

London Borough of Hackney  
Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission  
Municipal Year 2016/17  
Monday, 15th July, 2019

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

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<b>Chair:</b>	<b>Councillor Sharon Patrick</b>
<b>Councillors in Attendance:</b>	<b>Cllr Sade Etti (Vice-Chair), Cllr Anthony McMahon, Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Penny Wrouth and Cllr Anna Lynch</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<b>Cllr Ian Rathbone</b>
<b>Officers In Attendance:</b>	<b>Gilbert Stowe (Divisional Head of Tenancy and Leasehold Services) and Tracey Thomas (Prevent Coordinator, Hackney)</b>
<b>Other People in Attendance:</b>	<b>Councillor Sam Pallis</b>
<b>Members of the Public:</b>	
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## **Councillor Sharon Patrick in the Chair**

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Cllr Rathbone, who was attending a Ward Forum.

### **2 Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Officer called for nominations for Chair. Cllr Etti proposed Cllr Patrick and Cllr Ozsen seconded. There were no other nominations and the vote was carried unanimously.
- 2.2 Taking the Chair, Cllr Patrick called for nominations for Vice Chair, and nominated Cllr Etti. Cllr Ozsen seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations and the vote was carried unanimously.

### **3 Urgent Items / Order of Business**

- 3.1 There were no urgent items and the order of business was as laid out.

## 4 Declarations of Interest

4.1 Interests were declared as below. These were in relation to agenda item 5:

- Cllr McMahon declared he was a Board Member of Lordship South TMO
- Cllr Patrick declared she was a Board Member of Clapton Park TMO
- Cllrs McMahon and Patrick declared they were Council leaseholders

## 5 Housing Services support of resident engagement - DISCUSSION ITEM

5.1 Guests in attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Clayeon McKenzie, Cabinet Member for Housing Services
- Gilbert Stowe, Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services

5.2 The Chair welcomed the guests. Asked to give an overview of the paper which was available in the agenda packs, the Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services made the following substantive points:

- The paper provided an overview of the activities of the Resident Participation Team; one of 6 teams within his service.
- The resident engagement function had been reviewed by Hackney Homes in 2016, and again by the Council in 2017 following the return of Housing Services back into the Council.
- Some of the 2017 changes were delivered in recognition that the function would be operating within a different governance structure; it would no longer be reporting activities to a Board, for example.
- The review had also seen the Resident Liaison Group (the forum providing resident involvement at the most strategic level) and the Resident Scrutiny Panel (a body carrying out reviews of services and making recommendations for change) maintained, but with their formats changed to better involve a wider cross section of the community. Post the review, the service also intended to deliver a wider range of engagement activities.
- What the review did not do was to deliver significant change in staffing structure to support the changes. Up to this point, the new arrangements had been supported with interim measures, where staff with quite generic job descriptions had been allocated to various functions within the service, according to demand. This approach had led to a concern that each function was not always receiving the specialist required.
- This was the context behind a review of the structure of the team, which was currently underway. The final section of the paper set out the aims which the newly structured service would have. These had been partly informed by discussions with a number of Members around where there was room for improvement.

