

London Borough of Hackney  
Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission  
Municipal Year 2020/21  
Wednesday, 15th July, 2020

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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**Chair:** Councillor Sharon Patrick



**Councillors in Attendance:** Cllr Sade Etti (Vice-Chair), Cllr Anthony McMahon, Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone, Cllr Penny Wrout and Cllr Anna Lynch

**Apologies:**

**Officers In Attendance:** James Goddard (Director, Regeneration), Donna Bryce (Head of Resident Safety, Housing Services) and David Padfield (Interim Director, Housing Services)

**Other People in Attendance:** John Cockerham (Director of Customer Service Operations, Guinness Partnership), Helderda Costa, Ruth Davison (Chief Executive), Councillor Clayeon McKenzie (Cabinet Member for Housing Services), Steve Webster (Chair, Hackney Residents Liaison Group), Jess Mullins (External Affairs Manager (London)), Zoe Pratten (Head of Housing, North London), Stefanie Turton (Head of Housing (London)), Vatel Ntankeu (Head of Neighbourhoods, East Region) and Alistair Smyth (Head of External Affairs, Guinness Partnership)

**Members of the Public:**

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## Councillor Sharon Patrick in the Chair

### 1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence from Cllr Moema, Mayoral Adviser for Private renting and housing affordability; Cllr Rennison, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance and Housing Needs.
- 1.2 Officer apologies for absence from Matthew Parsonage, from Clarion Housing Group; Victoria Whittle, from Clarion Housing Group and Claire Raindrop from Peabody.

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

2.1 There are no urgent items or changes to the order of business.

## **3 Declarations of Interest**

3.1 The Commission Members made the following declarations of Interest:

3.1.1 Cllr Lynch is a shared ownership leaseholder of Hackney Council.

3.1.2 Cllr Patrick is a leaseholder of Hackney Council.

3.1.3 Cllr Rathbone informed his wife is a tenant of Peabody Housing Association.

3.1.4 Cllr McMahon is a leaseholder and Chair of a Tenant Management Organisation in the borough.

## **4 Exploring the work of Housing Associations in Hackney Scrutiny Review - Evidence Session**

4 The Chair welcomed to the meeting James Goddard, Interim Director Regeneration from London Borough of Hackney.

4.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting the following officers from Housing Associations and the National Housing Federation:

- Vatel Ntankeu, Head of Neighbourhoods, East Region from Peabody
- Ruth Davison, Chief Executive of Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association (ISHA)
- Alistair Smyth, Head of External Affairs from Guinness Trust and John Cockerham, Director of Operations for Maintenance from Guinness Trust
- Stefanie Turton, Head of Housing from Sanctuary Housing Association
- Zoe Pratten, Head of Housing, North London from Clarion Housing Group
- Jess Mullins, External Affairs Manager (London) from National Housing Federation.

4.2 The Chair explained this was the last evidence session for the scrutiny review exploring the partnership working of housing associations in Hackney. A selection of housing associations agreed to participate in this discussion.

4.3 The Chair outlined this item will cover 3 areas of discussion.

- 1) Improving community investment by housing associations, approaches to supporting their residents to succeed, and partnership with the Council to improve social and economic wellbeing.
- 2) Improving recycling on estates across the borough and the request of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).
- 3) The strengths of formal partnership arrangements.

- 4.4 The meeting commenced with a discussion about the strengths of formal partnership arrangements with an opening presentation from the Interim Director Regeneration from Hackney Council.
- 4.4.1 The Director explained this was a verbal update setting out the vision, thinking and work to date by the council in relation to developing partnership arrangements for Hackney council with Registered Providers (RPs) operating in the borough.
- 4.4.2 Hackney has been exploring how to formally set up their partnership arrangements and wants to co-design this with the RPs in the borough.
- 4.4.3 The council anticipates that this will have 3 levels of operation. The first being more formal covering things like nominations agreements, governance and forums. Semi contractual and contractual type activities and how grants are used etc.
- 4.4.4 The second level will be semi informal e.g. covering areas like a sales protocol that RPs can access to help work in partnership in this arena.
- 4.4.5 The lower level will be where the partnership working operates.
- 4.4.6 The Director pointed out Hackney does have a housing forum called the Better Homes Partnerships. There are 2 structures. One covering management and the other covering development. The partnerships meet quarterly so there are a total of 8 meetings a year. The meetings have themed discussions like smoking cessation and they are chaired by the housing associations. The council facilitates the discussions.
- 4.5 The Head of Neighbourhoods from Peabody outlined the following main points.
- 4.5.1 He works across 10 different boroughs therefore he agreed formal partnership working can be difficult when there is no structure. The officer pointed out it works better with a formal structure.
- 4.5.2 Although Peabody attend Hackney's Better Homes Partnership the officer acknowledge there was a gap.
- 4.5.3 The officer cited the develop work of a compact agreement by Waltham Forest Borough. Highlighting they engaged with residents and partners to develop the compact. The engagement reflected the work stream and was a good structure. The partners have clarity about the objectives they are working towards at the beginning of the year.
- 4.5.4 The officer pointed out the advantage of having a structure means no duplication among partner's work, particularly for areas like community investment. In the officers view from working with other boroughs he has observed that resources are better pooled together for the benefit of residents overall.
- 4.6 The Chief Executive from ISHA outlined the following main points.
- 4.6.1 To commence the Chief Executive asked Hackney to clearly define what they want to achieve through formal partnership working.

