

Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report to Full Council 2020/21





Chair's Foreword

Effective backbench scrutiny is an essential function of local democracy . Scrutiny holds the Executive and external partners to account on behalf of the community we serve. We play a vital role in developing policy and acting as a critical friend to decision makers. In Hackney, Scrutiny is the place where, when necessary, the Executive faces challenge in public on urgent issues of public concern but also where stakeholders are brought together to share ideas at the early stages of policy development.

Over the last year, in Hackney, we have faced the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic and the cyber attack as well as the ongoing challenges of austerity on local government scrutiny. Despite these challenges, in Scrutiny, we have continued to be ambitious and innovative in the way we work.

Over the past year Scrutiny in Hackney has been more visible and has reached more people than ever before. The opportunities brought by online and hybrid meetings have meant that a wider range of local residents and external experts have been able to contribute to our meetings. Scrutiny has become accessible to the community in a way that it has never been before.

Scrutiny commissions have interrogated issues of critical public concern from vaccinations to SEND; from flooding to LTNs. We have heard unforgettable testimony from local people about their lived experiences, including the impact of the pandemic on young people, stop & search and food poverty.

Our scrutiny reviews on exclusion from schools, stop and search and inclusive economy – go to the heart of the Council's policy development. Budget scrutiny is an essential part of our work and we have worked collaboratively across the Commissions and in coordination with Audit to ensure that this is embedded in our work. Looking forward, we will be continuing to work collaboratively across the commissions focussing on overlapping policy areas and the Council's progress to 'net zero'.

Scrutiny is only effective because of the contributions of a large number of people who contribute to our enquiries including Commission members (councillors and co-optees), Council officers, partners, stakeholder and local residents. I would also like to thank our tireless and tenacious Scrutiny team of Tracey Anderson, Jartlath O'Connell, Martin Bradford and Timothy Upton who continue to push the boundaries of what we can achieve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Gordon". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Cllr Margaret Gordon
Chair of Scrutiny Panel 2020/21



The Overview and Scrutiny function is required to report annually to Full Council on its activities over the previous municipal year. This happens at the first ordinary meeting following the AGM. This summary report covers the municipal year 2020/21.

Scrutiny in Hackney comprises 4 themed Commissions which meet 8 times per year:

- [Children and Young People](#)
- [Health in Hackney](#)
- [Living in Hackney](#)
- [Skills, Economy and Growth](#)

The Chair and Vice Chair of each panel then comprise the [Scrutiny Panel](#) which meets 4 times per year and which also holds a Vice Chair post for the opposition party. Members are appointed annually at the Council's AGM. Scrutiny holds the executive (Mayor and Cabinet) to account for Executive Decisions and contributes to policy development. It has no role in relation to 'Non-executive functions' such as Planning, Licensing, Pensions or Audit.

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The impact of Covid-19 and Scrutiny



The impact of Covid-19 and Scrutiny



Lockdown commenced on 23 March 2020 near the end of the last municipal year. The 30 March meeting of Health in Hackney had to be an informal one as the regulations on virtual meetings were not yet in place. Formal Virtual Meetings commenced in May with a joint session between Scrutiny Panel and Living in Hackney. All the Commissions and Scrutiny Panel cleared their work programmes and focused on how the pandemic was impacting on their remit areas. All the meetings from then on were live streamed via the Council's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/hacknycouncil>

How Virtual Meetings have altered our work

The volume of new regulations and policy changes from central government arising from the pandemic (not just in Public Health but also grants to businesses etc) has required us to be much more agile and responsive to issues. The switch to virtual meetings has, interestingly, made it easier to reach new audiences and to move beyond our existing networks. It has provided greater accessibility to external experts from national or regional bodies and from other local authorities as they're more amenable to joining us online rather than making a physical trip to come and speak to us.

Building back better – the role of Scrutiny

The pandemic has shone a light on the stark inequalities of our society. While it is going on it would have been easy to scale back our scrutiny work and review the response after the event but, with rising inequality and the need to create a more inclusive economy post Covid being key challenges for Hackney, we decided it was even more important to commence our scrutiny straight away. This would ensure we focused on how services and support are reaching the most vulnerable now so that the inequalities don't widen further.

This approach has not just helped to keep us abreast of the key challenges here as they evolve but to give us the insight needed to help support the “build back better” efforts of the Mayor and Cabinet. Scrutiny's role is to ensure that the policy approach being taken will tackle inequalities and focus on investment for recovery. We need to challenge the new approaches being set out because of Covid and ask whether they are actually serving to enhance the lives of residents of the borough and those who work here.

How we better engage, communicate and provide access to our Scrutiny investigations can act as a catalyst for how the wider Council and partners might also go about their work. We can draw in a wider circle of advice than normal. In the same way by drawing more on community voices we can enlist them in shaping more responsive policies and so put the focus on where the economic and social investment is needed in order to revive our communities post-Covid.

In the individual chapters you can read about how the Commissions responded to events during this remarkable period but below is a summary of some key items:

Joint Scrutiny Panel and Living in Hackney meeting

On 13 May this joint meeting comprised a Cabinet Member Question Time session with both the Mayor and the Chief Executive on the response to the pandemic. The Living in Hackney element focused on two services: domestic violence service and the support to those in social housing in the borough.

Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

The Commission explored with key officers how the digitally excluded can still get access to support and services and they examined libraries, culture services and housing services on the cross-Council approach to supporting residents during the pandemic.

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission

On 20 May CYP Commission began initial scrutiny on the impact of Covid 19 focusing on three areas: (i) support for vulnerable children (ii) impact of school closures on children's education and attainment (iii) mental health. Representations from academic bodies, local headteachers and Hackney Youth Parliament have all provided helpful insight into the impact of Covid 19 on local children and young people. Covid-19 dominated the work in the subsequent meetings.

Skills, Employment and Growth Scrutiny Commission

Virtual meetings commenced in June focusing on how a greener, fairer, inclusive economy can be achieved against the backdrop of a drastically altered economic environment. They focused on identifying how the work environment has changed, what 'skills offer' Hackney can put forward to fill the gap, and partnering with local business to ensure the change is as smooth and mutually agreed. The Commission also spoke to a variety of businesses from different sectors about the impact of covid and the support they need to get through the pandemic.

Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

On 30 March Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission held the first virtual scrutiny commission meeting, albeit informally, as the Government Regulations were not yet in place. This focused on briefings from the Homerton, Adult Services, Public Health, the CCG and the GP Confederation on the borough's initial response to the pandemic. Formal virtual meetings began in June and every month after that Members received updates from the Director of Public Health and at each meeting looked at different aspects of the response by the local health and social care partners.



Clinicians at HUHFT

Inner North East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

On 24 June INEL JHOSC devoted a meeting with the East London Health and Care Partnership health leaders to the subregional response to the pandemic and at the subsequent three meetings explored how NHS Test and Trace and the roll-out of the vaccination programme was proceeding. The committee also heard from the Group Chief Executive of Barts Health and the CE of Homerton University Hospital on the impact on secondary care, the impact on staff, on waiting list and the initial plans to build up elective care again.

Scrutiny Panel



Scrutiny Panel



We meet four times a year and our meetings are a mix of our standing items which provide overview and looking at some issues which cut across the 4 themed divisions.

Financial Overview

As part of our Budget Scrutiny role we invite the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Group Director for Finance and Corporate Resources for Quarterly Financial Updates. At each meeting we consider the latest Overall Financial Position (OFP) report which is prepared for Cabinet which gives the latest on the finances of the Council and we look at the most recent Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account reports. Then in February we receive the Draft Budget prior to it going to Cabinet and Full Council for approval. We are joined for these sessions by the Chair of the Audit Committee.

This year the focus was on the contingencies and emergency budgeting needed to cope with the pandemic. The financial impact from the pandemic alone is significant. The Council's sound financial management over the years has enabled the Council's finances to cope although they remain extremely stretched. Initially support from the Government to local authorities was very unclear and when it did come through it was heavily restricted and it was necessary to join up various strands of it in order to maximise impact. Neither did the funding stretch to the full costs of the new expenditure incurred or the substantial loss of income. While facing significant financial pressures the Council is in a better position compared to other neighbours however. Medium term plans have been impacted following the loss of income and longer term plans will need revising. The funding gap for next financial year has been mitigated and the Council did not need to implement an emergency budget. The council's finances will remain under constant scrutiny and the ongoing savings discussion and decisions will be reviewed too.

Mayor's Question Time

Each of the Cabinet Members is required to attend a Cabinet Member Question Time Session with their relevant Scrutiny Commission and the Mayor's CQT Session is a duty of the Scrutiny Panel. We hold the Chief Executive to account in a separate session.



The Mayor and Chief Executive are given advance notice of the topic areas. This year for the session with the Mayor we asked him to focus on 'Building Back Better' post pandemic with questions on: lessons learned thus far what might be done differently at the next stage; the long term financial implications for the Council and the borough; how the Council aims to reduce inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic e.g. systemic racism, and how the Council plans to engage the whole community in the process of building back better.

We explored with him how the Council plans to engage the whole community in the work and we looked at the Council's response to the crisis particularly for vulnerable residents. We examined how the Council was working with partners, the voluntary sector, local businesses and trade unions and we reviewed the potential long-term impacts of the pandemic. We learned that although there are many business continuity plans in place the unprecedented scale of this pandemic will have long lasting effects and as yet unforeseen impacts because it has been so all encompassing. The decision making of the Council was impacted greatly and new processes had to be put in place as the crisis required both swift political and operational responses. To ensure Hackney maintained strong governance of all this a Cabinet Sub Committee was established and initially it met daily.



Woodberry Aid in action

The humanitarian response had required the Council to set up multiple new services, many working closely with the VCS and the Mayor and Cabinet lobbied and challenged central government to deliver the right package of support at the right time. One advantage was that the depth of insight collated during this period will now better inform the design of future services and allow the Council to provide a much more nuanced and hopefully more effective response in the future.

Chief Executive's Question Time

We questioned the Chief Executive on three agreed areas.

On the new '*Harassment and bullying at work*' Policy which was about to be published he described how intensive work had gone into it, led by managers, Equalities Champions and the union reps, partly in response to a previous concern but also because it was in need of updating. He suggested there was further scope for the unions to be more involved in aspects such as micro-aggressions as well as in the broader anti-bullying work. During 2020 the number of formal grievances had dropped considerably, most likely because staff were working from home, but that of course presented new challenges and so there had been a shift of focus to mental health relating to home working and



to barriers to home working. One focus going forward would be ensuring common standards are applied to agency workers as well as in-house staff and that these are communicated clearly.

