tenants and leaseholders we hold mobile numbers for (29, 241).
 - Circulating a paper copy of the survey in Our Homes newsletter, with prepaid reply slip
 - Publishing the consultation through Facebook, Twitter, e-newsletters and the Hackney Council website, with a link to the survey on Citizen's Space .
- 2.13 The survey generated a good response, with 805 responses, of which 798 were submitted online (see **Appendix 1**). Building Maintenance (who hold the REIF budget and manage programme planning and delivery) are now in the process of developing a programme based on feedback from the walkabouts and wider consultation. This will be shared with Area Panels and TRAs and posted on estate noticeboards. We will also text a link to the final programme to housing residents we hold a mobile number for, allowing them to view the results online.
- 2.14 Based on this exercise, we expect to continue to achieve 100 percent spend against the REIB over the current and next financial year. We will also use learning

from this work to better promote the community development fund in the next year, especially as in-year spending has been limited in 2020/ 21.

Targeting Under-Represented Areas

- 2.15 Targeted engagement work in Cazenove ward, an area with a well below average representation of TRAs, has helped to engage residents who are outside the formal structure and hear their concerns. This has included hosting zoom meetings to engage residents on Broad Common Estate, Avenue House and Nelson Mandela House, with meetings promoted through flyers delivered door-to-door, posters, email and texts. The team has also met with faith group leaders and are working with the Consultation and Engagement Team to improve awareness and engagement with the Orthodox Jewish community who are under-represented amongst our TRAs. As part of this work, we are encouraging more residents to apply and utilise grants from the Community Development Fund in 2021/22.
- 2.16 In our service planning for 2021/22, we are now looking at how to extend this approach, working in conjunction with the neighbourhood Area Panels.

Community Gardens and Grow Spaces

- 2.17 There are currently 55 grow spaces and community gardens across Hackney's estates. The Resident Participation Team plays an important role in supporting groups to establish new spaces, to secure internal / /external funding and corporate volunteering days to develop them, and provides training and support to ensure sustainability and inclusion. Partners in this work this year have included Hackney Street Scene, Groundwork, the Woodland Trust, Grounds Maintenance, Curved Earth, London Marathon and the Greater London Authority.
- 2.18 Through lockdown, these spaces have often provided much needed respite for residents, and offered a focal point for engagement and support - for example, Shrubland TRA has delivered vegetables / soup made from garden produce to households in need. Some new spaces have also been established this year, including those on Nelson Mandela and Shannon Court Estates, and work has continued to support the development of newer spaces on Colville and Welshpool Estates and improve some more established spaces.
- 2.19 We have also funded Cordwainers Grow CIC- a Hackney-based community group - to pilot an Easy Grow Greens project across four estates (Fellows Court, Amwell Court, Portland Rise and Linzell Estate). This introduced residents who had not been involved in green space initiatives to healthy food growing practices and promoted interest in developing grow spaces on estates. The project engaged 30 households, with 75 percent from Black and other ethnic communities. Building on this, steering groups of 7/ 8 residents are now looking to develop community grow spaces at both Amwell Court and Portland Rise.
- 2.20 The development of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy will provide new opportunities to further develop this area of work, though we are mindful of a need to ensure that any new initiatives are well-supported by estates residents.

Promoting Digital Inclusion

- 2.21 The pandemic has led to an increased reliance on digital engagement, and there has been some success in transitioning to new ways of working. For example, the Resident Liaison Group (RLG) has been meeting online regularly since June 2020,

and some of the Area Panels and TRAs have hosted successful meetings and kept in contact via whatsapp groups.

- 2.22 We have also used a range of digital tools to promote participation budgets and widen participation, provided direct training to involved residents, and linked TRAs to corporate ICT initiatives, such as the Digital Buddies scheme, which provides online 'how to' guides and can link someone to a trained young person to help with their digital or technical issue over the phone. TRAs can use their TRA support grants (up to £600 per annum) to purchase IT equipment and zoom licences, and via previous grants, many are already well-equipped.
- 2.23 Some participation activities have also moved online. For example, in the first lockdown we ran a number of exercise classes on myhackney.org and moved youth activities provided by Mentoring Lab and bicycle repair workshops online.
- 2.24 We are nonetheless aware that digital engagement is not universal, with feedback from many TRAs and the 13 Older People's Groups showing that some residents are not digitally confident and /or have concerns about holding meetings which may exclude others. We will therefore be using the development of the Resident Engagement Strategy to explore how we can better promote digital inclusion - with options including inter-generational and peer support schemes, silver surfer training sessions, and online guides, as well as mixed virtual /physical meetings.
- 2.25 The roll out of the 'Better Broadband' full fibre internet connectivity programme to Council homes and community halls over the next few years will further support this work, and we are working closely with ICT to plan and prioritise its delivery. Linked to this, we are also developing proposals with Hackney Works to run Adult Education classes from some community halls from September 2021 onwards, some of which may focus on digital skills development.

3. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF RESIDENT PARTICIPATION - FUTURE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 We have continued to make progress on the reorganisation of the Resident Participation Service and development of a new Resident Engagement Strategy for Housing Services.
- 3.2 As the Committee will recall, a formal restructure of the Resident Participation Service was in progress before lockdown, taking into account feedback from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) review. However, a corporate decision to halt work on restructures during the first lockdown delayed implementation, and we decided to revisit our proposals to take account of learning from (and the impact of) the pandemic, and more recent developments, including the publication of a new [Social Housing White Paper](#) in November 2020 and Black Lives Matter movement.
- 3.3 This further work has reaffirmed the broad emphasis on ensuring that the new service enables the 'voice of the tenant' to be heard in all aspects of service delivery and improvement, and provides meaningful opportunities for residents to influence and scrutinise strategy, policy, performance and standards. It has equally underlined a need to:
- **Further improve partnership working and networking skills** - the scale of vulnerability and need among a significant minority of tenants and leaseholders has been highlighted strongly through Covid. An effective response from Resident Participation will depend on working in partnership

with a range of services and agencies to address this e.g. by linking into wider work on employment, training, health and well-being, and regeneration that can support new project delivery and bring benefits to residents. With statutory partners increasingly delivering alongside a range of voluntary and community sector partners, all RP staff will need to have good navigation skills and to work in a solution focussed way with multiple stakeholders.

- **Use engagement to address inequality** - we have long recognised a need to develop better ways to engage different groups of residents, build a more granular understanding of their needs and aspirations, and put more focus on co-production of new initiatives. However, the pandemic and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement has made clear that the focus on the particular needs of certain groups - such as people from Black and ethnic communities and others with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 - needs to be strengthened further to ensure that all have a strong voice in shaping new proposals and derive equal benefit from the team's work.
- **Focus on resource generation** - with increased pressure on housing budgets, it will be important to make effective use of resources which are allocated to the team. Equally, with the flow of funding from the aerial masts diminishing, there needs to be greater focus on securing resources from other national and regional funders and diversifying the income base. With many bidding regimes focussed on grants to community-led and charitable groups, this will mean developing the capacity and capability of TRAs and other groups to develop successful bids (and ensure funding is managed effectively).
- **Create a service-wide culture of participation and empowerment** - *'The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper'*, puts a strong emphasis on improving resident engagement across the social housing sector. This includes proposals to strengthen consumer regulation, backed by inspection of larger social landlords (1000 plus homes) every four years. Responding to the demands posed by the White Paper will require a strong focus on developing a service culture characterised by openness, accountability, transparency and respect between tenant and landlord and a further strengthening of resident involvement in service delivery and improvement. While this is a 'whole service' responsibility, the Resident Participation Service will play an important role in identifying good practice, steering the development of a new Resident Engagement Strategy to shape our overall approach, and supporting the training and development of both involved residents and Housing Service staff.
- **Further develop the 'Whole Citizen Approach' to consultation and engagement** - In 2017 the Communications, Culture and Engagement Department began to develop and embed the corporate communications and engagement plan for the Council. As part of this, and the low numbers of 'tenant voices' on key strategic campaigns and consultations, it was felt that engagement with tenants and leaseholders needed to better reflect a full range of corporate issues and that the strong tenant-landlord relationship was not being utilised to give residents in the most vulnerable communities a say on matters that impacted them most. As such, the 'Whole Citizen Approach' for Housing Services began to emerge and joint working between Housing Services and corporate communications and engagement has been strengthened to drive improvements. The restructure needs to to further

develop this relationship so that the unique and often direct relationship between Council tenant or leaseholder and the Council as the landlord is utilised to give residents a strong voice on all of our corporate consultation and engagement work.

3.4 These issues have now been taken into account more fully in the revised service structure for the Resident Participation Team, with the new model including:

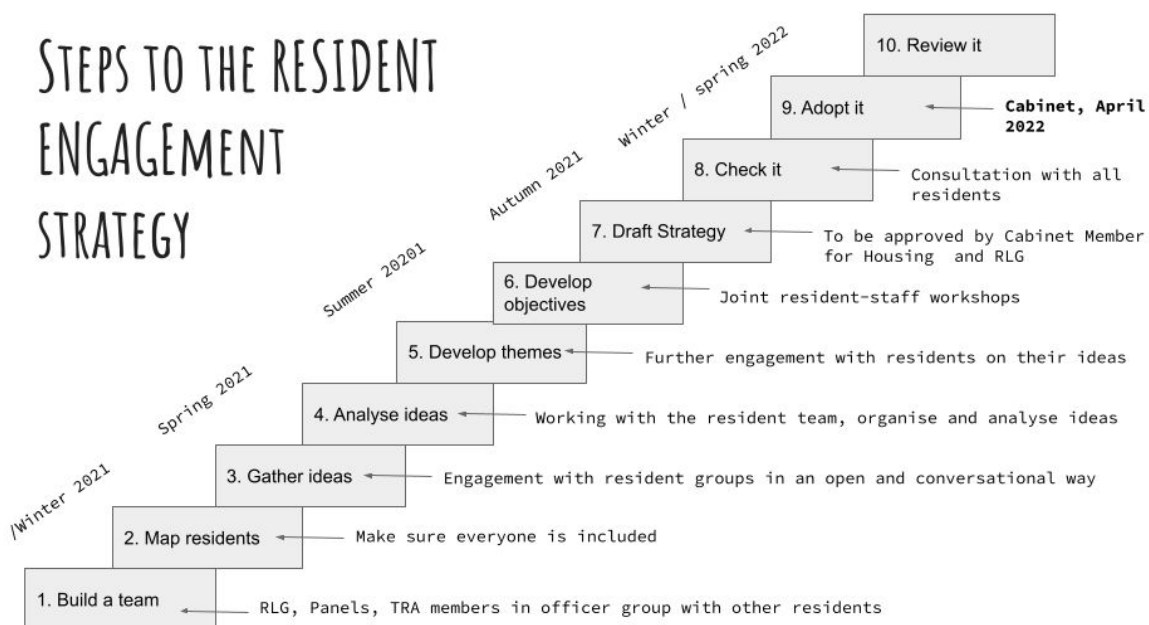
- **community and development resources** to support community project development and green projects, improve our engagement on regeneration projects, and allow more focus on leveraging in external grant funding;
- **a dedicated youth and community engagement role** to support delivery of Young Future Commission 'asks', to increase involvement of young people in service improvement and design, and to strengthen links with existing youth engagement work led by Young Hackney and the Young Futures Commission;
- **ongoing support to the involved structure**, with an enhanced focus on widening representation and diversity as part of our governance support and training and developmental roles;
- **resources to revitalise and develop the resident scrutiny function**, ensuring that residents are able to influence decision-making and review performance in key service areas; and
- **more formal links to the Council's Communications, Culture and Engagement Team**, designed to embed a stronger focus on building wider engagement of tenants and leaseholders into corporate initiatives and promote the 'Whole Citizen' approach on all consultation and engagement activity.

3.5 Staff consultation on these revised proposals concluded on 15 February 2021 and a final structure has now been agreed, with the new team expected to be fully operational by **June 2021**.

3.6 In parallel we have recently begun work on the development of a **new Resident Engagement Strategy for Housing Services**, co-produced with residents as equal partners. This work, which was delayed due to the pandemic, will be an important opportunity to promote an 'engagement positive' culture across the service, to build greater recognition of engagement as a service improvement tool, and ensure that attitudes and behaviours promote trust and mutual respect. While the process will be iterative - and ultimately be shaped around the concerns and issues that matter most to residents - we expect the strategy development process to:

- establish a clear vision for resident engagement, supported by clear principles, strategic aims and objectives;
- shape our menu of engagement and participation activities to maximise involvement and produce meaningful outcomes;
- consider new ways to improve resident satisfaction and increase representation across our estates;

- consider how we can improve the quality of information and communication to keep residents up-to- date and infomed;
- explore how we can further strengthen our relationship with our tenant management organisations and share good practice;
- improve how we consult with and report back to residents and show that we have taken their views into account;
- explore how other council services, and voluntary and community sector partners can support Housing residents to deliver community projects; and
- look at how we how can we better use of our resources (participation funds community halls, and digital tools) to support engagement and maximise community benefits;
- consider how we can strengthen performance management to ensure a clearer focus on value for money, social value and outcome monitoring;
- The strategy development process itself will be an important opportunity to engage with a wide range of residents, community groups and other stakeholders and to seek their views on how we can improve our ways of working across all areas of Housing Services. We are therefore working closely with the Communications, Culture and Engagement Team to ensure that we learn from recent strategic development work, including the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and Ageing Well Strategy, and make the approach as inclusive as possible. In order to maximise contributions, we currently envisage that the development process will take around 12 months, with a draft strategy published for consultation in Autumn 2021, with key steps set out below:



4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 As this report has demonstrated, 2020/21 has been a year of challenge and transition for the Resident Participation Service, with further progress on: widening engagement, promoting the digital agenda, the reorganisation of the service, and

the development of a new strategic framework to better guide service planning and prioritisation. The pandemic has in turn sharpened our focus on the inequalities many tenants and leaseholders face in relation to employment , health and systemic discrimination - and, more positively, highlighted the benefit of strong communities that can provide support, increase resilience and reduce isolation. In the year ahead, we will continue to consult and listen to our residents to better understand how we can build upon these strengths to further improve participation and engagement and contribute to both the wider corporate agenda to rebuild a better Hackney and the proposals set out in the White Paper.

Report Author: *Sara Kulay, Interim Head of Resident Participation, TMOs and Communities, Housing Services* *Email:* sara.kulay@hackney.gov.uk *Telephone:* 020 8356 1883

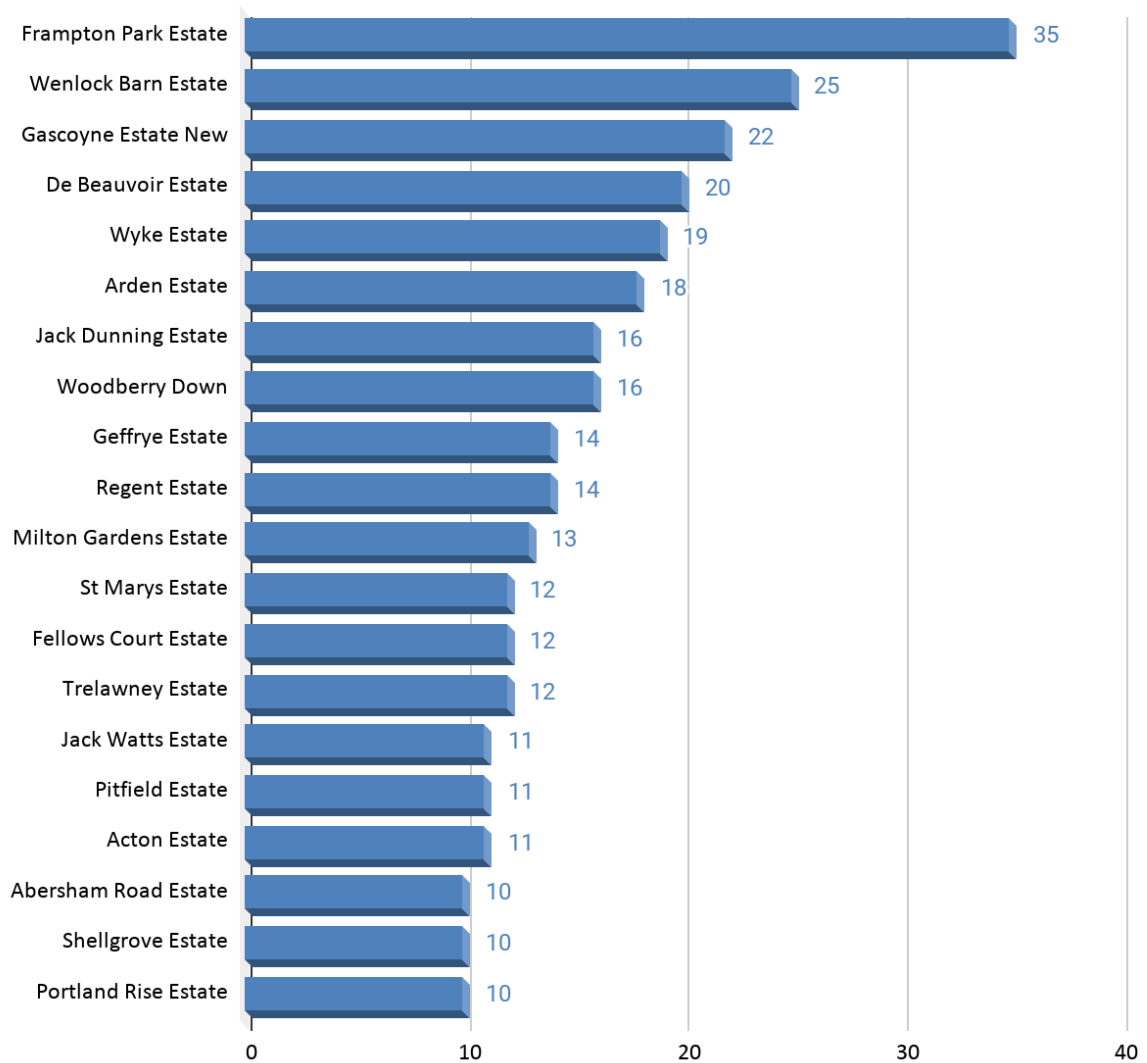
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APPENDIX ONE

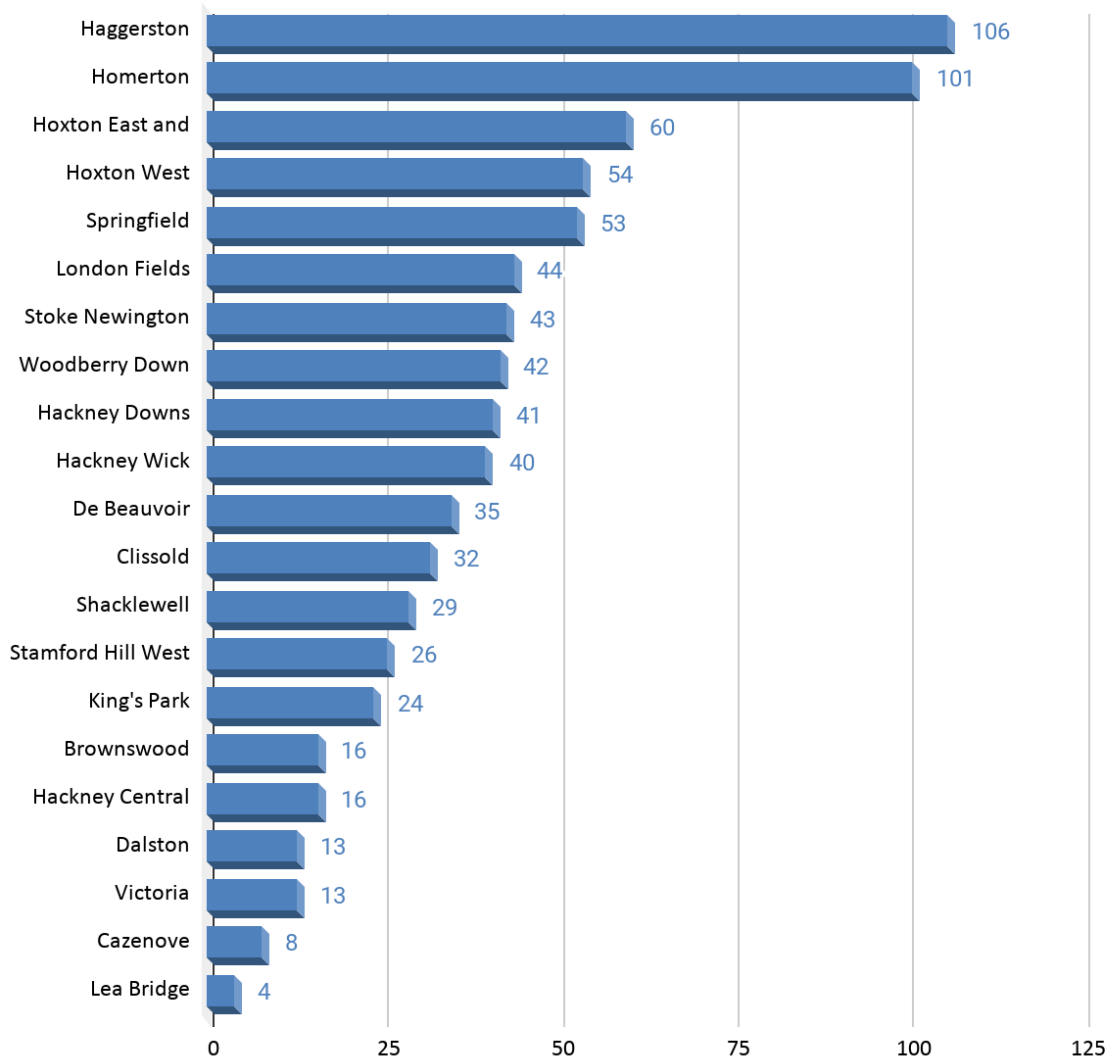
Residents' Estate Improvement Fund - Overview of results

What estate do you live in? (Base 805)

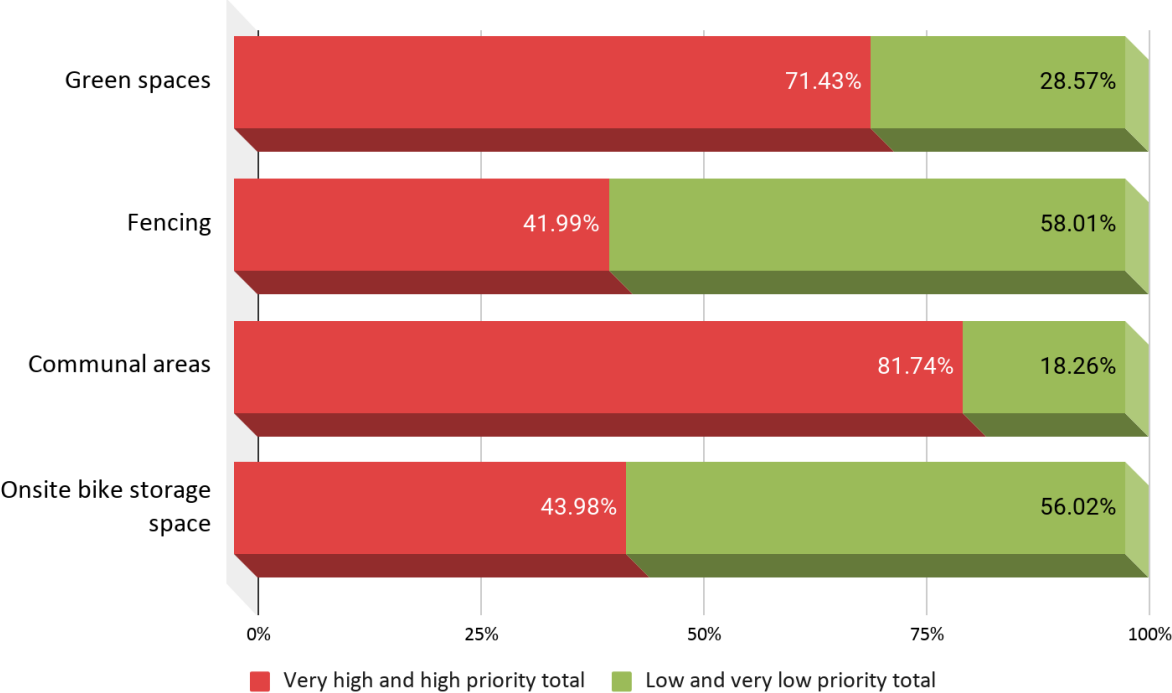
No. of respondents by Estate (10 or more responses)



No. of respondents by Ward



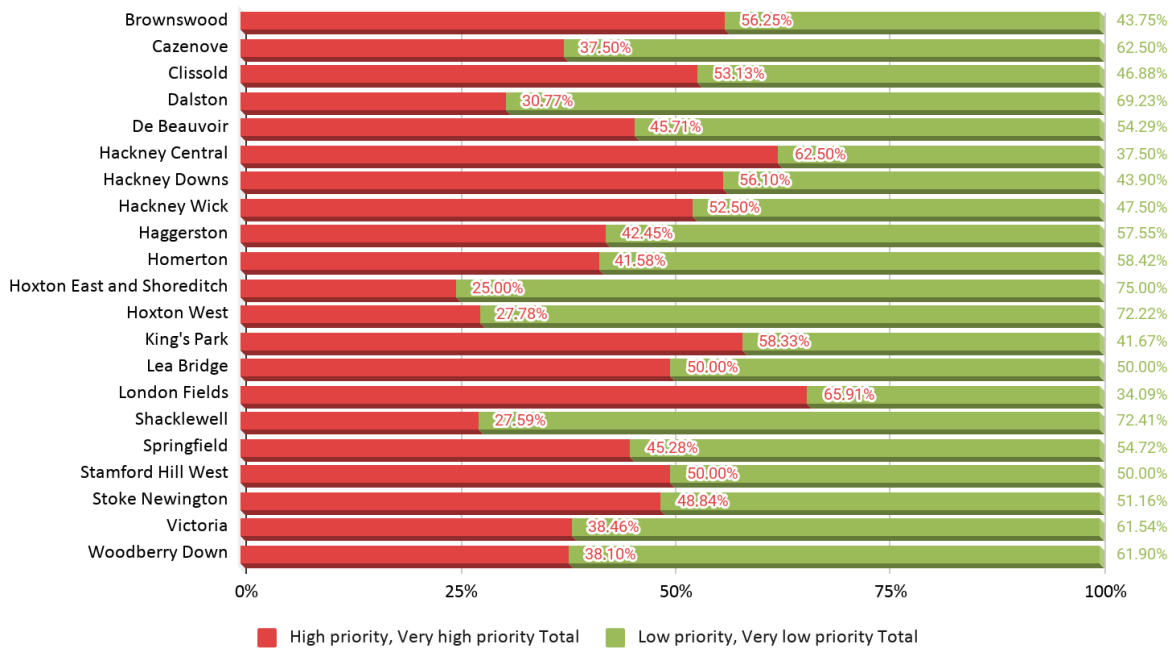
Thinking about where you live, what do you think are the most important areas for improvement? (Base 805)



