

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

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

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

## **Councillor Sharon Patrick in the Chair**

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

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

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

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

## **3 Declaration of Interest**

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

## **4 Thames Water Update**

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

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

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

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

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

4.6.15 The Director of Operations explained complaint cover 2 areas:

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

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

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

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

#### 4.7 **Questions Answers and Discussion**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 5 Lift Maintenance and Repair

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



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

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

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

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

## 5.10 Questions, Discussion and Comments

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Chair thanked officers for the update.

## **6 Digital Divide and Hackney Council Housing Services**

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

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

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

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

6.4.14 Social value benefits were outlined to be:

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 6.5 Questions, Discussions and Comments

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **7 Resident Engagement**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **8 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

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

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

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

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

**10 Any Other Business**

- 10.1 None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 9:55 pm