On the *Recovery from the Cyber Attack* we learnt that the attack in October had been a major and sophisticated criminal act

and he shared residents' and businesses' anger over it and the huge disruption it had caused everyone. The Information Commissioner had been contacted immediately and later had been very complimentary of the actions of the Council. Officers were continuing to work closely with the National Crime Agency and the National Cyber Security Centre. The attack had greatly impacted on the Council's legacy IT systems and the aim now was to move, as much as possible, to a cloud based system to ensure enhanced security. Some systems had already been recovered and others were on their way to being restored or replaced. From the outset the data theft aspect had been fully risk managed. A revised Electoral Register had been published on time which had been one particular challenge to overcome.

On the *Recovery Plan from Covid*, the CE reflected in particular on the immense impact on young people and on businesses as just two examples. The Council had continued to provide services whether it be support to business through new and additional grants, to support to residents in need through food or prescription deliveries and all of it had involved teams of staff working in completely new ways, many on secondments. All staff had to adapt to working remotely because of lockdown and there were particular challenges for front line staff who had to continue face to face interactions with those who were vulnerable. The CE commended the speed and pace at which services and support had been scaled up and delivered and how staff had risen to the challenge.

We also questioned him on how he was *managing a stable transition for the senior management team* as a number of changes at the most senior level were about to take place, including his own retirement. A specialist consultancy had been engaged to help redesign and improve all senior management recruitment processes and learning from this would be cascaded down the organisation. The Panel Members all paid warm tribute to his great contribution to the Council over the years.

Our Overview Role

We also look at issues which cut across the 4 Commissions and which would benefit from a wider perspective. Once a year we look at the *Council's Complaints and Members Enquiries Annual Report* which raises issues across the whole range of Council departments and we challenge how the learning from these is being taken forward.

This year we also looked at *Communications and Scrutiny*, exploring how scrutiny councillors might use different communication channels, such as social media, more effectively as well as the potential for more YouTube videos and live streaming. We questioned the communication strategy in place to support non-executive Councillors. We explored how scrutiny councillors can make their work more publicly accessible using their own preferred social media platforms and discussed the barriers to be overcome to ensure scrutiny councillors can communicate more flexibly with the public.

Food Poverty

We decided to devote a whole meeting to food poverty and the associated health and social impacts of it which of course have deteriorated during the pandemic. Hackney's own Food Bank has so far had to distribute almost 18,000 emergency food parcels during 2020 and residents' usage of it has increased 200% in just two years.

The problem is by no means unique to Hackney as it's a national one and we heard more about the national picture from two key organisations: The Trussell Trust and Sustain. We also looked at Hackney Council's own *Food Poverty Action Plan* developed with the VCS and how that might be carried forward via the Food Justice Alliance, a network founded in 2018 by residents from the Hackney Food Partnership. The alliance was originally a coalition of over 40 statutory services and community and voluntary organisations across the borough and membership has since grown to over 100 partners who collaborate to support the food poverty needs of the borough.

Both Trussell Trust and Sustain in their report emphasised the importance of a 'cash first' response, i.e. investing in local schemes over mere emergency relief, the idea being that you nurture services that can meet the need on a long term basis rather than financing a purely reactive approach. Other examples of the cash-first approach include paying living wage/ living hours to staff, investing in local welfare assistance schemes, and wraparound support within services. Their report showed that councils already using this approach were able to respond more rapidly when the pandemic hit.

We learned that while strength-based approaches (i.e. shoring up food-poverty relief efforts as a whole) were valuable, for certain demographics, in particular older residents and those with disabilities, there was a need for more bespoke solutions and we urged action on this.

We heard from 6 diverse members of the local Food Justice Alliance and the Hackney Food Network: Morningside & Gascoyne Youth Club, Carib Eats, Hackney Quest, Community African Network, the African Community School and The Round Chapel.

Every day these organisations witness the precariousness of residents and how they are often not aware of the relief available. The need for continued and better collaboration between the Council, the food network groups, the food banks and local businesses was stressed and the importance of input from Advice Services to ensure people don't fall between the cracks in provision. We learned that in addition to food-drops, many of the groups in the food network also engage in chats with their clients, even welfare checks in some cases, and this is a crucial aspect of the support being given.

A consistent worry for these groups was how to both sustain and grow their services with very limited staff numbers. We heard about the benefits of engaging young people in this work, noting the mutual benefits to them of contributing to the community effort



Hackney Quest's Covid-19 response

and to the older residents of having a friendly face of the service rather than having to call in to a help line. We learned that many volunteers are also users of the service themselves and this has proved an additional fulfillment to them. Providing culturally appropriate food is another key issue in a diverse place like Hackney and some groups in the network had been created solely to cater for people who would otherwise struggle to access the food they normally consume. We heard that the next two years will be particularly challenging for this sector when emergency funding ceases. Conversations the Council is now having will be crucial here to resetting partnerships in order to ensure that the work can be sustained.

Call-In of decision on Fortnightly Waste Collections

In June we had our first formal **Call-In** of a Council decision for many years. ‘Call-in’ is a tool to temporarily freeze a decision that has been taken by the Cabinet but not yet implemented, to allow for further consideration. To do this, **five** councillors have to sign a request that a decision be called in, if they believe it does not meet the Council’s ‘Principles of decision-



making’ as set out in the Constitution. The Scrutiny Panel then holds a special hearing to decide whether the decision should be referred back to Cabinet, discussed further at Full Council, or upheld. The two most recent uses of this power were in 2008 and 2010.

This related to a decision of Cabinet of 18 May on ‘*Restricting Residual Waste*’ by introducing fortnightly collections for residual waste to street level properties using black 180 litre wheeled bins.

The 5 Opposition Group Members Members who called-in the decision argued that the decision was not in the best interest of residents and ignored the consultation response where the majority of respondents had disagreed with the new residual waste services. The voices and concerns of residents about the proposed changes were being ignored and the Council should not be moving forward with the proposals, they argued. They pointed out the evidence to support implementation was weak nationally and there was no local evidence to support implementation either. They argued that while some local authorities had increased recycling rates a large proportion of this waste ended up contaminated and therefore was unrecyclable. Because of this the Council had a duty to explore alternative options and it had not been evident from the Cabinet report that they had done this.

In response officers argued that the decision to move to fortnightly collections was driven by national, regional and local drivers including targets being set by both national government and in the Mayor of London’s Strategy and all London boroughs were required to contribute towards the London targets. Hackney’s recycling target rate was 31 % and as Hackney’s waste services were already providing a comprehensive service, the only area left to pursue was to reduce residual waste. This change was being implemented to reduce residual waste and to maximise recycling. This decision would

also be taking important steps towards mitigating the effects of climate change in accordance with the Council's Declaration for Climate Change in June 2019.

Officers responded that resident concerns about negative impacts arising from long intervals between residual waste collections, as experienced in other boroughs, would be mitigated by carefully learning from those boroughs. The Council would also not reduce street cleansing and maintain it at current levels. They also reassured residents that they would have in place unlimited food waste collection and retain the weekly collection for recycling.

A comprehensive composition analysis was carried out in 2015 on the heaviest collection days. It had shown that 54% of the waste could be recycled or put in the food waste. A further composition analysis was carried out showing that 69% of food waste could be recycled. The environmental benefits far outweighed the concerns being raised, they argued. To mitigate the risks further, reasonable adjustments would be put in place including larger bins for larger families. The concerns being raised were common across all community groups and would not disproportionately impact one community group over another, they concluded.

The Scrutiny Panel voted unanimously not to uphold the Call-In. The Chair responded to each objection point by stating that the consultation had been taken into account alongside other important factors. He stated that it was not correct to assert that there was insufficient local evidence and that even contaminated waste when removed had produced better recycling rates. The Panel was satisfied that officers with expertise had benchmarked other boroughs and looked at all other options and the only viable way left to increase recycling rates was to move to fortnightly collections. The Panel was of the view that the Equality Impact Assessment had been very robust and had incorporated key impacts such as the 'very large family' policy. The Panel agreed with the Call-In members that there now needed to be clearer communications to those most affected particularly those who are digitally excluded. They rejected the assertion that this decision should have been taken by Full Council as that would not be in accordance with the Council's clear Scheme of Delegation.

Children and Young People



Children & Young People



Covid-19 pandemic impact on Children and Young People

Our year was of course dominated by the impact of the pandemic which has had a far reaching impact on local children and their families. We therefore kept our overview and scrutiny work going in order to monitor and review the situation but also to provide a 'critical friend' challenge to local leaders to ensure that the new and existing needs of children and young people continued to be met by local services.

The requirement to close schools and childcare settings to all except children in need or those of key workers meant that most teaching and learning took place virtually within the home and with parents taking a more active role in the education of their children. Keeping this issue under close scrutiny revealed to us concerns about the **inequalities of the home learning environment** for our pupils, not just in terms of access to IT devices and connectivity, but also in relation to the space that children had for learning in the home and in the nature



and level of support provided by their parents. Evidence provided by the Sutton Trust and local Headteachers at a session held in June, underscored the disproportionate impact that school closures had in terms of children's ability to study, their progression and attainment. We continued to challenge the response of Hackney Education Service and the wider council to this issue throughout the 2020/21 work programme, and given that young people's recovery will be long term, we will continue to monitor how children are being supported to catch up in the year going forward.

Restrictions on face-to-face contacts also severely impacted the way in which local services could support children and families with face-to-face meetings only taking place with those children most at risk or in acute need. We learned that Children and Families and Education Service both worked collaboratively over the lockdowns to ensure coordinated support which sought to maintain the line of sight for our most vulnerable and at-risk children. The safety and welfare of children and young people is of course

of paramount concern, and we have continued to challenge and test the efficacy and effectiveness of our local safeguarding response during the pandemic.

The pandemic has brought into focus the **mental health and emotional wellbeing** of children and young people and we questioned senior officers a number of times throughout the year on variations in the demand for mental health services and on the adequacy of the local response. Our questioning revealed that higher numbers of children and young people were presenting later and with more acute needs, underlining the need for more focused preventative interventions. Local CAMHS (Child and Adult Mental Health Services) were quick to respond, ensuring that first response and preventative interventions continue to be held virtually whilst expanding support through on-line tools such as Kooth. We will continue to review this response carefully however, as evidence presented to us from young people suggested that there were issues around the acceptability of on-line and virtual support for mental health issues.

Childcare services have come under extreme financial pressure throughout the pandemic as demand has been greatly impacted by parents working from home and choosing not to take up childcare places. Our questioning to local leaders revealed that this loss of income has meant that our local Children's Centres face a funding shortfall of over £1m which is a concern given their centrality to our 'early years' support offer. We also met with a number of local childcare providers who spoke passionately about the challenges they faced during the pandemic. We raised a number of issues with Senior leaders particularly in relation to the financial viability of the independent childcare sector whose income base is dependent on parental fees and which would likely be eroded by the increase in home working patterns in the future. Given the critical importance of independent provision (it supports almost 2/3 of our local childcare provision) we will continue to challenge local leaders on the sufficiency of local childcare in 2021/22.