- He would welcome further input during this item around how the service was delivered. This would help complement plans to consult with staff and residents on a set of proposals. Consultation would include discussions with some of those who were involved with engagement mechanisms already in place, and also with some of those who were not. This was within an intention to explore how the service could secure greater levels of participation.
- 5.3 The Chair thanked the Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services. She said she was keen to explore the support that his service provided to Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs), and other formal engagement forums. She knew that TRAs were struggling; in her Ward one had collapsed and another had come close to doing so. She suggested that this was partly due to the busy lives which residents led (often juggling work, caring and other responsibilities). Contributing to the management of a TRA alongside this was very difficult.
- 5.4 She was aware of research suggesting that falls in active membership of TRAs and of TRA numbers themselves was a London-wide issue. However, she felt that this was compounded in Hackney by there appearing to be quite limited support from the Council in some cases. Muriel Gordon MBE in her capacity as Chair of the Stamford Hill Panel and member of the Resident Liaison Group had written a helpful email in advance of the meeting setting out some of the challenges which these forums were facing.
- 5.5 She also felt there to be some gap in the support provided to Tenant and Management Organisations (TMO) around residents' engagement. The Council had a dedicated TMO unit which did provide support, but this was more focused around policies and Governance than engagement activity.
- 5.6 More widely than this – and again noting the fall in the number of active TRAs - she would welcome discussions on how the Council was working to secure the involvement of residents who were not engaged through the more formal structures in place. TRAs and other forums including Neighbourhood Panels and the Resident Liaison Group performed vital and valuable work. However, there was of course a need to engage more widely. Doing so would help ensure that more people could be involved in decisions affecting their areas; for example on the works delivered on estates through resident-led estate improvement funds. As one example, she was aware of some cases where text messages were sent to residents to advise them of events on and around their estates
- 5.7 Another Member agreed with these points. She noted the references in the paper to the service's offer for older residents, in the form of the delivery of a Neighbourhood-wide forum delivering a range of activities for over 55s.
- 5.8 She noted that this appeared to be open only to those who were members of older peoples groups which were registered with the Council. She knew of other groups who might benefit from this project; including older residents who lived in Registered Housing Provider (Housing Association) housing. She wondered if more that could be done to support a wider range of old people to engage in activities. This would help progress manifesto commitments around supporting older residents.

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- 5.9 She also noted the nature of housing change in the borough, including greater use of the private rented sector by the increasing numbers of residents for whom social housing nor home ownership was an option. She also noted the role the Council was playing in the direct delivery of intermediate and open market housing, in addition to the building of new homes for social rent. She felt that a refreshed approach to resident engagement might explore how the engagement of different residents might be best achieved.
- 5.10 A Member was keen to explore any differences in staffing numbers and duties which would result from the planned restructure, and in the activities which the service would provide. She asked for clarification on the staffing resources in place.
- 5.11 The Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services confirmed there were 12 officers in the Resident Participation team.
- 5.12 In addition to this, the service funded three posts within a dedicated team housed in the Communications, Culture and Engagement Division in the Chief Executive's Directorate. That team worked to ensure that the voices of Hackney's tenants and leaseholders were fully heard by the Council in its wider consultation and engagement activity. The team also helped Housing Services in its delivery of larger events, which had included a recent event in Hoxton.
- 5.13 In terms of the 12 officers within the Resident Participation Team, these were currently split into a number of roles.
- 5.14 He was limited on what he could say as changes proposed had not yet gone to consultation. However, in short, the review would aim to put the team on a better footing for delivery through putting a structure in place which was made up of specialist roles.
- 5.15 There were areas for improvement.
- 5.16 One of these was around how the service engaged with the wider priorities and commitments of the Council. The review would seek to make the service better at brokering contact and engagement between residents and a wide range of services both inside and outside the Council. He saw his service playing a much larger role in this.
- 5.17 Another was around the allocation of the Community Development Fund, which residents and residents groups could apply for to deliver community development and engagement activities on Hackney Housing estates.
- 5.18 This fund had replaced a previous scheme, within an aim of making participation funds available to a wider group of residents. It had been designed within a principle that each Hackney Housing estate would be apportioned a notional amount of the fund, which would be allocated following applications from residents and residents groups.
- 5.19 However – due to a lack of applications - only a third of the funding available for 2018/19 had been allocated. There was a need for the duty of managing and communicating this fund being formally incorporated into a job description(s). This would better enable a proactive approach where there was effective

