



# London Borough of Hackney

## Policy and Performance Scrutiny

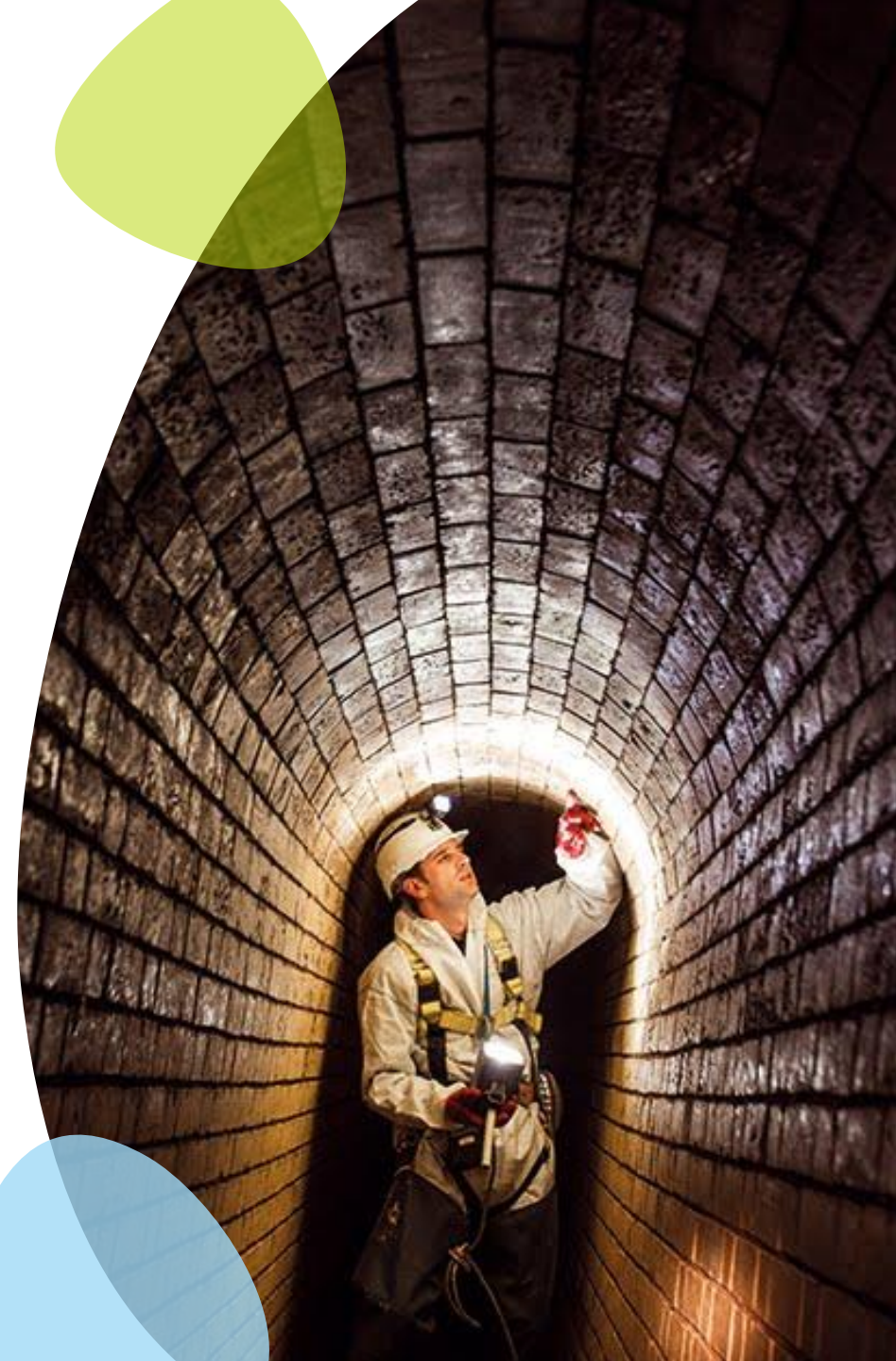
Steve Spencer – Operations Director

9<sup>th</sup> March 2021

# Aims and objectives

Provide key updates on several topics discussed at the previous Living in Hackney Scrutiny Panel of 30 September 2021

- Provide the latest information following the burst main at Queen's Drive
- Update on Seven Sisters project
- Our customer service performance
- Improvement plan and pandemic support
- Q&A



# Supporting our customers

- Following the Queen's Drive burst:
  - 188 properties were impacted including external and internal damage
  - 83 properties had to be vacated while repairs were undertaken
- Of the 83 properties that had to be vacated:
  - All but 12 households have now returned to their own properties
  - All 12 families are working with their own contractors and insurers – TW offer of support remains
  - Of the 12 we are supporting three in our alternative accommodation until their work is complete
- Many of the insurance claims have been agreed/dealt with (273 of 292) and a dedicated team remains in place with the remaining residents having access to a nominated contact
- Our aftercare team remains in place, and our Operations Director continues to be kept abreast of every case



# Seven Sisters Road project update

- We're relining the pipe which burst and the adjacent mains between Green Lanes and Seven Sisters Road at a cost of just over £11m in two phases.
- Phase 1 – Yonge Park junction to Finsbury Park Road
- Phase 2 - Stroud Green Road junction to Green Lanes (via Queens Drive)
- We're sorry for the disruption this is causing, but this project will reduce the risk of any future incidents
- In the meantime we have access chambers and are undertaking fortnightly surveys of the mains to ensure any further issues are detected at the earliest opportunity
- Due to the complicated nature of the job, phase 1 is now expected to complete in May 2021 and phase 2 will start in the summer
- Customers are being kept informed of all the changes and support is in place for any business impacted by our works



# Our customer service

- At the last meeting we recognised our customer service and complaints are not at an acceptable level.
- Our new CEO, Sarah Bentley, has made improving our customer service one of her top priorities, including the appointment of a new Customer Service Director.
- Around 70% of our complaints are due to issues with bills, and many relate to problems we've had with our new billing software implemented last year.
- As a result of the pandemic, we also have many colleagues currently working from home, which has made the transition to the new billing platform more difficult.
- In the field one of our major reasons for complaints is leaks, and working with the GLA and our regulator Ofwat we are planning on investing £275m to replace water mains in London, over the next 4 years.
- We are committed and confident we'll improve, but also recognise significant change will not happen overnight



# Our improvement plans

- Following feedback, we're improving how customers interact with us by investing in new online and telephone systems
- Our website has been upgraded, meaning customers can access their account online far more easily
- Our redesigned bill makes it easier to understand respective charges and has received positive customer feedback
- We overhauled our incident structure last year so we're in a better position to support people when things go wrong

## Pandemic support

- Introduced flexible payment options
- Doubled our donation to the Thames Water Trust Fund – now the biggest funder of debt advice in the region
- 200,000 customers are on a social tariff, getting 50% off bills
- £4 million committed to our Customer Assistance Fund





Questions