It was also important to ensure that the **voice of children and young people** continued to be heard throughout the pandemic, and we invited representatives from Hackney Youth Parliament to our meeting to describe how their lives had been impacted by Coronavirus. Young people provided very powerful accounts of their anxieties in relation to school closures, virtual teaching and the arrangements for their assessments and exams. With schools closed and opportunities to meet other young people limited, young people described feelings of disengagement and disconnection, and were anxious about how schools would help them to catch up and support them with their academic plans and aspirations. A big take out of this session was the degree to which young people felt 'left out' or not sufficiently involved in decisions that affect them. Following on from this, we will strengthen and diversify young people's representation on the Commission and will seek changes to the Constitution to support this.

Addressing inequalities and unconscious bias in the Education and the Children and Families Service

Although we routinely monitor racial disparities in education and children and young people's services, the death of George Floyd and subsequent Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 prompted us to have a more focused look at this issue and so we invited the Directors of the Children and Families and Hackney Education services to explain how

they were tackling racial inequalities and unconscious bias across their respective departments.

Our questioning revealed that Children & Families has developed a new inclusive recruitment policy which has seen the introduction of anonymous shortlisting, diverse interview panels and improved monitoring of workforce diversity. Work had also begun on developing anti-racist and inclusive social work practice to help understand and address disproportionality in children's social care interventions.

We believe that transparency is essential to improved awareness and efforts to tackle racial inequalities, and at our request, Children and Families later published disproportionality figures for children's social care interventions. These figures showed that whilst children from Black and Black British communities make up 29% of local young people they were substantially overrepresented among Children in Need (43%) and Looked After Children (40%) cohorts. Awareness and openness are the beginning of this journey, and we will continue to monitor how the service adapts and improves local practice to tackle inequalities.

The Education Service also described its work with schools and within its own department to address racial inequalities and unconscious bias. The school curriculum is the heart of the teaching programme in every school, so we were very impressed with the work of the Education Service to support schools to teach the Black Curriculum which not only aims to decolonise teaching programmes but also bring about a more inclusive and diverse approach to teaching for all young people. Given the positive feedback we have received from local schools and the number of enquiries and downloads of this resource by other schools and local authorities, it is apparent that this is a very welcome initiative and which we hope will have a positive impact on local young people.

Whilst we acknowledged that tackling racial inequality is a systemic and compound issue, we agreed that the pace of change needed to quicken to ensure the Council was delivering positive and impactful improvements on the lives of local children and young people. Given that this issue intersects so many other policy areas, we agreed to continue this work throughout 2021/22 to ensure that talking about race and addressing racial inequalities remain at the forefront of the local children and young people policy agenda.

Closing the attainment gap in our schools

We keep an overview of school attainment and receive annual updates from Hackney Education Service on the achievements of local children and young people. In June last year, performance data submitted to us showed that the attainment gap between different groups of young people remained worryingly large and that local efforts to stem this did not appear to be having sufficient impact. Of particular concern to us was the performance of Black Caribbean boys, who whilst performing better than their national counterparts were consistently underachieving across



Hackney's Purple Bus in action

all educational stages (Early Years, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4) compared to White British counterparts.

We therefore felt that additional scrutiny was necessary to ensure that our local programmes and policies to close the attainment gap were both effective and appropriately targeted. A dedicated session was held in February where we invited education specialists from the University of Durham and the Education Policy Institute to help us understand the national dimensions to this issue, as well as contributions from other Local Authorities to help identify best practice elsewhere. Local head teachers also attended to describe the barriers that they and their children faced in closing the attainment gap.

National data from 2019 presented to us was sobering; by the time Black Caribbean children reach GCSE level, they are almost 11 months behind in education and learning and just 42% obtain 5 GCSEs compared to 62% of White British children. Data from HES confirmed local disparities where GCSE (KS4) results showed that whilst students as a whole in Hackney made better progress (0.29) than the national average (-0.01), local Black Caribbean boys did not (-0.55).

We learnt that HES operates a number of programmes to improve attainment among underachieving pupils, including Black Caribbean and Turkish boys, and provides support at both pupil and at school level. Generic school improvement was driven by the 'Good to Great' policy which was assisted through more targeted support and development through School Improvement Partners. A Systems Leader had also been recruited who had provided more focused advice, guidance and support to help address racial inequalities, support inclusive leadership and deliver a more inclusive curriculum..

From our questioning we understood that without a national strategy and with no dedicated funding to support underachieving groups, closing the attainment gap would be challenging. Furthermore, whilst schools were key agents in delivering improvements, more widespread community action was needed to address the systemic issues which underpinned poor performance such as institutional racism, unconscious bias and valuing cultural diversity.

From this session we have developed a number of recommendations for Cabinet which centre on the need for introduction of local targets and improved governance to close the attainment gap for Black Caribbean, Turkish and Irish Traveller communities. We also identified the need for greater recognition of the voice and experiences of young Black Caribbean boys in helping to shape and inform programmes to help them achieve and reach their potential. Once again, we intend to keep this workstream live throughout our work in 2021/22 and will revisit this later in the year.

Action Plan in response to Ofsted Inspection

Building on last year's work we examined the progress being made in children's social care in response to the improvements required by Ofsted. In September, we reviewed the Children's Plan 2020 (which embodied the action plan of required improvements for Ofsted) together with governance arrangements for overseeing the necessary improvements. The service reported that improvements had been made to the Disabled Children's Service and that all private fostering arrangements had been reviewed and conformed to requirements. Other required improvements relating to improved management oversight of cases and greater timeliness of interventions were more compound issues and for which the service reported it was making positive progress.

We were reassured by the steps that the Children and Families service were taking to peer review of service improvements. It was noted that both Camden and Islington would contribute to a tripartite process which helped assess and benchmark local provision of children's social care services. We also welcomed the appointment of the external assessor who would provide independent and objective assurance of the progress being made to the Chief Executive and Member Oversight Board.

We provided a specific challenge to the service in relation to the relatively high caseloads of social workers within the Unit Model of social work in operation in Hackney. Children and Families services acknowledged that it was planning to review the Unit Model of social work practice as part of a wider approach to practice development. We agreed to look at these plans to reform the Unit Model when they will be presented to us in the next municipal year.

We also sought clarification on the nature of the additional investment which had been provided to the service as this had not been made clear in any of the reports provided to us. We understood from information submitted to us later, that additional financial resources had been used for staffing, particularly to increase capacity of middle management support to help improve case monitoring and oversight.

Given the uncertainties around Coronavirus, it was not clear when the service would be re-inspected by Ofsted, though we were reassured that the service is in regular contact with the inspection body. As well as dealing with the impact of coronavirus, since October 2020 the Children & Families service has also had to contend with the impact of the cyberattack and the loss of local information systems and records. In this context, we fully acknowledged the resilience of leaders and staff in not only keeping services running but also seeking to develop and improve provision during this period.

Budget Monitoring

Spending on services for children and young people totalled almost £90m in 2020/21, which equates to around 28% of total spending by the Council. Both Children and Families and Hackney Education provide regular budget monitoring reports to us so that we can maintain an overview of spending and provide challenge where necessary.

A number of budget lines in Children and Families Service were of particular concern to us this year given that these were areas of high spend and with significant in-year cost pressures. The cost of providing residential care for looked after young people was

expected to be more than double than was budgeted, with an expected overspend of £4.8m year end 2021/21. Similar cost pressures were recorded for semi-independent care (£2.8m) and independent foster care (£1.2m). These budget lines represent an ongoing financial risk, and we continue to challenge the service to provide longer term solutions including more localised provision and greater cooperation with other local authorities.. To assist further, we have agreed to have an in-depth look at adolescents entering care in the coming year, as this accounts for a significant proportion of the number of residential placements used by Children and Families.

Government funding for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) services has failed to keep up with demand, in Hackney the number of Education and Health Care Plans has been growing by 16-17 % per year which with little additional funding, has created significant cost pressures for Hackney Education, and across the Council; the year end to 2020/21 SEND services would be approaching £8m deficit. Following on from this budget monitoring report, we requested that SEND services provide details of the service recovery plan which would help address the ongoing budget deficit. Questioning revealed that almost £16m was spent on commissioning independent special schools, which is almost of the entire SEND budget. We agreed that further work was necessary to assess the commissioning strategy for independent provision and how such contracts are monitored and reviewed, and agreed to look at this further in a dedicated item in July 2021.

Short Reports

Hackney Schools Group Board (HSGB) -- In 2019, HES created HSGB as an independent advisory body to champion education excellence and to promote inclusion and belonging among local children and young people. The Board, which is made up of representatives from local schools and an independent Chair, was noted to have 3 in-year priorities to April 2021: *Belonging for All, Leading for the Curriculum and Reading for All*. We noted some interesting work that the Board was undertaking in relation to engaging parents of children from black and other minority ethnic groups, and an assessment of school leadership during the pandemic. Whilst welcoming this work we did question the Independent Chair on how the learning from these and other projects would be communicated across schools more widely. In terms of engagement, we noted that there had been little interaction with Alternative Provision which we would follow up the next time the report was taken.

Child Friendly Borough Special Planning Document - the Planning Service presented their finalised planning guidance to us which aims to ensure that all new development coming forward in Hackney recognises the needs of children and young people. We warmly welcomed the proposals set out in the planning guidance as this would have a far reaching impact on children and young people across the borough. We also applauded the inclusive way in which this guidance had been



created in which local developers and architects and of course local children and young people had been involved in both concept and design. The development of clear design principles which could be applied to development retrospectively was particularly helpful, as this would ensure that all young people could potentially benefit from this initiative rather than those living in new development.

As this was part of the formal consultation process, we subsequently wrote to the Head of Planning to ensure our views were reflected in the finalised planning guidance.

The Young Futures Commission (YFC) - young people from the YFC attended in December 2020 as the project has now concluded its engagement work with local children and young people and has produced a report on its findings, including a number of key 'asks' of the Council. We welcomed the report and the work of local young people in producing it. We were particularly impressed with the active role that they had played in working with officers to identify solutions to the problems and issues it raised.



Hackney Young Futures Commission Chairs and Vice Chairs

We heard of much new learning and understanding that had been gained from the YFC not only in terms of the issues and concerns which were important to young people, but also about the best ways to meaningfully consult and engage young people. In this context, we were keen to explore the legacy of the project with officers and how its findings would be embedded across the Council. It was acknowledged that this was still as yet undeveloped and would require further work, and in this context we agreed that officers should attend again next year to update us on how consultation and engagement with young people would be improved across the Council as well as the implementation of key asks of young people.

Cabinet Question Time

Once a year we invite the two Cabinet Members with specific responsibilities in our area to attend a Cabinet Question Time. For each session we agree in advance the specific areas of focus so that we can get the best out of them.