- publicity to ensure residents were aware of the fund and where the service provided support to parties interested in applying, when this was needed. This would help ensure the fund was used and utilised in the best possible way.
- 5.20 He agreed with the point that the service needed to engage with a wider range of forums. As an example, in the past, dedicated leaseholder forums were held annually, but had stopped. He was keen for these to be re-established.
- 5.21 In response to another point on the need to contact and engage residents in different ways, he was in full agreement. Until now, the service had relied on more traditional routes to engagement. They needed to get stronger in the use of platforms including social media and texting. This was also relevant to the point made around the changing nature of the borough. There was a need to ensure that all residents were engaged with in the way that suited them.
- 5.22 There was good practice in places; a Senior Housing Officer in one neighbourhood had piloted an initiative where he regularly contacted residents via text messaging. This had delivered good outcomes including a high turnout of residents at a local fair arranged by the service. Feedback gathered from residents on this initiative had been positive. The challenge for him as Head of Service was to ensure that this good practice was rolled out across the borough. The Residents Participation Team would also be expected to play a leading role in identifying and disseminating best practice.
- 5.23 The Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services also recognised the need to improve the online offer. He wanted to achieve a model where those wishing to do so could access all of the Residents Participation Team's functions online, whilst provision was left in place for those not wanting to go down this channel. He also saw the team having a key role in the general roll out of digital services across Housing Services, in terms of ensuring that residents were able to give substantial input into their design.
- 5.24 He noted the earlier point of the Chair around a lack of support for TRAs. There had been common feedback from TRA Chairs that 'red tape' was preventing them from doing things more quickly and easily. In response to this, roles in the new structure would have clear responsibilities to ensure that the processes and procedures in place around TRAs were effective, that TRA Chairs and Members were able to navigate them in the way that suited them, and that there was support available where it was needed.
- 5.25 Furthermore, the review would address the current lack of Officer support for both the Resident Liaison Group, and the Resident Scrutiny Panel. These functions played an important role in driving service improvement through the challenge they provided, but they needed dedicated support to be fully effective and sustainable. This included support to ensure that succession planning was in place so that new Members joined the functions to replace others standing down wherever possible.
- 5.26 The Chair thanked the Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services. She welcomed the review seeking to improve the support available to TRAs going through different processes, including applying for funds to hold events. She noted that a TRA in her ward had not held an event for some time due to the application process for funding not being as user friendly as it might be.

- 5.27 She noted the underspend in the Community Development Fund. She wondered if the service could be more proactive, both in terms of communicating the funds available as already mentioned, but also by directly delivering events for residents with these funds, if they had not been fully allocated by a set time of the year.
- 5.28 She also again noted the need for the team to reach all tenants and leaseholders; the great majority of whom would not engage through the formal mechanisms including TRAs. She asked if larger events – including ones which offered food – could be held more often as a way of both bringing residents together, and also gathering views.
- 5.29 The Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services said he also saw room for more large events. The recent Hoxton Fair event had been very successful. It had enabled the community to come together and have a good time, and also a wider range of Council services to engage with residents. Services areas across the Council were calling out for these type of opportunities to reach residents. In this way, the service could help the Council and its partners meet its objectives. The service would explore the possibility of doing more of these.
- 5.30 A Member had attended the Hoxton fair and found it a really positive event. She welcomed that the service would seek to do more events of this scale. However, she also wondered if there might be more engagement by the service - and the Council more widely - in events delivered by the community. She was involved with the annual Well Street Common Festival, as one example. Although it had become a large event with a very high footfall, the Council had not taken stalls there. She wondered if there was a need to identify the events going on in the borough and - from these - those which the Council would prioritise being represented at.
- 5.31 The Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services agreed with this point. This said, for the Resident Participation Team there was a need initially to better ensure that it was linked in with events and activities delivered by the Council itself. This was an area for improvement, partly due to the legacy left by Housing Services having previously been delivered by Hackney Homes as an Arms Length Management Organisation. Reorganisations of other areas of Housing Services since its move back into the Council had succeeded in achieving better join up. However, this was an area for improvement for the Residents Participation function.
- 5.32 Moving further forward, he agreed there was a need to better ensure the service's engagement with events led by the community. As an additional point, he advised that the Director of Communications, Culture and Engagement Division was leading on the development of a Resident Engagement Strategy for the Council as a whole. He hoped that this would set out the approach to best ensuring general Council involvement at community events.
- 5.33 The Member wished to explore the Council's approach to community hall hire for community events. She had attended one of the weekly events delivered by Foodcycle in New Kingshold Community Centre, where donations of food from local shops and businesses were used by volunteers to cook a three course meal for anyone wishing to attend.

