

Scrutiny Committee

Lift Maintenance and Repair

March 2021

Introduction

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

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

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

Lift Protocol

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

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

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 At present this is a static document - so as time goes on will become more and more out of date.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

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

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

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

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

Outline Proposals for the new Lift Maintenance Contract

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Proposals for new Contract Monitoring

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

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

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

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

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

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

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