We questioned the Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks and Play on **childhood poverty** and noted that after housing costs, 48% of local children were living in poverty where household income was less than £14k which was the 3rd highest rate of child poverty in London after Newham and Tower Hamlets. The proportion of children claiming free school meals had also risen from 32.2% to 35.2% and that there were now 12,074 children receiving free meals at school. In response the Council has rerouted £280k of grants to support the community response and has invested a further £500k in the Discretionary Crisis Support Scheme to help local children and families. A Winter Covid Grant of £1.1m was also anticipated to help families with food and other essentials over the school holiday period. There were a number of key issues that we highlighted from this questioning; the need to encourage more parents whose children are entitled to free school meals to apply; improved publicity for grant schemes available to local families and the need for more cash than 'in-kind' benefits.

We questioned the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care about the increase in demand for **Elective Home Education** and the additional support that had been put into this service to help. In September 2020, a 268 % increase was recorded in the number of parents seeking to home educate. We noted that all parents considering EHE are now spoken to before they actually move off-roll at school to ensure that they fully understand their responsibilities and the nature of informal support that was available. We also challenged the Cabinet member on the support arrangements for vulnerable children moving into EHE, to ensure that there were adequate assessments of risk in place.

Annual Updates for our overview

Every year there are a number of standing items which we take to monitor key aspects of the performance of both our schools and the children's and families service and our Safeguarding Board. These updates help us maintain an overview of key services for children and young people and help us to identify if additional scrutiny is needed:

Children & Families Bi-Annual Report (twice yearly) - we get 6 monthly reports of activity across Children and Families, which includes Youth Justice, Youth Services as well as children's social care. Data collection this year has been severely impacted by coronavirus restrictions and the Cyberattack, but this showed that the number of contacts, referrals and assessments undertaken have fallen by between 25-40 % in the year to March 2021.

City Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership Board - we review the annual report of the local safeguarding partnership each year, and to help identify new and emerging issues of concern for child safeguarding. Data from the pandemic period noted the concerns around an increased incidence of head injuries among young people and increased incidence of child accidents in the home.

School Admissions - this is to ensure that there are sufficient school places at primary and secondary level and that appropriate future planning is taking place. A key takeaway from the data was the falling school rolls in the primary schools and the need to cap places in some schools. We will be picking this up again next year, to assess how HES is supporting local schools.

Pupil Movement - this is a new standing item on our agenda which looks at the number of children moving out of school in any one year either through school exclusion, through a managed move or those going into Elective Home Education (EHE). It was encouraging to report the sharp decline in the number of children who were permanently excluded in 2020, with none being recorded in primary settings and just two in secondary settings. HES provided assurance that they would continue to monitor and challenge schools for which there was higher than average pupil movements in years 9-11. Our analysis and questioning of officers highlighted that the same groups of children were disproportionately represented in all these groups of children moving from and between school, these being boys from Black Caribbean and Irish Traveller communities and sought assurances that this issue was being tackled strategically.

Living in Hackney



Living in Hackney



Response to the Covid-19 pandemic

As with all the Commissions Covid-19 dominated our work during the year. At the beginning of the year we held a joint meeting with the Scrutiny Panel where the Mayor and the Chief Executive were questioned on the response to the pandemic. To make it manageable we focused on two specific service areas: domestic violence, and the support to those in social housing in the borough.

We learned from the Borough Commander then that domestic violence reporting had fallen but the Domestic Violence Service also cautioned that victims trapped with partners during lockdown would be looking for support in greater numbers once lockdown had been eased somewhat in the summer. They were expecting a major spike in demand for their services.

We heard from Housing Services about the whole range of support available to residents in social housing in the borough and we had them back later in the year to detail this and discuss the Covid-19 impacts.

Street homeless and Winter Night Shelters

During the pandemic, as a Public Health measure, the government requested all local authorities to find immediate temporary accommodation for the **street homeless**. Rough Sleeping teams within councils had to consider whether the risk to people sleeping rough in their area was so great that it required a Night Shelter to open or whether there was a more Covid safe option such as self-contained accommodation. We examined how the Council responded to this and how it's working towards more permanent solutions.

The Council had pre-empted the government's announcement by block-booking rooms in two large hotels and, in all, 219 people were housed across 11 hotels. While this provided immediate respite for those involved, the teams learned that further wrap-around support was badly needed for many of this cohort who have complex problems. One challenge was a lack of experienced and skilled workers to support this cohort. As a part response the Council used redeployed staff who were quickly upskilled in order to plug the gap in the short term. Having The Greenhouse facility in Hackney was a boost because it meant that 80% of our street homeless were registered with a GP compared to 30% London wide.

Long-term provision of this level of emergency support is of course unsustainable but much progress was made and we learned that only 80 remained in temporary accommodation at the end of the period. Funding support remains on an annual basis which is unsatisfactory in terms of planning and without government commitments to long-term funding, the solutions currently in place will be unsustainable.

While we were pleased to hear how the wrap-around support had made a marked difference to many of the group (helping their self esteem and confidence) the main drivers of homelessness remain and the challenges are immense. We commended the Council's visionary attempts to aim for a more holistic solution for these people by linking in health, wellbeing and drug and alcohol support services and we encouraged officers to promote the success of this in other boroughs. We agree that just providing temporary housing support alone is not the solution.

We also looked at the provision of **Winter Night Shelters**. These shelters, which often move premises, would normally open in November as the weather becomes colder and would operate for 5 months. Guests would be able to leave their belongings and return in the evenings. These are usually in church halls or community settings and the advent of lockdown restrictions impacted on both the provision and the safe management of these spaces. A review of the operating model had recommended year-round provision in more permanent premises and the pandemic had accelerated the implementation of this plan. Despite having a smaller capacity, permanent provision supports more people over time and a pilot for a women's shelter demonstrated this. These shelters had relied on a bank of volunteers to operate but the Covid restrictions had meant that guests and staff had to remain on site. Housing Needs described how they helped Hackney Doorways to find short-term premises. Their fundraising has also been hit because they cannot carry out their normal fund raising activities and despite receiving various grants they were anticipating a difficult financial year.

Community Safety issues

We have a statutory duty to scrutinise the *Community Safety Partnership for Hackney* and to monitor its *Community Safety Partnership Plan 2019-2022*. Each year we consider the Annual Review of the Plan and the progress being made against it.

At our January 2019 meeting we had noted how some indicators were suggesting lower than average levels of trust and confidence in the police and we discussed these with them. We learned that a range of actions had been taken by the Police including the establishment of a new Trust and Confidence Board within the Borough Command Unit (BCU), which is now a joint Hackney and Tower Hamlets body. We heard about the roll-out of body-worn cameras, the work of the Account Group, the Safer Neighbourhood Board and programmes in schools to improve understanding on both sides about the impact of Stop and Search. In June we revisited the issue to provide further challenge on what exactly was being done to build trust and confidence.



Street-based drug markets

We took an in-depth look at street based drug markets and substance misuse and ASB, one of the key elements in the strategic priority action plan of the Partnership. These are a key focus not just in Hackney but London-wide at the MOPAC (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime) level and making this a key strategic priority within our local Plan allowed our Partnership to use all the powers available to it. Local authority community safety enforcement teams have limited primary powers, unlike the police.

We learned how the key to tackling this is not just enforcement but also thinking about diversion, support and talking to the community and the young people involved to better understand the underlying causes. We noted too the professional assessments that this is greatly under-reported.

The introduction of a local operation with a focus on hotspots resulted in many drug dealing arrests. We challenged whether the focus on drug dealing was reinforcing some community tensions because of a perception that certain groups were being disproportionately targeted.

The Council of course also has to respond to a public perception that not enough is being done to ensure public spaces are safe, that drug dealing is being addressed and that ASB policies are being complied with (e.g. accurate recording of ethnicity on ASB warnings which are issued) and we questioned officers on these.

We learned that the Council had successfully secured an extension to a closure order for a drug taking site in London Fields. One issue which kept coming up in our discussions was communication. We stressed that improvements were needed in the communication back to residents on estates about the outcomes of incidents because many appeared to be dissatisfied with the reporting processes and were saying that they were not seeing any marked improvements. Many were also fearful about being personally identified. We asked the Partnership to look more clearly at this aspect as it was key to encouraging more reporting.

Stop and Search - ensuring more inclusive policing

Stop and Search and the need to build trust and confidence in the community arising from it remain a key issue for the Partnership especially during the pandemic. In June we examined the impact Covid-19 restrictions were having on crime and antisocial behaviour. We looked at the proportion of fines issued to our residents from ethnic minority communities for Covid-19 related infringements and examined whether the volume of stop and search activity had increased during Covid-19 and the proportion related to ethnic minority residents. We also challenged the response by the police to an arrest incident in Dalston which had been criticised in the local media as a disproportionate one.

In a subsequent session we decided to look more broadly at Stop and Search linked to the issue of inclusivity and building trust and confidence. We discussed with the Borough Command Unit, the Metropolitan Police Service Hq and MOPAC ways to build trust and confidence and asked what was being done at MPS/MOPAC level. We explored with the Independent Office of Police Complaints (IOPC) how they worked with the MPS in managing the complaints system.

We debated how the police and local authorities can jointly address the concerns about community relations and poor levels of trust and confidence partly caused by the implementation of Stop and Search policies. We asked about accountability, handcuffing policies, fair and inclusive approaches to policing, sources of intelligence for the police and community engagement work aimed at building trust and confidence. We questioned the IOPC in relation to the recommendations they made to the MPS, the role of the IOPC in relation to complaints and their success at influencing policy and having their recommendations implemented. We also discussed the IOPC's own review on Stop and Search.

Later on, following fresh concerns over community tensions between the police and local residents regarding the use of force and specifically Stop and Search, we questioned the BCU again on: how community relations currently stood; the increasing use of handcuffs and in particular on young people aged 10-14; officer training in stop and search; the threshold of complaints on a police officer's record to trigger further investigation particularly when there might be a recurring trend of inappropriate behaviour; the use of Territorial Support Group officers and impact of this on community relations; the Intelligence used to inform stop and search; how links are made to different types of crime and why 'stop and account' is not used initially instead of stop and search. We also asked for an overview of police officer accountability within their complaints system and about how the monitoring data on stop and search is used within the service.

Some key themes emerged from our questioning. It appears that the MPS complaints system is not very well trusted and is seldom used by community groups who are most impacted by stop and search activity. There was a wider public perception that the MPS does not have a robust system in place for police officers to be held to account for inappropriate behaviour and inappropriate use of police tools. Having on average a 20-25% success rate for Stop and Search was not really a good indicator of success or efficient use of resources. There were few details on current work to address the disproportionality among ethnic minority groups being stopped and searched and we weren't given reassurances about how the MPS might plan to address this more strategically other than through local BCU review work. We did acknowledge that the MPS is working hard to improve dialogue and engagement but this has not really filtered down to the local community and we pressed for greater representation of Hackney's diverse communities in MPS and MOPAC community engagement structures.

Housing Management issues

Apart from community safety issues, housing matters take up the bulk of our work.

We questioned officers about the consultation on the revised **Lettings Policy** and examined the drivers for change here. The Council has reached a point where doing nothing about the issue of an ever-expanding housing list vs a very limited supply was not an option. Officers argued that the current policy did not provide



genuine access nor realistic expectations to those applying. It was hoped the changes would provide much needed clarity at a time when we have the highest numbers in temporary accommodation in over a decade.