- 5.34 It had been an excellent event, well attended by a cross section of the community. She had been pleased to hear from the organisers that the Council waived the hire fees for these events. However, she felt there were a wide range of community-led events which deserved to have their fees waived, given the contribution they made to a range of wider Council priorities. She asked if there was a strategy in place around community halls charging.
- 5.35 The Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services advised that were subsidised rates within the community halls fees structure. In addition, the Community Halls Team did waive fees altogether in some cases, as with the events mentioned by the Member. This was particularly the case when an organisation was not receiving a grant from the Council to support its activities. There was not a dedicated strategy in place for community halls. However, a review was currently being carried which was exploring costs against revenue, and the usage of facilities.
- 5.36 He agreed on the need for the Council to support community-led events. However, this did need to be balanced with the fact that the Halls brought significant running costs which were increasing, and also the wider financial challenges being faced by the Council. An added complexity was that around half of the halls were managed directly by TRAs or TMOs, which could apply their own arrangements in terms of pricing and rate reductions.
- 5.37 The Community Halls Review needed to address the issue that halls were currently an underused asset. There was a need to improve the quality of the offer and to enable a wide range of usage; for example by exploring the viability of installing Wi-Fi facilities across the estate of Halls.
- 5.38 A Member noted that the NHS Long Term Plan committed to giving patients options around accessing care provision, closer to their homes. She suggested that Community Halls could play a role in achieving this. She felt that some residents would really welcome being able to access health and social care services in community halls. She asked whether the service was engaging with the Integrated Commissioning Teams.
- 5.39 The Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services thanked the Member. He had held initial discussions with a contact in the Homerton Hospital around using a local community hall to deliver some health services, on a pilot basis.
- 5.40 The Chair recalled that the Commission had asked questions of the Cabinet Member for Housing Services around Community Halls. She asked when the review would be complete, and if an update could be provided to the Commission at that point.
- 5.41 The Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services advised that the review was due to report in October. He agreed that an update could be provided in the Commission meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019. This was the same meeting that he was due to give an update on the Resident Participation Team Review.

**ACTION 1 (Scrutiny Officer):**

To schedule a 'Community Halls Review – Update' item in Commission Work Programme for the meeting 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019

- 5.42 Cllr Pallis - who was a guest for this item - felt that the review of the Resident Participation Team provided a real opportunity for the Council to effectively carry its agenda and messaging across the borough, including to areas which were difficult to reach.
- 5.43 There were a wide range of important Council policies and strategies which were in development; the Inclusive Economy Strategy, the Arts and Culture Strategy and the Green Infrastructure Plan to name a few. He hoped that the review would explore the role the Residents Participation Team could play in the delivery of the objectives outlined in these plans.
- 5.44 He also felt the review should set out the activities which were currently delivered, and the actions / measures / performance indicators which would be used to report on its delivery going forward.
- 5.45 For example – and linking in with the strategies mentioned – this might set out objectives / actions around aiding projects on estates which would deliver more green areas on estates, and communicating to residents on any funding opportunities around the greening agenda.
- 5.46 This was not about telling residents what to do, but about being clear on the ways they could engage, and the way that they could be supported to. Many residents wished to get involved, but were unaware of opportunities to drive improvements in the social and physical environments of their estates. Most did not know about the Community Development Fund. This was the case with the Resident Led Improvement Budget also, and the estate walkabouts which led to decisions around the works on estates which would be delivered with it. Walkabouts were not always carried out at optimal times of the day to allow greatest involvement, and whilst residents were given an option of requesting a separate time, many did not do so.
- 5.47 There was an issue around inconsistencies in the numbers of active TRAs in different areas of the borough, which were not fully explained by the volumes of Hackney Housing units within them. For example in the Stamford Hill Neighbourhood there were 8 TRAs, compared to 20 in Homerton. He hoped the review would end with work aiming to reinvigorate TRA activity with a particular focus on priority areas.
- 5.48 He noted the underspend of the Community Development Fund already mentioned. However, he also noted that the £1.1 million Resident Led Improvement Budget had been spent in 2018/19. He welcomed this, but felt that in future years there should be clearer information on outcomes delivered from the funds.
- 5.49 The Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services thanked the Member for these useful points. He felt they could be used by the service to help develop a plan/strategy for the next few years in terms of what it would seek to deliver and how it would measure its success. This would mean that future updates to the Commission could include outputs and outcomes delivered; for example the amount allocated through the Community Development Fund and the Resident Led Improvement Budget and the events and physical