- 4.6.2 The officer pointed out if Hackney's vision was to build a fairer, safer and more sustainable borough for residents this aligns with ISHA's vision. ISHA could help to support the delivery of that vision.
- 4.6.3 ISHA help to deliver this vision by building and helping others to build through alliance.
- 4.6.4 ISHA is a London living wage employer and insist their contractors are too. ISHA is serious about environmental sustainability too.
- 4.6.5 ISHA would like to partner with Hackney for them to understand how they build. They build social rented homes not affordable rent homes.
- 4.6.6 The fairer aspect of their vision aligns with Hackney's inclusive economy. This is covered in more detail in the written information provided in the agenda.
- 4.6.7 In regards to safety ISHA are of the view this is key for local authorities and housing associations to work together. Particularly around building fire safety. ISHA commented that the building safety fund announced would provide full refund for remedial action to building works. However this does not apply to social sector housing only the private sector. ISHA urged all local authorities and housing associations in London to come together and lobby about this.
- 4.6.8 In reference to sustainability, the drive to zero carbon and EPPC homes gives more money to residents and delivers the inclusive/fairer agenda.
- 4.6.9 In regards to partnership working ISHA was chairing the development forum - part of the Better Homes Partnership - until the retirement of their officer. The officer commented the partnership would benefit from more consistent attendance both from housing associations and the local authority and good strong discussion on issues that affect them all.
- 4.6.10 The officer pointed out ISHA have not been involved in the management forum of the Better Homes Partnership but they would like to be.
- 4.6.11 ISHA would welcome a stronger partnership approach between housing associations and the council going forward.
- 4.7 The Head of External Affairs from Guinness Trust outlined the following main points.
  - 4.7.1 As a national organisation they are involved in a number of partnerships nationally.
  - 4.7.2 Locally the organisation is working well operationally with Hackney Council and would welcome closer working and support the co-production principles and ideas.
  - 4.7.3 Guinness Trust is working with another London borough on a more strategic partnership which has recently been implemented. They welcomed a more strategic focused partnership.
  - 4.7.4 Local colleagues have attended the better homes partnership meetings in the past and found them useful.

- 4.7.5 Guinness Trust agrees with ISHA that regular attendance and a clear plan and agreements for priorities is key for residents.
- 4.7.6 The officer pointed out the pandemic and last 4 months has highlighted the importance of their role with residents and the community.
- 4.7.7 Guinness Trust supported the development of a structured partnership and was happy to be involved.
- 4.8 The Head of Housing from Sanctuary Housing Association outlined the following main points.
  - 4.8.1 Agreed with the comments made by other colleagues in the meeting.
  - 4.8.2 The officer highlighted the properties they manage in Hackney are real communities.
  - 4.8.3 They have a lot of partnership working on the estates to work with the local community.
  - 4.8.4 The current partnerships has been operational and transactional. Sanctuary would be keen to have a more strategic partnership.
  - 4.8.5 Moving forward resources will be stretched for everyone and therefore partnership arranges can ensure that resources are best placed to help communities.
  - 4.8.6 Part of the motivation for Sanctuary Housing implementing the Head of Housing post for London was to improve the quality of partnership working in London boroughs.
  - 4.8.7 Sanctuary Housing would welcome being part of the co-production process and reiterated the same comments as previous speakers.
- 4.9 The Head of Housing, North London from Clarion Housing Group outlined the following main points.
  - 4.9.1 The officer explained she had just taken over the housing management for Hackney in November 2019.
  - 4.9.2 The housing association manages approximately 2000 properties in hackney.
  - 4.9.3 The officer works across 7 boroughs and 17 estates across North London boroughs.
  - 4.9.4 Agreed with fellow colleagues about attendance at the Better Homes Partnership. Pointing out she had not attended because she was unaware of these meetings. The officer suggested there was some form of mechanism to inform new personnel.
  - 4.9.5 The officer pointed out colleagues within her organisation had spoken positively about the arrangements they have in place with Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest boroughs. There is a forum for the executive to talk about various issues and sub meetings for specific issue like public realm. Colleagues had

commented they found it helpful to join up all housing associations to find solutions to common problems they all faced. This was important because resources are stretched. It would make sure residents get access to the right support and financial assistance.