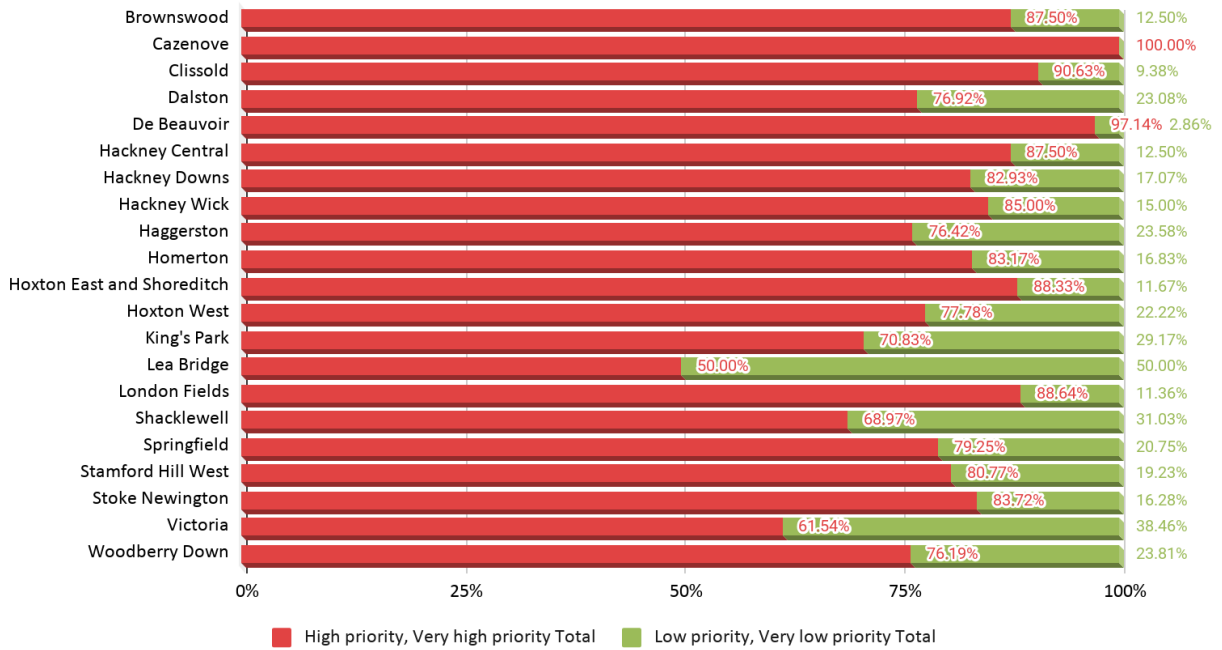
Cross-analysis of "Priority" vs "Ward" (Base 805)

<u>Ward</u>	<u>Count of responses</u>		<u>Ward</u>	<u>Count of responses</u>
Brownswood	16		Hoxton East and Shoreditch	60
Cazenove	8		Hoxton West	54
Clissold	32		King's Park	24
Dalston	13		Lea Bridge	4
De Beauvoir	35		London Fields	44
Hackney Central	16		Shacklewell	29
Hackney Downs	41		Springfield	53
Hackney Wick	40		Stamford Hill West	26
Haggerston	106		Stoke Newington	43
Homerton	101		Victoria	13
			Woodberry Down	42

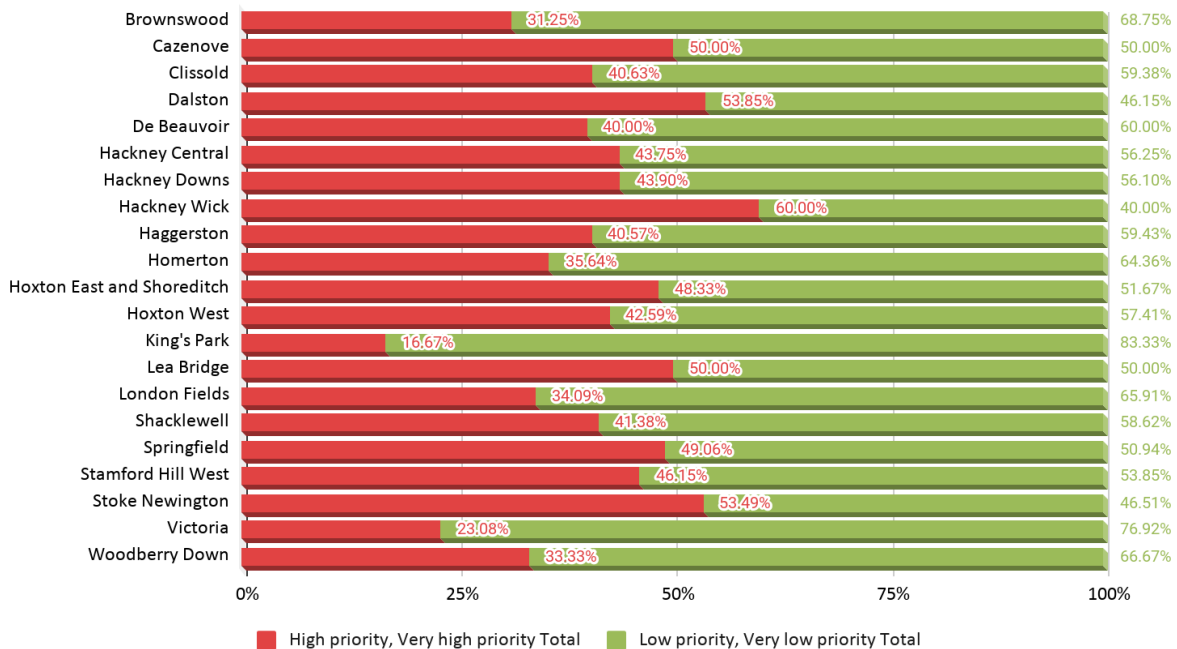
"What do you think are the most important areas for improvements - Onsite bike storage space" vs Ward



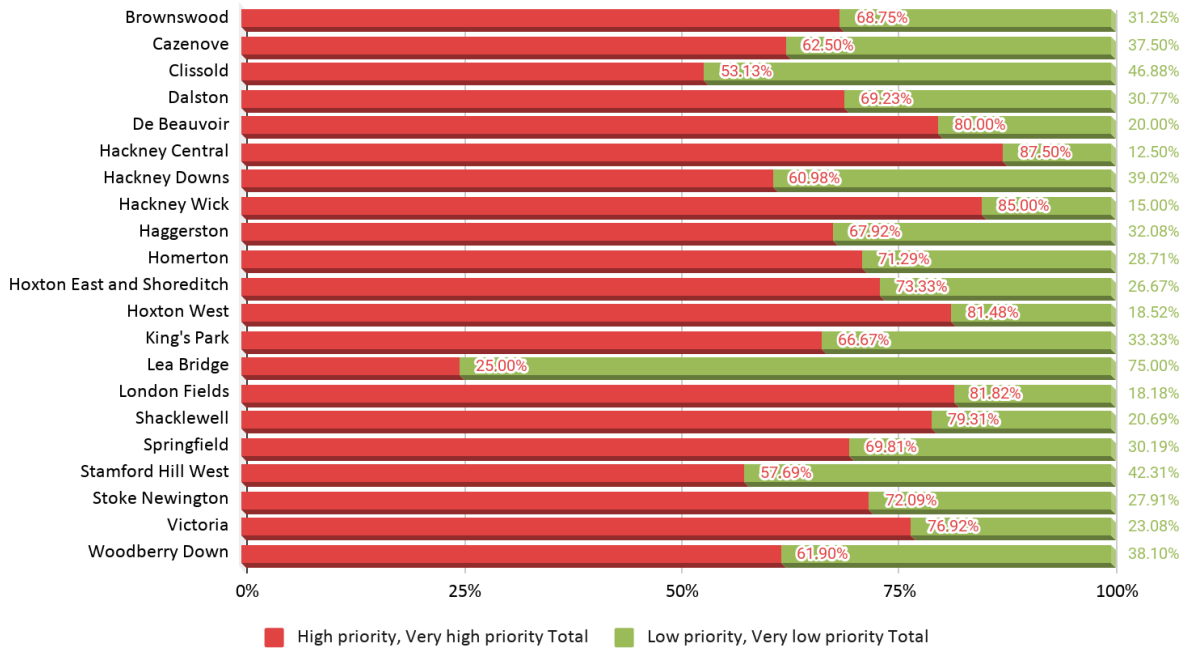
"What do you think are the most important areas for improvements - Communal areas" vs Ward



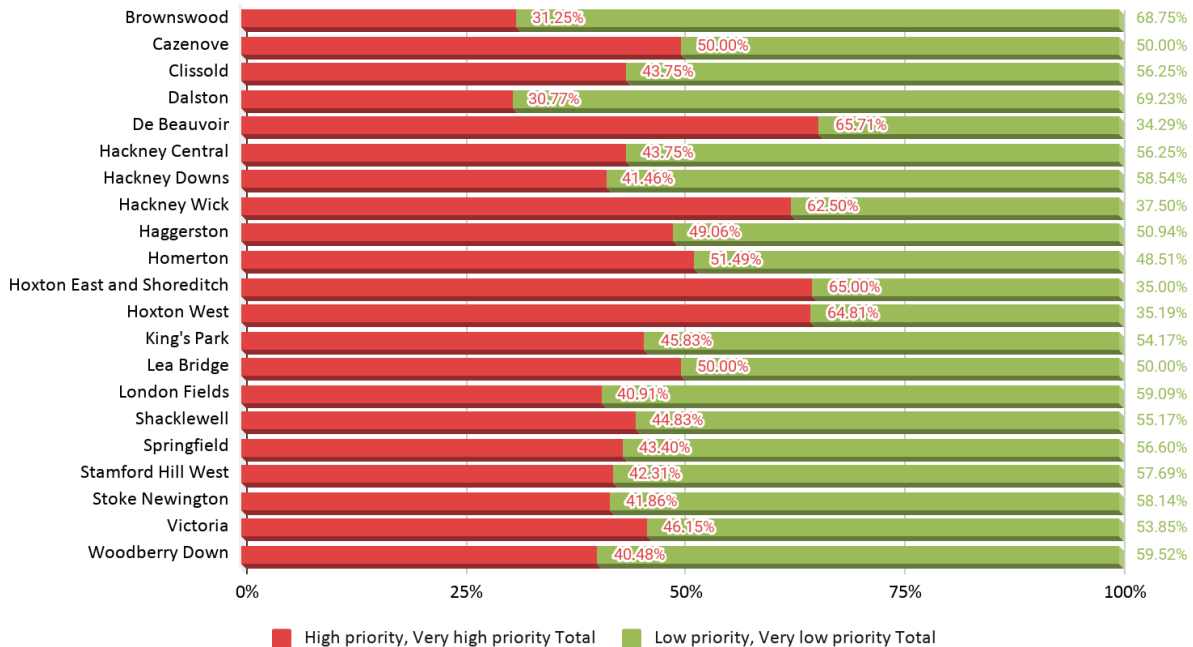
"What do you think are the most important areas for improvements - Fencing" vs Ward



"What do you think are the most important areas for improvements - Green spaces" vs Ward



"What do you think are the most important areas for improvements - Paving" vs Ward



What do you like about where you live? (744 comments)

<u>Key Theme</u>	<u>Count of mentions</u>
General satisfaction of neighbourhood they live in - clean, quiet, safe, the view	296
Location - close to amenities, work, schools, stations, bus stops, parks, etc.	266
Community/Diversity/Nice neighbours	209
Green space/Communal garden/Allotments	165
Negative comment/Suggestions	90
Playground area	30
Great staff - Cleaners, gardeners, caretakers	19
Closure to through traffic	7
Cycle lockers	6

If you have any other suggestions please add them here. It would really help us if you are as detailed as possible. (706 comments)

<u>Key theme</u>	<u>Count of mentions</u>
Block - Decorating/cleaning/improvements/etc.	191
Communal areas in blocks/estate	166
Communal garden/green space	156
CCTV/Security	128
Flat improvements	111
Playground/play area	107
Rubbish/Recycling	81
Bike Shed/lockers/storage	68
Parking	58
ASB issues	52
Estate roads/ access	52
Outside gym	20
Improvements to community hall	10
Drainage system	1

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Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 9th March 2021 Item 8 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting	Item No 8
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Outline

The draft minutes of the meeting of the 18th January 2021 and 11th February 2021.

Matter arising from 18th January 2021 meeting:**Action**

Action page 23 under point

Chair of Living in Hackney to draft formal response to Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and submit.

Response

A commission's response and comments were submitted formally to the Cabinet Member and officers on 12th February 2021.

Matter arising from 11th February 2021 meeting:**Action**

Page 24 action under 7.4.

The Chair and Overview and Scrutiny Officer to send out the invite requests to MPS Borough Command Unit Police, IOPC, MET HQ and MOPAC for the June 2021 meeting.

Response

Invitations have been sent out.

Action

The Commission are asked to review and agree the minutes, and to note the responses to actions arising from previous meetings.

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London Borough of Hackney
Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission
Municipal Year 2020/21
Date of meeting Monday, 18 January 2021

Minutes of the proceedings of
the Living in Hackney Scrutiny
Commission held at
Hackney Town Hall, Mare
Street, London, E8 1EA

Chair	Cllr Sharon Patrick
Councillors in Attendance:	Cllr Sade Etti, Cllr Anthony McMahon, Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone Cllr Penny Wrout, Cllr Anna Lynch
Apologies:	
Officers in Attendance	Aled Richards (Director of Public Realm), Ian Holland (Head of Leisure, Parks and Green Spaces), Sam Parry (Parks Development Manager), Karol Jakubczyk (Strategic Planning Manager), Matthew Carrington, (Strategic Delivery Manager) and David Padfield (Interim Director of Housing)
Other People in Attendance	Sam Griffiths (AECOM Senior Landscape Architect), Phil Glanville (Mayor of Hackney)
Members of the Public	None
Officer Contact:	Tracey Anderson ☎ 0208 356 3312 ✉ tracey.anderson@hackney.gov.uk

Councillor Sharon Patrick in the Chair

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 No Apologies for absence.
- 1.2 Apologies for lateness from Cllr Anthony McMahon.

2 Urgent Items/ Order of Business

- 2.1 There was no urgent items, and the order of business was as per the agenda.

3 Declaration of Interest

- 3.1 Cllr Rathbone declared he is the Chair of Hackney Parks Forum.

4 Green infrastructure in Hackney and Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

- 4.1 In attendance at the meeting for this item from AECOM, Senior Landscape Architect, Sam Griffiths. From London Borough of Hackney in attendance at the meeting for this item was the Mayor of Hackney, Phil Glanville; Director of Public Realm, Aled Richards; Head of Leisure, Parks and Green Spaces, Ian Holland; Parks Development Manager, Sam Parry; Strategic Planning Manager, Karol Jakubczyk; Matthew Carrington, Strategic Delivery Manager and Interim Director of Housing, David Padfield.
- 4.2 This discussion item would be looking at the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.
- 4.3 The Chair opened this item and explained the green infrastructure strategy is much more than a strategy for the provision of the traditional 'green space' of parks and gardens. Green infrastructure (GI) is integral and essential to the borough's resilience, meeting its future challenges and the delivery of its wider strategies, both at a community and individual level. To maximise the benefits of Green Infrastructure the Council is proposing to interlink 3 strategies / plans.
- 4.3.1 The presentation covered the draft Hackney Green Infrastructure Strategy providing a short overview of the vision, baseline and needs, objectives, opportunities, projects and initiatives.
- 4.3.2 In addition to the GI strategy a new strategy was being developed for parks and greens spaces. The draft Parks and Green Spaces Strategy was out to consultation and due to close on 18th Jan 2021.
- 4.3.3 Although there is no statutory requirement to produce a parks strategy the Council is committed to continuing to deliver improvements to its parks and green spaces. The last strategy covering the management of Hackney parks was the Hackney Parks Strategy 2008-2013.
- 4.3.4 As part of the consultation process the views of the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission are being sought as the Council develops its Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.
- 4.4 The Director of Public Realm from LBH commenced the presentation with the following opening remarks.
- 4.4.1 The council has recognised the significant impact the green infrastructure can have on achieving its vision. This work is a high priority and incorporated within the Council's environmental services work to improve the green infrastructure across the borough, improving the linkages between the various green infrastructures.
- 4.4.2 Currently there are huge challenges such as climate change. The green infrastructure has an important role in, for example, cooling the urban environment, reducing temperatures by planting large canopy trees to help to improve air quality.
- 4.4.3 The pandemic has highlighted the importance of green infrastructure and spaces for residents both for their physical and mental health wellbeing. The work now is to link all the strategies together and put in place a robust strategy

to get community food growing and enable access to nature. This has shown to have a beneficial impact on mental wellbeing.

- 4.4.4 During the pandemic, the council has seen more use of its parks and open spaces than ever before. Last year this high usage raised issues. But it also highlighted they are a vital resource for residents in the borough, many of whom do not have access to outside space.
- 4.4.5 The officer explained by linking the parks together it will help to improve the current infrastructure for cycling, walking to improve health of population.
- 4.4.6 The officer pointed out to maximise the benefits of the green infrastructure the council is preparing 3 documents that will interlink.
1. Green Infrastructure strategy
 2. Parks and Greens Spaces Strategy
 3. Nature recovery plan – key mechanism to help monitor and prioritise nature recovery in the borough.
- 4.5 In relation to Hackney's Green Infrastructure Strategy the Strategic Delivery Manager from LBH opened with the following main points.
- 4.5.1 The council commissioned the work to deliver on the manifesto commitment which was the green infrastructure plan, and this was also referenced in the open spaces assessment that informed the Local Plan (LP33).
- 4.5.2 AECOM were commissioned in Feb 2021 to work with the council to develop the green infrastructure strategy. The council also commissioned London Wildlife Trust to deliver a nature recovery plan and review sites for nature conservations.
- 4.5.3 The GI strategy will align with the template for London and follow the new guidance being issued by the GLA. The officer pointed out Hackney is one of the first London boroughs to align with the template. It also identifies the structure for other operational plans like the nature recovery plan. The Council is also one of the first local authorities to undertake a nature recovery plan.
- 4.5.4 Developing the GI strategy has involved key stakeholder from the GLA and staff members from planning and parks and green spaces as part of a working group. This work has also featured in wider working advisory groups that have involved housing regeneration, housing development etc.
- 4.5.5 The council has undertaken some initial public engagement with stakeholder groups like Hackney Biodiversity Partnership and stakeholders involved in nature recovery. The council is planning to do more engagement over the coming month and is currently in dialogue with external organisations.
- 4.5.6 The Senior Landscape Architect from AECOM advised they have been working with Hackney Council staff for the last 12 months to develop the Green Infrastructure strategy. The officer outlined the proposed Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- 4.5.7 The strategy will cover all the boroughs green assets such as:
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and parks

- Amenity grassland around housing estates
- Woodlands
- Street trees
- Gardens
- Public realm
- Built green features
- Wetlands and waterways.

4.5.8 Although these are all individual assets when joined together, they become the green infrastructure network. This network can be planned, designed and managed to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits.

4.5.9 The strategy will incorporate the following:

- **Context:** establishes the case for green infrastructure in Hackney
- **Baseline and needs analysis:** provide an understanding of existing assets that comprise Hackney's current green infrastructure network. Identify deficiencies to focus resources.
- **Vision:** states how the borough should change over the period up to 2040.
- **Objectives:** providing specific details of the vision.
- **Opportunities:** for the realisation of the objectives, identifying the parties and mechanisms best placed to bring about change.
- **Proposals:** lists specific interventions that should be implemented to realise the vision (streets and parks etc).
- **Forward Plan:** identifies the priority tasks.

4.5.10 In relation to the context. The reasons for developing a green infrastructure were outlined to be:

- Health and Wellbeing - Outdoor air pollution, urban heat, Covid-19, cardiovascular disease are areas where the green infrastructure can help.
- To tackle climate change - Climate Change is the key factor underpinning this work. An emergency declaration was made in July 2019, committing to do everything in Hackney's power to deliver net zero emissions.
- Nature Recovery – is a key element aligning with the Environment Bill. Space for nature to thrive.
- Sustainable Growth – Hackney is expected to experience a high percentage population change. It is estimated 279,700 people in 2019 will increase to 320,000 by 2033, and 335,000 by 2041.
- Benefits of Green Infrastructure – more liveable infrastructure.

4.5.11 They commenced this work looking beyond the borough boundary. The key assets on borough boundaries are Lee Valley Regional Park, Victoria Park (in Tower Hamlets), Finsbury Park and the Waterways – River Lea, Regents Canal and the New River. These are all primary corridors through urban landscape.

4.5.12 The presentation showed a graph showing green cover comparing boroughs using GLA data from heat mapping. This shows how much of the borough is green. Hackney is about 38% green.

- 4.5.13 The officer pointed out Hackney has approximately 739 hectares of green cover comprising of:
- Parks and green spaces.
 - Sites of importance for nature conservation
 - Trees and woodlands
 - Rivers and wetlands
 - Green roofs
 - Domestic gardens.
- 4.5.14 In reference to parks and green spaces. 3/4s of Hackney residents rely on these as their primary open spaces. However, in the borough 7 wards in the west of Hackney are deficient in access to open space. Highlighting that the distribution of parks is not even across the borough.
- 4.5.15 The officer explained there can be a compromise of ecological function following the need to provide a wide range of functions and leisure use. Pointing out sometime the ecological function can be lost or compromised by other demands.
- 4.5.16 In relation to trees and woodlands Hackney's coverage is 23% with over 350 species of trees in the borough. Parks and domestic gardens are key assets. Street trees are a valuable tool in forming the linkages they would like to see.
- 4.5.17 In relation to rivers and wetlands there are 9 critical drainage areas prone to flooding during severe weather. This is a type of green infrastructure that could be used to minimize the risk of flooding.
- 4.5.18 Although no detailed information was provided about green roofs and domestic gardens (because they are harder to map) they are still very important to the GI.
- 4.5.19 After mapping Hackney's GI it was assessed as:
- The borough enjoys a good level of green cover overall
 - The waterways comprise the key green corridors
 - The network is largely fragmented. There are areas of low quality greening that could be enhanced to provide wider benefits
 - The south western part of the borough is typically the most in need of enhancement
 - There are gaps in the network, particularly the strategic road network and commercial areas
 - There is some compromise in quality where sites serve both ecological and recreational purposes.
- 4.5.20 The draft vision for the strategy is '*By 2040 Hackney will be a series of liveable neighbourhoods that are resilient to the effects of climate change, provide a network for wildlife to thrive and promote the physical and mental health of its residents.*'
- 4.5.21 The draft objectives of the GI strategy were noted to be:
Objective 1 – Improve residents' health and wellbeing.

- Promote active travel and more parks. If more parks and green spaces is not possible can they promote green links to existing networks
- If there are constraints on space can they provide new cul-de-sac pocket parks in some areas with least provision
- Minimising air and noise pollution through integrating new strategic planting.

Objective 2 - To become more resilient to the effects of climate change. The climate is changing and bringing new challenges in terms of weather and adaptation. Expanding the sustainable urban drainage system (SuDS) network to cope in flooding events, particularly having multi-functional green SuDS. Protecting existing tree canopy will provide shading to help mitigate the urban heat island effect and attenuate surface water. Although the officer pointed out they need to diversify the plant stock to have an elevated level of bio security. In addition to a promotion of urban greening. Particularly promoting green roofs and green walls for future new developments to help regulate the temperature.

Objective 3 - To increase green infrastructure provision in areas of deficiency in green open space. In areas like Shoreditch, Dalston, De Beavouir and Haggerston.

Objective 4 - To increase ecological connectivity between the existing network of nature conservation sites for people and wildlife.

- Protecting the best ecological assets;
- Securing net gains for biodiversity;
- Prioritising locally native plants;
- Reducing the application of pesticides;
- Implementing biosecurity measures;
- Improving the quality and extent of the most valuable habitats;
- Establishing a local nature recovery network.

Objective 5 - To maximise delivery of green infrastructure through increased collaboration between internal departments, and between the Council and key external partners. Interdepartmental coordination

- Collaboration with key land owners
- Working with neighbouring boroughs
- Working with the community groups.

4.5.22 The council recognise the green infrastructure will span a number of administrations and boundaries but is in the interest of everybody.

4.5.23 If the council is to deliver this coherent network, then there needs to be communication between all the different groups and stakeholder who might put forward schemes.

4.5.24 In terms of opportunities the GI strategy also provides some strategic opportunities these are:

- 1) Enhancement of existing networks particularly parks and green spaces
 - Hackney's Parks
 - Hackney's Estates and green spaces around housing estates
 - Expansion of Tree Network
- 2) Transforming streets and the public realm

- Low Traffic Neighbourhoods
- Cul-de-sac Pocket Parks
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- Expansion of Street Tree Network

- 3) Urban Greening – embedded within the LP33 particularly around polices and initiatives like the urban greening factor and urban space requirements. Urban greening of existing and new buildings and developments is a key way to realise some of these objectives.
- 4) The enhancement and creation of green links. This is primarily the rivers and waterways. They can look to introduce a number of green links through exploiting opportunities that can be joined up.
 - River Lea
 - Regent's Canal
 - New River
 - New green links.
- 5) Mobilisation of citizens and community groups. This is bringing groups together to feed into a coherent set of goals and objectives.
 - Community groups
 - One off volunteers.

4.5.25 In relation to the proposals the emerging proposals with different departments to achieve the vision were outlined to be:

- SPATIAL FRAMEWORK - A mapping that identifies the priority locations for interventions needed to establish an integrated network.
- There will need to be a shift in organisational structures and how they use policy linked to a number of INITIATIVES.
- Lastly a series of PROJECTS which are practical things that need to happen on the ground to enable the network to be realised over the coming years.

4.5.26 The forward plan will highlight the key projects that are a priority for the next 5-10 years.

4.6 The Parks Development Manager presented the information about the draft Parks and Green Spaces Strategy that was out for public consultation. The main points noted from the presentation were:

4.6.1 The strategy will be implemented this year.

4.6.2 The Parks and Green Space services is responsible for 58 parks in the borough and from next year the service will soon incorporate approximately 200 council housing green spaces too.