- improvements delivered as a result, and a list of events in which the service had brokered contact between residents and the wider Council and its partners.
- 5.50 It was also important to make the point that resident engagement went far beyond the remit of the Resident Participation Team.
- 5.51 All areas of Housing Services – including Housing Officers in his wider service, the Asset Management Service delivering planned maintenance of stock, the Building Maintenance and Estate Environment Service providing responsive maintenance and other functions, and the Resident Safety Team delivering the fire safety programme (and ensuring health and safety generally) – needed to involve residents in its work. A crucial role of the Resident Participation Team was to help advise on and enable the engagement of residents by these wider areas. Each also had roles in publicising the opportunities for involvement available through the Resident Participation Team, including the Community Development Fund and Resident Led Improvement Budget.
- 5.52 Asked to make any final points, the Cabinet Member for Housing Services thanked the Commission for exploring the area of resident engagement.
- 5.53 Drawing on the points made tonight by Members and also discussions he and Officers had had with others, it had become clear that the way that Housing Services engaged with residents needed to change. This was in recognition of the busier and more time pressured lives residents were leading.
- 5.54 The more traditional, formal structures had often been led by more senior residents who had been willing and able to dedicate significant time to carrying out the range of administrative, bureaucratic tasks which were needed in order for progress to be made. He was hugely grateful for this.
- 5.55 However, the capacity for residents to make this level of contribution had reduced. It was not the case that residents did not want help shape improvements to estate environments and to the services they received, or to be involved with events.
- 5.56 However, the Council needed to adapt its systems and processes to make this possible. The ones in place were out of date, and could provide barriers to engagement in some cases rather than support to enable it. Change would take some time to deliver. It would include the need to secure buy in and support from staff.
- 5.57 The discussions this evening had been very useful. The points made would build on those already collected from other discussions. The concerns raised by Members had been largely consistent with those reported by the Residents Liaison Group, which gave him reassurance that addressing them would lead to real improvement. The discussion at the Resident Liaison Group had led to the production of a 23 point action plan. He asked that the Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services shared this with the Commission to help demonstrate the understanding of the service around the improvements needed, and its journey towards delivering them.
- 5.58 The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and said she would look forward to receiving the action plan.

<b>ACTION 2 (Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services):</b> To share To share Housing Services' Resident Engagement Action Plan.
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- 5.59 Noting the discussion was coming to an end, a Member wished to pay thanks to the Resident Participation Officers for the work they did. This did involve giving up evenings which she appreciated was not always easy to do. She had been to TRAs and other meetings which had been very well supported by Resident Participation Officers, and other Housing Services staff.
- 5.60 The Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services thanked the Member for this point, which he appreciated. He noted that the discussion had been largely focused aspects for improvement. However, it was important to note that Officers within the Resident Participation function were highly committed to delivering a good service, and generally welcoming of a review which would provide a more effective structure in which to do so.

## **6 Prevent Programme Update - DISCUSSION ITEM**

- 6.1 The Chair welcomed Tracey Thomas, Prevent Coordinator for Hackney. She asked that she summarise the paper which was available in the agenda packs.
- 6.2 The Prevent Coordinator made the following substantive points:
- Prevent was one of the four strands of the Government's counter terrorism strategy. The Prevent strand operated within the non-criminal space, and was focused on preventing vulnerable people getting involved in terrorism and or becoming radicalised.
  - Hackney was designated by the Home Office as a Prevent priority area due to being identified as being at significantly higher risk than the majority of local authority areas (this was partly due to its location in the east of London).
  - This status translated into the Home Office funding three posts operating locally on Prevent; her own, a Prevent Support Officer, and a Prevent Education Officer. The person filling the latter role had recently left. Recruitment into the vacant post had been successful, with the replacement due to start in September. The Council also received additional resources to deliver a local Prevent Programme, and a range of projects. Funding secured for the delivery of projects had been at its highest level yet in 2018/19.
  - The Council had a statutory safeguarding duty around protecting people from grooming, exploitation or harm. The statutory Prevent Guidance operated within this wider context, and highlighted 6 key areas which local authorities had to adhere to in order to meet the Prevent duty.
  - Two of these were around having a risk assessment and Prevent Action Plan, overseen at the appropriate level. Hackney's Statutory Officers Group performed this oversight role.
  - A key aspect of Prevent was partnership working; both with agencies and communities. Hackney was clear around the need for Prevent to be delivered in a community-led way. She worked with a number of individuals who were not