- 4.9.6 In reference to recycling Clarion have found significant increases in bulk consumption on estates and fly tipping. They would welcome closer working with Hackney to resolve or find solutions. Particularly for fly tipping and recycling alongside better enforcement across the borough. In Clarion's view these were 2 areas that would benefit from formal arrangements.
- 4.9.7 Clarion would support looking the development of formal arrangements and would welcome being involved in the co-production of the arrangements.
- 4.10 The External Affairs Manager (London) from National Housing Federation outlined the following main points.
  - 4.10.1 The national housing federation is the trade body for housing associations.
  - 4.10.2 The National Housing Federation believes there is value in local partnership working. They encourage and create opportunities for their members to work with local authorities.
  - 4.10.3 The value of partnership working runs through the federation and is part of their business strategy.
  - 4.10.4 Their Members acknowledge partnership working is central to the sector to deliver on its ambition.
  - 4.10.5 They recognise working together is the best way to tackle some of the shared challenges they all face.
  - 4.10.6 Their written submission focused on 3 broad areas of key partnership working. But there are different models and structures to explore, that can be adopted depending on formality and scope. Key to this is the aims of the partnership.
  - 4.10.7 Their written submission identified some of the common characteristics for good partnership working. It is important to have shared and agreed vision, values and objectives to build trust and for it to be led by senior leaders. In all these areas they have noted the benefit for everyone working together to achieve the areas outlined in written submission.
  - 4.10.8 A good partnership values compromise, flexibility and good communication. Ensuring the partnership is well resources from the outset.
  - 4.10.9 There can be barriers to partnerships working such as a lack of trust between parties and reluctance to share the credits of success. Also disagreements over issues. In addition there are also barriers like the lack of time and resources being invested up front in the partnership.
  - 4.10.10 The officer made reference to case studies in the written submission.
- 4.11 The positive comments to the idea of formal partnership structures from housing partners was welcomed by the Commission.

4.12 **Questions, Discussion and Comments**

- (i) **Members asked if the Better Homes Partnership had powers or was it an information sharing structure. Asking if the partnership groups could make changes following resident views or requests?**

The Interim Director Regeneration from LBH informed Members it was a mixture. They have powers in relation to areas like nomination agreements, domestic violence and governance. There are also some areas of work where they do not have controls/powers but this work is achieved through relationships and protocols. The Director pointed out there are no formal arrangements in place for redress / chasing if things go wrong. For example the current nominations agreement is run by East London but it is out of date by 10 years. In Hackney they have no formal forum to review this and make changes for agreement with their local RPs.

Having a partnership / signed document by chief executives will help them to work well together through a set of partnership standards.

The officer advised the new arrangements could be trailed and reviewed after 12 months to consider how it's working.

- (ii) **Members asked about the steps taken or positive achievements since the last scrutiny evidence session.**

In response the officer confirmed he has had contact with all RPs that were present at the meeting. There has been more interest and uptake of their grant. There has been more interest and uptake around nominations agreements and disrepair cases. There is still progress to be made but this has slowed due to Covid-19, as all organisations moved to emergency services. This is important because they were making good progress following the scrutiny meeting, but it is estimated the pandemic has put this work back by 4 months. In the next 6 months there is a lot of catching up to do.

- (iii) **Members asked Peabody to confirm if they would be willing to participate in the development of a formal partnership structure in Hackney.**

In response the officer from Peabody confirmed they would.

- (iv) **The Chair suggested the Commission monitors the progress of the partnership structure. The Chair asked if the interim Director Regeneration could return with a brief update in September 2020 and then a full update in December 2020.**

In response the Interim Director of Regeneration from LBH agreed with the points made by the partners and confirmed the council has been in discussion with other London boroughs about their arrangements. The officer reiterated the development of this partnership would be achieved through co-production. The Director pointed out there are 56 known register providers in the borough and the Council's aim is to capture the views of all the RPs for the development process.

The Director informed the partnership would cover development as well as housing management.

The Director pointed out there are different forms of partnership like compacts and federations. During the development process they will be looking at the different structures to consider what would work best for Hackney.

The Co-Chair of Hackney's Resident Liaison Group (RLG) commented the RLG is part of Hackney's housing structure to encourage residents' voice in the development of policy and service improvements. The Co-Chair pointed out there is a lot of expertise in managing fly tipping and waste and encouraged all partners to come together. The Co-Chair also pleaded for registered providers to speak to residents to get their views and ideas as they develop their work.

The Chair suggested the RLG and housing association other residents groups could come together to discuss.