Although under the proposals the register would be reduced by c. 13,400 the Council was confident that this action would free up resources to support those not eligible for council housing so that they could be helped to explore the other options. We raised concerns about households being placed in the private sector and being forced to stay on benefits. We learned that c.80% of households in temporary accommodation were now in work and the Local Housing Allowance uplift had provided some further flexibility.

We raised concerns about the quality of communication with those being removed from the list and the need to help people to understand why the changes were necessary. As well as the consultation website the Council had planned an extensive number of face to face and virtual sessions however the lockdown had impeded the roll-out of these in the short term.

We sought information on the **Council's Fire Safety Works** with input from Hackney's Resident Liaison Group. After the deeply distressing events of Grenfell Tower we received assurances that the Council was continuing to make progress with its fire safety work and this was proactive and not just reactive. An increased emphasis on fire safety considerations was now being built-in to all the works being carried out, be they major or minor works.

We learned that while there were no cladding issues in our blocks, the inspections had uncovered some sub-standard External Wall Insulation (EWI). On the back of remedial work on this, certificates were then issued to residents which would enable them to sell their properties in future. Other initiatives included improving the skills of the resident safety team and ensuring all vulnerable residents have a personal escape plan in place. We noted the improved liaison with the London Fire Brigade on key issues such as information exchange and improving the quality of signage in blocks to also help them as well as residents.

We noted that the Council was ensuring that the new regulations on developers for licensing new builds gave the Council more information and also the ability to ensure that documentation is correct.

We also sought assurances that the Council has a robust system in place to monitor leaseholder properties for gas and electrical safety certificates. Lockdown had impacted on the Council's work on safety certificate checks for leaseholder properties and this would need to be restarted promptly. We suspected that some leaseholders may not understand why the safety certificates are important and why there is a cost. Our suggestions for improvement were taken onboard and information about the importance of gas and electrical certificates would be included in the new round of letters. Although it was not possible for leaseholders to have these costs incorporated into their service charge if the council's DLO had carried out the checks, we did get a commitment from the Council to explore whether residents could be offered options to spread the costs of these payments.

We were disappointed to learn that the Council was unable to get any government funding to support the costs of these works and we supported the Cabinet in lobbying on this.

The issue of **Lift Maintenance and Repair** touches on so many of our housing residents. We discussed with housing officers the maintenance and repairs to lifts on the Council's housing estates, examining how they implement LBH's 'Lift Protocol' and the proposals for the new lift maintenance contract. We also examined the proposals for monitoring this contract e.g. response times, servicing arrangements and any new changes or enhancements being made to manage the new contract effectively.

We discussed the **Digital Divide in Housing Services** with senior managers from both IT Services and Housing Services, exploring how they planned to support residents who remain digitally excluded. The total shift to digital caused by Lockdown had exacerbated the problem for many who rely on public access computers. We examined such aspects as assisting with the provision of digital connectivity and securing low cost internet. As part of this we also revisited a previous examination of improving internet connectivity in our community halls.

Resident engagement and participation is a continuing area of focus for us. Last year we reviewed the findings of an external review commissioned by Housing Services into supporting engagement and participation for housing tenants and we made a number of recommendations ourselves to Cabinet. Our work partly informed a planned restructure and the publication of a new **Resident Engagement Strategy**. We asked officers to update us on progress. We highlighted some shortcomings such as the failure to respond to resident feedback from an engagement exercise on the correct placing of bins on estates and the need to get engagement right the first time.

Other Issues

Thames Water's response to floods in N4 caused by burst water mains

In October 2019 burst water mains caused extensive flooding in the N4 area of the borough and the ongoing disruption and distress for residents continued for some time. Since then we have had sessions with Thames Water to update us on the progress of the repair works and update us on the number of residents returning to their homes. We invited residents and ward councillors to these sessions.



Flooding in Brownswood Rd

170 properties, across all tenures, had been affected and 83 had to be vacated while repairs were undertaken. 52 have now been repaired and families/residents have returned, including all council tenants. 19 remain in alternative accommodation while

repairs continue and 12 families have moved from Queens Drive and taken up long-term rentals elsewhere. The Aftercare Team remains in place and oversight is maintained by the Operations Director.

One outcome from our investigations was that Thames Water had donated to the Lea Bridge Ward businesses, arising from the 2018 floods there. We discussed the use of these funds noting that local ward councillors had made recommendations about disbursement. We discussed the governance processes for these funds and the restrictions involved. We also noted that Thames Water had expanded its business resilience team which works with local councils as well as its five year plans for improvement works.

Managing our Green Spaces

Covid 19 restrictions and lockdowns changed population flows and resulted in more residents remaining in the borough for leisure time, which has put greater pressure on our communal green spaces. We heard from officers about the new **Green Infrastructure Strategy** which focuses on how parks, green spaces and waterways can better integrate. We also looked at the network of parks and green spaces, trees and woodlands, rivers and wetlands, and green features in the urban environment such as green roofs and walls. The strategy aims to provide a structure for how all this can be planned, designed and managed to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits.

We also made a submission on the **Parks and Green Spaces Strategy**.

We welcomed the Council's renewed commitments here noting how the pandemic had highlighted just how integral green and open spaces are to maintaining health and wellbeing. We asked that the service ensure that parks are more accessible to all community groups and all age groups and that they function as a hub with clear signposting of equipment and spaces. We asked that equipment be better labelled. We asked that more be done to ensure that minority ethnic groups make greater uses of our parks and green spaces and that their views are captured clearly in the engagement work. We asked that there be continuous engagement to ensure that parks and open spaces remain relevant to changing local needs. We welcomed that income generation to pay for improvements was not being pursued as the key objective and we welcomed plans to encourage more cafes, especially locally run ones. We recommended greater toilet provision so that older people and disabled in particular can make greater use of the spaces. We also asked that consideration be given to opening up more spaces for teenagers, for community



groups to hold activities and for a volunteering programme e.g. working with people with disabilities, which in turn would give the young people involved the skills to enable them to apply for apprenticeships.

Hackney Carnival Update

We examined the Hackney Carnival and the impact Covid-19 has had on arts and culture services. Over the years the Carnival has grown rapidly attracting nearly 100,000 London-wide participants and it takes significant resources to ensure the event is safe and well managed. In Jan 2020 we heard about the experiences of young people who had participated in the event in 2019. We had raised concerns about the event becoming increasingly thought of as a London-wide party and losing its local flavour and family focus. We highlighted there was room for improvement in grassroots participation if schools, youth and local community groups and groups of residents are given adequate notice and assistance with how to access funding to participate.



We learned about last year's Virtual Carnival and how its success and reach was measured. 2021 will still need to be virtual. We examined strengths and weaknesses of the previous carnivals and how organisers were aiming to attract a wider net of local communities and grassroots organisations. In preparation for next year's carnival we explored what has been learned, how our key concerns about inclusivity had been incorporated and what a return to a live event might look like. **We explored the challenges the Council will have in continuing to fund the Carnival as it grows and how to balance the growing popularity of the event whilst maintaining it as a truly local and family oriented event.**

More broadly we examined the *Recovery Plan for Culture* in the borough and the impact the digital divide has on provision of culture services. For recovery in the arts and culture sector it was not purely about funding during lockdown but how they could stay connected to their customers and retain their premises. The shift online had helped to keep some connections but was also contributing to the digital exclusion for some groups.

Hackney Library Services

We questioned officers about the plans for the phased re-opening of Library Services and the digital divide issues exacerbated by the pandemic. We looked at the online activities and the changes to service provision that will be needed to make them fit for purpose in the future. As more services move online we asked what the Council is doing to help residents overcome the digital divide and how council buildings, services and communal spaces are being used to support this work. We learned that the Mobile Service for the Housebound was maintained during the summer, providing a valued service for this often isolated group.

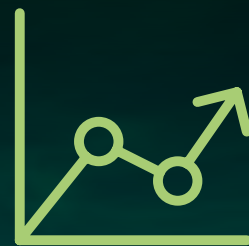
We examined how well the service was operating during lockdown and explored with officers how the Council might capitalise on the benefits of some of these changes. Although services could be provided online, the key learning was that library PCs were a lifeline for people who, for example, need to manage their benefits claims, or apply for jobs or order prescriptions.

Update on implementation of review on ‘Serious Violence’ 2019

We considered the Cabinet’s Response to our own previous review on ‘*Serious Violence*’. That review had looked at the work of the Community Safety partners in tackling a spike in serious violence/gang activity which had occurred in 2018. We were pleased that the bulk of our recommendations were accepted. We welcomed closer working between the Integrated Gangs Unit and Children and Families Services with representation at regular risk review meetings and a referral process from the IGU. Increasing public transparency about the work of the IGU is key, so we were encouraged to learn that their web presence had been improved. We continue to push for greater transparency and public access to learn about the work of the unit and groups they work with. Demonstrating the effectiveness of the IGU was also key, so we were pleased that work to develop a new monitoring framework had begun.

Taking a ‘whole system’ approach to tackling serious violence was important and this would be bolstered by developing a single action plan aimed at tackling not just the violence but the underlying drivers of it. We also welcomed a new more holistic focus to working with mental health partners and to this end a new joint post has been created with ELFT, within the IGU, to take this work forward.

Skills, Economy and Growth



Skills, Economy and Growth



Rather than attempting a full review this year, because of the limitations and pressures on stakeholders under the pandemic, we used our meetings to provide a platform for local businesses and residents to detail their experiences so that we could establish their current situation, what they're planning and what might be needed in the short and medium term to help them re-start. We would also have to address the major impact of the pandemic and how to develop a Skills Offer that will fit in with post Covid-19 recovery.

Impact of COVID-19 on the local economy

Our work this year was dominated by how to support businesses to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and our focus was primarily on gathering lived experiences from local businesses around COVID, the support they received and their views on what they might need next to get back on their feet and their views on what support they will need in the medium to long term.

The business owners indicated that business rate holidays were useful to offset the downturn in profits in the short-term, but expressed concerns that the measures could be insufficient in the medium to long term. It was a common concern that other avenues of support might be needed such as private loans. They expressed their concern about using private financial debt to keep going when the future of towns and highstreets was still so uncertain.

We discussed the challenges with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture and Inclusive Economy and the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources. Our work provided another opportunity to connect them directly with local business owners and several meetings between the two groups were arranged on the back of ours. We also heard the perspective of landlords including a local pub landlord who was able to explain the challenges they face in keeping their businesses viable.



A key concern for the pub landlord was the economic viability of continuing to pay rent on the premises when business operations were essentially paused. It was expressed that any support that could be provided, either in terms of direct financial intervention or a policy to protect them against eviction in the case of rent arrears (should they have to remain closed), would be greatly welcomed.