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necessarily supporters of Prevent, but who could provide challenge and advice to help ensure that projects were shaped appropriately. This included liaising between the Home Office and the community where the Home Office was encouraging a particular project but where the community was significantly against it. In these cases the Prevent Coordinator built an evidence base around the community concerns on the proposed project, which could be used to reason not going ahead with it on a Hackney level.

- She worked to ensure that the projects delivered in Hackney were informed and designed around the local context. There was an issue in the borough around gang activity and gang affiliation. A range of relevant projects had been delivered in this area. This included the commissioning of Mentivation – which worked with Hackney’s Integrated Gangs Unit – to deliver sessions to raise awareness among young people around both gang activity and radicalisation.
  - Another key aspect was the delivery of training in Prevent Safeguarding, to staff in schools and other educational settings. Training was also available to other partner organisations and Council departments.
  - Another involved identifying and providing support to agencies and other organisations which supported children and vulnerable individuals.
  - The final element was around out of school settings operating in the borough. The service was working with the Hackney Learning Trust on a mapping exercise to identify these within an aim of then going on to deliver training in safeguarding and health and safety standards.
- 6.3 The Chair noted the point around Hackney being a Prevent priority area. She had always felt Hackney to be a harmonious area. She asked why the borough was designated a high risk area.
- 6.4 The Prevent Co-ordinator advised there was a criteria which was used to identify priority areas. Evidence did suggest there to be quite low levels of concerning activity in Hackney. However, the borough was based in a wider area where there had been some instances of radicalisation. For example, a member of staff in a school in a neighbouring borough had been found to have been grooming young people towards radicalisation. A number of children from Hackney had attended that school.
- 6.5 Another reason why she felt that little was heard about issues in Hackney, was the way that the borough managed cases. A recent example had been the partnership response to the managed release of a person having completed their sentence for seeking to radicalise others, and the way that this was managed delicately with regard for both the family of the offender and the wider community. There were a number of individuals living in Hackney who were being monitored following offences relevant to the Prevent arena. She felt that the way these cases were managed was testament to the strength of arrangements in place.
- 6.6 The Chair noted the reference to the work on identifying out of school settings. She noted points made during Scrutiny Reviews by both this Commission and another around young people who were excluded from schools being at greater risk of exploitation. She asked how this work was progressing.

- 6.7 The Prevent Co-ordinator said that with funding from the Home Office the Council had been able to employ a dedicated Officer who was working to identify and map all out of school settings. This would cover a wide range – youth clubs, language schools, unregistered schools, and others. Following this work, the intention was to work with these establishments to ensure robust safeguarding and general health and safety arrangements
- 6.8 A Member wished to note from the paper that the findings from peer review by the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism had been generally very positive, and that this had included the finding that the Prevent Coordinator and Prevent Education Officer were highly thought of across the partnership.
- 6.9 She noted that a staff resource of three was in place. She wondered if this capacity was limited compared to those in place for other functions. She asked if more support was needed, and how the level of resource compared with other boroughs. She asked whether other areas of the Council aided her team in its work.
- 6.10 The Prevent Coordinator said that different boroughs had different levels of resources in place. There had been a scaling back by some Councils, and there was a general assumption that direct funding would reduce. Hackney did face the risk of having its priority area status removed by the Home Office, which would result in a loss of funding. It was important to note that the Council would still retain the Prevent Duty in this case, but would need to perform this with its own funding. Some boroughs were in particularly difficult positions; one – for example - had issues with extreme right activity, yet received no dedicated funding.
- 6.11 In terms of the question around support by other areas of the Council, this was an area which could be improved. This was particularly in relation to communication and promotion of the programme. Some community groups had been frustrated at what they saw as a lack of information from the Council on the support it offered. Earlier that day she had met with Communications which had been very positive. The Peer Review - whilst largely positive - had made some recommendations for change. This included the development and publication on a Communications Plan. The Council was now moving forward on this.
- 6.12 A Member noted the reference to far right activity in another borough, and also an apparent reinvigoration of the far right generally. She asked if this was being seen in Hackney. As a Councillor, she had seen very little suggestion that this was an issue locally.
- 6.13 The Prevent Coordinator agreed that there appeared to have been a rise in far right sentiment on a national level. For Hackney, it was something that she suggested Councillors should be aware of. In the current environment, some people perhaps felt free to make comments which in the recent past they would not have done. In terms of the Prevent Programme, this was manifested in the team receiving more calls from schools and others reporting young people to have said particular things. Sometimes, issues emerged through young people being exposed to content online which they then repeated in other settings. The team intervened in these cases by having conversations. The Prevent