- (v) The Head of Housing from Clarion asked if Hackney had a strategy for recycling. The officer pointed out there was the potential to do more for example with food waste. The officer asked for more information and the contact details of who to speak to at the council.**

In response the Chair of the Commission confirmed Hackney Council did have a recycling strategy and that this was recently agreed by Cabinet. A key ambition was to increase recycling rates.

The Interim Director Regeneration from LBH informed he would make contact after the meeting.

The officer pointed out this was as example of what the partnership could cover.

- (vi) Members commented that Hackney's housing estates have food waste recycling. Members urged RPs to look into having this as it is a good time to expand. Members pointed out Hackney Council has been developing some strategies and following investment these have been trailed e.g. new collection facilities and times, literature to residents to boost recycling rates etc. Members suggested this was a good opportunity for LBH to share the benefits of their trail work, so Partners could see what can be achieved with investment.**
- (vii) Members referred to the report on page 109 in the agenda and highlighted there was no mention of working with Tenant Resident Association (TRAs) to help communicate with residents about recycling. Members pointed out TRAs are a good way to get information out to residents.**
- (viii) Members asked if the housing associations present were willing to implement recycling on their estates in Hackney.**
- (ix) Members asked Hackney Council to confirm if recycling on estates had increased and urged all parties to work with TRAs.**
- (x) Members made reference to Guinness Trust moving services online and asked how they were capturing residents that were digitally excluded. Members pointed out Hackney had a big digital divide.**



**(xi) Members also asked the housing associations worked with other each other in partnership or on projects.**

In response the Director of Operations for Maintenance from Guinness Trust confirmed the written information in the agenda advises that their core services have moved online. This has given them capacity to deal with more enquires over the phone and more residents across the country.

They also work with other agencies like DWP to help solve residents' issues and sign post them to other agencies.

This gives capacity to do more for more people. The officer pointed out they do have local teams on the ground who work directly with residents. These officers liaise with colleagues in the organisation to get the right support / information if they are not able to access digital channels. They still do visits and urgent surgeries for residents with access issues to digital channels.

Guinness Trust confirmed they do work with other housing associations for formal joint ventures like building homes and they have less formal arrangements that cover specific issues in specific areas like fly tipping campaigns etc. They have lots of experience of working with local authorities too.

The Interim Director Regeneration confirmed Hackney has good collection rates for recycling. The Council is not in a position to do more to involve residents to improve rates. Do things like have green champions to provide better information and change behaviours. Having a formal partnership would help to bring RPs together for work areas like recycling.

A key aims is to then turn the rhetoric into action plans. The Director confirmed he could provide an update in December 2020.

In response to Members questions ISHA confirmed they have formal arrangements with North River Alliance. This partnership was established 15 years ago and works with 11 housing associations for development. This partnership has built 3500 homes in the last 15 years. In Hackney they have a formal arrangements with the North London Muslim Housing Association and they build on their behalf.

**(xii) Members referred to ISHA's recycling targets (21% by March 2021). Members asked about their progress to achieving this target, how they intent to meet the target and if Covid-19 had impacted achievement of this target.**

In response ISHA confirmed work on recycling has slowed during lockdown. During Covid-19 they have focused on vulnerability welfare and shielding.

In reference to digital exclusion ISHA found there were older people who could order online but were lonely. Therefore their weekly calls helped those residents. The organisation is looking at the good elements to keep from lockdown, like good communication with residents.

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In relation to recycling they did a big piece of work 2 years ago and that achieved shift gold - a housing sustainability award for all elements of their business practices. But in their hostels they do not have good recycling provision and they are working with residents to improve this.

Having a partnership that joins up those areas of work on recycling would be welcomed. ISHA confirmed they have not worked closely with Hackney in relation to their recycling strategy.

The officer was unable to confirm at the meeting the progress against the target but highlighted they are working with residents.

**(xiii) The Chair asked the other housing association to comment in their recycling and their work with residents to encourage recycling.**

In response the Head of Neighbourhoods, East Region from Peabody advised in Hackney they were part of an initiative where local residents could bring their white goods for repair to sell or to recycle.

The officer agreed that partnership can be formal and informal and in his experience this can be reactive to resolve issues. Formalising the relationship should lead to better outcomes and impacts for residents due to pooling resources.

**(xiv) Members asked what worked well and what has not during Covid-19 and what lessons have been learnt to take forward.**

In response the Interim Director Regeneration from LBH advised the council has been in contact with approximately 16/17 registered providers to talk about services, repairs, food, digital exclusion and to check the challenges. The initial themes at the start related to PPE, getting operatives to buildings, and ensuring people who need to shield could shield.

These themes have transitioned to questions like "how to manage this long term and being virtual". With formal partnership working they can build on the relationships built up during Covid and before to consider how they can face the challenges of the next 6 months together.