Impact of COVID-19 on Local Residents

We heard from a group of local residents about their experiences during the pandemic. We were particularly struck by the story of residents attempting to find employment after gaining a new qualification who found that, due to Covid-19, not only were they not securing interviews, but many businesses were unable to advise when they would look to be hiring again. This prompted us to allocate more time in the year's work programme to discuss the skills & employment offer to assist residents, many of whom will have had similar experiences when seeking skilled work.



Supporting local arts and culture enterprises

We also had a significant focus throughout the year on what was being done to support parts of the economy that enjoy less focus in the national conversations about economic support: namely small non-profit organisations, sole traders, and the arts. Hackney is home to a range of arts organisations including major ones such as the Hackney Empire. We also examined what is available to support those seeking support in gaining qualifications for jobs in arts & culture organisations.

We were pleased to learn that Arts Council England is now using Hackney's Arts & Culture Strategy approach as an example of good practice and we're recommending it to neighbouring boroughs.

The '15 Minute City'

The health of our Town Centres and the particular employment opportunities which they can offer is key to the vibrancy of our borough. We explored with the Deputy Mayor for Housing Supply, Planning, Culture and Inclusive Economy the concept of the '15 minute city', the idea that everything residents regularly require in terms of local shopping, amenities and entertainment be reachable in 15 minutes either walking or on a bicycle,

without the use of cars or even public transport. The concept of ‘the 15 minute city’ was popularised by Carlos Moreno, the Special Envoy for Smart Cities for Paris. Moreno’s assertion is that city life is unlikely to return to conditions seen prior to the pandemic, and encouraging the concept will improve quality of life for residents, bolster green initiatives, and support local economies.

The aim is to ensure that skills opportunities are designed incorporating residents and employees who are predominantly walking and cycling to work or in their work. This touches on the issue of Local Traffic Neighbourhoods and how they impact on businesses and economic activity and how to maximise this while being ‘car free’.

A major concern of ours was whether the initial consultation with residents had been sufficient and sufficiently well-advertised. The senior officers involved with Low Traffic Neighbourhoods as well as the relevant cabinet member assured us that the process of consultation is ongoing and the opportunity for residents to voice their views will remain open; the views provided by residents will continue to feed into how the scheme is implemented, and further to that, it was made clear then that the scheme hadn’t been in place long enough to draw informed conclusions about its benefits and the time for more robust scrutiny would be in the longer term.

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

The issue of LTNs has been a high profile and highly contested one not just in Hackney but across London, with very strong views on both sides. Looking at it from the perspective of local businesses we asked whether LTN’s could be used to increase trading space for them and whether licensing rules might be relaxed to permit this. We raised concerns from local businesses who had been in contact asking about logistical difficulties with receiving large deliveries if their businesses were harder to access for larger vehicles. Some residents had also been in touch with concerns that their roads were experiencing increased traffic due to the scheme, and that congestion appeared to have increased.



We heard from officers that the ongoing consultation process will help them address concerns from residents and businesses, and aid them in their task to find a balance, achieve the ‘green’ & wellbeing objectives of the scheme, while minimising fallout for businesses and residents who have voiced concerns.

Insight derived from studying LTN's & the feedback from local residents, businesses, and other local authorities trialling LTN schemes will be useful to Cabinet as it considers the consultation response and seeks to make recommendations about the future of the scheme.

We examined the level of coordination taking place between the Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture and Inclusive Economy and local businesses to better understand the specific impact of LTNs on them. We learned that shops and services accessible by bike or walking tend to be visited more frequently and enjoy a larger spend per square meter when compared to consumers travelling by car. These insights will help us to contribute recommendations to Cabinet on "greener economy" proposals generally and on implementing 'the 15 minute city' and other 'Shop Local' initiatives.

It was also important to us to ask about the impact of LTN's on residents and how the Equalities Impact Assessment for the plan is carried out. We learned that the EIA was done at an executive level when developing the transport strategy, and a separate assessment was undertaken for the emergency transport plan. We learned also that the equalities assessments will be ongoing as these policies are built upon.

Cabinet Member Question Time

Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture and Inclusive Economy

We asked about the **business rate relief** implemented by the Council in response to the challenges businesses are facing since Covid-19 and whether the relief would continue beyond the initially stated 12-months. The Mayor continues to lobby the central government to extend the rates relief holiday.

In October the Council's IT systems suffered a major **cyber attack**. We questioned the Cabinet Member on the effect it was having on council services and in particular on the support for employment programmes and support for businesses. In response to concerns that the attack waged on the Council may affect the decision to extend the business rates relief holiday, we learned that this would not be the case. As regards how the attack will affect businesses we were relieved to learn that no personal information from businesses had been compromised, and that the window for any resulting fraud was virtually nonexistent.

We asked about areas of concern from the monitoring of **local economic health** and the plans to support these areas. While our previous suggestions of support for businesses most in need were appreciated, their success relies on the Council establishing a resource to monitor the local economy's health more closely. We learned about a study which had been commissioned about Shoreditch's local economy as an example. The results of that will provide an opportunity to reflect on the strengths of the observation tools used and to consider whether use of these might be extended. We noted the close partnership work between the Council and bodies like the Hackney Federation of Small Business and the East End Trades Guild. New and emerging models being developed for observing economic activity in an area will be crucial for the Council and will of course help better inform our work too in providing a 'critical friend' challenge here.

Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources

In our session with the Cabinet Member, we learned that as well as looking at all the sectors impacted by both Covid-19 and Brexit it was also necessary to identify areas of strength in the borough to complement this. We questioned how Cabinet was supporting **adult learners** to gain the skills they require and we had a look in particular at the arts and culture sector and whether this area suffers from being deemed as of lesser economic importance than others. We learned that there is a piece of work to be done around Level 3 qualifications and the arts, but that adult learners may struggle here as the various funding provisions will be the linchpin for this work. Will these continue and how might they be affected. It was clarified to us that a crucial strand of work will be trying to achieve sustainable funding and we will build this issue into our own work programme for the coming year.

We discussed **STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics)** and how this commitment is not just about the digital creative economy, but also areas such as construction and health. Again, trying to secure sustainable funding will be a key challenge here.

We asked about the **Apprenticeships Programme** and learned that this area had expanded considerably. The programme is key to achieving the Council's goal of it being a significant source of employment for residents. We will keep a watching brief on this significantly expanded programme and also on the question of whether Hackney's employers remain enthusiastic about the programme and whether there has been a reduction in the opportunities they can provide to apprentices as a consequence of the pandemic. With the economy experiencing rapid change because of the pandemic, and apprenticeships attracting interest from a broader demographic than previously, scaling up this programme in a way that is sustainable but sufficient to meet need will be a key focus. In particular there will be a need to improve partnership working with local businesses.

We questioned officers about the changing **Neighbourhood CIL** (Community Infrastructure Levy) which is partly becoming more akin to a 'culture' fund. We requested further information from Cabinet including a concrete date for information around the key metrics to be used for assessing and administering this levy. We are eager to receive this to better understand the possibilities the redesigned CIL will bring to the borough and to help us in our work in evaluating and understanding how it operates.

We also discussed **business confidence** and differences in the attitudes of business owners to how they might recover post the pandemic. The Cabinet Member underlined that lateral thinking about the current observational tools being used to understand the health of local businesses is needed so that we can bring together all the different dimensions of the problem.

Health in Hackney



Health in Hackney



Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

The response to the Covid-19 Pandemic dominated our year also and we cleared the work programme to give it full attention. We held the first Virtual Meeting of a Hackney Commission on 30 March, albeit informally, as the legislation had not been in place then. We used it as a vital first opportunity to hear from each of the health care partners about how they were coping during the initial peak.



Vaccination Pop-up organised with Community African Network in Dalston

Once the municipal year began, each meeting then involved questioning the Director of Public Health and others each month about the latest data on incidence, the rates of testing and rates of hospital admissions. We acted as a critical friend to the health partners on the roll out of the local end of the rather controversial national NHS Test and Trace Programme, hearing about the challenges of aligning data flows so that local contact tracing could commence in earnest. In January we then moved on to examine the plans for the Vaccination Roll Out with the GP Confederation who were leading on it, advised by Public Health and others.

In June we did a Panel Discussion focusing on what councils might do to mitigate the spread in their areas and explored what space there was for local health partners to supplement the national government's approach. As well as having all the local health and social care system leaders present we really benefited from having some national experts to challenge how we were doing things locally and to learn more about the national picture. We heard from Professor Kevin Fenton, London's Regional Director at Public Health England, Professor Anthony Costello of the Institute of Global Health at UCL (as well as a former director at WHO) and a Member of Independent SAGE and from Professor Allyson Pollock of University of Newcastle, another member of Independent SAGE, who had a national media profile on the issue. Independent SAGE had published a major report in May on options for the UK which we used as the basis for our discussion. We benchmarked Hackney's experience with County Durham and heard from their Director of Public Health on how they were one of the first councils to join with the local NHS on testing. Running these meetings virtually had the advantage that we were able to attract national figures who might not have come to Hackney in person. Because of the subject and the profile of the figures involved that meeting attracted 112 viewers on the YouTube livestream, demonstrating a key advantage of the online meetings. A key message that came through was that the government's centralised testing system was not working. Subsequently of course there was a significant devolution of the approach down to local public health teams but Test and Trace remains a challenge and until the vaccine appeared it was the key topic.

In July we examined in detail with the CCG Chair and MD their ‘*Restoration and Recovery Plan*’ for the local system after that first wave. Little did we know that a second and third lockdown would follow and alter this picture. That plan also focused on both mental health and health inequalities impacts of the first wave of Covid and was a useful warning to us that these aspects needed greater attention.

Covid -19 and Care Homes - benchmarking discussion with national experts and key partners

In November we examined how local care homes, as part of the wider system, were coping with Covid and the lessons learned from the first wave in March, when many vulnerable patients had to be discharged very rapidly to care homes, and also about preparations for the next wave. We heard from the manager of Acorn Lodge in Hackney and from the commissioners in Adult Services and to aid us in providing some challenge to them we included a senior academic expert from the Care Policy and Evaluation Centre at LSE and a Senior Fellow in Social Care at The King’s Fund in our panel. We also explored with the Chief Executive of the Homerton the current discharge rules and concerns that eligibility thresholds for elderly admissions to acute services had been unduly raised during the first wave. She replied it was always based purely on clinical assessment.

Development of local Test, Trace and Isolate system for Covid-19

As the national NHS Test, Trace and Isolate system took shape, separately from Primary Care, each month we questioned the Director of Public Health and the other health system leaders on how effective the local system was in aligning with a strictly centralised national system and database. Data flows are vital and the speed of these down to local contact tracing teams within Public Health is key because if the contacts from the ‘index cases’ aren’t acted on immediately the exercise is futile. We commended how PH was using staff from the Council’s Contact Centre as they had both expertise and local knowledge to help nudge residents to get tested promptly and to self isolate. We noted how the £500 payments to help people self-isolate was ineffective as it was linked to existing benefits only. For many in precarious zero hours employment the need to go out to work trumped any requests from authorities to stay home because enough support was not provided to them.