Education Officer played a key role in preventing these kind of instances through programmes which celebrated diversity and difference.

- 6.14 There had also been an issue of some people flyposting offensive material in the public realm. Generally, it had been suspected in these cases that perpetrators came from outside the borough.
- 6.15 Having said this, 2018/19 had seen no Channel cases (these were cases where a multi-agency approach was put in place to support an individual identified as being at risk of being drawn into terrorism). For the current financial year to date, one person was being supported, including via mental health services. During the peer review the Home Office had been critical of the low number of Channel referrals by Hackney. However, her team adopted a cautious approach where – prior to any Channel referral - they worked with the police and partner agencies to complete an initial assessment.
- 6.16 This better ensured a proportionate approach. For example, in cases where there had been an isolated incident of one child saying something to another at school, the service would generally work to engage those involved and look at the case in more detail before identifying the appropriate way forward.
- 6.17 A Member wished to commend the work of the team. She knew that it was having an impact, and had been very well received in schools.
- 6.18 She also noted the points made in the paper and in the discussion around support, training and advice which was provided to organisations in the community. She asked if advice and support would also be available to any members of the public who might have concerns around an individual in the community, who might not want to go to the police.
- 6.19 The Prevent Coordinator advised that a briefing pack was available which included contact information for when someone in the community had a concern. This also included data on caseloads and referral numbers. She offered to share this with Commission Members

**ACTION 3 (Prevent Coordinator):**

To share Prevent briefing pack and caseload data with Commission Members

- 6.20 The Chair noted the point earlier around the Home Office encouraging the delivery of projects which the community might not always welcome. She noted wide ranging commentary about the Muslim community feeling unfairly targeted by the Prevent Programme. She asked if projects were indeed mainly focused on this community, or whether there were other faith groups which the Home Office encouraged the Council to work with.
- 6.21 The Prevent Coordinator advised that – in the UK - the largest threat in terms of terrorism and radicalisation did emanate from Islamic extremism. It was the area that the Prevent Programme was most focused on. It was the case that there was frustration in the community towards Prevent. This included concerns around some of the approaches taken; for example the installation of CCTV cameras in a particular area of Birmingham had caused significant upset.

6.22 There were indications that the Home Office were responding to this; at meetings she had attended officials had spoken around doing more to listen to the community. There had also been an increased focus on far right extremism and – within this – the increased Islamophobia which had been seen. It was estimated that significant amounts of Islamophobic hate crime went unreported.

6.23 It was important to note that as the Prevent Coordinator she represented the Home Office on the topic on a local level. She was committed to rolling out Prevent in a balanced way, and in a Hackney context. She was pleased that she had been able to build some effective relationships in the community which better enabled an approach based on Hackney's characteristics and needs.