In response the Head of Neighbourhoods, East Region from Peabody advised one of the areas that has been challenging is domestic violence. Particularly being able to identify DV. The real challenge has been the loss of visiting contact. They decided to give known victims a weekly call for welfare checks. They also keep an eye on requests and queries coming in, to look for usual trends such as a high number of door key requests. Minimising contact during this period has impacted on identifying other issues too. There needs to be reflection to consider how they can find other ways to identify vulnerabilities.

The Co-Chair of the Resident Liaison Group (RLG) commented as a local resident group they have been actively involved and have offered support to residents shielding on the estate. They have been working with the Council's volunteers to get food, prescriptions etc. out. They have also helped to ensure issue are referred to the council for escalating.

In response to the question the officers from Guinness Trust confirmed they have been doing welfare calls.

Guinness Trust recognised a large proportion were being helped by the wider community, however they also discovered a new group that was on the margins e.g. board line poverty. They have come to light from the impact of furlough, the pandemic and redundancies. The pandemic has propelled a new group of residents to the fore. They were unknown previously. The officers suggested the new partnership could look at this group.

The Guinness Trust highlighted that a particular problem going forward was isolation and they need to understand how they can maintain the support. Residents have welcomed the proactive contact. They need to consider how to keep that going in the future to help older people in this category. The trust is working in partnership with the Royal College of Arts to see how they can improve the experience for older people. The Trust offered to share the findings once produced. They are now developing a new service for this group.

- (xv) The Chair commented the council was looking at what needs to be changed in relations to support services post Covid-19. They are aware there may be people seeking support and help that previously did not use services. Members pointed out services need to be prepared.**
- (xvi) The Chair suggested people needing help may go to mutual aid groups or their landlords. The Chair suggested the two work together as people may go to one or the other and it would be better if they pooled resources and worked together.**

In response to Members questions the Chief Executive from ISHA advised they have an active scrutiny panel looking at the organisation's response during Covid. The HA would share once complete.

ISHA also found a spike in ASB complaints for things like my neighbour is playing the piano loudly. This was due to people living cheek by jowl (side by side).

As an organisation they took the view it was important to ensure homes were safe. ISHA carried out all compliance work during lockdown and only had one gas safety certificate expire for approximately 2 weeks during this period. ISHA also carried out voids and emergency repairs during the restricted period too.

- (xvii) Members asked about customer services for housing associations. Members pointed out they have noticed that residents have been unable to get in contact with housing associations customer service teams during Covid. Residents had received out of office emails stating they were on furlough. Members directed the question about customer service contact and response during Covid to Clarion and Peabody.**
- (xviii) Members also commented they were made aware of an older resident in Sanctuary sheltered accommodation that had no contact from the housing association and this was 2 month into the pandemic.**

- (xix) Members referred to food poverty and local authorities' carrying out food distribution during the pandemic; noting that this was due to come to an end shortly. Members asked how organisation were preparing for this; given the expectation there will be further economic impacts like redundancies. Members pointed out many people are being forced into food banks etc. What are RPs doing to be able to signpost appropriately?**
- (xx) Members commended the housing association that reported giving donations to food banks in Hackney.**
- (xxi) Members asked the housing associations if required, would they be willing to increase the recycling capacity to support the council to reach its targets.**
- (xxii) Members referred to shared ownership and affordable housing tenants and pointed out they could be vulnerable too and have young families. Members encouraged the housing associations to provide sign posting for these groups too.**

In response to Members questions, the Head of Housing, North London from Clarion Housing Group confirmed they were committed to recycling. However operational limitations such as space to hold extra bin stores may restrict them doing more. There could be operational challenges with space and fitting new bins on site. For example they might need to remove a car parking space to do this.

- (xxiii) Members pointed out the council is giving up car parking spaces for cycle racks, recycling and park lets. Highlighting that car park spaces could be used for other purposes now. Commenting generally more could be done to improve recycling on estates. Members suggested the partnership could carry out work to advance this policy across the borough. The Member pointed out he was in talks with Sanctuary Housing about exploring solar power on roofs. Members commented solar power and working with the Council's energy company are areas of work for the partnership agenda.**

In response to Members questions about customer service the Head of Neighbourhoods, East Region from Peabody suggested he speaks directly to the Councillor about the specific cases after the meeting. The officer pointed out initially at the start of the pandemic staff experienced challenges with the telephone system when they transitioned to working from home. However to his knowledge this was resolved within 2 weeks.

In relation to front line staff being on furlough. To his knowledge only back office staff were on furlough not front line staff. However the officer will check this and report back to Members.