Vaccination Roll Out - discussions with GP Confederation, CCG, HUHFT and Vaccination Steering Group

In January we went through the vaccination roll-out plans with the Chief Exec of the GP Confederation and others we raised with Adult Services concerns about the public health implications of vaccine hesitancy among both care home staff and domiciliary care providers. We received assurances that greater education and awareness raising was being put in place.



Tackling Vaccine Hesitancy and progress of Vaccinations Steering Group

In February we heard from Support Where It Matters (SWIM) who were brought in by local VCS to work on engagement with local ethnic minority groups where there is significant vaccine concern. They described the historical context for hesitancy and how the groups are not homogenous so that a range of bespoke approaches are required e.g. for Black Francophone vs Afro Caribbean groups. We had concerns that no single person or body was holding the ring on tackling vaccine hesitancy and it was an urgent issue. In March the GP who leads the Vaccinations Steering Group in the GP Confederation detailed for us the outreach and engagement work taking place on the ground and we explored with her how data was informing the targeting of particular wards or cohorts. We also discussed how the flow of vaccination bookings can best be optimised. We also discussed what more could be done to reduce vaccine hesitancy among both care home staff and domiciliary care staff where there still were issues.

Covid-19 Vaccination

pop up walk-in clinic for ages 18+ who need first dose and second doses of the Pfizer vaccine.

It takes two full doses of the vaccine to keep you safe. The first dose gives you partial immunity. The second dose maximises your protection. You need to have your second dose 8-12 weeks after your first one.

We can help you access a vaccination appointment and provide language support in Yoruba.

Saturday 31 July, 2pm - 6pm
Unit 7b Bison House
Sedgwick Street
Off Homerton High Street
London E9 6AA

Pre-booking will guarantee a slot for you.
Call Taiwo on 07762314162

Hosted by African Development and Advocacy Centre, (AFRIDAC) and RCCG Light House Assembly.

AFRIDAC

RCCG

NHS North East London Central Commissioning Group

New Integrated Care System for North East London

In October the 40 GP Practices which comprise NHS City & Hackney CCG voted overwhelmingly to merge with the other 6 CCGs in north east London to form NEL CCG which came into being on 1 April 2021. Allied to this, the new NEL Integrated Care System would be put in place, in shadow form on that day, and would exist formally from 1 April 2022.

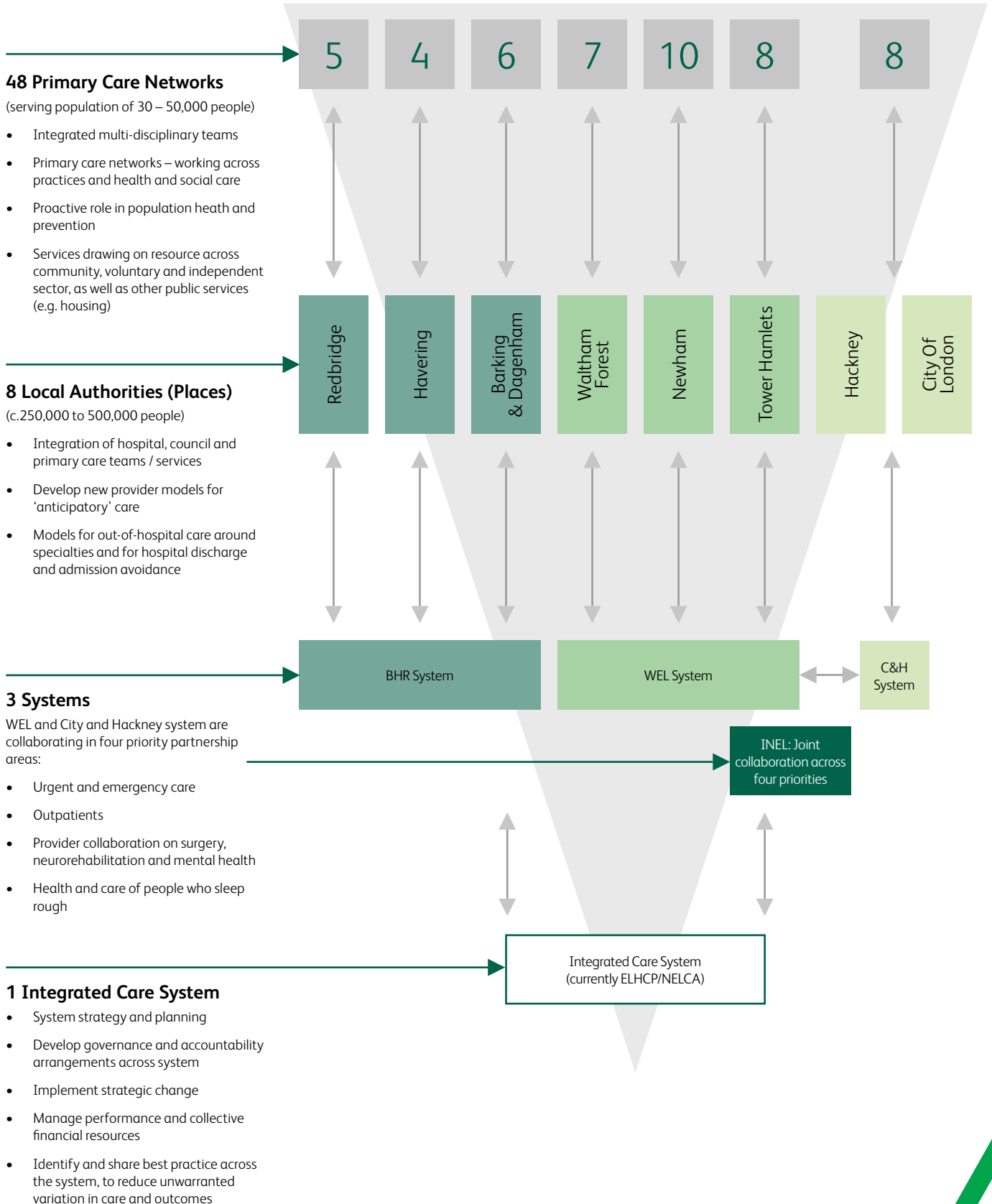
In a number of sessions we debated these plans robustly with the local health leaders and pressed them for the new constitution, operating handbook and governance structure once these were in place. They stressed that these changes represented an evolution rather than a revolution and that they were responding to the requirements put on them in the NHS Long Term Plan. Their argument was that these changes represented a significant move away from the “commissioner-provider” split in the NHS (in place since the 2012 Act) towards a local ‘system’ focus with a better sharing of responsibilities.

Locally the Integrated Commissioning Board would become an *Integrated Care Partnership Board* and underneath would sit a *Neighbourhood Health and Care Board* with providers on it which would be responsible for service planning, delivery and improvement. While we acknowledged that the delivery of services would remain at local place or borough level (the 80:20 principle) we questioned whether a governance structure covering 8 boroughs and 20 providers would become too unwieldy and asked how local voices would continue to be heard. It was noted that the CEO of HUHFT, our largest local acute provider, would now be the lead for the whole system in City and Hackney, previously it was commissioner led.

NEL ICS - wider context



City and Hackney as part of the integrated, collaborative health and care system in North East London



Responding to national consultation on Integrated Care Systems

While having our local discussions about shaping the future of our system, the government, via NHS England, launched a rapid formal consultation on ICSs on 26 Nov with a response deadline for 8 Jan. They were proposing two broad options: a Statutory Committee model that binds together the current statutory organisation OR a Statutory Corporate NHS Body that additionally brings CCG statutory functions into the ICS. NHSE was clearly promoting Option 2. While north east London health leaders submitted a joint response, we stressed to our CCG that our preference was for Option 1 because the latter option appeared very 'top down' and did away with any effective local veto. It also appeared to include far less stakeholder engagement within it. We reminded the NHS that in the past the Commission's concerns about the creation of the Single Accountable Officer for example had been discounted and that the 8 boroughs in NEL were also given assurances that the NEL ICS's three subsystems would also be protected. They were not and instead, it turned out there would now be a single CCG which would evolve into a single ICS. Our concern remained that Option 2 does not provide sufficient reassurance about local accountability and transparency. The Cabinet Member took our concerns on board and incorporated them into an additional formal response to the consultation made by him and the Mayor on behalf of the Council.

New Governance Structure for NEL ICS and impact locally in City and Hackney

The CEO of HUHFT, (now also the 'Integrated Care Partnership Lead for City and Hackney' and Chair of the 'Neighbourhood Health and Care Board') and the CCG Clinical Chair for City and Hackney returned to us in March to outline further how the new ICP governance structures would work for us locally. We pressed them on making sure that the new body doesn't just become a rubber stamp to a higher NEL board and asked how clinical leadership will work within the new system. We also challenged them on how to build in a more robust resident involvement element and on the transition from the old committees. We queried how sustainable these structures will be given that more decision making is likely to be taken at sub-regional level i.e. ICS. The Health and Care Bill 2021, currently going through Parliament, has set out some details and the Regulations under that Act should clarify how the new system is expected to operate from 1 April 2022.

Homerton Hospital's contract for 'soft services'

In July we were approached by a range of stakeholders including Unison to urgently examine a decision taken by the Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (HUHFT) to sign a further 5 years contract with the facilities services company ISS. ISS has run catering, cleaning, security and portering at the hospital since 2015 and both Unison and GMB unions had been involved for some time in a labour dispute with them over pay and conditions (an item we had previously discussed with the Chief Executive). The renewal of the contract hadn't been subject to the normal competitive tendering process, we were told, because of the urgent circumstances of the pandemic.

A key issue was that there did not seem to be any provision for occupational sick pay for all those employed on the ISS contract. We pointed out in an exchange of letters before the meeting that occupational sick pay was crucial in supporting infection control among



frontline health workers especially given the prospect then of a second wave of Covid . The risk was that low paid staff, some with precarious work contracts, were choosing to continue working while ill because they could not afford to lose pay and because their sick leave provision was inadequate.

The meeting brought together the Directors of Finance and of Workforce and OD of HUHFT with the senior union reps. The management explained that negotiations were ongoing with ISS and the contract was due to receive Board approval shortly and cautioned that the increased costs put on the ISS contract would have to be found in efficiencies elsewhere. They argued there was insufficient evidence to justify not proceeding with extending the contract when it was necessary and that a range of strict KPIs had been attached to the new contract. They added that the deal they would strike with ISS would rightly recognise the great efforts ISS had made in supporting the Trust during the very difficult period of Covid.

Following on from our meeting the Mayor and others also lobbied the Trust. Subsequently we were pleased to learn that in the revised contract all ISS staff were put on at least the London Living Wage and that full parity of sick pay was achieved. There are still disparities in pay rates with equivalent NHS staff (on 'Agenda for Change' rates) and issues about back pay are unresolved. The item also sparked a wider debate with the Trust on encouraging them to speed up their plans to test the viability of bringing more services in-house in the medium to longer term and this is something that we will pursue actively with them.