4.6.3 The Parks and Green Spaces Strategy will guide their work over the next 10 years and will cover both parks and housing green spaces. The document is high level with guiding principles instead of documenting a series of specific improvement projects.

- 4.6.4 The draft strategy was developed following extensive engagement with local people.
- 4.6.5 There were a number of drivers as to why a new parks and green strategy was being introduced. Firstly, the council has not had a strategy since 2013. Secondly the other drivers were noted to be:
- New technology – drones and electric scooters
 - Austerity – cuts to public services
 - Increased interest in the environment and concern about the use of chemicals
 - Plastic use
 - Air pollution
 - Climate change
 - More people cycling through parks
 - Expecting new facilities and services in parks such as outdoor gyms
 - More professional dog walkers using the parks
 - Increased interest in biodiversity - people expecting a quicker response
 - Taking on housing green spaces this year.
- 4.6.6 The Parks and Green Spaces Strategy will sit under the Green Infrastructure Strategy and alongside the Nature Recovery Plan.
- 4.6.7 Discussion started in early 2020 meeting with stakeholders to get their views on what they wanted to see in the strategy. Following these meetings, they identified categories which were transformed into chapters in the strategy.
- 4.6.8 The officer highlighted the main themes and structure of the strategy and explained it outlined the process for development - comprising of focus groups, research and engagement. It was noted the document was produced in a easy to read format because they wanted the general public to read and understand it.
- 4.6.9 After dialogue with stakeholders 3 main themes were created in the strategy.
- 1) Work with communities
 - 2) Activation of parks and green spaces
 - 3) Environmental sustainability – the green spaces and the service.
- 4.6.10 Under work with communities – this theme emerged because local people wanted to engage with them more. Feedback identified people wanted to be more involved. Although they have a few volunteers in their parks they want to expand this. One of their commitments is to appoint a dedicated volunteering officer to oversee a comprehensive and intergenerational volunteering programme for Hackney’s parks. The aim being to see young people volunteer in their parks and progress to employment in their parks.
- 4.6.11 The officer highlighted they do a lot of engagement on parks and green spaces currently and would like to expand this area of work. The service would also like to see the park user groups actively involved in looking after green spaces. The service would also like to involve young people in the design of their response to climate emergency and the improvement in the facilities in their parks.

- 4.6.12 There are a total of 10 commitments under this theme and those noted at the meeting were:
- 1/ Involve young people in designing our response to the climate emergency, children's play spaces, sports provision and informal socialising spaces.
 - 4/ Engage local communities, residents and tenants in improvements that affect their local parks and housing green spaces, with continued engagement from outset to delivery, with a special effort made to reach and hear from underrepresented groups.
 - 6/ Develop a skills/employment pathway, creating opportunities for structured career progression, and an extensive training programme for our staff.
 - 7/ Appoint a dedicated Volunteering Officer to oversee a comprehensive and intergenerational volunteering programme in Hackney's parks and green spaces.
 - 10/ Develop a work experience and apprenticeship programme and explore supported opportunities for people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- 4.6.13 Activation of parks and green spaces - under this theme they want to make it easier for residents to plan and host appropriate community and cultural events. In their engagement with stakeholders several groups feedback that it was difficult for them to host events currently. The process was bureaucratic and difficult to navigate and largely unknown.
- 4.6.14 The service area wants to create a design guide to inform the development of parks and green spaces including play areas. The creation of a criteria is to help bring transparency to the investment in parks and green spaces, so residents understand how the money is spent. Although there are some cafes and food outlets in parks people want to see more. In addition, the council is receiving a number of requests from artist to put on exhibitions and permanent sculptures in parks.
- 4.6.15 There are a total of 10 commitments under this theme and those noted at the meeting were:
- 13/ Make it easier for residents to plan and host appropriate community and cultural events in parks and green spaces.
 - 16/ Create a design guide to inform the development of parks and green spaces, including play areas.
 - 17/ Create criteria for investing in parks, sports facilities and play improvements.
 - 18/ Expand the provision of cafes and food outlets in parks and green spaces.
 - 19/ Develop a Hackney Parks and Green Spaces Public Art and Culture Strategy and Policy to secure investment to deliver more public art and culture.
- 4.6.16 Environmental sustainability - this theme came through strongly in the engagement sessions. This covers 2 main areas firstly responding to the biodiversity crisis and secondly responding to the climate emergency. Currently a lot of the green waste collected is taken out of the borough and composted. They want to re-use more of the green waste locally. There are local initiatives like Haggerston Park reusing more green waste on the site and they would like to expand this initiative.

4.6.17 The service area has received interest from groups wanting to support the delivery of creating more wild areas across all parks and green spaces.

4.6.18 The use of glyphosate is a concern to residents, and they want them to go further by reviewing all the chemicals they use. Currently the council is using 50% less glyphosate than it did a few years ago and there is a no spray zone being trailed in the E5 postcode.

4.6.19 There are a total of 10 commitments under this theme and those noted at the meeting were:

21/ Work towards becoming a Zero Carbon service by 2031.

22/ Aim to re-use more green waste within parks and green spaces.

26/ Increase biodiversity across Hackney in line with the emerging Local Nature Recovery Plan, creating more wild areas across all parks and green spaces.

27/ Eliminate all annual planting and replace it with more sustainable and drought tolerant planting schemes.

28/ Significantly reduce the use of Glyphosate and continue to explore alternatives.

29/ Follow the recommendations of the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy where they relate to parks and green spaces, including identifying opportunities to connect parks and green spaces together.

4.6.20 The document will cover a 10-year period. Each year they will produce an action plan which will provide more details about what they will be delivering each year. Progress will be reported annually through annual reports.

4.6.21 Timeline for next steps is:

- Consultation Nov- Jan 2021
- Finalising Strategy Feb 2021
- Finalising action plan for year Feb 2021
- Strategy approved by Cabinet April 2021
- Implementation April 2021
- Annual report published Jan 2022.

4.7 Questions, Answers and Discussions

(i) In reference to the consultation Members asked how members of the public were informed about the consultation for the strategy being online. Members wanted to understand who has been told the consultation is live. Members pointed out responses rates might be impacted by the pandemic, schools being closed, limited access to youth clubs etc. Members asked if young people, TRAs and TMOs knew about the consultation and if they were consulted. Members referred to the digital divide and raised concerns about a consultation of this significance only being online. Highlighting during Covid people may not be aware of the consultation.

The Parks Development Manager from LBH confirmed they have not been able to do as many face to face meetings during the consultation period as they had hoped. However, they did manage to have a number of physical meetings before the latest restrictions were implemented. So they did have some meetings with groups and individuals face to face.

The consultation was published in Hackney Today and they have put up hundreds of posters and banners in the parks and on housing estates.

The council met with the Resident Liaison Group (RLG) to speak to housing tenant representatives. They have received approximately 600 responses. The officer pointed out this is a high response rate for a consultation of this type.

The officer added If people were not online, they could contact the service area and they would send out a hard copy to people who do not have the ability to respond online.

- (ii) **Members asked if the council will provide more information about the links between the GI and P&G strategy. Highlighting there is some overlap between the two strategies. Members want to know how they planned to create a unified strategy to make sure everyone works together for the borough, how it will be managed and how the different sections of the council will work together – streetscene, parks, planning etc. Members asked for more information about the progress and was seeking assurance that everyone was on board with the work objectives and vision.**

In response the Parks Development Manager informed it was beneficial that they would be delivering the two strategies at the same time along with the replacement biodiversity strategy. The development of the strategies simultaneously has required liaising with each other throughout the process. The GI strategy mentions the parks and green spaces strategy and vice versa. The officer highlighted the park and green spaces strategy only covers parks and housing estate green spaces. It does not include streets or any of the other elements mentioned in the presentation for the GI strategy.

The Strategic Delivery Manager added when they set up the project advisory groups, they put together a breath of people from across the council. Doing the nature recovery plan has helped them to understand that area better. The officer often highlighted the timelines for the different documents do not align. The officer pointed out when people see the 2 documents, they will see the relationships between the parks and green spaces strategy and the GI strategy. When all 3 documents are viewed you can see how they link. This is the advantage of doing them all at the same time and in a sequential way.

The council is aware there is strong community interest around parks and green spaces, and they want to harness this interest to the maximum benefit for the communities. Doing all the documents together has been a positive experience and they have learnt from it. The other critical element is the engagement with members of the public and finding out their interests. Producing the documents in a similar time frame has maximised the benefits.

The AECOM officer reiterated a key objective of the GI strategy is to set up mechanism for departments and stakeholders to work together. This collaboration and work will need to continue once the documents are finalised.

- (iii) **The Chair commented there was an example of this joint working in her ward for the new playground in Millfields Park which is on the edge of**

Millfields estate. This is a demonstration of the joint working. This is welcomed because the playground has been redundant for many years.

The Head of Leisure, Parks and Green Spaces from LBH agreed this was a good example. The officer pointed out there was a demand from park users for a new play area in the south of Millfields in addition to tenants on the Millfield estate wanted the play area replaced. This was taken out of use following health and safety concerns.

After considering all the options they concluded it would not be best use of resources to put 2 play areas within 10-15 meters of each other. Therefore, they decided to work together to deliver a play area that was accessible by both residents and park users. This should be complete in the next couple of months.

The Director of Public Realm added all of the work streams – streetscene, pocket parks and the work in Dalston Colvestone Crescent are all integrated into the public realm climate change agenda. They are all working and co-There is partnership working with housing, residents and tenants to develop these schemes rather than taking a top-down approach. The Director hoped this would give Members reassurance that all the pocket parks and greening of cul-de-sacs linked into the green infrastructure. Resulting in all the various public realm environmental services linking into the work stream.

- (iv) In relation to the parks and green spaces strategy Members asked the following questions and made the following comments**
- a) Referred to 2040 and the expected growth in terms of the volume of park users. Members asked if the strategy would be able to address the long-term volume of users in the future.**
 - b) Members asked if it was possible to have a complete park that catered for a range of users e.g., in Clissold Park there is an area for the children with animals etc and the cafe. Members wanted to know if there could also be an area that is designated for young people. The Member pointed out not all young people want to play football or rugby. The Member encouraged the council to think more broadly about other activities that can be included. Although the questions were directed at young people's provision. The Member encouraged the council to look at a range of activities across all age groups. A park that will enable a parent to look after younger children, older children, grandchildren but will also be of interest to the adults too.**
- (v) Members asked for more information about the volunteers' programme referenced in the strategy and asked if the service area would be working in partnership with Hackney Works. Enquiring if this programme would be independent or in conjunction with Hackney Works.**
- (vi) In reference to sustainability and the environment Members asked about having honeybees – not necessarily in parks but in green spaces and woodland. If possible, could this be considered as a future investment - Hackney honey.**

- (vii) Members referred to page 8 point 3.13 in the report and asked about the council's commitment to this and the approximate timescale that would be needed to start the process if an organisation wanted to run an event next year. Members suggested a timeline was added to this commitment so that people would be aware how long the process should take.**
- (viii) In reference to use of space and expanding the provision of food and drink. Members agreed it would be good to have more tea/coffee places in the parks. Members acknowledged there have been challenges with letting spaces. But Members wanted to know how much local people could be involved in that process. The Member has had enquires from local residents about operating a tea bar in a park.**
- (ix) Linked to the above question Members also asked how the council would keep residents involved in the parks in different ways. In essence how they can activate more people in the parks and involve more diverse communities through all these activities.**
- (x) Members referred to food growing on estates as referenced in the strategy and asked if they could use part of a park or green spaces to grow food. Thinking about the pandemic and the impact Brexit is having on vegetable and fruits coming into the UK. Members suggested it might be beneficial to encourage more vegetable growing etc.**
- (xi) The Chair reiterated the Members points about diverse communities and pointed out from her regular use of local parks she had noticed very little diversity in park users. Members commented they want to make sure everyone feels welcome to use the parks.**

The Chair also referred to the Members previous points about young people and added although there is great provision for under 5 years and primary school, in their view there is a deficit of provision for young people above primary school age and teenagers. Members suggested widening the offer.

The Chair also highlighted the areas with green gyms and various equipment did not have labelling to explain how to use them or give instructions.

The Chair also asked for the Green Infrastructure to think about where communities can meet. Noting street pocket parks were used by the local community in that street to socialise because they did not have a community hall. The Chair suggested consideration was given to something similar for young people to enable them to meet so they do not cause any disturbance to other residents. Pointing out if they congregated on the estate around stairs they get moved on and if they on the streets there is a risk they can get stopped by the police. The Chair urged for more thinking about facilities for young people and where they can meet safely together. The Member pointed out the council has excellent youth clubs, but they cannot cater for all the youth in the borough.

In response the Head of Leisure, Parks and Green Spaces advised in reference to food growing the reason the strategy is focused on food growing in estates is they are of the view it would be more successful and there is already great work and an existing network of work by the housing team in developing this area. They already have a shortage of green spaces. If they were to put food growing in parks and green spaces, they can end up becoming restricted spaces for the people involved in the food growing and not necessarily accessible spaces for the wider community. Therefore they conclude this initiative is more successful directed at housing estates. The officer pointed out the council does have 3 food growing sites in their parks and green spaces with growing communities. They are:

- Clissold Park
- Alan Gardens
- Springfield Parks.

In reference to many of the questions above about (making the space inclusive, how to design them to appeal to a wider range of users) the officer referred to an example as his response.

The officer cited the refurbishment of Shoreditch Park. This process is an example of how they intend to approach future parks projects. They started with a blank sheet of paper and went out to the local community. They held a few consultation and engagement session – online, face to face and focus groups. The council received 1600 responses for that first stage of the consultation. A large percentage of the response were from children and young people because they targeted them (they are often not heard in community engagement and consultation exercises). After taking the responses into consideration they developed outline designs. The second phase of the consultation process involved going back out to consultation to make sure they had the design right. This received a further 400 responses. The process was slightly constrained by Covid so the level of engagement was not as extensive as the first phase. The community confirmed they had it right and the community feedback was they had listened. The design now includes spaces that are accessible and appeal to a wider range of user. There are sports facilities, areas to sit, newly designed play areas and play trails, new walking and running routes around the park, quiet space for contemplation and new wildlife area etc. The objective was to design a park that was suitable for as many groups as possible within a constrained space.

This example is a demonstration how they will approach and deliver future projects for parks and green spaces and the level of engagement with the community.

In reference to the question about bees. The officer confirmed they do have some bees in parks and green spaces – Hackney Marshes tree nursery, Millfields waste depot and some in St John's Church Yard. The officer pointed out there is a balance to be struck in terms of bees, biodiversity and the prevalence of honeybees.

In reference to their commitment for events they recognise that user groups have found it challenging and they needed to find a better balance. However, they also need to ensure the events are safe because if they grant permission

to run an event on council owned land (parks and green spaces), the liability rests with the council for approving the event. The Parks service is working with the Events Team to aid. Where a community group or user group is struggling, they appreciate they need to put more time and effort into helping them. The key point officers wanted Members to note is that events need to be appropriate for the green space.

The parks and green spaces volunteering programme is not with Hackney Works. However, they will co-ordinate through their dedicated volunteering officer with Hackney Works. Although they are working with Hackney Works on apprenticeship roles. When they integrate with the housing grounds maintenance service the objective is to create a number of apprenticeship roles. Recruitment for these roles will be through Hackney Works. The officer explained the horticulture sector has an aging workforce and they need to attract young people into the workforce. The apprenticeship programme will be a way to help address this challenge over recent years.

In response to the question about cafes they do want more cafes and kiosks in the parks and green spaces. Over the last year the pandemic has made this challenging and it has not been the right time to put out opportunities. A few sites have been identified but they will have to go out through a competitive tender process for the concessions. The opportunities will be widely advertised. For example, there is a small old park keepers hut in Haggerston Park and the council intend to put this out as a concession opportunity. This would be suited to a sole trader or a start-up business. There will also be bigger opportunities like Clissold Park in the house that would suit a more established business. The parks and green spaces service are of the view there will be a range of opportunities that will be attractive to both small and medium size businesses. There are plans to put these opportunities out to the market next year, but this will be Covid dependent. The success of the tender will be market led. This will also be the same for the potential opportunity for the kiosk at Millfields depot. Again, this will be led by the market to identify if there is a viable business there or not.

- (xii) Members asked how the council will integrate the work between housing, parks and the new green infrastructure to make sure tenant voices are heard. Recognising tenants were consulted and the RLG has responded to the consultation Members still wanted assurance individual voices would feed in too, not just capturing their views about their estate but wider issues too.**

In response the Interim Director of Housing from LBH pointed out he was pleased with work on estates recently. This has aligned with the agenda in relation to tree canopy work and not using Glucophage's around saffron hedgerows and Victoria meadows. They are working quite closely with parks but are looking forward to joining up the grounds maintenance teams to pool resources and expertise. This should enable the council to do a lot more with spaces on housing estates.

In terms of the engagement with resident the officer advised the parks and green spaces officers went to the RLG meeting last week and had a robust discussion. Some resident representatives expressed concerns about if this would encourage people who did not live on the estate to come onto the

estate. LBH officers did offer some reassurance that the work would go via TRAs and existing resident engagement networks. Their commitment going forward is to work with residents about any proposed changes they are planning to make on the estates.

Mayor Glanville added linked to the officer's response, Shoreditch Park is important because it links into the Britannia project around toilet facilities. This had been referenced by residents for years at that site. In recognition of the things needed to make a park successful (toilets, cafes, water fountains etc.) the best example is the co-production and the live work about Shoreditch Park. At this meeting he hoped what was coming out strongly was the coherence sitting under the GI strategy. But also, the work of the aging well strategy, Hackney Young Futures and the synergies.

The Mayor held up a jar of Millfield honey as an example of local produce.

In terms of estates and green spaces the sense of ownership is critical. We know estates can sit differently in the public realm and there has been that long aspiration from Members about having a seamless public realm with the same quality of planting and cleansing. The council is also aware that places that feel comfortable for people to walk though feel safer. Therefore, having really attractive and more attractive estates – Kings Crescent, Pembury and Wenlock Barn - will encourage people to want to go there as they are walking their children home from school. The Mayor acknowledged there is a fine line in relation to creating a destination on Hackney estates. He highlighted leaseholders have expressed concerns about the implications for their charges and cleansing. On the housing and green spaces side people are cognizant of that dilemma and making sure the council gets it right.

In relation to the food growing movement referenced by officers. The Mayor pointed out this came from their housing estates and from some of the very best work of this scrutiny commission, championing and coming up with new opportunities for food growing. Although this is a manifesto commitment, it has not been driven by the council but dictated from the bottom up. Residents have come to the council requesting for the patch of green space to be used differently and housing services have responded to the request by enabling it to happen.

In closing the Mayor commented there has been a huge number of aspirations set out in the political manifesto along with the aspiration of residents. There has been investment in play, facilities, greening and biodiversity. Critically also investment in volunteering and job opportunities. The volunteering and apprenticeships are an example of the green dividend that goes beyond what they are delivering - parks and green spaces. This is an opportunity for Hackney to take the lead and demonstrate where jobs for the future can come from.

- (xiii) Members commented they welcomed the inclusion of health both physical and mental. This is important and the last 12 months have shown how important parks are to people.**
- (xiv) Members commented there are some risks associated with parks and commercial opportunities. It was noted residents have been concerned**

about gentrification and isolation for parts of the community. Members asked how the strategy would try to mitigate these risks. Members referenced Victoria Park as an example of maximising commercial benefit which caused misery to residents.

- (xv) In reference to previous points about diversity Members suggested this work should link in with the work of the Cabinet Member for Early Years Cllr Woodley and Mayoral Advisor for Older People Cllr Maxwell. In relation to the work they are doing with young and older people in making sure parks fit with their needs. The Member commented from the information tonight it would appear this work is being joined up at an officer level and Members assume this is also the same at Cabinet level too, to ensure no duplication and one voice.**
- (xvi) Members asked if it would be possible to look at having green gardens with greenhouses in the parks to grow plants and flowers for residents to have via a donation or for free. In addition, in these locations can there be volunteering opportunities and environmental educational small courses?**

In response to the questions about commercialisation the Head of Leisure, Parks and Green Spaces from LBH agreed there needs to be a very careful balance. The officer was hoping Members had seen this in the last few years in Hackney's parks and green spaces. Referencing events like the half marathon and 10K that have been compatible with the parks and green spaces. Pointing out they are mass participation but low impact on the parks and green spaces and residents. Albeit there are road closures associated with them. Where they have had events in parks and green spaces, they have had a dialogue with the user groups to try and find compatible events. They recognise events are an important part of parks and green spaces to bring communities together. Although it has to be the right event in the right space.

The officer added commercial opportunities can also bring other opportunities e.g., café concessions. Whilst they cannot afford to put toilets in all their parks and green spaces - they only have 8 toilets blocks in the 58 parks. The council can request for the café operator to provide a public toilet for the park and green space. A good example of this is the project they are looking to deliver at Fairchild Gardens. This is a concession with a toilet designed. The toilet will be looked after by the café operator in that premises. The officer pointed out commercial opportunities can be used to deliver some of the wider objectives and then the council does not pick up the costs and have ongoing revenue costs.

The officer explained in relation to green gardens unfortunately the council does not run a nursery and growing opportunities have diminished. Some councils still provide this, but it needs to be done at scale and potentially at the loss of green space for other opportunities. However, they do have excellent groups in the borough that provide tech training opportunities for people on growing. Mainly around fruit and vegetables. But there are opportunities in parks and green spaces working with other stakeholders. Currently the council has no plans to go into the nursery provision given the space it would require.

- (xvii) Members asked if the parks and green spaces strategy aligned or incorporated the work of the Kings Park Moving Together project. Members asked the Council what they have learnt from the research and work of this project and how the council is taking this into consideration. Members pointed out this work highlighted many residents in Kings Park Ward did not use the Hackney Marshes or were aware of the park and green space.**

In response the Head of Leisure, Parks and Green Spaces from LBH explained they are working with the Kings Park Moving Together project team to look at opportunities. The officer pointed out the community engagement carried out identified the local community valued Daubeney Fields over the Hackney Marshes and their focus and desire was for this area to be improved. The Council started the process with a new play area which has been well received and increased usage of the space. They are looking at potential improvements to the skate park. In addition to looking at new pathways to help the community get from one side of the space to the other through active transport routes as opposed to walking around the space on a wet day.

The Council has also been speaking to the project team about potential use of the canal for the local community to utilize cheap water sport opportunities. There are a number of conversations taking place about how they can improve Daubeney for the local community and for them to use it more for their health and wellbeing.

- (xviii) In reference to the officer's points about accessing water sports. Members pointed out Hackney has the Lea Rowing Club in Springfields and the Laburnum Boat Club that do excellent work. Members referred to the waterways and asked how they could use them more and how the council could support the use of the waterways safely.**

In response the Head of Leisure, Parks and Green Spaces from LBH informed the waterways are the responsibility of the Canal and Riverside Trust not the council. However, they can work with them to open up access to opportunities. This was also one of the conversations they have been having with the Kings Park Moving Together project to introduce water sports to the local community around Kings Park utilising the council's riverbank access.

- (xix) Members commended the work of all departments over the last year managing all the covid challenges. One of the highlights from this has been that people are more affectionate about their green spaces.**
- (xx) Members pointed out Victoria Park has been at the extreme end of events in parks and at the opposite end of the scale was Well Street Common that has had a few community events including the Well Street Common Festival. Members highlighted this is a community event that has been organised by the same group for over 10 years. The Member pointed out they would have quite a lot of expertise in running events. Members were aware the council run a couple of workshops every year for organisations interested in applying for community grants to explain the application process to smaller organisations. Members asked if the parks and green spaces service would consider doing something similar**

for the community groups who might be interested in holding events on the Council's green spaces. Walking them through best practice and the considerations. Members asked for the council to give some consideration to doing this.

- (xxi) **Members referred to the discussion about older people's activities and diverse communities. Highlighting the busier the parks get perhaps older people get fearful about using parks. Adding areas like the bowls green in Springfield Park were no longer available. Members asked if the service was thinking about any particular activities in the parks for older people that could be of interest e.g. gardening clubs.**
- (xxii) **Members referred to the discussion about food growing on estates and pointed out although some people may want more food growing space others want a green space to be retained for leisure purposes. Members expressed concern about going too much towards food growing on estates and losing recreational green space. In relation to this Members asked how the council would get people involved in the steering group and how they recruited to the steering group. Enquiring if it was through the TRAs or some other form of outreach.**
- (xxiii) **In reference to cafes and commercial opportunities and the strategy citing this would seek to use non-recyclable plastics. But with the plans to have more cafes Members were concerned about the rubbish and packaging. Members asked if the council would be proactive to minimise rubbish and encourage recycling by using the cafes as a tool to educate people about recycling.**
- (xxiv) **Members also asked how the strategy would manage the issues related to London Fields overuse in the summer months.**

In response the Head of Leisure, Parks and Green Spaces from LBH explained in terms of cafes they check all their specifications through the Environmental Sustainability Team for input. This is the same for the Public Health Team. This needs to be balanced with the viability of the concessionary offer. Therefore, they are guided by the teams about what they should put in the specification about recycling.

In terms of events and best practice the officer advised they have previously helped and assisted with documentation. This support is usually on a one-to-one basis. The Parks and Greens Spaces Team have been in dialogue with the Events Team to talk about doing what Members have just suggested. Offering workshops to a wider range of organisations. This will give peer advice in conjunction with support and information from the Council.

In reference to London Fields, they do have plans in place for this summer to manage many of the issues they experienced last year.

In relation to activities for older people there used to be a number of bowls greens in the borough but they have generally been under used for over a decade. Therefore they were unsustainable based on the level of usage. The council is looking at alternative provisions for them. The officer informed currently they put on activities for older people but mainly around walking and

safe access routes. The new age games programme for ages 50+ utilizes the parks and green spaces particularly through Covid as there has been no access to leisure centres or community halls. Through the parks and green spaces strategy they can look at if there is demand for anything further.

The Director of Public Realm from LBH added the Council recognises the situation with London Fields last year was abysmal. They did put more enforcement resources in place but this year they are trying to pre-empt the issues and challenges they might face. The Director pointed out that as people have had restricted movement for the last few months, they suspect that when the warm weather comes out in April people will want to get out. As part of their planning the council carried out a London Field conversation with residents capturing their views about London Fields and their main priorities. These responses have been taken into consideration and they are now preparing a briefing note that will outline how they will manage some of the issues faced in London Fields last year and how they will resource it. This is so that they can mitigate a lot of the issues experienced.

The Director advised they have very good liaison with the residents on London Fields and they expect a very busy summer in London Fields their plans and preparations now should help to resource and resolve the issues.