<b>ACTION</b>	The Head of Neighbourhoods, East Region from Peabody to check and confirm if back office staff were furloughed during lockdown.
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**(xxiv) The Chair thanked all the housing association officers for their attendance and participation in the scrutiny review.**

## **5 Update on Housing Services' Fire Safety Works**

- 5.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting from London Borough of Hackney: Cllr Clayeon McKenzie, Cabinet Member for Housing Services; David Padfield, Director of Housing and Donna Bryce, Head of Resident Safety.
- 5.2 Also in attendance was the Resident Liaison Group. Representatives for the RLG was Co-Chairs: Steve Webster and Helder Da Costa.
- 5.3 This item was to discuss the Council's work in relation to the fire safety and improvements work that are being carrying out following the Grenfell tragedy.
- 5.4 The Commission invited the Resident Liaison Group (RLG) to participate in this discussion to provide the views and experiences of residents in relation to the fire safety improvement works on their estate(s) and or completed fire safety improvements that had taken place.
- 5.5 The Chair highlighted the written reports in the agenda were on pages 113-132.
- 5.6 The discussion items commenced with a short introductory update from the Cabinet Member for Housing from London Borough of Hackney (LBH).
  - 5.6.1 The Council's housing services continue to make progress and take a proactive approach to fire safety.
  - 5.6.2 Fire safety is an integral part of how they work on residential housing stock.
  - 5.6.3 The fire safety costs uncompleted work is expensive and without government funding support.
  - 5.6.4 The Council is trying to ensure the fire safety work is part of the asset management programme to make best use of resources and limit the impact on residents. Any outstanding actions will be included in major works and they have ensured there are mitigating risks in place.
  - 5.6.5 The Council has focused on resident inclusion for the fire safety works on their estates.
  - 5.6.6 The Council is keeping abreast with legislation and taking a proactive approach to the recommendations in the Hackett Review.
  - 5.6.7 The Fire Safety Governance Board gives Members assurance of senior management oversight for the fire safety works programme and business as usual.
  - 5.6.8 The Council's Executive continues to lobby government to ensure councils have adequate funding to implement any new changes in legislation.

- 5.7 The Head of Resident Safety from LBH highlighted the following key points from their written submission.
- 5.7.1 The Council's key area of fire safety work over the last 3 years has been external wall installations (EWIs).
- 5.7.2 In Hackney they did not find any cladding but did find EWI that was not to standard. The Council has been doing proactive work on various estates in the borough.
- 5.7.3 For EWI fire safety work they have issued certificates to residents to help with selling their properties.
- 5.7.4 The Council is hoping to use the government building fund to help with leaseholders charges for EWI.
- 5.7.5 Done extensive survey on blocks and there is no more blocks with EWI concerns.
- 5.7.6 Major works taken place at Fellows Court following fire inspection and fire safety works. They brought all works together and this has been completed.
- 5.7.7 The Council has been fitting dry and wet risers across the borough. Phase one had 63 (154 blocks) and phase 2 had 63 blocks. Post inspections found 4 more blocks. Missed blocks will be added to list and done by end of September and full maintenance programme in place.
- 5.7.8 Fire safety is considered at all points of the works they do across teams.
- 5.7.9 Carried out new fire risk assessments to standards and have in-house fire risk assessors that are members of the Fire Engineers Register.
- 5.7.10 Where they have taken the decision to do no works they are part of the asset management programme e.g. fire door programme.
- 5.7.11 The council is working through the actions coming out of phase 2 following type 3 assessments.
- 5.7.12 For phase 1 they did works for communal areas. For phase 2 they looked at 10% of properties for more in-depth assessments.
- 5.7.13 If issues are found they do a type 4 which is a more intrusive survey within a property. If critical action they call fire safety team to get works done immediately and take mitigating action. Categories of high are within a month and the mediums they are working through.
- 5.7.14 Recently trained resident safety team.
- 5.7.15 Door replacement programme was impacted by Covid. However Covid did not affect the work on fire risk assessments in communal areas.
- 5.7.16 As a result of Covid the council was able to get in contact with residents and put in place personal escape plans for vulnerable residents who may need assistance to leave their property in an emergency. The council is not

providing personal details to the London Fire Brigade (LFB) but with personal plans in place the council can provide the LFB with more details about flats and can direct support to resident who need extra support.