## **7 Remit and recent work of the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission - ITEM TO NOTE**

7.1 The papers in support of this item were noted.

## **8 Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission- 2019/20 Work Programme - DISCUSSION ITEM**

8.1 The Chair advised this item had been scheduled for Members to discuss its areas for focus for the year.

8.2 For its substantive review, she wished to propose the Commission explored a range of areas around housing management. Within this – and in broad terms – she suggested that Members sought to identify good practice, among both Councils and Registered Housing Providers.

8.3 She was aware that the Regulator for Social Housing set 4 consumer standards which both Councils and Registered Providers of Social Housing were required to meet. These included aspects around tenant involvement and empowerment, keeping homes safe and in a good state of repair, lettings homes in fair and transparent ways (including through co-operation with local authorities' duties around meeting housing needs and homelessness duties), helping promote social, environmental and economic well-being in areas where they own homes, and working with others to tackle anti-social behaviour.

8.4 She felt that a range of themed items around these standards could help explore approaches which had had success. In addition to Councils and Registered Providers, this would include substantial discussions with tenants and leaseholders.

8.5 Members were supportive of this proposal. The Chair thanked Members and said she would speak to the Scrutiny Officer and others to take this forward.

8.6 She also hoped the Commission could give over the majority of its meeting in January to considering the Hackney Carnival.

8.7 From discussions with the relevant Cabinet Member and also from her own experience of regularly attending, she knew that the Carnival now constituted a major event, in a London wide context. This was partly reflected in the announcement that this year's event would follow a new route and arrangement, in order that it could cater for the high visitor numbers predicted.

- 8.8 She felt the Commission could add value by exploring the learning from the newly formatted event for 2019, the costs of holding it, the social benefits of the Carnival for Hackney's residents, and any advantages and disadvantages of the Council delivering the event directly.
- 8.9 She suggested that organisations supporting participation in the event and the arts generally should also be invited to hear about their work to aid participation and involvement from the community.
- 8.10 Holding the item in January would allow Officers and Cabinet Member to report back to the Commission on a review which was planned for after the event, on the 8<sup>th</sup> September. The Cabinet Member had been very positive about this as a value adding item for Scrutiny. As an additional point, the Chair advised that she had asked that Commission Members be formally invited to the judging bus for the event, as this would enable them to hold discussions with a range of stakeholders who would be represented.
- 8.11 A Member felt this suggestion to be a very good one, including the aspect around the benefits and disbenefits of direct, in-house delivery of the event. She noted the annual [Boishakhi Mela](#) festival in Tower Hamlets. She understood that Tower Hamlets Council had now started delivering this directly again, following a period when they had contracted it out. She suggested that the item might hear from those organising this event to hear about their experiences.
- 8.12 Another Member agreed with this point. He felt that an item exploring work to involve a wide range of people in the event would be useful; for example school students and residents on estates.
- 8.13 The Chair advised that other items envisaged for the year included updates on the Council's additional and selective private rented sector licensing schemes, and the measures taken further to the agreement of the Council's Reduction and Recycling Plan at Cabinet in June. The latter – among other points – set out the intention to consider the introduction of fortnightly, restricted residual waste collections for street level properties with appropriate frontage space, and to further improve levels of recycling on estates. She suggested that the Commission should keep these plans under review, given the scale of the change which was being considered, and also the escalating waste disposal costs which they could (in-part) help to mitigate.
- 8.14 There would be a number of items relating to Community Safety. Updates would be sought from the Police and monitoring groups on Stop and Search activity and outcomes, and on the Police's engagement with the community generally around trust and confidence. In specific relation to the Commission's role of performing the statutory crime and disorder committee function, the Commission would receive a general progress report against the priority areas of the Community Safety Partnership's Community Safety Plan. There would also be a more detailed exploration on partnership work to address open drug markets (street based dealing) and anti-social behaviour related to it, which formed part of one of the four priorities of the plan.

9.1 The minutes of the meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> April were agreed as an accurate record. This was with the exception of the third bullet point under minute 5.3, which should have appeared as:

- For 2018/19, £11 million had been allocated to fire safety work, including £8.7 million for the front door replacement programme.

## **10 Any Other Business**

10.1 It was agreed that the Commission meeting currently scheduled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> September would be rescheduled for the 30<sup>th</sup> September.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 9.20 pm