- (xxv) Notwithstanding London Field was the worst hit by overuse, in response to officers' replies Members asked if other parks around the borough will be considered in the strategy and the pre-planning work too. As some of the other parks experienced inappropriate use too.**

In response the Director of Public Realm from LBH confirmed all parks will be considered. They are looking at increasing enforcement and working with the police for those parks over the spring and summer. The director highlighted that the situation with London Fields was exacerbated by the close proximity of Broadway Market and some premises selling take away alcohol. This was the fuel for the antisocial behaviour. The other parks have not been excluded but the decision was taken to have a London Fields conversation to find a way forward for London Fields.

- (xxvi) Members referred to the 7 wards on the west side of the borough with deficient green spaces and asked about the council's work to try to address this. In addition, Members asked how the leafy east side of the borough might be linked to the west. For example, could there be green trails to help navigate people to the other green spaces around the borough that may be in close proximity.**
- (xxvii) Members asked if there will be more notices in parks and more leaflets distributed to give information and a description of what each space offers in terms of foliage and fauna. Members suggested this will help people to value the space more and understand there is a whole living environment in that space.**

In response the Parks Development Manager from LBH explained a lot of their parks and green spaces have park management plans with a lot of information about the parks. The team have been working to translate this information into accessible and readable posters. They are in the process of putting them

up on park notice boards. This will give members of the public information about what is in the park and the improvements they will be making to the park soon. For park specific improvement projects (Springfield Park and Abney Park) they are looking at better interpretation. They are discussing what the interpretation boards will look like to give people a bit of a richer history about their green spaces. They are also creating activity packs for local schools to run self-led trails around the parks to teach children what is in the parks and green spaces.

(xxviii) Members referred to MUGAs that are not up to standard and asked if there was a timeline for improvements with those areas e.g. St Johns Court.

In response to previous questions the Strategic Delivery Manager from LBH explained there is recognition of density and housing density in the west of the borough and the challenges. There is a distinction between accessible green space and just green space. The options for accessible green space are potentially how they negotiate on new developments as part of the planned growth in some of those locations e.g., the south of the borough and in Dalston. Also, the council will need to be innovative in terms of how it looks at highways - in relation to repurposing highways. The officer pointed out low traffic neighbourhood schemes (LTNs) are currently in the experimental phase, but they are the beginning of journey of how they might make use of different spaces. If it does become installed in the future, it is about changing the dialogue to look at the wider benefits that may come out of a low traffic neighbourhood – how they soften the entrances around parks and repurpose existing highways space. The officer highlighted they will need to be mindful if they are creating new space about how they will be managed, maintained and financed. There is a recognition in areas of key deficiency they will have to look at things in terms of the future and the long-term requirements for those locations. Particularly as there will be an increase in density as a result of developments.

In terms of green links the officer for AECOM referred to the presentation and the outline of the objectives addressing that deficiency in the south and in the west. One of the key means is where they cannot have new green spaces is to create green links. Previously mentioned in the presentation were opportunities and these may be across the borough, however, they are focusing on those in the areas of need. For example, for low traffic neighbourhoods and green links they would need to look at links overlay, matching need, different assets and where they can join up with either a low traffic neighbourhood, certain streets that meet the right proportions, or looking at how they use car parking spaces. It means utilising all those opportunities to create green links to tie into the wider network e.g., if they can get people to the tow path of the Regents Canal then they can get across to Victoria Park. Creating small steps to link into the wider network if they cannot deliver new green spaces on the doorstep.

(xxix) Members congratulated the Director, Service Head and Manger for their work in helping to maintain a wonderful green borough, the green spaces and increasing the green flags. Members expressed their appreciation for them on behalf of the residents. They encouraged officers to build on the improvements they have achieve thus far.

In addition to officers' comments Mayor Glanville from LBH added the deficit in the west of the borough in those 7 wards will be met in a variety of different ways. Crucial to this will be the repurposing of street space and this will be incremental. They have an idea of what some of that can look like and there has been a huge, impressive roll out of SuDS and urban planting in and around some of their key street scape schemes. Pointing out this is about creating those biodiversity intervention, sustainable urban drainage but also some beauty. Mayor Glanville highlighted they may need to change what they consider as beauty as this will not always be ornamental planting like they have historically. The diversity of their street trees combined with those spaces will, for generation to come, have a fundamentally different layout to what people expect. This can be seen on Queensbridge and Mare Street and in Colvestone Crescent when they do the 21st century street. There is the potential to take some of those lessons onto the estates and improve greening there.

Mayor Glanville referred to the biggest regeneration project in the borough Woodberry Downs and highlighted this is a tripling of the density of residents but also having a large increase in useable public green space that ultimately comes back to the council. So, it will not become privatised green space but useable urban parks that link the reservoirs and communities together. Mayor Glanville pointed out this was possible because of the master plan work as a partnership and the challenge from the council's planning department about the types of spaces they want to see. There is also recognition of MUGAs and the value of the cage and the MUGA in the urban realm. Making sure that those green spaces become not just ornamental but useable and work for residents and different groups of residents in an intergenerational way. This intervention is visible across the western boarder and Dalston is a demonstration of how emerging planning policy treats the deficit of green space. They are placing value on places like the Eastern Curve but going further and thinking about the connectivity and those opportunities to introduce further planting. This will be seen at Ridley Road and Arcola Street as part of the greening for public squares and spaces in the future.

Mayor Glanville informed there has been a lot of learning and best practice which has been incorporated in Planning's LP33 document and the thinking about how development can create inclusive spaces. Seeing a development that will improve the green infrastructure and play in the public realm and less behind a gate. This can be seen in the new regeneration area of Kings Crescent. The second phase of this will not just have a new green in the heart of the estate but an inclusive MUGA space as well. This will be comparatively close to Clissold Park. Resident feedback indicated they wanted to see this near their homes with a useable green space on their doorstep.

In reference to London Fields and enforcement whilst they want to do more as custodians of the public realm but there is a cost for education and enforcement. If they want to manage a space like London Fields, it is not easy and sustainable to just have an enforcement response. They will need residential support as they maintain the inclusive spaces for everyone coming out of the lockdown period. They do not have the option to employ private security to support the work of their parks and enforcement teams indefinitely.

The Strategic Planning Manager added in relation to the deficiency in open space, the planning system in its role of guiding and managing new developments, is well placed to address this. Hackney is in a good place by having the LP33 already adopted in addition to a whole suite of new area-based plans coming forward that will support this. The growth the council is planning for across the borough does provide planning with the opportunity through the growth strategy, planning policies and site allocations to deliver on some of the identified deficiencies and make right the level of provision.

Despite a tension around the scale of growth and how they accommodated and embedded new open space and green infrastructure within that scale of growth. Woodberry Downs is a good example of how the council is applying its planning policies particularly around the design of new developments to optimize opportunities and ensure that all new infrastructure networks are fit for purpose for the growth taking place in the borough.

Mayor Glanville commended the work of the various teams across the council to assist the good discussion at the meeting. Highlighting Hackney has the best team in London and the UK doing this work.

The Chair closed the discussion by making the following closing remarks:

Hackney has a great parks team and brilliant parks. This pandemic has made more people realise how good Hackney's parks are. With unlimited funds the parks could be even better, and the council could do all the improvements they would like to see.

In relation to the consultation the Commission welcomed the consultation and were of the view it was a good consultation with good ideas and they look forward to it being implemented.

ACTION:	Chair to draft formal response to Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and submit.
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5 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 5.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th January 2021 were approved subject to the following amendments.
- 5.2 Amendment request to the minutes from the Chair on page 5 for paragraph 6 and 7 wording is not correct. The incorrect wording was noted to be:

page 5 for paragraph 6 (current wording)

It is not the preferred option to open a self-contained shelter due to the risks of infection. The council would be required to implement a number of things such as staffing, signage for one way systems, additional cleaning and deep cleaning after residents have left etc. In addition to testing and screening for

Covid before letting people into the premises and having security to keep people safe. In essence there are multiple things the council would need to consider delivering this type of provision.

Amended wording

It is not the preferred option to open their own self-contained shelter due to the risks of infection and additional costs that would be associated with operating a provision during Covid. The Council would be required to implement several things such as staffing, signage for a one-way system, additional cleaning and deep clean after residents have vacated the premises. Also, they would need to implement testing and screening for Covid before letting people into the premises and have security to help keep the people safe. In essence there are multiple specification that would need to be met to deliver this type of provision.

page 5 paragraph 7 (current wording)

The Rough Sleeping Manager from LBH added in terms of people the winter night shelter cannot accommodate, if they eligible access public funds the Council will assess under the usual homeless HRA criteria and process under interim duty of care.

Amended wording

The Rough Sleeping Manager from LBH added in reference to the people the winter night shelter could not accommodate. If the individual is eligible to access public funds, the Council would assess them under the usual homeless HRA criteria and assist them under the interim duty of care.

- 5.3 Amendment to minutes by Cllr Lynch to point 5.7 (ii). The Councillor advised it should read “CCG Managing Director” not “CCG Chair”.
- 5.4 Chair informed the Commission she would draft some points as the formal response from LiH to respond to Council’s the Lettings Policy consultation. This will be circulated to Members of the commission.

RESOLVED:	Minutes were approved subject to the amendments noted above.
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6 Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission- 2020/2021 Work Programme

- 6.1 The Chair referred to the work programme and updated the commission on the discussion items for the remaining 2 meetings in the municipal year.
- 6.2 The February meeting was scheduled to include a discussion about digital divide. But attendees were not confirmed. The Chair explained the digital divide had been exacerbated by the pandemic in all areas. The Chair was in discussion with officers about attendance. The Chair was of the view this was an important area for scrutiny to review to consider the council’s work and response during the pandemic. The Chair pointed out currently officer resources are stretched due to the impact of the pandemic and the recent cyber-attack on the council’s systems.

- 6.2.1 In addition to digital divide in February there would be an update on the Hackney Carnival, previously discussed in January 2020. This discussion will consider the new approach taken to the Hackney Carnival as a result of Covid. This item will also explore if the recommendations made (for better inclusion of the wider community) in the discussion at the LiH meeting in January 2020 were taken on board. In addition, there would a discussion about libraries and the strategy for reopening the service post lockdown.
- 6.2.2 The March meeting is scheduled to look at the lift maintenance and repairs contract. There have been several life breakdowns which has left residents stranded. It was noted the discussion will be restricted because housing services are currently going through the retender process for a new contractor.
- 6.2.3 In addition, there will also be an update from Thames Water on the flooding in N4. This was the agreed six-month report back requested by the commission earlier in the municipal year.
- 6.2.4 Lastly there will be information about the resident engagement work.
- 6.3 In response to the Chair's update Members made the following points.
- 6.3.1 Cllr Rathbone asked to bring the police back for an update before the end of the municipal year to discuss their reviews on handcuffing and their work on vehicle stops and ethnicity monitoring.
- 6.3.2 In response the Chair recommended this was reviewed in the first meeting of the municipal year. Explaining this would be six months since their last discussion on the topic area. This should give the police appropriate time for a progress update.
- 6.3.3 The Member referred to a recent report *called Review of Pre-arrest Handcuffing* by the MPS. The Member pointed out the report makes a few recommendations and that the scrutiny commission had not been formally informed about this report. The Member suggested the Commission schedules the item for 30 minutes to get a short update on their work in this area. Then also have an additional meeting in the new municipal year. The Member raised concern about the MPS plans to do ethnicity monitoring for vehicle stops.
- 6.3.4 The Member pointed out some of the recommendations in the report had been implemented, some already completed, and others were planned for future implementation. The Member also highlighted a second report about a pilot project checking the ethnicity for police stops.
- 6.3.5 Cllr Wrouth asked about looking at renaming spaces following the comments from the Minister Robert Jenrick. Suggesting they should be proactive in fighting back. The Members asked if they should consider having an update on this.
- 6.3.6 The Member referred to the impact of Covid-19 on the arts and culture industry. Pointing out many venues may only open in a piece meal way and added given the significance of the arts and culture industry for Hackney they may wish to look at this.

In response the Chair advised they could add this to the Hackney Carnival update and ask the Cabinet Member to expand his presentation to include this update at the February meeting.

- 6.3.7 Cllr Lynch referred to the trials of the new waste collection in the next few weeks. The Member suggest the commission looks at how that is progressing. The Member acknowledged the Commission did look at this area previously and considered the new waste collection and implementation plans. The Members suggested this may be an item for the future meetings.
- 6.3.8 The Member agreed with the suggestion about looking at arts and culture and reviewing the carnival to consider the long-term implications.
- 6.3.9 The Member also asked about the focus of the item on digital divide highlighting it covers a large area of inequality across residents. The Member pointed out other scrutiny commissions would be looking at this issue for their remit e.g., CYPS for children. However, if the focus was about the Council's communications with residents who may not have online activity or devices in their home. This might link to the work of the Mayoral Advisor Cllr Maxwell in relation to her work on the Aging Well Strategy.
- 6.3.10 In relation to officer attendance for the digital divide item the Member expressed concern about asking ICT officers to attend the meeting when they were focused on recovery following the cyber-attack on the council's systems.

In response the Chair confirmed CYPS had looked at this area. However, the Chair pointed out to apply for anything from the Government an individual needs online access and many residents were not online, and the places previously used to access online services were currently closed due to the pandemic.

Cllr Etti added the CYPS Commission discussion on digital divide also highlighted the issue of WiFi and internet access. Pointing out a larger number of children were going into school in this third lockdown due to the lack of access to the internet.

Following Members comments the Chair suggested revising the item on digital divide to focus on housing service in relation to having an update on council housing blocks and community halls for connectivity.

Members agreed.

- 6.3.11 Cllr Ozsen asked about looking at LTNs.

In response the Chair advised this is covered by the Skills, Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission not Living in Hackney.

- 6.3.12 Cllr Wrout suggested an update on community halls and the plans for reopening for use.

The Chair suggested this could be added to the resident engagement item.

6.3.13 After discussions Members agreed the following amendments to the work programme.

1. Housing Services to update on Wi-Fi in council housing blocks and community halls in relation to digital divide.
2. The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy to talk about arts and culture in addition to the previously requested updates.
3. Review of the lift repairs contract and how residents are supported to exit or gain entry to their properties.

7 Any Other Business

7.1 None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 9.30 pm

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London Borough of Hackney
Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission
Municipal Year 2020/21
Date of meeting Wednesday, 11 February 2021

Minutes of the proceedings of
the Living in Hackney Scrutiny
Commission held at
Hackney Town Hall, Mare
Street, London, E8 1EA

Chair	Cllr Sharon Patrick
Councillors in Attendance:	Cllr Anthony McMahon, Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone
Apologies:	Cllr Anna Lynch and Cllr Penny Wrout,
Officers in Attendance	Polly Cziok (Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development), Lucy McMenemy (Cultural Development Manager), Petra Roberts (Cultural Programme Officer)
Other People in Attendance	Cllr Guy Nicholson (Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy), Auro Foxcroft (Village Underground)
Members of the Public	None
Officer Contact:	Tracey Anderson ☎ 0208 356 3312 ✉ tracey.anderson@hackney.gov.uk

Councillor Sharon Patrick in the Chair

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence from Councillors: Anna Lynch and Penny Wrout.
- 1.2 Congratulations to Cllr Sade Etti on her new role as Mayoral Adviser for Homelessness, Housing Needs and Rough Sleeping. This was her last meeting with the scrutiny commission be commencing her role on 1st March 2021. The Members of the commission wished her all the best in her new role.

2 Urgent Items/ Order of Business

- 2.1 Items of the meeting was as per the agenda and there were no urgent items.

3 Declaration of Interest

- 3.1 None.

4 Hackney Library Services

- 4.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy, Cllr Guy Nicholson and Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development, Polly Cziok from London Borough of Hackney.
- 4.2 Libraries not only offer access to books and other reading material but also provide a valuable service to residents in the form of public computer use for those who do not have access to IT services within their home. Covid-19 has had a huge impact on library services.
- 4.3 The Commission asked for information about the impact of Covid-19 on library services, plans for reopening and their work to mitigate the digital divide in relation to library services.
- 4.4 The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy commenced the presenting with the following points in his opening statement.
- 4.4.1 The Cabinet Member placed on record his thanks and appreciation to staff for keeping the library service functioning over the last 12 months. Pointing out staff provided an immediate response to the pandemic and lockdowns.
- 4.4.2 The report provides information about some of the activities that have been scheduled as part of the phased reopening of the service. This is currently on hold due to the current lockdown.
- 4.4.3 The service is still focused on a 4 phased reopening strategy. The phases are set out in the report in the agenda.
- 4.4.4 The Cabinet Member drew Members attention to looking beyond the immediate response to the pandemic; to also consider how the service has been able to engage with residents and provide a service. Looking at the future of library services, what it will look like and the kind of services they could offer.
- 4.4.5 The Cabinet Member referred to the extraordinary outcome of the last 10 months and the channel shift of library services; operating effectively within the virtual space. Moving book clubs, reading sessions, accessing to information, learning and knowledge online. Noting various strands of engagement have come to the fore whilst the physical space has been closed and the restrictions in place.
- 4.4.6 The Cabinet Member pointed out this would be a future piece of work. The Cabinet Member suggested the scrutiny commission may wish to think about this as a future work programme item, as the service evolves over the coming 12 months.
- 4.4.7 The changes being discussed are not about restricting a service, closing or reducing the service; but capitalising on the aspects that have been delivered well over the last 10 months to expand the offer. Whilst supporting and enabling the librarians to be able to engage with that agenda and lead it.

- 4.4.8 An important part of the next 12 months will be to ensure the library staff are leading on the investment they need into their professional careers and what they need to deliver a great service over the next 5-10 years.
- 4.4.9 There is more work to do in relation to this area of work. But this meeting is providing the Executive Members with the opportunity to highlight the ambitions and to set in motion a work programme.
- 4.5 The Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development added the library services has had a challenging time over the last 12 months. The service experienced a huge impact in the first lockdown when the service had to close.
- 4.5.1 The service transitioned to moving all provisions online e.g., book groups, storytelling sessions, quizzes etc. During this time, they found the uptake of ebooks and audio services increased massively.
- 4.5.2 The paper outlines the work carried out in the black history season.
- 4.5.3 In the summer, the library service was able to recommence the home visits service which is of key importance to the residents who are housebound.
- 4.5.4 The major impact of the first lockdown for the public was that they could not offer computer use. The Council is aware the world shifted services online during the pandemic and for those people who are digitally excluded or effected by digital poverty that free computer usage was essential.
- 4.5.5 Previously the digital divide assumptions were that people could not use the internet or did not have access to the internet. More recently it has been identified that its now related to people who are on really low incomes, who have run out of data on their phone or who are not able to pay their broadband bill. The library PCs service was a lifeline to people trying to sort out universal credit claims, applying for jobs or ordering repeat prescriptions.
- 4.5.6 The Council received a lot of feedback from residents that this was something that they missed extraordinarily.
- 4.5.7 There has been an impact on the service areas income. They have had no income from fees, fines or meeting room hire.
- 4.5.8 The 4 phased approach to reopening was developed with public health and the corporate health and safety teams.
- 4.5.9 The Strategic Director pointed out the library service has done an amazing job to create a covid secure environment. Citing the Director of Public Health saying they are an exemplar in everything they have done to keep staff and residents safe.
- 4.5.10 The Strategic Director put on record her thanks to the service lead (Libraries and Development Support Manager, Sue Comitti), her staff and the corporate Health and Safety Team who have worked hard to protect the staff and public and to provide a service to the public in a safe way. Opening the service as much as they can whilst adhering to the public health guidance.

- 4.5.11 Current government guidance in this lockdown permitted libraries to open for order & collect and public PC use.
- 4.5.12 There were requests among the staff group and from unions to close libraries completely. However the government guidance permitted libraries to be open for public PC use. The Council felt very strongly that whilst the infection levels were high, they did not want staff to come into work who were anxious about putting themselves at risk. Notwithstanding the council had a duty to provide a skeleton service to vulnerable members of the public that needed access.
- 4.5.13 Due to the high infection rates in Hackney they decided to open the libraries that had the highest levels of usage only for order & collect and for PC use. These were Stamford Hill and Dalston. Each library is open 2 days a week with limited opening hours (11-4pm). The aim of reduced hours being to reduce contact for the public while the infection rates were as high as they were. At the same time, the council was of the view they could not completely deprive the vulnerable public of that access.
- 4.5.14 The Council worked closely with the staff to make sure they had enough staff - who had identified as feeling comfortable with coming into work - to cover the proposed hours.
- 4.5.15 The Council was hoping to reintroduce the click and collect service for Hackney Central library. But this has been challenging due to the building management issues.
- 4.5.16 The Council has been able to redeploy library service staff into other areas of the council e.g., telephone contact tracing, business grants administration, electoral services (helping to get the electoral role ready for May) and data recovery work following the cyber-attack.
- 4.5.17 The redeployment has been good for library staff because they can often feel detached from the rest of the organisation. This provided an opportunity to get them involved in the covid effort. The additional under employed staff are hoping to get involved in the vaccination work. The Strategic Director pointed out staff have had a positive attitude to getting involved in redeployment.
- 4.5.18 Currently their work in relation to the digital divide has focused on keeping the libraries open and making sure people can come in and use the PC services.
- 4.5.19 The council highlighted that some of the people using libraries are vulnerable and often ask staff for one-to-one support with things like filling in their Universal Credit Claims. It was pointed out currently staff cannot give this type of support because of social distancing requirements. However, the Council is doing all it can to help and support people from a distance.
- 4.5.20 In reference to the future of the library service. The Strategic Director highlighted they have huge amounts of learning from the pandemic and it has been a very long period since hackney library services had a strategic review. The council is proposing to do a review of library services in the new financial year.

- 4.5.21 In relation to the review there will be a full-time member of staff working alongside the head of service to do the review. The first phase will involve reviewing all the data they hold on current usage both pre pandemic and during the pandemic, footfall, demographics, library usage etc. This information will provide a clear picture of the usage pattern. The review will move to look at how things have shifted during the pandemic and what is sustainable.
- 4.5.22 The next phase will be intensive staff engagement. The council has approximately 100 staff in libraries and many are very creative people with lots of ideas about how the service can grow and develop. The council is hoping to have some face-to-face contact with staff at this point, but this will be covid dependent.
- 4.5.23 Lastly, they will move into the public engagement phase. The council is anticipating this will be around summertime with various engagement methods (face to face, focus groups, online) but this will be covid dependent. This will aim to understand what people get out of using the library service whilst targeting people who do not use them to find out what they might want from the service in the future.
- 4.5.24 Finally, they will be looking across the council to look at what services can be provided out of libraries. The aim is not to turn them into mini customer service centres but to consider genuine co-location of services that will provide a real synergy with library services. This will involve talking to people across the council and looking at where the synergies could work and perhaps ways, they can make the libraries more financially sustainable long term. Using libraries as a springboard for other service provision and as effective community engagement hubs.
- 4.5.25 Taking into consideration that other offices like neighbourhood offices have closed over the years. Libraries remain the single touch point for local resident engagement. Libraries have a presence in all their neighbourhoods, and this is precious and important, they can do a lot more with their presence.
- 4.5.26 After all this work they will develop a Library Strategy in 2022-26 to cover the next administration. At this point they expect to have a clearer understanding of the timings in relation to the capital programmes being planned for libraries and they will be able to have a solid plan with clear strategic objectives.

4.6 Question Answers and Discussion

- (i) Members referred to the digital divide being mentioned at this scrutiny commission and coming up at various council meetings. Members referred to the explanation given about digital divide being related to poverty and not so much about digital skills and the inability to use digital devices. In reference to libraries Member asked if there was a criteria for residents be able to use the computers and if use was restricted, in timeslots or open for booking.**
- (ii) Members referred to Dalston and Stamford Hill and asked if there were plans to re-open Shoreditch library? Members referred to the libraries currently open and in the planning being at the centre or north of the borough.**

In response the Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development explained the reasons they chose to just keep the 2 libraries mentioned open after Christmas and during this period is because of the high infection rates locally. They wanted to keep providing a service but a minimal service. In addition, several staff were feeling at risk therefore they chose the 2 sites with the highest level of usage for PC use and click & collect. This was also to ensure they were still serving the communities that needed the service the most.

The Strategic Director pointed out the aspiration is to open Hackney Central library and they will reopen the other libraries when the infection rates decline. This is being monitored. The Strategic Director added they want to re-open Shoreditch library because it has had a refurbishment. It was pointed out libraries will reopen taking into consideration public health advice which gives notice that it is a safe and sensible to do so.

The Strategic Director pointed out the council does not want anyone to come into work who is clinically vulnerable, has a long commute or are at risk. Currently they have enough staff who live locally and who can walk to work and feel safe, to staff the current service offer.

The Strategic Director pointed out the infection rates are declining, and all the information indicates things are moving in the right direction as residents get the vaccine. It is anticipated they will return to full opening over the next couple of months in line with Government advice.

The Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development confirmed there is no criteria for PC use and a resident can just book. The Strategic Director explained there was a discussion at a national level (Chief Librarians Association) about essential use, but they decided they would not define what is essential use. Some people find their computer activity good for their mental wellbeing. In addition, Librarian did not want to police this activity.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy emphasized about social distancing in the libraries. One of the key challenges with Hackney Central is the access arrangements for the library and the inability to implement effective social distancing. This is of great concern to everyone working in the service and for the council managing the public health impact of covid on the local community. This supported the rationale for why some libraries were open and some are closed. It is anticipated this will be the position for the next 6 months as they adapt.

The click & collect offer is available for users of the service and eBooks remain unaffected.

The Strategic Director added for Hackney Central the design of the building is inappropriate and access is very dependent on lifts for accessibility. Pointing out it is hard to run lifts in a covid safe way. Their plans are to implement an order & collect service on the ground floor. Although this site will not be open for PC use residents will have access to order and collect. The challenge lies with the building management arrangements and this has been hard to negotiate. The Council hopes to resolve this very soon.

In response to the question in the chat by a Member asking if the home delivery service is open. The Strategic Director confirmed the home delivery service is still open via the community library service. This service is still delivering to a few hundred residents although fewer than normal because many of the residents who use this service are clinically vulnerable and they have declined to use the service to limit contact with people.

(iii) Members commented the feedback noted from residents who are shielding is that delivery of books is appreciated.

In response the Strategic Director confirmed they still operate home delivery for books.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy commended the community library service who have continued to operate throughout the pandemic with a very short interruption to the service at the beginning. The Cabinet Member pointed out they have had to redesign the way they deliver the service and managed to keep that momentum. For those who are using the service it has been of great comfort and support to their quality of life over the last 10 months.

In response Members commented some cancer patients cannot go out and are very comfortable to receive home delivery and this has been great.