- 5.7.17 Hoping to launch an app soon and this will enable residents to self-refer.
- 5.7.18 Many of the gas safety certificates held for leaseholders are out of date. Covid has impacted receipt of gas safety certificates from leaseholders. Prior to Covid the council had received gas certificates from 51% of leaseholders.
- 5.7.19 The Council will be writing to leaseholders and will offer the LBH service (DLO) to provide gas safety certificates at a competitive price.
- 5.7.20 The Council will be asking for fixed electrical certificates too from July 2020.
- 5.7.21 The Hackitt and Grenfell reviews have implications for LBH. Mainly low level concerns such as fire action notices. The council is carrying out work on blocks for evacuation action notices.
- 5.7.22 All 10 storey and above blocks will have plans and LFB will have this information. The Council is commencing work for 6-9 storey blocks and they are well into the work programme.
- 5.7.23 Done work on access to street level properties. Been able to do joint working across housing services to do assessment and works in these properties covering asbestos, fire and electrical checks in a programme of works.
- 5.7.24 One of the actions following the Grenfell review was having floor level indicators. The council is getting plates made that will show the LFB how many flats are on the floor and the floor level. On every floor there will be a floor level indicator for residents too. The DLO will be commencing this work.
- 5.7.25 There are significant changes due to come into force in April 2021. A new joint competent authority will be set up comprised of health and safety executive, fire and rescue authority and local authority building control. This authority will oversee every new buildings. All new buildings will need to be licensed before residents can occupy the property. Developers will need to demonstrate fire safety is up to date and building control regulations in place. This will require having the correct documentation for each build. New builds will be included and old buildings will come into the programme when they get refurbished. The regulator will have more authority to stop breeches of fires safety in building controls.
- 5.8 The Co-Chairs from the Resident Liaison Group (RLG) highlighted the following key points from their written submission.
  - 5.8.1 The RLG welcomed engagement with the scrutiny commission and the opportunity to bring the voice of residents to the commission.
  - 5.8.2 The RLG thanked the Head of Resident Safety for the work of her team and the effective partnership working with the RLG.
  - 5.8.3 The RLG pointed out this had inspired confidence in residents that the council is taking their views seriously and they felt listened to.

- 5.8.4 The RLG was pleased to know the council has put in place a requirement for leaseholders to have gas safety checks on their property and requested certificates.
- 5.8.5 The RLG asked for assurance from the Council that there is a robust system in place for leaseholders and freeholders to a) be compliant with safety checks and b) send in certificates as proof.

## 5.9 Questions, Discussion and Comments

- (i) The RLG requested to be involved in the monitoring of the statistics and to have the ability to scrutinise the fire safety KPIs to be assured. The RLG pointed out at each meeting they have regular updates from the fire safety team and asked if these could include the monitoring data on gas safety certificates.**

In response the Head of Resident Safety from LBH confirmed they have a database and can present the statistics to the RLG. It was highlighted that the system flags up when new certificates are required. The officer confirmed the fire safety team could bring a report to the RLG.

- (ii) The RLG highlighted there was confusion in relation to the request for electrical certificates because of mixed messages and asked for clarification. The RLG pointed out at each meeting attended there has been mixed messages to leaseholders and freeholders in relation to these certificates.**
- (iii) In relation to gas and electrical safety certificates Members asked if leaseholders would be able to spread the cost of these and have it added to their service charge bill to help with affordability.**
- (iv) Members asked if there was anything the council could do to support residents with the costs. Member commented this might improve the take up of the DLO service for certificates from the council. Commenting many people may not know the cost of these safety checks and certificates.**
- (v) Members also pointed out that residents may not understand the importance of electrical certificates so it might help if the council provided more information to residents.**
- (vi) Members referred to fire alarms and commented that when the battery needs replacing often the whole unit has to be replaced. Members asked if this could be changed.**

In response the Head of Resident Safety advised the letters sent out about gas safety checks also included information about electrical checks. Taking into consideration the points raised about the general understanding and costs they could include a leaflet providing an explanation.

The officer explained the electrical check was a mains check and this should be checked every 5 years.



The officer pointed out the letters issued will contain requests for both certificates. These checks are in the leaseholders regulations. The Council has been introducing a more robust system but are giving leaseholders time to adjust. They will be enforcing both more robustly from next year.

In reference to fire alarms the officer confirmed the LFB do fit alarms but they are battery operated. However when the council does fire safety works or a refurbishments of a kitchen and bathroom they will fit an electrical wired fire alarm.

In response to the question about spreading the cost of safety certificates the Director of Housing from LBH informed the Commission this could not be add to the service charge. Legally this was not a service charge. The Director informed the Commission the council would review what options are available to see if they can do anything.

- (vii) Members suggested offering a service to leaseholders e.g. boiler cover for a monthly fee. Members suggested this could be a potential income stream for the council. Members pointed out this could help to give leaseholders benefits they previously had as tenants, assurance and access to more trusted contractors.**
- (viii) Members referred to the fire action work referenced that is expected to be completed by December and asked if it has started and if it will be completed by the deadline stated?**
- (ix) Members referred to page 130 in the agenda (the RLG submission) and asked the Council if this could be investigated as a health and safety concern, noting similar concerns have been raised about estates in their wards.**
- (x) Members also highlighted that it has been mentioned that there is a lack of communication between the leaseholder management team and the asset management team. Members asked if this has been a factor and has it been rectified?**
- (xi) In the chat function Members asked how leaseholders will know when their certificates have expired.**

In response to the questions above the Head of Resident Safety from LBH confirmed the programme is progressing well and yes they will finish street properties by December 2020.