(iv) Members referred to Hackney Central Library being filled with people using the computers, particularly students. Members asked as there are only 2 libraries open has the service been able to cater for students or is this not a possibility?

In response the Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development confirmed they are unable to cater for student's computer use. Pointing out Hackney Central will continue to be a challenge due to the design of the building. Pointing out that in the Town Hall building the lifts have been switch off due to covid.

It is anticipated that the refurbishment of Clapton and Shoreditch libraries will provide more workspace for people. Currently the only service they can offer under government guidance is PC use (this is booked for 1 hour at a time) and order & collect. Therefore, even if they opened more libraries, they would not be able to allow people to come in and study there for hours, browse or do any other activity they would normally do in a library. The Strategic Director pointed out as the guidance changes; they will be able to open some more of the provision. This will be in close working with support and advice from their colleagues in public health and the corporate health and safety team.

(v) Members asked if there are any timescale for reopening a service that caters for students. Noting schools will reopen on 8th March 2021.

In response the Strategic Director confirmed there was no definite timings or dates. But assured Members the council will open services as quickly and as safely as soon as possible.

(vi) Members asked if the Council records the usage of library services.

The Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development confirmed they have a detailed record of service usage. The Strategic Director offered to provide this data if required to the Commission in a briefing note.

(vii) The Chair commented that the review sounds interesting and was pleased to hear they will be reviewing the service to make improvements. Commenting several boroughs have cut their library services due to austerity. Members were pleased the Council made a commitment to keep their libraries open. The Commission welcomed being kept informed about the library service review.

(viii) In relation to the service review Members welcomed the aim to speak to all users and asked how the council was going to engage with non-library users to get their views to feed into the review.

In response the Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development advised they will use their current communication and consultation methods. They can also use common place, public events and have stalls in parks etc. Highlighting there are a range of ways they can talk to people generally.

The Strategic Director pointed out for the review they do not just want to talk to very active users who are in the library user groups. They want to talk to everyone in addition to looking at the data they hold on usage. There has been a lot of feedback from the Hackney Young Futures Commission about libraries and how important they are to young people. This data can feed into the review.

In terms of non-users, they want to understand why they are not users of libraries services. For example, there are parents who were avid users of the library when their children were small but then they stop. The council wants to look at how to keep those customers. Also, understand what will attract people into the libraries. Considering the events to hold and the community work they could host. They will talk to voluntary sector partners and everyone.

The Cabinet Member added the success from engaging with the community through consultations like the Dalston conversation gives a good platform to reach out to the wider community including those who may not use the service, to really connect and engage to get their feedback and ideas. This will be a major exercise, but the library service has a great future ahead. The pandemic has provided a platform that demonstrates the flexibility of the service and the ability of the service to be able to respond to quite difficult environments and how to continue a service. The next 12 months should be a great opportunity for the service.

5 Hackney Arts and Culture Services

- 5.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting the Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy, Cllr Guy Nicholson; Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development, Polly Cziok; Cultural Development Manager, Lucy McMenemy and Cultural Programme Officer, Petra Roberts

from London Borough of Hackney. Also in attendance was venue operator Auro Foxcroft from Village Underground.

- 5.2 At a previous discussion (January 2020) about Hackney Carnival by the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission they provided some challenge about the inclusivity of the event. This discussion is to provide an update on how the Council addressed the concerns raised about inclusivity. The specific questions the Commission asked related to this update are outlined on the cover sheet for item 5 in the agenda.
- 5.3 The 3 lockdowns have had a significant impact on the operation of arts and culture in the borough. The Commission decided to look at the impact of Covid-19 on arts and culture and the recovery plans for this sector in the borough.
- 5.4 This discussion covered:
1. Hackney Carnival
 2. Impact of Covid 19 and Recovery Plan for Culture
 3. Impact of Covid-19 on Cultural Services and the digital divide.
- 5.5 The presentations from LBH Cultural Development Manager outlined the following main points from the report in the agenda.
- 5.5.1 In the context of the pandemic their initial planning for the Hackney Carnival in September 2020 ceased in March 2020 following the cancellation of the live event.
- 5.5.2 Prior to this announcement they had started to act on the recommendations from the LiH Scrutiny Commission. Namely increasing levels of community engagement. The team was reaching out to various groups in Hackney and lined up a number of new organisations and council services to participate in the carnival with a view to raising some funding from the Arts Council. This was to develop a new and exciting community engagement strategy for the event. This work can resume in the future.
- 5.5.3 After reviewing the options of what could be achieved, they decided to produce an online carnival.
- 5.5.4 They worked with Hackney Carnival groups to create videos that reflected the work they do to summarise some of the out puts from the programme. E.g., presentations of cultural traditions and videos about reflections on carnivals and what it means to Hackney's communities. Also covering the impact of the pandemic.
- 5.5.5 There were also videos on how to do carnival crafts at home. These videos were viewed by many people online. In total 21 short films were made, and these were placed on the Hackney Carnival Facebook page.
- 5.5.6 There was a team of co-curators who helped to develop specific projects. In addition to the films by the carnival groups there was a film about the health and wellbeing effects of taking part in the carnival.

- 5.5.7 They also delivered a Hackney Carnival at Home Weekender. This was a celebration on the weekend when they would have had the physical carnival. This was a live stream event in 2 parts. Part 1 was a sound system event on the Saturday and part 2 was the livestream event on the Sunday.
- 5.5.8 They created a mentorship opportunity for a young person. The young person worked with one of the carnival curators and focused on digital content production. This was successful and they would do it again.
- 5.5.9 Two of the curators worked together to create a new archive of Hackney Carnival. This consists of a lot of interviews with carnival artists and volunteers and they reflected on the meaning of carnival to them, the history and heritage. The officer pointed out this has developed into an interesting resource which can be built on. This is on the Love Hackney website.
- 5.5.10 The aim of the programme was to support Hackney's carnival groups in developing new digital skills. The feedback received from the groups was that this was useful in helping them develop their online presence. It was appreciated that the online version had helped to keep the carnival spirit alive.
- 5.5.11 The how-to videos were appreciated by the public and they had positive feedback.
- 5.5.12 They had started to think about their preparations for Hackney Carnival 2021. They had hoped they would be able to do a live event this year and started the round of carnival commissions for carnival groups to apply for. They were giving access to funding earlier than usual to start thinking about what they would do for Hackney Carnival 2021. This was to enable them to consider their themes and to help make their workspaces covid safe.
- 5.5.13 The number of people who accessed the carnival online amounted to almost 39k views of the 21 short films by the carnival groups.
- 5.5.14 There was a smaller number of people who engaged with the sound system day on Real Rebels radio station. They had 372 listeners.
- 5.5.15 On the Sunday for the live stream on the Hackney Carnival Facebook page attracted 22,000 views and a high number of engagements. People enjoyed interacting with the host Pax Nindi. That was successful.
- 5.5.16 The carnival dance challenge project was a piece of work that the young person doing the mentorship worked on. They put a call out to the public to take part and come up with a dance in response to a soca tune developed especially for the project. This had 6000 views. This was a good outcome for a new event.
- 5.5.17 There was good press coverage (the full list is in the report) and they had positive response from various media outlets that reported on the carnival.
- 5.5.18 The live stream had clips from carnivals of previous years and messages from other carnivals, DJ sets and competitions that allowed the host to interact with the audience in various ways.

- 5.5.19 Regarding the Hackney Carnival event, it was announced today that they had taken the decision to not proceed with the outdoor carnival event in September. This was due to the ongoing concerns about the pandemic. The focus would be on building on the successes of the digital event last year. The Council will review the situation because it may be possible to have some pop-up carnival activity in public spaces nearer the time. In the meantime, they will focus on creating a fun, interesting and meaningful online carnival.
- 5.5.20 The aim is to develop a new website for Hackney Carnival. Last year some of the content was on the Facebook page and some was on the Love Hackney website. It was a little scattered. The desire is to create a bespoke website that would enable them to recreate the experience of accessing the event in person. To have a legacy that could be used in the future. It could also be used as a networking tool for the groups in the future.
- 5.5.21 The council wishes to maintain the online presence of the carnival groups. The groups have feedback that although they enjoyed learning about creating a film and sharing their work, they would love to get back to making costumes for the carnival event. It will be key to refocus the carnival groups on their art form; allowing them to do that again and for the council to document and facilitate this rather than expecting them to do this from home with mobile phones.
- 5.5.22 It will be important to do a wide-ranging community engagement plan this year. The council is in a better position this year to think about how this will work. For example, this could be to build on the carnival dance challenge that enabled public participation in a collective endeavour.
- 5.5.23 The council plans to build on the Hackney carnival archive they started on Love Hackney. They wish to find ways to make that more accessible and interactive.
- 5.5.24 The Council would like to involve another young person on the digital content production again in association with Hackney Young Futures.
- 5.5.25 The council wishes to explore partnerships with local businesses to encourage them to support the online program. They are committed to supporting the carnival groups and continuing with the annual commissioning programme to sustain their practices throughout the next year.
- 5.5.26 The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy thanked the Cultural Development Manager and her team for a successful first attempt at producing a digital carnival. The Cabinet Member pointed out similar to libraries, this had opened up opportunities even though it was sad not to physically participate in a live event.
- 5.5.27 The Cabinet Member pointed out the Mayor of Hackney is keen to see a larger programme delivered this year. Therefore, if they are to go virtual again, they will look at how to expand this further. This expansion will primarily be led by more participation, making and creating things and doing performances and capture more views.
- 5.5.28 Fundamentally it is about building a larger programme and a larger portfolio of activities. Even though it will take a lot of work to do this.

- 5.5.29 The Cabinet Member advised the Council's view is it would not be safe to run a live event on this scale in September. The Cabinet Member pointed out Glastonbury were of the same view and had cancelled their event too.
- 5.5.30 The Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development advised the decision to cancel the live event was driven by the uncertainty around the infection situation. Highlighting it was important to note that even if they were to consider holding a safe event in September this year. The organisations capacity to do the work and deliver the event is not available. For example, the council's current event manager is redeployed on the covid effort working on PPE distribution. In addition, the Police also have to put in a large number of resources to help keep the public safe. Also, health partners are involved in the carnival planning too. So, it is not just about making the plans for the event for September but also about the organisational capacity to sit around the table with partners to plan the event. The Hackney Carnival is a partnership effort to make it a safe event.
- 5.6 Part 2 was a discussion about the impact of covid on cultural services, arts & cultural sector, digital divide and the plans to support the recovery of the arts and culture sector in the borough.
- 5.7 The Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development commenced the update by paying tribute to the support work of the Cultural Development Manager (Lucy) and Cultural Programme Officer (Petra) to the arts and culture sector in the borough. Recognising it has been a challenging year for the sector and still is. The Council is aware how important the arts and culture sector is to the local economy, jobs etc.
- 5.7.1 The Strategic Director highlighted the work of this team would normally centre around organising events. Their usual work has been impacted and the team have shifted their focus onto providing support to their partners in the sector.
- 5.8 The Cultural Development Manager made the following main points from the reports in the agenda.
- 5.8.1 Covid has had a significant impact on the arts and cultural sector and they remain affected.
- 5.8.2 Initially in the first lockdown the culture team did a survey and held several meetings with the sector to understand the impact of the first lockdown.
- 5.8.3 All cultural programmes came to a stand stop.
- 5.8.4 Organisations reported a serious loss of income through the withdrawal of grants, freezing of grants and the loss of all of their earned income streams – tickets, space hire, hospitality etc.
- 5.8.5 Organisations based in council premises were able to discuss rent deferrals but others with private landlords did not all have the support and understanding from their landlords.
- 5.8.6 The Arts Council set up emergency funding in the first instance which helped to keep several arts organisations a float. But some reported falling outside the

- criteria for the government funding because they did not pay business rates, had a higher rateable value for their premises, being a micro business in a shared workspace or having charity rate relief.
- 5.8.7 The job retention scheme has protected many jobs in the sector however the freelancers have been hugely affected with many losing all their paid work.
- 5.8.8 Several organisations also reported concern about losing contact with their participants and audiences and the effect this would have on their wellbeing. Particularly young people and older people alongside the impact of digital exclusion.
- 5.8.9 The Culture team contributed to the Council's lobbying efforts to the Government. They lobbied through the parliamentary inquiry into the impact of covid on the DCMS sector. This included lobby for a forward-looking sector support fund to develop organisations to enable them to survival the initial impact of the pandemic.
- 5.8.10 Following the lobbying the Government announced the cultural recovery fund of 1.57 billion to invest into the arts and cultural sector. The first round was funding to help businesses stay afloat covering 6 months of funding from October 2020 to March 2021. In LBH they were allocated approximately £12 million. This went to 68 arts and cultural organisations in Hackney.
- 5.8.11 There is a second round of recovery funding – launched in December 2020 – of which the application window has closed. They are currently awaiting the outcome of that funding allocation decision. This will be additional funding covering April - June 2021. This will be to help businesses transition into a more sustainable operating business model with the aim of being able to reopen in July 2021.
- 5.8.12 Regarding the re-opening and reclosing of venues. When organisations tried to reopen in between the lockdowns they reported opening with 30% capacity for cinemas and less in music venues. Some venues tried to mitigate that by holding 2 performance per night and bringing in additional audiences in phases.
- 5.8.13 The 10pm curfew mainly affected bar sales but for places like theatres they started performances earlier to mitigate this.
- 5.8.14 The feedback from organisations that did reopen advised it was easier financially when they were closed because they had no overhead costs. Therefore, many were of the view it was not viable for them to reopen.
- 5.8.15 For those that reopened they found that audiences were keen to return to venues, screenings and performances. They were sold out. However, they did flag concern about the lack of new films and cultural performances being put forward by the relevant industries, citing there was not enough new work available to draw in audiences. When venues reclosed, it was difficult because business had started to pick up again.
- 5.8.16 Organisations were able to keep their spaces open for tenants and for hires e.g., daytime TV and film screenings, rehearsals and recording. This has been an important source of income. Many organisations moved their programmes

- online this enabled them to stay in touch with audiences and to try new things, although it has not necessarily been a lucrative source of income.
- 5.8.17 Online equipment requires substantial investment. This is a long-term investment and remains to be seen if it will be a good source of income.
- 5.8.18 Many organisations have been innovative e.g., music venues have tried out live streaming events, one theatre is developing an outdoor theatre, this will allow them to reopen sooner than they would do for their indoor theatre.
- 5.8.19 There is a radio programme for older residents. There is a project called Hackney Social Radio by Immediate Theatre. Programmes are broadcast weekly on Resonance 104.4FM. If older residents do not have access to digital devices or WiFi they can tune in. The programmes feature music requests, audience phone-ins, stories from the community, features from local artists, interviews and advice from experts, with regular up-to-date information about where to access help and support.
- 5.8.20 In relation to the recovery plan, there have been a few council services that have directly supported organisations to survive the challenges – Regeneration, Property, Environmental Health, Licensing, Employment and Skills and Cultural Development. They have all worked together to share information with organisations through various meetings, regular newsletters and emails, access to funding through supporting the many rounds of government for businesses, organising advice sessions on various grants that are available to organisations, writing letters of support and launching commissioning funds - the Wick together fund for freelancers in Hackney Wick area and the second round of the Shoreditch and Hoxton art fund.
- 5.8.21 The Council's property team has supported venues with rent deferrals and the culture team has supported organisations with private landlords to access support from the GLA's Culture At Risk office. They have also engaged with private landlords directly.
- 5.8.22 The council has supported the reopening process by inviting guest speakers to share best practice. For example, with reopening workspaces and helped organisation to interpret government and local guidelines on the restrictions for licensed venues. In addition to practical advice on how to reopen. They have also promoted venues and shops through the Love Hackney Shop Local campaign.
- 5.8.23 The council has supported the creation of training opportunities by facilitating organisations to apply for the governments kickstart apprenticeship scheme. They have supported the development of online programmes by putting on training sessions by the Arts Council's digital culture network.
- 5.8.24 The Council has been working with the visual arts and heritage organisation to reconnect with Hackney's schools. These organisations felt that this was the key issue for them. They have not been able to deliver their workshops in schools, so they have had online sessions with teacher to explain and explore the best way to keep that engagement with schools.

5.8.25 In terms of future support for the sector, this is evolving all the time. Currently they envisage supporting the sector to access funding through a new Neighbourhood CiL fund. This will be launched in the next few months. This will enable arts and cultural organisations to apply for project funding. There will also be further rounds of government funding.

The Chair clarified if the CiL funding was Hackney Council funding. The officer confirmed it was.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy added this is being explored by the planning authority. They are keen to bring it forward as a culture fund that can be deployed across the sector. They will draw down the Neighbourhood Community infrastructure Levy (CiL) which is a section of planning gain that comes forward specifically to deploy around communities and investing in communities. This is to help mitigate the social impact of new development in the borough.

The Chair clarified if this was Section 106 money.

The Cabinet Member confirmed Section 106 is focused on specific planning gain related to affordable housing and school places from the immediate impact of a development. This funding also has more restrictions. The CiL takes a more general planning gain.

5.8.26 The officer continued the presentation by advising the licensing team will launch Hackney Nights which is a new online portal for licensed venues and will help them to find the information they need.

5.8.27 There will be a specific love Hackney shop local guide for the night-time economy to help promote the cultural offer when venues start to reopen.

5.8.28 The culture team will launch a new arts and health network to help the cultural sector to connect better with health professionals around social prescribing, older residents and the negative effects of isolation and mental in children and young people.

5.8.29 The culture team will be talking to property services and Hackney Business Network (previously known as Invest in Hackney) about the possibilities for the arts and cultural sector to access any space that becomes available.

5.8.30 The culture team will continue to deliver their cultural initiatives which enables them to commission organisations to deliver work e.g., the Hackney carnival, Windrush festival, black history season and discover young hackney and hackney circle.

5.9 The Cultural Programme Officer added in addition to maintaining some of the cultural programme activities they have led on initiatives responding to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 linked to the racial inequalities work. Using arts and culture as a powerful tool.

5.9.1 In relation to the Mayor's review of the naming of landmarks, streets and public spaces. The review is called 'review, rename and completely reclaim', established in June to listen to the views of residents about how to tackle

- landmarks, streets, buildings and public spaces named after plantation owners and people who traded in enslaved Africans.
- 5.9.2 They had reached a turning point in history where covid and the Black Lives Matter movement placed racism in the spotlight and this complimented the Council's Black Lives Matter motion and built on the local history of fighting racism in the borough, dating back to the 1980s. This has also been well document through the work of Hackney Museum.
- 5.9.3 The project gives the council an opportunity to rethink the names of spaces, where communities live, learn, work and play. To ensure that they are appropriately reflecting their diverse communities.
- 5.9.4 In June 2020, the council set up task groups across culture heritage working with planning, parks and green spaces. Central to the review in Hackney is the community steering group. Made up of local cultural historians, community leaders, young people and residents. All having local expertise, experience, investment and passion for the subject. They have played an advisory role to the council. The community steering group identified the names and symbols of people who profited from slavery and colonialism and those that remain memorialised in the public spaces.
- 5.9.5 The group met weekly and identified 4 contentious symbols through the review which are linked to Sir John Cass, Cecil John Rhodes and Sir Robert Geffery and Francis Tissen
- 5.9.6 They have developed a framework for the council which includes a traffic light system and a process on how the council can make decisions about contentious sites.
- 5.9.7 One of the first actions is to change the name of Cassland Road Gardens which the council has committed to. That was named after Sir John Cass Director of the Royal African Company. This will be complex as they need to consider the impact on residents, legislation and the process of engagement. The council wants to hear resident views and give residents as much information as possible before consultation more widely.
- 5.9.8 The other aspect of the review is to consider how in the future the borough's public realm could better reflect the people they champion across the board. The Hackney renaming hub was launched in November 2020. This is an online hub to crowd sources new names from residents. They have also launched the web page which gives information about how the two groups are working together on the review.
- 5.9.9 The equalities work links with the announcement of the 2 new permanent public art works to pay tribute to the Windrush generation. In partnership with Create London the Council will commission 2 sculptors – Thomas J Price and Veronica Ryan – to produce 2 permanent pieces of artwork to honour Hackney's Windrush generation and in recognition of the significant contribution they have made to life in Hackney and the UK. This will also symbolise the ongoing commitment from the borough to provide refuge and welcome to worldwide migrants.

- 5.9.10 The Council is currently fund raising for this work. The artwork will be installed in 2 different locations across the borough – outside Hackney Town Hall and the Narrow Way.
- 5.9.11 The Council's partners London Creates have been awarded a sizeable grant from the freelance foundation to deliver a public digital engagement programme; to include an interactive website, exhibitions and educational resources. This ties in closely with their Windrush engagement programme working with approximately 3000 Windrush elders and their descendants on a whole range of intergenerational activities across arts heritage, sports, health and education. This work will link with the black curriculum work across the council and link to the unveiling of the artwork with the celebrations of the Windrush day and year-round ambitions to promote black history - telling the story and the educational history about the art works.
- 5.10 A local business owner from Village Underground, Auro Foxcroft attended the meeting to give his experience as a venue operator in the arts and culture sector. Outlining the impact of the pandemic on the business.
- 5.10.1 The venue operator from the Village Underground thanked the culture team for all the work they have done. He explained this has genuinely been very good and helped to sign post to funding opportunities which has been excellent.
- 5.10.2 Most important was bringing everyone together. The venue operator explained he takes part in a regular music venue meeting with participants from across the borough. The solidarity and coming together and Hackney Council facilitating this has helped to share ideas, support and help. The venue operator hopes that this will be a long-term change.
- 5.10.3 The venue operator commended Hackney Property Services for their support too. Particularly in their case and having forbearance on their rent. Also, to Hackney Council supporting the cultural sector with deferments. This has managed to keep businesses going. Village Underground highlighted they have benefited from forbearance from a range of organisations, but rent was really key.
- 5.10.4 Hackney's cultural infrastructure is stressed, and some businesses are doing better than others. In his view Hackney is doing fairly well considering the current climate. In his view this is partly to do with the support and partly to with the great cultural infrastructure that Hackney has. Emphasising they are all working together.
- 5.10.5 In terms of what might happen next, he would like to encourage the council to focus on bringing everybody together for reopening. There are a number of great organisations both building based, and non-building based. Taking the opportunity to come back stronger and getting Hackney's cultural infrastructure going well is probably the safest way forward. Not just for the infrastructure but also for the audience to feel safe to comeback out again.
- 5.10.6 They should also look to welcome everyone back to cultural events and try to reduce the natural and understandable apprehension. In his view the council can play a fundamental role in terms of messaging and the communication to residents. Continuing the facilitator role, the council has been undertaking to bring organisations together.

- 5.10.7 In relation to spaces it would be sad if Hackney ended up with empty commercial space. Not only because of the impact on the economy but for the people who previously occupied those spaces. The venue operator pointed out If this does happen it would be good if the Council could devise a process for using the space for cultural purposes, offering it out to cultural organisations and particularly to those that interact the most with residents and society. Offering to arts and culture that have the most social role.
- 5.10.8 The venue operator pointed out space is such a premium in arts and a lot of great projects and ideas could flourish with the use of empty spaces. Pointing out from his experience in the industry when they get a commercial lull this can leave loads of empty space and suddenly you get an explosion of creativity and great new ideas. In terms of property services and what the cultural team can do to get empty space in temporary use, (until it becomes income generating again) this can be put into the hands of artists and arts organisations which would be good for the community at large.
- 5.10.9 The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy thanked the Village Underground for his contribution and the officers in LBH for leading the support work to the sector. The Cabinet Member pointed out this work has positioned the sector within the council across the different service areas that engage with the Cultural Team. This has reaped dividends for many in the sector in Hackney. This is the first time over the last 10 months that the cultural sector is in higher consideration by Property Services as they are for cultural development, business support and business advice services that the council are delivering. This work has helped the council to understand its relationship with the arts and cultural sector in the borough.
- 5.10.10 Bringing about a far greater level of engagement, as described by the guest in the meeting, has been important because the other set of relationships that are critical is the relationship between the Arts Council and Arts Council England. It will be key going forward for the council to advocate on behalf of local organisations across the sector with creditability and bring that advocacy into Arts Council England and into Central Government and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.
- 5.10.11 Ensuing the council is listened to because it's important to champion all of those great creative practitioners that have made Hackney their home.

5.11 Questions, answers and Discussion (part 1)

- (i) **Members referred to the table in the report highlighting the work started after officer attendance at LiH in January 2020. Members commended the council for taking on board the comments and recommendations made during their meeting and the plans to expand. Members referred to schools and youth clubs not being open except for vulnerable young people. Members asked how they would get schools involved - in addition to youth clubs and tenant associations - recognising it is just after they start their academic year following a long summer holiday.**
- (ii) **Members commented if they are making films these can be made at any time and during the summer term before they break up. Although**

Member recognise schools will have a lot of academic work to catch up on. Members think it's important that young people are given the opportunity to make films and costumes because of cultural heritage being an important part of people's wider education.

In response the Cultural Development Manager confirmed they do want to involve schools and agreed they can ask them before they break up for the summer holidays. This format will give them a lot more flexibility for involving groups that have those kinds of restrictions.

One of the first steps is to meet with their carnival groups and contact the curator team for the carnival to help produce a robust community engagement programme. There will be via consultation and co-production with key carnival stakeholders and artists. The process will involve talking to various partners and working out what will work for them.

They intend to involve youth groups, schools and the other partners they started to contact in February 2020.

- (iii) Members commended the work and activities by the service to involve schools and agreed it would be a great activity. Members also welcomed the creation of an online space for the carnival as this would serve well for the future. Referring to the previous report to the Commission from officers last year about their relationship with other carnivals around the world. This will add as a rich resource for other carnivals.**
- (iv) Members commented events like this do not have much institutional memory. Therefore, the work to create institutional memory through videos as a resource about the carnival was welcomed.**
- (v) Members commended the report on the carnival and asked if the same funding was available during the pandemic and enquired how groups can get help with funding.**

In response the Cultural Development Manager advised the funding application they were scheduled to submit to the Arts Council was still available. There is also project grant pots of funding. The officer pointed out the funding stream is currently oversubscribed because they have removed the requirement for match funding. This funding is available to large organisations, local authorities, individual artists and carnival groups. They do provide support to groups during their application process. They support them with advice on how to make a successful application.

The other fund is 'developing your creative practice', this is also Arts Council funding. This is aimed at individual artists to be able to develop their practice in a new way, to seek advice and mentoring to support what they would like to do. The Council is writing letters of support for carnival artists and others who are applying for that funding.

In summary there is funding available, but it is extremely competitive.

The officer advised the council will not be applying to the Arts Council for funding for the carnival this year because they are submitting a bid for another project. They can only apply for one in at a time.