In response to the health and safety concerns raised about balconies the officer agreed with the concerns raised and highlighted this is particularly an issue for private properties.

The Council recently issued guidance to residents about combustible items and have included balconies in the letter. They will send out letters again to residents to remind people about this because it is on their radar but they need access to properties to review. The information being sent to residents also includes reference to enforcement action and notice for removal if found. The

officer highlighted this issue needs education and the council is meeting with LFB to discuss how they can work in partnership to support the council with this issue.

In response to the question about communications between service areas the Director of Housing from LBH advised generally the information flow between the two teams is good. He highlighted one area there has been a historical issue is with final accounts for major works bills. The council is slow at issuing final bills for works. A benefit of lockdown has been the suspension of schemes enabling council staff to clear some of the final accounts backlog. The Director encouraged Members to contact him if there were specific cases.

- (xii) Members asked a question about using technology such as drones to carry out a survey of balconies on estates. Highlighting this would be an efficient way to get a survey done and encouraged the council to explore this possibility. The Members acknowledged there would be challenges in relation to privacy etc. but commented there have been reports of small scale fires that were started due to items on balconies.**

In response the Head of Resident Safety from LBH commented it was also about educating their contractors to report back information to the council if they noticed something when doing works.

The Co-Chair from the RLG agreed with Members observations and highlighted that many TRAs conducted walkabouts and they could inform the council too. The Co-Chair highlighted the council completes regular inspections and if staff carrying out inspections identify issues on balconies they should report it so action could be taken. The Co-Chair also liked the idea of a technological solution to survey and access balconies.

- (xiii) Members asked about the Council's relationship with Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) and asked if their contractors are compliant and if their works are to the standards that Hackney Council expects?**

In response the Head of Resident Safety from LBH advised the TMOs fire safety and fire risk assessments are carried out by the council. The works are completed by DLO to ensure standard and they do health and safety inspections.

Communications between TMOs and the Council are going well with the council is attending their monthly forums and does joint inspections.

The officer pointed out when the council does health and safety inspections for TMOs they will check the competency of the staff. The council also checks the works are to standard. To date TMOs have engaged well with the council on this.

- (xiv) Members referred to the post Grenfell work that councils are required to carry out and asked about the actions required and the funding they have received to do this work?**

In response the Head of Resident Safety from LBH confirmed they have started looking at the recommendations in terms of building safety. They need a building safety manager and have started to have discussions about this.

The council is also doing engagement with residents. It is important they ensure residents understand the duties on them too. The officer explained there will be requirements for residents to undertake in the new legislation for fire safety and to maintain fire safety.

The council will be doing work on the licensing of new buildings prior to occupancy. Going forward the council will have to look at new design and sign off builds. This has huge implications and changes for planning and regulation of build licensing. Thus is to make sure the people building new buildings are competent.

The officer pointed out all London boroughs have concern about the recommendation to do quarterly checks on all front door closers. There are 33 thousand front door closers in Hackney borough.

In relation to funding there is no funding to complete the works and the council continues to lobby about this. However, there is a building safety fund for organisations with ACM cladding. Hackney did not have any ACMs.

There is a new building safety fund for EWIs but a council can only access this fund if they can demonstrate that doing the works will make them bankrupt.

The officer informed the Members there is another pot of funding that Hackney can apply for. This is in relation to charging leaseholders for EWI work. The Council will be applying for this funding.

The officer pointed out the council has made progress with the works to date but in the next 12 -18 months there will be a lot more work to do.

**(xv) The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and advised the scrutiny commission will continue to monitor the fire safety works.**

## **6 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

6.1 Minutes for the previous meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 were agreed.

<b>RESOLVED</b>	Minutes were approved.
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## **7 Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission- 2020/2021 Work Programme**

7.1 The latest version of the work programme was on pages 157 – 162 in the agenda.

7.2 The Chair advised a full review of the Scrutiny commission's work programme for 2020-21 will take place at the LiH meeting in September 2020.

7.3 The Chair provided the following updated:

1. The September meeting is as outlined in the work programme document.
  2. The November meeting will be a follow up meeting with Hackney Metropolitan Police Services in relation to stop and search.
- 7.4 Members raised concern about the timescale for the next discussion with the MPS and proposed they hold a round table discussion before the next formal meeting in November 2020. Member suggested this was held over the summer or early September.
- 7.5 Members highlighted at the next Full Council meeting there will be a Black Lives Matters motion and this covers concerns about the attitude of the police in relation to police activity and community perception.
- 7.6 The Chair agreed to set up a round table discussion with Hackney MPS in advance of the November meeting.

<b>ACTION</b>	The Chair to set up round table meeting date for Commission and the Borough Commander.
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## 8 Any Other Business

- 8.1 None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 9.40 pm