- (vi) Members asked the officer to describe a tangible benefit from this work that people can do together e.g., NHS claps. The Member suggested doing something that embodied the spirit of carnival bringing the community together. Is this possible?**

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy welcomed the idea and asked Members for suggestions.

The Chair suggested the creation of small neighbourhood groups with activities to celebrate carnival - subject to small groupings being permitted. The Commission agreed to feedback any further ideas.

- (vii) Members asked if the carnival would be shown on YouTube. Members suggested being on YouTube may encourage more people to view it and once they are allowed to mix, they could sit together.**

In response the Cultural Development Manager confirmed last year they used the Hackney Carnival Facebook page because they already had a following on that page with a view of building on that audience. The officer advised on reflection it would be good to put it on YouTube because it may be more accessible.

- (viii) Members pointed out Hackney has very talented young people and older people and asked if the dance challenge would be opened to and linked in with groups like the Windrush generation to encourage all age ranges to get involved.**

- (ix) Members commended the engagement list of groups in the report. Members asked if all these groups would be encouraged to participate in the online event again.**

In response the Cultural Development Manager advised they would get back in touch with the groups to explore the potential of their involvement this year and work out the best way to do that for them. This will be worked out with each group.

This will require coming up with a form of community engagement that everyone can do.

5.12 Questions, answers and Discussion (part 2)

- (i) Members commended the work of the council to support the cultural organisations and tenants of council properties. Members asked if the Council has been lobbying the government to put pressure on all landlords to help the organisations that were not fortunate enough to be commercial tenants with the Council.**

In response the Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy advised as a Council they have been championing the case for commercial

tenants across many sectors when it comes to their relationship with commercial landlords. The Cabinet Member confirmed this has been happening and continues currently.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that both Mayor of Hackney and he, as Cabinet Member, will be attending a meeting with landlords to advocate for a group of commercial tenants. Pointing out this is ongoing work. The Cabinet Member informed there are more calls on the Council to support in whatever way it can. The fundamental issue is the council has no authority to intervene in the relationship between a commercial landlord and its tenant. Notwithstanding the council can help, advocate and bring people together.

In relation to lobbying government to lever out as much support as possible. The Council has contributed to the formal channels such as the Select Committee inquiries and direct representation through to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

- (ii) **Members asked Village Underground to outline his experience of being a venue operator during these times and the plans for reopening. Members also asked if he was aware of any venues that have not survived during the pandemic.**

In response Village Underground explained it has been tough because their business operation revolves around bringing people together and this has evaporated. They have lost approximately 95% of their income.

During the open period they put on a couple of events and found the audience was keen to buy tickets and come out again. The current challenge is whether Hackney's infrastructure will be as successful as it was previously in the first and second culture recovery fund round. If they have the same level of success with funding Hackney should see most of the cultural infrastructure survive. In his view the big issues to watch for the winddown of furlough – this has been a protection for many jobs. This is not just in reference to the cultural sector jobs but jobs of the audience members too.

There is also the end of eviction protections soon so this could be a potential watershed moment for commercial landlords and commercial tenants.

Lastly there is the large debt mountain that is building up from taking out a coronavirus business interruption loan (CBILS) scheme. His business had £1million of CBILS loans to keep them going through the pandemic. In addition to the forbearances given to them by the council and other stakeholders/funders. He pointed out they have a payment plan in place, but this is subject to the business bouncing back reasonably well.

The venue operator was of the view there will be organisations in the borough that are going to struggle with the huge mountain of debt. Pointing out even if they did not take out CBILS loans they would have forbearance that will need to be paid back.

In his view the sector has a lot of optimism that they will get through this period. But there are still hurdles to overcome for the cultural and hospitality sector. He pointed out it comes back to everyone working together and the Council

taking the leading role. Orchestrating a mass opening when it is safe to do so to encourage a lot of activity. They are hoping this will commence in the summer.

- (iii) **Members referred to the night-time economy being closed and that residents may have found it has been quieter and become accustomed to this. Members asked if the Council is expecting residents to provide opposition to venues reopening? Members commented it is great that parts of Hackney have become a destination but queried if the culture offer after the pandemic could be widened.**
- (iv) **Members referred to the great work in relation to Black Lives Matter and the Windrush generation. Members asked if it would be possible to make culture even more encompassing. To enable people who do not currently enjoy those destinations, clubs and venues to enjoy a wider culture, so they could build back better and stronger.**

In response the Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy acknowledged the thoughts and comments from the venue operator from Village Underground. The Cabinet Member added they can consider a portfolio of activities across a wider community to draw people in. Hoping then the residents would not look at the sector with animosity. But perhaps with a new sense of ownership of what the cultural, leisure and hospitality sector can offer in the borough. Point out the arts and culture interface are the perfect platform to do as described by the venue operator. Like the work he has been doing with his two venues demonstrating the capacity and ability of the arts and cultural sector to build those bridges and create that relationship.

- (v) **Members referred to one of the most famous venues in Hackney (theatres) and asked if they have engaged with theatres like the Arcola to find out the impact on them.**

In response the Cultural Development Manager confirmed theatres have been hugely affected just like music venues and cinemas.

Officers advised these are the 3 groups of organisations they meet with monthly to help them navigate this very difficult time.

In relation to the theatres a lot of them were interested in doing outdoor theatre in the first lockdown. But this was something the council was unable to support them with because of the concerns about organising events during the pandemic.

Some like the Village Underground were able to reopen for a short period in the late summer and were able to re-engage with audiences.

There have been some innovate approaches like access all areas. This is not a venue but a theatre organisation that works with people with a learning disability. This group normally takes part in the carnival each year but this year they worked with their members to create an online event. This also had a route through Hackney's streets with QR codes for people to scan as they went along the route to hear about the lockdown experiences of their members.

The Shoreditch Town Hall have progressed with some projects. They have started working with a group of young people to help develop their programme for young people. They have recently put out a call for 6 new artists to work with them to develop new work. They had approximately 160 applications for this. This demonstrates a huge demand for these opportunities in the sector. They have moved all their work online.

The Cultural Programme Officer added the council has worked closely with the Hackney Empire on the Discover Young Hackney Festival. The is an all-year-round programme for young people aged 13-19.

They put on activities to help young people remain part of society and to take care of their wellbeing and mental health. The council commissioned 15 projects. A lot of the projects were held online but focused on the softer elements of wellbeing and mental health and gave young people an opportunity to communicate with each other. This was in addition to developing skills and training opportunities to provide pathways for young people into the arts and culture sector. Theatre organisations have worked hard across the borough to maintain that creative activation.

The Hackney Empire is planning to hold their annual Alter Ego talent contest in the next couple of months. This is likely to be held in March or April 2021. The Hackney Empire is continuing to engage with audiences online as well as through other communication channels.

Members acknowledged it has been a terrible time for many businesses but especially the arts and culture sector. It was pleasing to hear that in the short window of opening that some businesses had reopened. The Commission is hoping the vaccine programme will be successful and enable the sector to take events back offline and put them back into the community.

The Chair and Members of the Commission thanked LBH staff and Village Underground for attending the meeting.

6 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 6.1 The draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th January 2021 have been delayed and will be provided at the next LiH meeting on 9th March 2021.

RESOLVED:	Minutes were approved
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ACTION:	
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7 Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission- 2020/2021 Work Programme

- 7.1 The Chair referred to the work programme and updated the Commission on the discussion items for the next meeting.
- 7.2 The March meeting is scheduled to focus on housing and the digital divide.

7.3 There will also be an update from Thames Water on the flooding in N4. This is the six-month progress update agreed by the Commission earlier in the municipal year.

7.4 Police to be called back for first meeting of the new municipal year in June. The Overview and Scrutiny officer to send out the invite requests for the June date in the draft calendar.

ACTION:	Overview and Scrutiny officer to send out the invite requests to MPS Borough Command Unit Police, IOPC, MET HQ and MOPAC for the June 2021 meeting.
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8 Any Other Business

8.1 None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 9.10 pm

Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 9th March 2021 Item 9 – Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 2020/21 Work Programme	Item No 9
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OUTLINE

The draft work programme for the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 2020/21 is attached. Please note this a working document.

ACTION

The Commission is asked for any comments, amendments or suggestion for the work programme for the new municipal year 2021-2022.

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Overview & Scrutiny

Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission: Work Plan July 2020 – April 2021

Each agenda will include an updated version of this Scrutiny Commission work programme

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
23rd June 2020 All Council meetings will be held remotely until further notice. Papers deadline: Fri 12 th June 2020	Trust and Confidence	Metropolitan Police Service Hackney Borough DCS Marcus Barnett, CE BCU Commander	The Commission's scrutiny review highlighted some indicators suggesting lower than average levels of trust and confidence (meeting held on 31st January 2019). The Commission learned a range of activities were being delivered by the police in this area including the activities being delivered by the newly formed BCU-wide Trust and Confidence Board. This item is an update on that area of work and a look at the impact of Covid - 19.
	Stop and Search	Metropolitan Police Service Hackney Borough DCS Marcus Barnett, CE BCU Commander	At the Commission's meeting in January 2019 the Commission heard about the roll out of body worn cameras, and work with the IAGs, the Safer Neighbourhood Board, and programmes in schools to improve understandings on both sides about stop and search. This item is an update on that area of work and a look at the impact of Covid - 19.
	Community Safety Partnership Plan 2019-2022	London Borough of Hackney Tim Shields (Chief Executive)	An update on the progress of the Community Safety Partnership Plan against the four priority themes of the plan. This update will include an in-depth look at the strategic priority Street Drug Market and Substance Misuse.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
		Metropolitan Police Service Hackney Borough DCS Marcus Barnett, CE BCU Commander	
<p>15th July 2020 All Council meetings will be held remotely.</p> <p>Papers deadline: Fri 3rd July 2020</p>	Update on Housing Services' Fire Safety works	Housing Services in Directorate of Neighbourhoods and Housing David Padfield Director of Housing	Information about Hackney Council's fire safety works with input from Hackney's Resident Liaison Group.
	Evidence Session for Exploring the work of Housing Associations in Hackney Scrutiny Review	Various Housing Associations and London Borough of Hackney James Goddard, Interim Director, Regeneration	This session will explore: 1) The strengths of formal partnership arrangements 2) Community investment by housing associations, approaches to supporting their residents to succeed, and partnership with the Council to improve social and economic wellbeing. 3) Improving recycling on estates across the borough.
<p>30th September 2020</p>	Update on Thames Water Main Burst in	Thames Water Steve Spencer –	An update from Thames Water on their progress of repair works, a status update on residents returning to their homes (home owners, private tenants, council tenants, registered social landlords and leaseholder) and an outline of

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
<p>All Council meetings will be held remotely.</p> <p>Papers deadline: Fri 18th Sept 2020</p>	the N4 area	<p>Operations Director Tim McMahon – Head of Water Asset Management</p> <p>Ofwat Carl Pheasey - Director Strategy & Policy</p>	<p>your investment plans, timescales and the improvements you expect to achieve from this investment plan.</p> <p>An update from Ofwat on the progress of performance for Thames Water, accessibility of this information locally and investment in improvements by Thames Water.</p>
	Update on the Impact of Covid 19 on Hackney's Housing Service	Interim Director of Housing David Padfield from LBH	Hackney Housing to provide an update on the impact of Covid 19 on Hackney's Housing Service in relation challenges and opportunities; business as usual activities; repairs; financial position; support to residents and customer service.
	Executive Response to LiH Scrutiny Review - Council and partnership response to escalation in serious violence review	Tracey Anderson Overview and Scrutiny Officer	<p>The Cabinet response to the LiH's recommendations following their scrutiny review looking at the <i>Council and partnership response to escalation in serious violence review</i>.</p> <p>The Commission's review of the Executive's response to the recommendations made by LiH.</p>
	Update on Thames Water Donation for Lea Bridge Distribution / Use of	Cllr Rathbone Ward Cllr for Lea Bridge	Update on recommendation for distribution / use of funds fro Ward Councillors and The Commission to approve the allocation of funds (taking into consideration the recommendation by the local ward councillors from Lea Bridge Ward) and to agree the governance process or any restrictions on the

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
	Funds		donations e.g. for a specific use.
	Discussion about work programme for 2020/21	Tracey Anderson, Overview and Scrutiny Team	The Commission to agree the work programme items for 2020/21.
<p>9th November 2020</p> <p>All Council meetings will be held remotely.</p> <p>Papers deadline: Wed 28th October 2020</p>	Stop and Search Inclusive Policing linked to Building Trust and Confidence	<p>Metropolitan Police Service Hackney Borough</p> <p>DCS Marcus Barnett, CE BCU Commander</p> <hr/> <p>Metropolitan Police Service HQ – Professionalism</p> <p>Commander Catherine Roper</p> <p>Head of Profession, Crime</p>	<p>This is a dedicated session to look at more broadly at stop and search and inclusive policing linked to building trust and confidence.</p> <p>The aim of this meeting is to talk with the BCU, MET HQ and MOPAC about the work to build trust and confidence to help us understand how public concern is being addressed by the MPS and MOPAC. We have included the IPOC to further explore how the IOPC works with the MPS in terms of their complaints system.</p> <p>This is a broader discussion to considers how the Police and Councils (not just LBH) can address concerns (linked to the stop and search activity) about community relations and trust & confidence between the Police and local communities.</p> <p>Question in advance have been submitted to the Borough Commander, MET HQ and MOPAC officers covering the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stop and Search 2. Trust and confidence 3. Accountability

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
		Prevention, Inclusion & Engagement	4. Handcuffing 5. Fair and inclusive policing. 6. sources of intelligence 7. community engagement work related to building trust and confidence Question in advance have been submitted to IOPC officers covering the following areas: 1. Powers of IOPC in relation to the recommendations they make to the MPS 2. Role of the IOPC in relation to MPS complaints 3. Their success in relation to influencing policy and recommendations implemented. 4. Information about the IOPCs review on the use of stop and search.
		Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) Natasha Plummer Head of Engagement	
		Independent Office of Police Conduct Sal Naseem Regional Director London	
14th December 2020 All Council meetings will be held remotely.	Lettings Policy	Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply Cllr Rennison	Discussion and update about the lettings policy and the planned consultation on the new proposed policy. .

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
Papers deadline: Wed 2 nd December 2020		Head of Benefits and Housing Needs Jennifer Wynter	
	Homelessness and the Impact of Covid-19	Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply Cllr Rennison Head of Benefits and Housing Needs Jennifer Wynter	Homelessness/rough sleeper update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Commission would like to hear about the Council's work securing a home for those housed during lockdown and also to understand what the Council is doing with the new street homeless. The Commission wants to explore the impact of Covid-19 on this service and impact on future provisions and costs to service
	Winter Night Shelters Provision in Hackney	Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply Cllr Rennison	Local housing and rough sleeping teams within local authorities must consider whether the risk people sleeping rough in their area is so great that it requires a night shelter to open or whether there is a more COVID safe option such as self-contained accommodation. The Commission wants to look at the decisions about local provision for winter night shelters in the borough.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
		Head of Benefits and Housing Needs Jennifer Wynter	
18th January 2021 All Council meetings will be held remotely. Papers deadline: Wed 6 th January 2021	Green infrastructure in Hackney	Cabinet Members for Energy, Waste, Transport and Public Realm Cllr Jon Burke	As a result of Covid 19 more residents have remained in the borough which put pressure on communal green spaces in the borough. Presentation about the Green Infrastructure Strategy.
	Parks and Green Spaces Strategy	Cabinet Members for Energy, Waste, Transport and Public Realm Cllr Jon Burke	Presentation about the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy out for consultation
11th February 2021 All Council meetings will be held remotely.	Hackney Carnival Update	Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy Cllr Guy Nicholson	Update on Hackney Carnival and the impact of Covid on arts and culture services. Update to cover the following: 1: Hackney Carnival 2. Impact and Recovery Plan for Culture 3. Impact on Culture Services / Digital Divide. 1) Update on virtual carnival and a follow up from LiH challenging to the council about inclusivity.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
Papers deadline: Mon 1 st February 2021		Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development Polly Cziok	2) Following the impact of the pandemic and move of the Hackney Carnival to the virtual environment. The Commission wants to explore the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What happened this year - how successful was the virtual carnival and measures of success b) What was the virtual reach this year? c) Strengths and weaknesses of this year's carnival. In preparation for next year's carnival how do we capitalise and still do a live event.
	Hackney Library Services	Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy Cllr Guy Nicholson Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development Polly Cziok	Information about Hackney Library services phased re-opening strategy and digital divide. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. its approach, response and phased re-opening following Covid-19 b. Online activities and changes to the service provision to make it fit for purpose in the future. c. As more services and access to services move online what is the council doing to help residents overcome the digital divide? d. How are council buildings, services and communal spaces being used to support this work?

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
<p>9th March 2021</p> <p>All Council meetings will be held remotely.</p> <p>Papers deadline: Wed 24th Feb 2021</p>	<p>Update on Thames Water Main Burst in the N4 area</p>	<p>Thames Water</p> <p>Steve Spencer – Operations Director</p>	<p>An update on the progress of repair works, a status update on residents returning to their homes (home owners, private tenants, council tenants, registered social landlords and leaseholder) and the progress of performance for Thames Water.</p> <p>In attendance will be the Ward Councillor for Brownswood Ward representative for local residents in the ward who were impacted by the flood.</p>
	<p>Resident engagement</p>	<p>Interim Director of Housing David Padfield LBH</p>	<p>Update on resident engagement in relation to the council structure and strategy.</p>
	<p>Lift Maintenance and Repair</p>	<p>Interim Director of Housing David Padfield LBH</p>	<p>Discussion about the maintenance and repairs to lifts on the Council's housing estates across the borough. The discussion will cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) implementation of LBH's lift protocol (b) proposals for the new lift maintenance contract and; (c) proposals for contract monitoring - response times, servicing arrangements and any new changes or enhancements being made to manage the new contract effectively.
	<p>Digital Divide and Housing Services</p>	<p>Interim Director of Housing David Padfield LBH</p>	<p>Digital Divide and Housing Services - the following information is requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) how housing services are supporting residents who are digitally excluded and; (b) The work of the council to assist with the provision of digital connectivity and low cost internet. Also an update on connectivity in community halls.

Item to be rescheduled

Housing Services - Interim Director of Housing David Padfield from LBH

- Leaseholders Services - Leaseholders Services – how are leaseholders consulted and engaged. A look at the different types of leaseholders, support to leaseholders and engagement generally and in relation to Section 20 notices. Include points raised by Commission
- Outcomes of Housing Services' review of Community Halls - Update on the outcome of the review



London Borough of Hackney
Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission
Municipal Year 2020/21
Date of meeting Wednesday, 9 March, 2021

Minutes of the proceedings of
the Living in Hackney Scrutiny
Commission held at
Hackney Town Hall, Mare
Street, London, E8 1EA

Chair	Cllr Sharon Patrick
Councillors in Attendance:	Cllr Anthony McMahon, Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone Cllr Penny Wrout, Cllr Anna Lynch
Apologies:	None
Officers in Attendance	David Patfield (Interim Director of Housing), Sinead Burke (Head of Property and Asset Management), James Hunt (Head of Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Housing), Henry Lewis (Head of Platforms), Henry Lewis (Head of Platforms), Interim Head of Resident Participation, Sara Kulay (TMOs and Communities, Housing Services), Gilbert Stowe (Head of Tenancy and Leasehold Services)
Other People in Attendance	Steve Spencer (Operations Director, Thames Water), Michael Benke (North London Local Government Lead, Thames Water), Cllr Clayeon McKenzie (Cabinet Member for Housing), Cllr Clare Potter (Brownswood Ward), Cllr James Peters (DeBeauvoir Ward), Steve Webster (Co-Chair of the Resident Liaison Group), Helder da Costa (Co-Chair of the Resident Liaison Group)
Members of the Public	None
Officer Contact:	Tracey Anderson ☎ 0208 356 3312 ✉ tracey.anderson@hackney.gov.uk

Councillor Sharon Patrick in the Chair

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 No apologies for absence.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the meeting etiquettes.

2 Urgent Items/ Order of Business

- 2.1 There was no urgent items, and the items of the meeting was as per the agenda.

3 Declaration of Interest

- 3.1 Declarations of interest from Cllrs: Anna Lynch, Anthony McMahon and Sharon Patrick as leaseholder of Hackney Council.

4 Thames Water Update

- 4.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting Operations Director, Steve Spencer from Thames Water and Councillor Clare Potter Ward Councillor for Brownswood from London Borough of Hackney.
- 4.2 This is a scheduled update from Thames Water in relation to LiH's monitoring of residents impacted by the flood to ensure they have all returned to their homes. Particularly homeowners who have managed the process themselves.
- 4.3 At the last update concern was raised (at the LiH meeting in September) about communication with residents from the customer support team and the commission also noted the rise in customer complaints to Thames Water as highlighted by the regulator Ofwat.
- 4.4 The discussion commenced with opening comments from the Ward Councillor from Brownswood Cllr Clare Potter. The main points from her presentation were:
- 4.4.1 The Ward Cllrs thanked Thames Water for attending the meeting to update on the progress.
- 4.4.2 The ward councillor pointed out although it has been 17 months since the incident this is still having a huge impact in the area.
- 4.4.3 To the ward councillor's knowledge most of the 83 households that left their properties have returned home. But there are still some residents who have not returned to their home 17 months later. There are also some residents still in their homes awaiting significant works to be completed and still several snagging issues outstanding.
- 4.4.4 There is a strong feeling of frustration among residents with reports of little or poor communication and after care. There have been reports of damp returning across a range of tenures. Residents have reported having to prove it is as a result of the floods. Some gardens are still a mess and some of the work has been reported to be sub-standard with replacement kitchens and bathrooms needing to be replaced.
- 4.4.5 Some compensation payments are still outstanding. But for the payments that have been agreed the process to receive the money has been slow. Residents are still investing a large amount of their own time in getting a resolution and navigating their way through.

- 4.4.6 Recent feedback from residents was noted to be feeling quite remote from Thames Water. Left to deal with loss adjustors and contractors. Residents would like to have someone in Thames Water as a point of contact to bypass loss adjustors.
- 4.4.7 The Brownswood Ward Councillor highlighted the emotional toil and impact this has had on residents. With some residents in basements describing each time there is a mini flood - there have been 3 in the area as a result of pipe replacement work – they become fearful. For example, a relative of a resident has described their elderly parent going into a care home whilst the works are being carried out. But due to covid relatives have been unable to see their relatives until this week.
- 4.5 The Chair asked the Thames Water representative to respond to the points the Ward Cllr raised, update on residents return to their properties, customer complaints and how Thames Water has improved communications with residents who are not supported by the Council or a housing association.
- 4.6 Thames Water provided an update. The update covered the works, recovery work still ongoing for residents and the current work by Thames Water. The main points from the presentation were:
- 4.6.1 The Operations Director highlighted he had previously promised to remain in contact with this case after the impact to ensure Thames Water make the necessary investment to mitigate the risk of this happening again. Currently Thames Water has a significant presence in the area as they undertake the scheme of works.
- 4.6.2 Thames Water reported being very conscious of the emotional impact on residents particularly related to the recent events. E.g. a fountain of water came up through a valve on a main. This related to some proactive survey work on the mains. Taking into consideration the history and events of the area they acknowledged this must have been very concerning for residents in the area. This work is part of a programme to make sure they survey the mains every 2 weeks to pre-empt any future issues before they occur.
- 4.6.3 The investment work being undertaken is replacement pipes to make sure this type of flood experienced does not happen again. This update is to give reassurance to residents.
- 4.6.4 In response to residents returning to their homes. Thames Water confirmed there are a small number of people still out of their properties. Since the last update to the scrutiny commission Thames Water have made contact. Several residents opted to go through their own insurers. Thames Water have contacted residents and their insurance company to get an update and offer their support.
- 4.6.5 From the 12 households still out of their homes they are providing temporary accommodation for 3 resident households. The offer of support from Thames Water remains in place despite residents choosing to go through their own insurers. Other households have not taken up the offer of accommodation. Thames Water informed the ward councillor if there are people struggling the team at Thames Water remains in place to support.

- 4.6.6 In relation to the situation with claims. They have had 292 individual claims and there were 183 properties impacted. Thames Water have agreed all the claims expect 19. Thames Water confirmed the ward councillor was correct that the agreed additional work (they have agreed the scope of work) was still outstanding. Some works need to align with customer availability and others for example agreed garden work have been delayed. This is because it has been a very wet winter. Doing this type of work now might cause damage.
- 4.6.7 Thames Water acknowledged there are a number of things they still need to do and the Director of Operations has a note them and is monitoring the situation. If there are cases where the Director of Operations need to intervene, he will do so.
- 4.6.8 Thames Water still has a dedicated team. This is the team they set up when the incident first occurred. After hearing the reports of resident frustrations from dealing with loss adjustors, he will ask the team to contact residents. The Director of Operations committed to making contact with residents that still had remaining / outstanding work. To ensure if anyone needs support with loss adjustors, they have it.
- 4.6.9 On behalf of Thames Water, the Director of Operations apologised to residents committed to keeping the ward councillor (Cllr Clare Potter) informed.
- 4.6.10 In relation to the burst mains work. After the burst Thames Water decided to spend just over £11 million on 3 large mains around the seven sister's route. Each will be either replaced or relined. Thames Water confirmed this work will take some time and there will be some disruption in the area. Following the completion of this work these large mains will have a new pipe inserted inside or a new pipe laid. This will reduce and mitigate the risk of a mains flood in the future. This project will be in 2 phases. Phase 2 completing in 2022. This will be one of their biggest engineering mains replacement projects being completed over the next 5 years.
- 4.6.11 Thames Water update on customer service following the comments from Ofwat at the last meeting advising that Thames Water customer service was poor. In essence Ofwat was correct Thames Water customer service needed to see improvement. They have made new changes recently including appointing a new Director for Customer Service.
- 4.6.12 When they reviewed customer service, they looked at the provision of clean water, drainage service and billing. The other areas of poor customer service related to the new billing system that was implemented. Over 2/3rds (over 70%) of customer complaints / dissatisfaction derived from billing. The new billing software platform was introduced in February / March 2020 just as staff were sent work from home due to covid.
- 4.6.13 Therefore, familiarisation with the new system and using the system was mainly through online training coupled with a number of improvements. These 2 things compounded the increase in complaints and residents contacting Thames Water about billing. Over the last year Thames Water have been trying to rectify this. They commenced with bringing several people back into the office in a covid secure way to try to improve. This area of compliant is now

showing an improving trajectory. Thames Water acknowledged they still have a long road ahead before they are a high performing company in the sector.

4.6.14 Thames Water apologised to all the people who have been affected by this and advised they have improvement plans in place that they will need to deliver on. But this will take some time to achieve.

4.6.15 The Director of Operations explained complaint cover 2 areas:

- a) **Operations** – the primary reason is related to leakage. They are working with Ofwat and the Greater London Authority (GLA) to secure £275million to replace water mains in London over the next 4 years. This will be additional investment to the original plans for investment. This should commence later in the year. This will target the areas that are prone to water bursts and leakage.
- b) **Waste/drainage** – the primary issue is around flooding. Particularly this year with the very wet weather it has been a very challenging year for Thames Water. Primarily in the Thames Valley part of their region.

4.6.16 The key messages Thames Water wanted to convey are they have clear plans in place to make improvements. Thames Water outlined some of the improvements they have put in place to support customers during the pandemic. They are:

- A new bill design
- Upgraded their website
- Changes to their incident response
- Submitted a significant donation to their customer assistance fund and a trust fund. This is to help people who are struggling. Not just with their water bill but generally
- Identifying people who could be eligible for a social tariff. This takes 50% off their bill.
- They are also in partnership with Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to help with debt advice.

4.6.17 In summing up Thames Water acknowledged they have a long road ahead, but they have plans in place that will show they are trying to make a difference and improve.

4.7 **Questions Answers and Discussion**

i. **The Director of Operations offered to set up regular monthly meetings with the Ward Councillor (Cllr Clare Potter).**

In response Cllr Potter confirmed she would welcome a regular meeting monthly with Thames Water. Cllr Potter appreciated the offer of proactive contact but asked if this could cover more than just outstanding queries but also include all issues like snagging and aftercare? Cllr Potter also pointed out that although the Thames Water customer care team has always been in place, the feedback from residents appear to indicate this is not evident to residents. The Ward Councillor suggested Thames Water issues an update like they did in the beginning to all residents. This will ensure residents are aware of what work is outstanding and the commitment from Thames Water to resolve it. The Ward Councillor requested for a specific communication to the residents impacted by the incident.

In response the Director of Operations from Thames Water confirmed he was happy to meet all the requests from Cllr Potter and committed to getting the team to contact all 292 residents that had a claim. Thames Water also committed to producing the newsletter to give all residents an update and aftercare service.

- ii. **Members commented it was disheartening to hear there were still some problems 17 months on. Members commented further that they were not confident the commitments from Thames Water would have been made if the scrutiny commission had not made requests for information and regular updates. Although Members pointed out every time Thames Water have attended the meetings things moved forward for the better for residents. Members hoped this would be the last update from Thames Water about this.**
- iii. **Members suggested Thames Water could communicate with Hackney residents through the Hackney Life / Hackney Today publications as they go to every household in the borough. Members also asked if Thames Water had any plans to speak to residents directly in some way e.g., hosting a meeting to keep residents informed.**

In response the Director of Operations from Thames Water thanked members for their suggestion and advised they would explore the publicity channel. The Director of Operations highlighted the last 12 months has been difficult with regards to communication particularly with the covid restrictions in place. Under normal circumstances they would have carried out more face-to-face meetings. The Director of Operations suggested in addition to emails they could do some outbound calls to residents. The Director of Operations advised if an individual meeting with a resident is required, they would try to organise this. However, they cannot convene meetings with large groups currently.

The Director of Operations from Thames Water pointed out he welcomed having monthly meetings with Cllr Potter and they could use this to review individual cases. If progress is not being made, Thames Water would welcome the scrutiny commission inviting them back to discuss this further.

- iv. **Members commented it is good to hear Thames Water are listening.**
- v. **Members asked for more information about the funding for debt advice and the social tariff so they could pass on this information to residents. Members pointed out there is a real problem in Hackney with poverty and destitution among residents.**
- vi. **Members referred to the debt advice fund and commented they would welcome Thames Water directing some of the funding towards Hackney for debit advice taking into consideration all the disruption that the borough has experienced from Thames Water.**
- vii. **In reference to the social tariff for bill relief, Members assumed there would be a criterion that members of the public would need to meet. Members suggested this information is shared with ward councillors so they can share this with the voluntary sector.**

- viii. **Members highlighted Hackney Marshes was still disrupted following the works to repair the burst water mains. Members asked Thames Water to provide an update about the timescale of this work to the ward councillors for Kings Park and Hackney Wick.**
- ix. **Members expressed concern about the anxiety resident in basement properties are feeling when they experienced a small flood. Members suggested Thames Water does some work to explore this further. Particularly for basement properties.**
- x. **Cllr Potter asked Thames Water for an estimated timescale all residents would return to their homes, all compensation payments made, and the works completed.**

The Director of Operations from Thames Water explained in relation to people returning to their property it was difficult to answer this question. For all the people they have directly managed their repairs, they have returned to their properties. It is the independent cases that are outstanding. Thames Water has reached out to the people and the insurance companies but there is no obligation on them to accept their offer of help. They have been informed the vast majority are close to returning.

The Director of Operations gave an example of the reason for delays by pointing out there is some work like garden work outstanding. Thames Water wants to complete this between April and May (this has been agreed) because the ground has been saturated due to the wet weather.

The dedicated team keep the Director of Operations updated with any outstanding issues and claims. There are some cases they are close to resolving. The Director of Operations advised if they agreed to the regular meetings, he would provide the ward councillor with updates at their regular monthly meetings and run through each case.

The Ward Councillor Cllr Potter agreed this was a good way forward.

- xi. **Cllr Potter asked if Thames Water could share the presentation slides.**

The Director of Operations from Thames Water agreed to share the presentation slides.

ACTION	The Overview and Scrutiny Officer to include the slides in the next agenda under matters arising.
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In response to Members questions about debt advice. The Director of operations confirmed the debt advice is funded through the Citizen Advice Bureau. This is to provide debt advice. The Director of Operations and urged people to use the service.

In relation to the social tariff the Director of Operations encouraged customers or constituents who are struggling to come forward and contact Thames Water. Pointing out Thames Water staff can assist and put people onto that tariff. The Director of Operations offered to send some information through to the scrutiny commission to share with constituents. This is open to all Thames Water customers who qualify.

- xii. **Members asked Thames Water to confirm if the CAB are funded directly. Members pointed out the CAB in Hackney is very busy and any extra funding they can receive would be helpful.**

The Director of Operations advised he will find out who the funding is sent to at the Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) and report back to the Commission.

ACTION	The Director of Operations from Thames Water to provide information about the Thames Water funding to CAB.
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- xiii. **The Chair thanked Thames Water for attendance and informed the scrutiny commission would maintain contact with the ward councillor for further updates.**

5 Lift Maintenance and Repair

- 5.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Clayeon McKenzie; Interim Director of Housing, David Patfield; Head of Property and Asset Management, Sinead Burke; Head of Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Housing, James Hunt and Cllr James Peters ward councillor for DeBeauvoir from London Borough of Hackney.
- 5.2 The Chair also welcomed to the meeting representatives from the Resident Liaison Group Co-Chair, Steve Webster and Co-Chair, Helder da Costa.
- 5.3 The Chair informed the meeting the current lift maintenance contract is going through a new tender process so this discussion will not cover the performance of the current contractor or look at the current contract agreement. This is commercially sensitive information. The discussion will focus on how the council maintains its lifts and the service level agreement for repairs.
- 5.4 Currently lift maintenance and repair for Hackney housing estates are carried out by contractors in the borough. Concerns have been raised about the Council's communication, response, and service level to residents (particularly vulnerable residents) when a lift has broken down.
- 5.5 The Commission asked for the Council to provide information about:
1. Hackney Council's lift protocol
 2. A lift maintenance contract monitoring – response times, servicing arrangements and changes or any enhancements being made to manage the new contract effectively.

- 5.6 The Commission wanted to take this opportunity to comment on the contract monitoring arrangements. To ensure the new contract put in place results in a better system of maintenance and repair.
- 5.7 The Cabinet Members for Housing commenced the presentation by highlighting the Council understands the importance of having a good lift service in operation for high rise building and that it is critical for ensuing people have a decent quality of life.
- 5.8 The Head of Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Housing commenced the presentation and made the following main points.
- 5.8.1 The Council's protocol in place is to ensure that lifts are repaired in a timely manner and that residents are kept informed about the repair and timescales.
- 5.8.2 There is a focus on vulnerable residents in this protocol and it is the responsibility of the housing officer to contact vulnerable residents. This is to assess needs and to put in place any support to help them.
- 5.8.3 Before the pandemic this type of support was fragmented. A positive outcome from the pandemic is that it has helped to concentrate that support into one place. Now housing officers making calls, assessing the vulnerability are directing people the 'here to help' helpline. This is to tap into the solutions to give access to food delivery, medication etc.
- 5.8.4 The future aim is to find a better way of communicating to all residents both vulnerable and non-vulnerable. The current protocol puts the emphasis on the contractor and as a council they want to take on more responsibility with regards to communication. This will free up the contractor to focus their time and efforts on repairing the lift.
- 5.8.5 The council is working on a better way to have information flowing between them and the contractor to update residents. They have been experimenting with different communications channels such as sending residents information via text and email messages. The council is currently analysing this to decide on the best system to put in place for residents they cannot contact via these options.
- 5.9 The Head of Property and Asset Management updated on contractor monitoring. The main points from the presentation were:
- 5.9.1 The officer referred to the report in the agenda and advised it outlines the proposals for the lift maintenance contract monitoring. This is subject to the contract tender and approval process.
- 5.9.2 The current service provider ELA has served a contract termination notice effective June 2021. The Council is currently in the process of procuring an interim service and maintenance contract. This will be a 1-year interim contract. The officer explained there needs to be an interim contract because the formal procurement process takes a long time to complete. The procurement process will include carrying out leaseholder consultation and requires Cabinet Procurement Committee approval. These are carried out either side of a 2-stage tender valuation process.

- 5.9.3 The new contract will cover servicing and maintenance from June 2021. This will not cover capital programme works. This is due to the limited capacity they have to consult with leaseholders on the interim contracts.
- 5.9.4 The outline ideas they have for the long-term contract are in contrast with the current set up. Currently they have one contractor responsible for reactive and planned work (servicing & repairs and long term capital work) e.g. lift replacement work. The contract being terminated has highlighted some risks in relation to having one provider doing all this work in the whole borough.
- 5.9.5 Officers are proposing to mitigate that risk by putting in place a framework contract. Framework contracts have some slight disadvantages over a term contract (the current contract type). A single contract can be issued for up to 10 years and breaking the contract is limited to 4 years. After a review of this they consider the balance in favour for this trade -off for a framework contract.
- 5.9.6 For the framework contract they want to have 3-5 contractors. There are 600 lifts in the borough so this is a large volume of work to cover. They are considering how to award the contracts taking into consideration the serious health and safety implications. The aim is to give a contractors a patch so they can have control over the access to the areas they will work on. For example, they could have one contractor with a patch in the north of the borough and another contractor having servicing in the south of the borough and then have a third contractor as a backup if one of the 2 contractors fail. Therefore, although contractors will be given a patch, they would some recourse to a backup if they fail.
- 5.9.7 The council is finalising their documentation to go out to tender on four other mechanical and electrical contracts. The procurement work from this can be used to inform the other new contracts. The council has done a lot of work with legal firms on the forms of contract and researching the types of specifications that can be used in these contracts.
- 5.9.8 The council has also begun a wider review of the lift service operation so when they are redesigning and thinking about the responsibilities for the new contractor, they will a better understanding of the needs. This work will be carried out in close working with the Head of Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Housing who will aim to be more in control of the resident communication.
- 5.9.9 The cyber-attack has complicated things for the council because several of the systems they would have used to do text alerts are not currently available. When the systems are back online, they will trail them to produce a more live form of communication and update on issues.
- 5.9.10 There are several stages to go through before completing the procurement process, but the council anticipates having a new contract in place by June 2022.
- 5.9.11 In relation to contract monitoring this will be carried out by a dedicated team who are specialist in the field of lifts. Due to the cyber-attack, they have lost some data, so they have been rebuilding their dashboard of data on lifts. The council will be moving the focus away from contractor KPIs to enable the

council to get a better picture about the lifts themselves and the core of technical issues with lifts. This would include looking at things like the number of times London Fire Brigade attend lift trappings, overall lift availability and the number of lifts which have been out of service for 24 hours. The aim is to give the council a better understanding of lift operations not just contract performance so they have a clearer picture about lifts as a service to residents rather than solely looking at the performance of the lift contractor.

- 5.9.12 Lift availability is usually at 97% - 98% and this is the expected rate for lift operation. They do not expect to hit 100% because of having a servicing regime which impacts on the operational percentage. The recent performance has dipped to 95% and this is linked to the reduction in servicing regime during covid. It highlighted the lift contractors had several staff self-isolating and it has led to an accumulation of issues resulting in a higher rate of breakdowns.
- 5.9.13 Other areas of improvement such as moving to a reporting software to help with monitoring, working with colleagues in resident safety to ensure there is a wider range of compliance and carrying a review on each block to identify the type of two lift situations they have, if at all. This information will help to inform how urgent the situation is, if residents have access to a second lift or if assistance needs to be provided to residents.
- 5.9.14 The lift review has now provided the council with an understanding of all types of situations e.g., having 2 lifts that stop of all floors, 2 lifts that stop on alternate floors or a lifts that are at different end of the building that they may need to open up access to. They now have a clearer picture of all the situations. This will help her team to work closely with the housing management teams to target that assistance.

5.10 Questions, Discussion and Comments

- i. **Members asked who was responsibility (council or contractor) for informing residents about lifts breakdowns and the length of time they would not be operational?**

In response the Head of Property and Asset Management from LBH advised the current contract requires the contractor to put up a notice on the lift and all floors. This information should provide an update on the status and when they estimate it will be back in action. This becomes challenging when the contractor does not do the communication very well. This is where they have had conversations with housing management about taking more responsibility for communication. They also want to explore if there are better ways of communication other than posters. This might be a text-based system. The other challenge is that the dates might change but the poster might not be updated and this could cause some frustration for people. This will be explored for the new contact but at present the responsibility is with the contractor. They want to have a more real time way to connect with residents i.e. text system once restored.

- ii. **Members suggested the council does take this area of responsibility back from contractors. Member also agreed they should be sending out text messages. However, Members pointed out the council needs to ensure**

the people who do not have access to text messaging are kept informed too.

- iii. Members pointed out an area of concern is the support to residents. Members wanted to see this improved, and this should be a responsibility of the council. Members urged for this issue to be explored now and long term. Members commented on people being trapped in their houses because people cannot get in and out due to the lift being broken.**
- iv. Members referred to lift notices and pointed out the notice only provided information about who to contact for a breakdown. Members suggested the council's protocol includes residents who have concerns about being trapped inside or outside their home. This is in addition to a protocol for people trapped inside the lift. Members suggested the 'here to help' service was expanded to include the lift protocol and provide contact details.**
- v. Members asked if lifts could be rediverted from serving alternative floors to all floors? Members suggested ensuring lifts could stop at all floors was something to be taken into consideration for future property developments.**

In response the Head of Property and Asset Management from LBH advised no and explained there would be concrete where there should be a door. Therefore, lifts that served alternate floors could not be rediverted to serve all floors.

- vi. Cllr Peters Ward Councillor for De Beauvoir Ward asked questions and made the following points to the commission on behalf of residents.**
 - 1. A regular feature of local TRA discussions and meetings is lift operation and lifts being out of action with vulnerable residents being trapped in their homes without contact from the council.**
 - 2. In relation to the vulnerable residents list how are people identified, how do they get on the list and has there been a loss of data following the cyber-attack why some residents have not been contacted?**
 - 3. Commended the work to look at expanding the number of contractors and considering the technical aspects. A reoccurring theme from lift outage is waiting for parts. The Member asked if there are standard lift parts and if the council could store these parts to make sure it is not waiting for them to come in from Europe or internationally.**
 - 4. Does the Council need to contract out this work or can the Council insource this service and directly employ Hackney staff to do lift maintenance and repair service work.**

In response the Head of Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Housing replied the current list has been produced for the covid response the council put in place for vulnerable residents. Although this is covid related it covers a wide range of vulnerable people. This list also includes the personal evacuation policy for all tower blocks in the borough where they have identified anyone who would struggle to exit the building as a result of a fire. This information is collected annually by the resident safety team.

The officer confirmed the list has been affected by the cyberattack. The current list is from March 2020 and is a static document.

The council is developing a new system which will allow much greater access to information. Not only information from housing but also information from other service areas that the council hold with permitted access rights. This will inform the future identification of vulnerable resident. This will be a dynamic live system. It will also enable them to automatically text residents about a lift breakdown and give accurate information to the right people because they will have knowledge about the structure of the building. The information will be structured in a way that will enable them to text or email the right people to give them the correct information.

Currently this is a static document, but it covers a very wide remit of vulnerability. This comes from a range of data sources such as adult social care, NHS etc. New residents that come in have an initial tenancy visit and they use this to update the records.

The system is expected to improve because the new system they are building will get the right information to officers so they can make the right decisions for the right people.

In response to the questions about parts the Head of Property and Asset Management confirmed the council does have a parts store but a concisely limited range of parts they need. In addition, some parts are very expensive, therefore speculatively holding the item in stock just in case a part breaks is not effective use of resources. The officer confirmed a large proportion of parts come from Germany and Sweden. There are manufactures in the UK too but normally the part is specific to the make and model and can also require bespoke parts too. The officer explained lifts are like cars they are specific makes and models. Upgraded models and older models. The part needs to be specific to that model. This is an industry wide issue where some parts have a long wait time. This issue is not unique to Hackney or the contractor they work with.

In reference to insourcing, the report they will take to Cabinet Committee outlines the option for insourcing in response to the council's manifesto commitment to do that where possible. However, they have not recommended this option due to the large staff resource it would need, the requirement to run a full out of hours service and that it requires specialist. They find it a challenge to recruit the specialists required to carry out the contract management for this service. In addition there are also a range of insurance issues that will need to be managed to cover health and safety of staff working on dangerous machinery and environments. The third challenge is that the Council would need to have in place a very complex supply chains to cover parts etc. This requires a company having access to a whole range of lift part companies. This would be a key component to providing the service.

The Council has plans to expand the DLO service. The expansion will focus on services already identified as viable. There will be information about this provided to Members shortly.

- vii. **Members asked if working with neighbouring boroughs would create the economies of scale to make this type of insourcing viable.**

In response Head of Property and Asset Management explained scale is not necessarily the barrier the biggest challenge was having a supply chain, risk in place and the specialist skills needed to operate the service.

- viii. **Members commented they appreciated the attraction to have different contractors covering different parts of the borough and that this would lead to much better communication channels between the various local stakeholders. Members asked how many lifts break down at any one time and how they are prioritised? Members asked if a priority criterion will be built into the contract, or will the contract companies be sufficiently large that they can manage multiple breakdowns on the same day?**
- ix. **The Member pointed out intermittent problems with lifts is a significant issue. Members referred to a case whereby a resident on the 4th floor had not left their property in 4 months due to fearing they would not be able to get back into their home following the many intermittent problems with the lift. Members commented when you have lifts with intermittent problems contractors tend to leave that lift until last because it regularly breaks down.**
- x. **Members also commented lifts that have regular problems eventually ending up on the capital works programme. Member queried if this programme would be on hold until June 2022 or later and if the council will have to do a separate contract for the lift replacement service. Members raised concern that if this is the case this could result in the replacement programme being on hold until 2023 and this would result in a very long delay.**
- xi. **Members raised concern that the termination of the contract prompted the review of how the council carries out its contract management. Members agreed with seeing more rigorous KPIs and the plans for better accountability structures for contractors when repairs are not carried out in a timely manner.**
- xii. **Members referred to the 'here to help' service that should provide some level of wrap around service to create a one stop shop for resident. Member suggested having some form of dashboard that red flags this information, so when a resident in this position makes contact with the council it enables them to link with other services. Members suggested the vision for the council should be to link all different services from the council. For example, if a resident calls up about a lift break down it would flag up that they are vulnerable and could need other areas of support. The Member commented she found the information provided by officers reassuring and that this approach should be applied to all the Council's contract management.**
- xiii. **Representatives from the RLG asked if the Council had plans to engage residents in the contract procurement process and the contract monitoring?**

- xiv. **The RLG asked what arrangements would be in place for scheduled lift maintenance works in addition to putting up notifications and sending text messages to residents?**
- xv. **The RLG asked what arrangements would be put in place for lifts that breakdown with building that have elderly or disabled residents on the higher floors?**

The Head of Property and Asset Management replied with regards to prioritisation this is an area they will look at and consider. The expectation is that all lifts will be attended to for diagnostics within a specified time. The current prioritisation for lifts is not based on the height of the building but the problem. There is a higher priority if a person is trapped in the lift compared to a lift break down.

In reference to lift intermittent problems yes, they do have lifts with these problems and the officer acknowledged the frustrations these caused.

In reference to lift replacement programme the officer confirmed it is difficult to do any replacement work until the new contract is in place. However, when they do secure the contract, they will also need to develop a capital works project and carry out leaseholder consultation. This will take time to set up therefore it is likely to be summer 2023 before the new contract yields capital programme works. This will be kept under review, but pointed out this is due to the lengthy procurement process.

In relation to if the contract termination prompted the review. The answer was yes and no. The officer explained there are things they can only review and consider at the point of a new contract. This was also prompted by the cyber-attack as they are thinking about how to get the monitoring figures back again. In addition to this they have a new team of specialist that have recently joined the team bring renewed energy to the work. But generally, at the point of a new contract is the time they can do big thinking because they can change the contract terms. The officer pointed out this approach is also being applied to other contracts.

In response to the RLG about resident involvement in the procurement of the contract. The officer advises she was happy to discuss ideas about building this into the process but cautioned they have a small timeframe for their involvement.

The Head of Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Housing echoed Cllr Lynch's comments about the enthusiasm for the 'here to help' project and it has spawned so many other areas his team are working on. Pointing out the advice network in place now offers a wider range of advice and support for residents they can tap into.

Their key aim is to have a better offer for vulnerable residents in its entirety. The expectation is this will get better as they draw on the VCS network and not just their statutory partners.

Regarding supporting people to get in and out of the building this requires physical movement - to physically carry the person up and down. The officer informed the Council has recently had a few of those cases. These are managed on a case-by-case basis. With a recent case they were able to get support of the family to carry the person. The Council also put a person in hotel accommodation because they had medical appointments to attend. The officer pointed out there is some flexibility to offer some level of support. However, over the long term they do not have a service they can offer residents. But as part of the wider advice network, there is a partnership with organisations like Age UK who for example do have access to this type of service. This will be explored further by the council to see if there is an agency that could provide this service. The protocol does say they will work with individuals for each case.

It is hoped the new advice network will be beneficial and that they will deliver more services through it.

- xvi. **Members asked what things would be in the new contract to ensure that lifts are repaired promptly. Members commented that previously they were led to believe the contractors did not come out on time to repair lifts or just surveyed the damage and left the lift to meet their contract criteria. Members urged the council to ensure all lifts are fixed promptly. And if a lift cannot be fixed promptly Members asked for a priority criteria to be in place.**
- xvii. **Members referred to the information about lift breakdowns. Although they had been discussing the council calling residents. Member comments the information on the lifts themselves was not very helpful and recommended better information was displayed on the lifts about what a person should do if the lift is broken down and who they can contact. Members also asked for the information to cover what happens if a lift break down occurs out of hours.**
- xviii. **Members asked if there was an out of hours team to attend to the lift to repair it? Members also asked what happens if someone comes home out of hours to find the lift out of service and they cannot get into their home. Members were not convinced residents had knowledge of this information. Members pointed out the pandemic had several restrictions in place limiting where people could travel to or take shelter. Members asked if this has been taken into consideration?**

In response the Head of Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Housing explained they want to get to a point where they are proactive and can tell residents a lift has broken down rather than vice versa. Although the technology is not in place and the current situation has been hampered by the cyber-attack and changes to the system. The council wants to be in a position whereby they are sending out information to residents in a timely manner.

If they can get the contract fit for purpose and the technology and information flowing to the council in the correct way, they will be in a better position to take control of texting and emailing residents. Instead of having multiple people all

calling the council about the same problem. This is the service they want to deliver to provide better communication.

The Head of Property and Asset Management added they have remote monitoring on the lifts currently. This provides the council with an alert that the lift has broken down. For out of hours the monitoring system will automatically put a call out to the contractor. The officer pointed out they have a system in place that alerts them to the problem the challenge they face is that it is not connected to their resident communication system.

The other challenge with the system is it highlights all faults like if the door is jammed open. A door jammed open can cause the lift system to go into an automatic shut down for 10 minutes. This will be notified on their system as a shutdown. The council does not want keep texting residents for these small shut down as this would be frustrating for residents. The council needs to understand how they can filter out of the system these small outages and set an appropriate level of outage before sending out communications to residents. The officer pointed out currently the Head of Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Housing's team gets notified about any lifts that were out the previous day. This is the current trigger for communications with residents.

In response to the question about ensuring the contractor fixes the lifts in a timely manner. This is an area they will work on in detail as they review the contract and the provisions. The officer highlighted the framework with more than 1 contractor does give them slightly more flexibility and a bit of competition to allow the contractors to compete rather than having a situation whereby they are reliant on a single contractor. The officers are proposing the council has a framework to give them this flexibility to manage it.

The officer accepted the Members points about whether some lifts should carry greater priority than others. This will be explored further.

- xix. **Members enquired if there is a shortage of lift contractors in the country operating in the market and asked if the council was confident of getting the required number of contractors to put in place this framework?**

The Head of Property and Asset Management advised at present they have not done any market testing. After a review of the contract value the Council concluded they should be able to attract the contractors. There are several contractors in the market. The officer acknowledged with specialist areas of work they can end up with the same contractors repeatedly. Lifts are not that specialist and there is a good range of contractors in the market. But they will do some market testing as part of the procurement process to ensure they are attracting the right contractors.

- xx. **Members wanted reassurance the Council would not be stuck with contractors that are not performing well because there were no alternative operators in the market.**

In response the officer agreed they did not want to be in that position.

- xxi. **Members referred to the council's desire to be the communicator when lifts have broken. Members enquired what will happen in the interim until the system is ready and how is the Council is managing this?**
- xxii. **Members also enquired what happens if someone is stuck outside their home and they live on the 17th floor. For example, if they have a pushchair and a child, a trolley full of shopping or the person is in a wheelchair. What assistance is available to residents and how do people find out what they should do to access this assistance? Members commented this information needs to be readily available to people in the physical environment e.g., by the lifts and in the housing block. Member commented not everyone has a mobile phone or can operate text messaging. Members urged the Council to consider all possible scenarios.**
- xxiii. **Members also referred to an article in the Hackney Citizen about a housing block at 355 Queensbridge Road. This article mentioned the concerns from residents about the lifts being out of action and asked officers for an update about the situation and the progress to resolve it.**

In response the Head of Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Housing explained they still have the lift protocol in place with the current contractors. This requires the contractor to put up notices and a report gets emailed to all the area housing managers within his team detailing all the lifts that have been out of service overnight. This report triggers the lift protocol. Everyone on the vulnerable list is contacted. The officer explained hand delivery is in the protocol currently, but this is difficult to do currently with all the covid restrictions in place. Therefore, the council relies on the posters by the contractor, texting, emailing, and making phone calls.

In response to people being stuck inside or outside their home. There is no readymade physical solution for that scenario or to pick people up and take them to places. The officer highlighted residents can contact his service, they have a helpline. For this reason, they are exploring other possible options through the advice network and their statutory partners. Taking the specific examples mentioned the officer highlighted they can with time and planning arrange for assistance to be put in place e.g., put a person into a hotel (this is if the need is identified). As informed earlier the council has put a resident into hotel accommodation because they had appointments that could not be missed. This was the offer of assistance the council put in place. The officer highlighted they do have the ability to offer hotels or alternative accommodation but, on a case,-by-case basis. It was reiterated the Council cannot physically carry a person and the council does not currently have any partners or organisation that offer this type of service.

In reference to 355 Queensbridge Road. The Interim Director of Housing explained the work by the council in relation to this issue. 355 Queensbridge Road has a concierge service, and this service has been adapted to help residents in this block. Where there is an existing service provision like this, they can utilize this service in a different way. The pandemic response put in place by the Council had overtaken the temporary changes. The officer hoped this response and service would continue because it has been a very valuable

service to residents particular for the residents that do not meet the safeguarding threshold for adult social care. The officer agreed they will have to review the offer to residents regarding carrying them physically to their home. Currently this is very limited.

The Interim Director of Housing added 355 Queensbridge Road is a designated housing block for the over 55s. They have several elderly residents living in the block. This block is served by 2 lifts that stop at all the floors. However, one of the lifts has been unreliable and out of service for a while. This awaiting a part to come from Germany. The Council is very conscious that residents are worried that the other lift might breakdown too. The council is doing everything possible to look after the more reliable lift which is under extra strain. The council has put in place an enhanced servicing regime; however, this means the lift will be out of action for 2 hours when they do a service. Last week they arranged for letters to be delivered to all residents before the servicing of the lift to inform them. In addition, the council put on an extra concierge duty for that day to help and provide extra assistance if required.

The Chair thanked officers for the update.

6 Digital Divide and Hackney Council Housing Services

- 6.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Clayeon McKenzie; Interim Director of Housing, David Patfield and Head of Platforms, Henry Lewis from London Borough of Hackney.
- 6.2 This item on digital divide covered council housing services to review how housing services were supporting residents who are digitally excluded and a progress update on the connectivity for community halls.
- 6.3 The Interim Director of Housing commenced this item referring to the Council's work on digital exclusion and the Head of Platform provided a presentation about the Council's work on digital inclusion and the full fibre connectivity project.
 - 6.3.1 The Interim Director of Housing explained during the pandemic the world moved services online- shopping and work – and the assumption has been the same for all council services. The Director explained whilst some services had shifted online, the Council's housing services (when developing services) have been mindful that a significant proportion of residents do not have access to the internet or digital tools. In developing mechanisms of communication, they have kept this in mind.
 - 6.3.2 In the report it highlights some of channels they have been using. There has been a big emphasis on telephony because at the start of the pandemic this was recognised as an important tool for communication.
 - 6.3.3 The council's housing contact centre with the Council's corporate contact centre merged. This was to ensure the move to remote working for all telephony staff was consistent across the council. This also provided the council with flexibility to move staff around to cover staff shortages. There have also been some service improvements such as the voice activation service and

- automated call backs. There have also been several outbound calls made to residents during the pandemic which led to the here to help service.
- 6.3.4 The council also provided printed communications in the quarterly housing publication. There has also been work on mass texting as covered under the previous discussion item. The Council did acknowledge not all residents have access to a mobile phone but pointed out the vast majority do. Based on the communication trails to date, text messaging looks like the most suitable communication channel to progress.
- 6.3.5 Housing services have also aimed to join up as much as possible with the wider digital inclusion work. E.g. providing laptops to disadvantaged children. This also linked into housing services resident participation work.
- 6.4 The Head of Platforms commenced his presentation explaining he was the Council's strategic lead for connectivity. The presentation covered the council's work to launch the better broadband programme. The main points were:
- 6.4.1 This programme commenced 2-3 years ago. It was noted a number of services had been doing work on connectivity, but the council lacked an overarching strategy. This strategy covers the vision agreed by The Mayor and Cabinet for connectivity in December 2018.
- 6.4.2 The council now has a set of key principles to use. These are to use its key assets to deliver and maximise benefits for the communities and businesses of Hackney.
- 6.4.3 The Council's key asset is its building and the better broadband programme aims to help the council leverage its housing stock to provide more affordable high performing broadband services for tenants and the key service stakeholders they want to target.
- 6.4.4 Connectivity is important and was also a key priority prior to the pandemic because it was needed for:
- Job search - easier access to jobs and support online to make applications
 - Education - access to the internet is a vital tool to support learning online
 - Shopping - people shopping online save money (approximately £500 per household)
 - economic development - to support SMEs in digital and media services. Feedback from SMEs highlighted traditional broadband providers were too expensive for them and a barrier to setting up successfully in Hackney.
- 6.4.5 During the pandemic connectivity has become even more important for:
- Home schooling
 - To keep in touch with families and friends
 - To work from home
 - A source of entertainment
- 6.4.6 Connectivity has been a lifeline for people where it has been available. Especially for people who have been shielding to keep in touch with family and friends.

- 6.4.7 The Council also has a key manifesto commitment around this area related to pushing the market to provide Hackney with faster consistent internet connectivity. This links with other manifesto commitments to invest in and develop connectivity for people in temporary accommodation provision in Hackney. It was pointed out having connectivity in their own room was important to the residents of Hackney.
- 6.4.8 The council talked to tenants and local businesses before launching this programme work. In Autumn 2019 they survey all council tenants, and they received a positive response to the proposals. They received a lot of feedback about intermittent broadband and wanting broadband that worked. The officer highlighted these were the comments before the pandemic. It is assumed these comments would have focused more upon the importance of high performing services.
- 6.4.9 3 key areas of high priority:
- Higher performing services
 - Affordable services – people worried about the cost of broadband services.
 - Digital inclusion.
- 6.4.10 The council also talked to the tenant liaison group when they were at the development stage of the programme and have since returned to talk about the launch of the programme.
- 6.4.11 The programme is working with several full fibre connectivity providers to implement high performing and more affordable broadband into housing block and street properties.
- 6.4.12 The summary of programme was noted to be:
- New connectivity providers will be implementing high performing, more affordable broadband into their housing blocks and street properties. It is anticipated this programme of work will be able to cover almost all housing blocks and street properties. Many tenants will then have a choice of full fibre providers.
 - There will be no cost to the Council - the funding for new roles within the Council's Housing department to support the roll out and the costs that the council will incur to support the management of the programme will be by the providers.
 - Tenants will have a choice about whether to sign up to the programme. It will not be compulsory
 - There will be a range of social value benefits from the providers to support some of our most vulnerable residents. The Council is of the view this will give residents more choice and better value for money.
 - The programme will run for between 2 and 3 years. It is anticipated they will get most areas with at least one provider within the next year.
- 6.4.13 Regarding delivering more affordable full fibre provider options. The officer displayed a table listing the prices of full fibre providers compared to other big broadband providers. It was highlighted that typically the well-known broadband providers advertise a particular speed per second, but the

customers experience is well short of that provision. Whereas for the full fibre providers their service promise matches the customer experience.

6.4.14 Social value benefits were outlined to be:

- Free full fibre internet in perpetuity for key council services:
 - temporary hostels – it will deliver full gigger bit connectivity to all council hostels and build WiFi on top. This is so everyone in hostels is able to get connectivity in their rooms for free
 - Housing with Care schemes – as above and will include residents and their carers in that scheme. The buildings are managed by RSLs. The Council is in discussion about the connectivity and the RSL will provide the WiFi.
 - Housing community halls - they will all be connected.
 - Children’s centres - they will all be connected.
- Each provider to provide 40 free connections in perpetuity. This will give a total of 120 which will be enough to cover the services outlined above.
- Council and/or RSLs will deliver free WiFi to these sites.
- The providers have agreed that for one in ten households that are connected they will give:
 - Vouchers to the council which will be targeted to households in financial hardship. This should be able to help approximately 1000 households. This should also help to deliver a 50% discount to monthly costs. Taking the provision of the basic package cost to about £10 a month.
 - Further, free connections may now be available for 12 months to vulnerable households with school age children.
- Will be delivering digital skills training. Hope to deliver some of this training through community halls.
- There will be a range of apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

6.4.15 All the providers have signed up to the better business tool kits, local employment through the council’s employment and skills team and are a London living wage employer.

6.4.16 The providers have recently announced there may be free connection available for 12 months to vulnerable households with school aged children.

6.4.17 In comparison to the provision by other providers to other London boroughs (who have rolled out this scheme) Hackney is getting more for residents. Hackney applied the learning from other council deals to secure better deal for Hackney borough through their negotiations.

6.4.18 They have one provider signed up to the scheme. The next steps will be:

- Signing up more providers
- Close to agreeing the roll out schedules for the programme
- Delivering a comms plan for the programme
- The council remains in discussions with RSLs to ensure as many people in social housing can benefit from this scheme.
- Agreeing criteria for targeting vouchers
- Continuing to liaise with voluntary sector partners about this programme.

6.5 Questions, Discussions and Comments

- i. **Representative from the RLG confirmed the RLG has been communicating with LBH officers about the programme. The RLG referred to families on very low incomes and commend the proposals for the voucher scheme. The RLG suggested the council considers adding some extra funding to widen the provision. The RLG acknowledged the Council has limited funds but suggested they identify some VCS partners and facilitate crowd funding to subsidise this programme further and extend the availability to the next group (in terms of the indices of poverty).**
- ii. **Members referred to community halls and previous discussion about viability and their future. Members commented that covid had highlighted the need for provision to be near where people live. Members asked if work has been carried out on how the benefits of having the internet access within the community halls will provide opportunities for the council to provide non-council service e.g., health services as well exploring options to generate an income stream for the council.**
- iii. **Members wanted the Council to press upon RSLs to be included in the connectivity work to give equity of experience to council tenants and RSL tenants.**
- iv. **Members asked how access to the community hall's Wi-Fi will be managed in relation to opening and closing times of the building. Members wanted to understand if the community hall will only be open at certain times and how residents make use of this? Members pointed out access needs to be made available for the community and not just for specific groups, presentation, meetings etc.**

In response the Head of Tenancy and Leasehold Services from LBH confirmed the full fibre delivery to community halls was an opportunity to develop and link up with other service partners to help deliver additional services where possible.

Due to covid and the cyber-attack on Hackney Council the work to consider the future use of community halls was put on hold. But the opportunities that full fibre offer will not be lost. The council will work closely with statutory and VCS partners to look at what can be delivered and the opportunities for people to access the new provision.

The officer pointed out as part of the community halls review, they were looking at accessibility. The officer pointed out half of the community halls are managed by the council and the other half are managed by local TRAs or other groups. This review was looking at how to improve these arrangements to maximise the use of the community halls.

It was highlighted tough decisions will need to be made about current use, future use and how much they would invest in community halls. Some halls have deteriorated badly, and they will need to make decisions about their future.

In relation to ICT's work in terms of prioritising the roll out for full fibre this will consider the community halls team information about the current condition of the community halls to understand which halls they should target first and what ones they need to do further work on before it can be used for full fibre connectivity.

The Interim Head of Resident Participation, TMOs and Communities, Housing Services added in relation to the points about health they are starting to reach out to get involved in conversations at a neighbourhood level in Clissold Ward. This is being used as a sounding board to understand the needs of local people to offer in the local space. The officer has also been meeting with learning disability commissioners to review how the centres could be used for people with a learning disability too. Despite this work the challenge remains in matching the financial viability of the building to the needs of the people.

The Head of Platforms advised ICT is working closely with leaseholder services and the resident participation team to make sure they co-ordinate the provision of connectivity. This is so when community hall re open they will be able to deliver new services to residents and make use of the connectivity provided. In essence having connectivity and not delivering services will not make use of the provision. This should also help to improve people's lives locally.

In relation to the query about Wi-Fi passwords. Passwords for an all-access Wi-Fi service will not require a password, making it easy for everyone to access. The officer pointed out if Wi-Fi is difficult to access people tend not use it and this has led to people being digitally excluded in the past. This will be an easy-to-use system where people press one button and can be connected for 3 months.

In response to the query about RSLs. ICT has done quite a lot of work with RSLs to encourage them to sign up with the same full fibre providers on similar terms so they delivery similar benefits for their tenants. The Chief Executive from Hackney Council has written to all RSL Chief Executive encouraging them to have a dialogue with Hackney's ICT. Typically, it is the smaller RSLs that have been interested than the larger RSLs. This is because the larger RSLs tend to be national and have their own arrangements in place. ICT has found that the RSLs they work with for adult social care are interested in signing up to this service. This is good for the council because it will mean they are delivering connectivity to places with residents that have learning disability or mental health.

- v. **Members asked if the council would maintain both the security and new wireless infrastructure. Members also asked if there would be financial implications to the council to deliver the service and the benefits to the council for providing this service?**
- vi. **Members enquired if other network providers have a better service in the future or better financial opportunities will customers be able to switch?**
- vii. **Members asked for more information about which RSLs have not engaged with this work and asked if they could get an indication of the large RSLs that have not responded. Members suggested this**

information could be shared with ward councillors to help encourage RSLs.

- viii. **Members commented they were encouraged to see this work linked to apprenticeships and some training included in the discussion with providers. Members asked for more information about the activities this will involve and enquired how these opportunities will be advertised and how all age groups will be sign posted to these career opportunities.**

In response to the question about security and maintenance the Head of Platforms explained the council is only providing access to the internet and the only security there will be on the system is to prevent accessing sites that are illegal. There is no particular access to council services therefore people are free to surf the internet as they would in their own home.

In response to the question about other suppliers in the future who may wish to come onboard. The Head of Platforms explained this can be accommodated because it is not an exclusive scheme. Anybody who meets the criteria can sign up to the scheme. Currently there are only 3 providers in London who can deliver full fibre in the way the council has envisaged.

In response to the question about RSLs and who has engaged and who has not. The Head of Platforms advised he did not have that information at present. The officer confirmed he would be happy to take up the offer to work with ward councillors to help encourage RSLs to join the scheme. Engagement of ward councillors would be better in a few months' time when they have more data about take up and understand resident experience.

To date their discussions with RSLs have centred around support services like housing with care schemes and the benefits connectivity can provide to residents whilst also leading to improved health and wellbeing. The discussion has been more focused on outcome and not technology. This is the same approach they would like to take with RSLs. Highlighting why connectivity is important.

In terms of employment and skills plans the information about this would be provided by the Council's Employment and Skills Team. The officer advised he would be happy to report back on the details if the commission wanted further details.

- ix. **Members asked if the council has control over the pricing or can the providers increase the prices without consultation with the Council? Members also asked if the price does increase is there an agreement with the Council about the increase limit?**

The Head of Platforms provided clarity about the pricing and explained the arrangements are between the supplier and the individual households. They are free to set their own pricing.

The officer pointed out the council will have discount vouchers and the degree to which they can apply a discount. The council is expecting this scheme to lead to a more competitive market and that the full fibre providers signed up will see a benefit in under cutting the prices the big brand providers are offering.

The officer pointed out recently Hyperoptic talked about exploring a best value offer which would be open to all residents in Hackney. This would still be a high level of connectivity which is better than the top brands. To date the direction of travel in relation to pricing is a downward trend, so the council is relatively reassured. However, pricing is not in their control. It is anticipated by having competition in the market there will be more providers to provide these services.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Clayeon McKenzie added this has been journey over the past year. There have been some hard negotiations and the principles set out to all parties wishing to engage in this scheme. The Cabinet Member commented unfortunately, the council is unable to regulate the market although they did make enquires at the start of this work about market control, but it was not possible. No local authority can dictate the market rate. However the council is mindful about securing the best deal for Hackney residents.

The Cabinet Member highlighted their work in Hackney is starting a trend of worry by big providers about the market and the effect on their market share. The Cabinet Member pointed out residents can make an informed choice. The Council is hoping for the direction of travel for pricing to continue downwards. The Cabinet Member informed the scheme being set up in Hackney is being noticed by the big brand operators in the market and they are concerned about market share.

The Cabinet Member for Housing said these types of schemes are a good indication of being able to force the market down. In addition, the Council plans to lobby Government in terms of regulating the internet service provider industry to highlight that tariff price rates need to be genuinely affordable. The Cabinet Member pointed out having access to the internet is an essential service and a requirement for any person to enjoy a full life. Political they are escalating this to central government in the interest of getting better regulation for the internet services provider industry.

7 Resident Engagement

- 7.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Clayeon McKenzie; Interim Director of Housing, David Patfield, Interim Head of Resident Participation, TMOs and Communities, Housing Services, Sara Kulay and Head of Tenancy and Leasehold Services, Gilbert Stowe from London Borough of Hackney.
- 7.2 The Chair also welcomed to the meeting representatives from the Resident Liaison Group Co-Chair, Steve Webster and Co-Chair, Helder da Costa.
- 7.3 This item was an update on the approach to supporting resident engagement and participation for tenants and leaseholders within Hackney Housing Services.
- 7.4 The update was a follow up to the work and information provided at previous LiH meetings. The report to support this discussion item was in the agenda under item 7. The main updates from the report were noted to be:

- 7.4.1 This report aimed to aid the discussion about the restructure of the Resident Participation Team (RPT) and strategy development. It also highlighted some of the work they have been doing during the pandemic. The officer pointed out this was important because previous reports to the scrutiny commission had focused on the need to widen participation and increase engagement in some of their participation funds. Despite the pandemic they have made some progress in these areas.
- 7.4.2 As a result of the lock down some of their usual activity - like estate fun days, trips to the seaside and theatre to see the pantomime - had been put on hold. However, the team has participated in other areas of work like the 'Let's talk project'.
- 7.4.3 It was pointed out within 11 days of the first lockdown in March 2020 the Resident Participation Team put in place the 'Let's Talk' project. It was a response to understanding the anxiety, isolation and worries about the financial difficulties tenants and leaseholders were experiencing. They set up a referral route very quickly from housing officers into the team.
- 7.4.4 When the project launched, they had no idea about the take up. Over 500 people contacted the team and in some cases, they had multiple calls with the same people because of their complex needs related to anxiety, depression, and family concerns.
- 7.4.5 The initial scheme helped to develop the subsequent 'can we help scheme'. Feedback was provided to the strategy and policy function about the service and what people needed and the problems people were presenting with. This has helped to shape the service. The service provision was a 2 way street because their resident participation staff benefited from additional training and development (domestic violence, mental health) and this has helped to increase the capability and capacity of the team. This has also helped to identify the vulnerability of some of their tenants and leaseholders. This information is important in terms of shaping further strategy development.
- 7.4.6 Another area of work the Resident Participation Team funded was a children and young people's programme over the summer. They commissioned 5 providers directly to work on their estates. This was a hyper local provision. They co-ordinated with Young Hackney so they were not targeting and reaching the same children and young people. They engaged 350 children in those programmes over the summer. This provided important respite for children and parents. This was a very positive initiative. They will move forward this work in the future with Young Hackney and engage with the recommendations coming out of the Hackney Young Futures Commission.
- 7.4.7 In reference to widen engagement for the Resident Estate Improvement fund (previously known as the Resident Led Improvement Budget). This year the team worked with the Resident Liaison Group to come up with a new name. They were conscious if they wanted to promote it and market it effectively, they had to make it clear it was an estate-based fund and focused on housing estates. The report details the wider programme of engagement and consultation they carried out about the fund. The team has worked with colleagues in other departments to promote the programme borough wide. In

terms of responses, they received 805 and most were digital responses. They also conducted walkabouts on estates. The covid restrictions have impacted on estate walkabouts. But there have been some opportunities for people to walk around on the estate. The report details some ward-based analysis from this information. They recognise there is room for improvement in relation to the responses. 805 represents only 2.6% from households. Notwithstanding this was the first step and viewed as a positive first step. Next year they are hoping to coordinate wider publicity about the walkabouts to get a bigger turn out on the walkabouts.

- 7.4.8 The Resident Participation Team (RPT) has also done some targeted work in wards that do not have large scale estates like Cazenove. As they are conscious, they do not always have the resident participation engagement structures in place in the same way large estates do. They have carried out targeted work in Cazenove hosting and promoting zoom meetings with residents in particular blocks on estates. This has been good because they have reached out and engaged people who previously had no contact with the RPT. The RPT is now trying to get them to form a Tenant and Resident Associations. This may not be the step they want to take right now but the engagement has provided an opportunity for them to think about how they wish to work with the RPT in the future.
- 7.4.9 The other key areas of work was the strategy development and restructure. A lot of this work has been put on hold due to the pandemic and the corporate decisions to halt restructures. The RPT has now completed the restructure of the Resident Participation Team. The new structure will be implemented on 1st June 2021. This gives more clarity about the support role and a focus on project and community development. The RPT recognised this was needed to improve involvement in the community development fund. A fund set up to benefit residents. There is also a youth engagement role within the new structure too.
- 7.4.10 The RPT has also taken forward the work on the resident engagement strategy. This model has been developed in partnership with the RLG. It is a model of co-production. The development of this strategy as involved working from the ground up. The strategy development process was more important than the final document. This was because it was about building connections and relationships. From the process itself they anticipate they will get a lot more feedback from residents.
- 7.5 Representative from the Resident Liaison Group confirmed residents on his estate had given positive feedback about the 'lets talk project' and that this was a very welcomed project for residents who were vulnerable and/or isolated during the pandemic. The RLG hoped this would be developed and expanded in the future. The RLG commented they would like to see this type of support / service continue after the pandemic.
- 7.5.1 In reference to resident engagement, the RLG pointed out they and officers from LBH have been working closely to develop a framework to engage with a wider range of residents in the borough to get their views on how the council should communicate with residents, work together and develop projects together.

- 7.5.2 The RLG commented one of the key points they wanted to make was that they would like the engagement structure to recognise the contributions that active resident groups (TRAs, Panels and RLGs and support residents groups) can make and that they are the primary groups to have discussions with.
- 7.5.3 The RLG commented they want there to be consultation with a wider range of residents, young people and different ethnic groups, people with disabilities etc to get a really broad range of views. The RLG want this insight to be useful for a long period of time. A framework that recognises the input from residents across the borough.
- 7.6 **Questions, Discussions and Comments**
- i. **Members made the following comments and questions. Resident engagement has been an issue that has been raised for several years. Members pointed out estate walkabouts are held during the day and weekdays which is more suitable for officers, and that this is despite the fact that the majority of residents are at work.**
 - ii. **Members urged officers to think of better ways to engage with residents at a time that is more suitable to them. Members pointed out if the council is going to engage with residents it needs to be on their terms not the council.**
 - iii. **Members acknowledged the work that has been carried out in relation to digital inclusion and that this needed to continue.**
 - iv. **Members suggested the council reviews officer contractual working times to enable officers to be flexible and work weekends or evening when residents are available.**
 - v. **Members asked if TMOs have been included in this work? Members acknowledged TMOs are responsible for their own engagement work with their tenants but Members pointed out the residents are still Council tenants. Members were of the view TMOs should be included to some extent in the council's engagement work.**
 - vi. **Members referred to the engagement work in the report following Black Lives Matter and as a result of new government policy. Members were of the view the council should have been doing this prior to these 2 events. Members pointed out engaging with their ethnic minority communities should have been standard because a large proportion of residents are from black and ethnic minority backgrounds.**

In response the Interim Head of Resident Participation, TMOs and Communities, Housing Services from LBH explained in reference to TMOs are responsible for their own resident engagement strategy. The Council recognises they need to work in partnership and have a good TMO client team that sits within the service. The RPT has regular TMO forum meetings and they have discussed resident engagement strategy at the TMO forum. The Council does view them as very important partners and stakeholder. The key aim is to build good relationships and learn from each other and share more around good practice.

Regarding the timings of the estate walk abouts for the resident estate improvement fund. This year they liaised with TRAs and the TRAs communicated the best time for them. As a result, they did quite a few walk abouts in the early evening. They have altered the times to try to provide some flexibility to accommodate what residents wanted. The officer confirmed they have not considered weekends, but they can explore this.

In reference to the drivers for development of the resident engagement strategy. The officer explained there were plans to develop a resident engagement strategy for a while. The officer pointed out this was a gap in their framework. The officer highlighted the new social housing white paper, which has evolved from Grenfell, identified a key issue was around residents not being heard. Although residents were spoke to, they were not listened to. This is important and the council is very mindful of this. The white paper puts the tenant voice at the heart of everything housing services should do. In the report the Council was highlighting how they plan to make sure there is even better engagement with their resident. With Black Lives Matter this was related to the issues around diversity and inclusive approaches. They want to ensure the resident engagement process is as wide as possible and that they hear from as many different people from as many different groups as possible. To understand how they want to be involved.

The Cabinet Members for housing commented in relation to the resident participation strategy. This had been impacted by events outside of their control. The Council is aware that as a social landlord they need to put the resident voice at the centre of their thinking, in terms of evolving the services they roll out to residents. There is more room for improvement but their current working with residents is moving in the right direction.

8 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 8.1 The minutes of the previous meetings held on 18th January 2021 and the 11th February 2021 were approved.

RESOLVED:	Minutes of the meeting on 18 th January 2021 and 11 th February 2021 were approved.
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9 Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission- 2020/2021 Work Programme

- 9.1 The Chair referred to the work programme and confirmed this was the last meeting for the municipal year.
- 9.2 The next meeting will be in the new municipal year commencing June 2021. The first meeting will be a follow up to their meeting in November 2020 with the Metropolitan Police, MOPAC and the IOPC.
- 9.3 The Chair suggested Members of the Commission email the Overview and Scrutiny Officer their suggestions for the new scrutiny commission work programme. This will be discussed at the meeting in July 2021.

- 9.4 The Chair thanked all Members and officers for their attendance throughout the year.
- 9.5 The Chair thanked the officers who have supported the scrutiny commission. Overview and Scrutiny officer Tracey Anderson and ICT officer Mario Kahraman for the dedicated live stream support to the scrutiny commission meetings over the last year.

10 Any Other Business

- 10.1 None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 9:55 pm

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