Relocation of in-patient dementia assessment services from Mile End Hospital to the East Ham Care Centre (urgent meeting)

When making significant service changes NHS Trusts have a duty to consult local health scrutiny committees and in practice they consult us as part of their general stakeholder engagement on any major changes. In the past we've considered various formal 'case for change' proposals from the CCG and ELFT (our mental health trust) on relocating mental health services.

We had previously endorsed a plan to relocate dementia and 'functional older adult' wards and in Jan 2020 had endorsed a further proposal to consolidate both dementia and 'challenging behaviour' in-patient wards at Mile End Hospital, which is out of

borough. The advent of the Covid 19 crisis then impacted on the configuration plans by creating an urgent need to create a “Covid-19 safe” or ‘Green’ area on the site at Mile End. This meant that plans had to be accelerated and ELFT was proposing to move Columbia Ward (essentially the dementia assessment centre) at Mile End in full, to East Ham Care Centre and to make the change immediately on a one-year trial basis. We convened an urgent meeting in late July to facilitate their request and we questioned the clinicians and commissioners from ELFT, Barts Health, the CCG and Healthwatch.

In Dec 2019 we had made site visits to both and we’d noted that the facility at East Ham was of a higher standard. Nevertheless, we still had concerns about the additional travel burden it would place on relatives from Hackney. ELFT had undertaken to provide transport for any relatives/carers who needed it, however and we asked to see a full Transport Plan. We also asked them to engage better with Healthwatch Hackney on monitoring the impacts and to agree a new process for engaging ‘patient voice’ on such services charges precisely when the changes have to be urgent. The urgency here meant that there had been no consultation. ELFT gave an undertaking to provide a commitment to more extensive stakeholder and public consultation should the move be made permanent and they will return to the Commission in October ‘21. Our concerns remain about the travel impacts of ongoing consolidation of NHS services across the wider North East London footprint.

Role of new Population Health Hub and the Health Inequalities Steering Group

Since the Integrated Commissioning Board began, we have received regular updates, in turn, from each of its 4 themed Workstreams (Planned Care, Unplanned Care, CYP & Maternity and Prevention). The ‘Prevention Workstream’ has now been replaced (in August 2020) with a new *Population Health Hub*. The Hub will serve as a shared resource to provide timely and actionable intelligence data as well as developing practical tools to help support the partners to reduce health inequalities.



In addition, the pandemic has magnified the existing health inequalities in the borough and to better address these, the *Health and Wellbeing Board* has established a new sub Committee called the Health Inequalities Steering Group to provide a focal point for this work. It comprises all the local health and care partners and the key third sector organisations in this sphere and it will report to both the Health and Wellbeing Board and to the Integrated Care Partnership Board.

We questioned the Director of Public Health and the Consultant in Public Health, who leads on health inequalities, about both of these new initiatives. On the Steering Group, we asked how much buy-in they expect to receive from the rest of the system and what would be needed to make this succeed. We also asked how they planned to optimise data collection on the wider determinants of ill health e.g. by timely noting of personal

circumstances on housing conditions for example and explored how this aspect might be developed further. We learned that work will be taken forward within multi-disciplinary teams, with specific projects being led by the team member best placed to deliver on them.

Digital and remote NHS services - a CCG analysis

When the pandemic hit digital and remote NHS services which had once been thought of as an ambition or a long term project suddenly had to be implemented almost overnight and GP consultations or appointments with hospital clinicians had to be done via smartphone or laptop. The Head of Quality in the CCG had produced a report in October which had mapped the digital and remote services in place by then. It set out the issues the CCG has to consider to ensure patients and carers are able to access remote or digitally enabled NHS services which are at least as good as or better than face-to-face services, in terms of safety, patient experience, staff experience and clinical outcomes. This report (and a previous report of our own on '*Digital first primary care*') was the springboard for a discussion on this vital issue.



While we welcomed the recommendations in the report we explored with the CCG the resources needed to implement them and the possible next steps. The CCG Chair cautioned that the enhanced remote offer hadn't replaced face-to-face and that the CCG had always funded Enhanced Services. We discussed how Remote Services will not work for everyone and some Members described case work they'd had from digitally excluded elderly residents who had struggled during lockdowns. We stressed the need for a single system for remote GP access and for recording of wider personal circumstances. We explored the Quality-Access-Capacity conundrum in primary care, whereby increasing one of these invariably reduces one or more of the others. This is an issue we will be returning to.

Annual Reports of partners/stakeholders and Cabinet Question Time

Each year we hold various health partners to account in sessions where they come to answer questions on their formal annual reports. Healthwatch Hackney presents the report it submits to Healthwatch England and HUHFT presents the Quality Account it is required to submit to NHSE/NHSI. All acute NHS Trusts are required to formally secure comments on their draft Quality Account from the local scrutiny committee where they are headquartered.

Once a year we also question the Independent Chair of the City & Hackney Safeguarding Adults Board which provides a useful insight into this vital work and any problems in the system. We also hear once a year from each one of the 4 Workstreams under the Integrated Commissioning Board. Again these provide a useful overview of the sheer breadth of activity which is commissioned.

In the past year we considered:

- Planned Care Workstream of Integrated Commissioning Board annual update
- Children Young People Maternity and Families Workstream of ICB (joint with CYP Scrutiny Commission) annual update
- Unplanned Care Workstream of ICB annual update
- Healthwatch Hackney Annual Report
- City & Hackney Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report
- Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Annual Quality Account

We questioned Unplanned Care about problems with NHS 111 and ‘Co-ordinate-my-care’ and about fears of a diminution of patient and public involvement in health services as a result of the pandemic and on fears about a return to a more medicalised model of health care which would have to be corrected post the pandemic.

We questioned *Planned Care* about communications around Long Covid, about how GPs going ‘virtual by default’ was exacerbating the digital divide, about the centralising of surgical hubs and on patient transport arising from services being segregated or temporarily moved. We also asked about the variances in generic vs prescribed medicines.

We questioned CYP&M workstream director about flu and measles vaccinations, about CAMHS, about partners attending scans and births and about perinatal mental health support.

We questioned the *Safeguarding Adults Board* on the level of engagement by the police in their various multi-agency team meetings and about how the learning from the two recent formal SARs (Safeguarding Adult Reviews) are being implemented. An ongoing issue for us is seeking evidence that the learning from these is properly cascaded down to frontline NHS and care workers.

We questioned *HUHFT* on preparing for what was then a second wave of Covid, on testing of staff and on managing staff burn-out.

We commended Healthwatch on the range and rigour of their work during the year and debated with them the digitisation of access to primary care and how it might widen the digital divide. We asked if they would work with the GP Confederation on developing a protocol for GP Practices to support those who cannot readily access GPs via digital means and on establishing a consistent standard across all GP Practices in Hackney.

We also held a **Cabinet Member Question** time with the Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure. It being such an unusual and dramatic year we asked him to focus on his key reflections on the pandemic locally. He talked about the challenges in the relationship between local authorities and central government in executing an efficient pandemic response, one example was being sent inappropriate items and inappropriately sized items for the food distribution programme, as well as a personal reflection on the impact of pandemic on everyone’s mental health. He set out three ambitions for the year as: to get out more into the community post the pandemic; to tackle a number of issues on staffing, on structures and on in-sourcing; and on ensuring that the changes to the wider health system which have been introduced in NEL will work for Hackney.

Inner North East London



Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee



Inner North East London



Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

INEL JHOSC comprises 3 councillors each from Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest and one from City of London Corporation. Its function is to scrutinise cross borough proposals from the NHS and has a watching brief on sub-regional plans for the NHS. Of late more and more commissioning is taking place at a sub regional level under the NHS's North East London (NEL) area. NEL comprises the 5 INEL boroughs and the 3 Outer East London boroughs of Redbridge, Barking & Dagenham and Havering. The latter are scrutinised by ONEL JHOSC.



On 1 April 2021 the 7 NEL CCGs merged to form a single *North East London CCG* under a single Accountable Officer. At the same time the East London Health and Care Partnership (previously called the STP) has evolved to form a new *Integrated Care System for NEL* again under a single management structure led by the Accountable Officer and under a new Independent Chair, Marie Gabriel CBE. This will operate in shadow form until 1 April 2022 when it will be formally in place.

This year the Committee met four times and considered, over multiple items, the response to Covid-19 pandemic across the 5 boroughs. It also explored the operation of the test, trace and isolate programme with the Directors of Public Health from across the 5 boroughs.

We also questioned the Chief Executives of Barts Health (5 hospitals) on the direct impact Covid-19 was having on secondary care e.g. impact on elective care, impact of staff fatigue and morale, the segregation of sites, discharges to care homes and other settings etc.

Once a vaccine was developed we then discussed with the NEL system leaders how the vaccine programme was being rolled out at sub-regional level and what the main stumbling blocks were.

The impact of Overseas Patient Charging procedures in the NHS, particularly on undocumented migrants, has been an issue at Health in Hackney which we took up on behalf of Hackney Migrant Centre with the CEO of the Homerton. At the INEL level this has also become an issue and of course it has been exacerbated by Covid-19 as there is a public health priority now to ensure that undocumented migrants are not being driven underground and are coming forward for testing, treatment and vaccination. We heard from the Medical Director of Barts Health about the progress they've made across all their sites in making this burden on the Trusts more equitable on patients coming forward.

We also pursued with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Chair of NHS's Race and Health Observatory on the issue of undocumented migrants being further deterred from engaging with health services including NHS Test and Trace and the vaccination programme. We raised concerns about the public health impact of the overseas patient charging issue if it is not tackled and if the fears of many about engaging with health services aren't assuaged.

The Redevelopment Programme of Whipps Cross hospital is the largest capital development in the region and we heard how it was progressing from their Redevelopment Team now that the outline business case has been agreed. This will particularly engage the local scrutiny committees in Waltham Forest and Redbridge but we will keep a watching brief on it too.



Whipps Cross Hospital - artist's impression

The Review process



The Review process



How we identify topics

The Commissions' work is divided between **single meeting** items, **mini reviews** (over 2 or 3 meetings) and a **Full Review** with items over perhaps a 6 month period as well as site visits. The pressure on agendas and the need to be both responsive and topical means that, of late, in-depth reviews have taken second place to the need to look at a number of short topics over the year. This was even more so during the past year when the normal work programmes had to be set aside because of the need to focus on the impact of Covid. Each Commission tries to achieve a balance of giving sufficient space to an issue to be effective and productive while trying to cover as many areas as possible over the course of the 8 scheduled meetings.

Commissions in their overview role have to consider a number of **fixed annual items** such as: CYP (Schools Achievement, Children's Social Care, Safeguarding Children's Board annual reports); or Health in Hackney (Safeguarding Adults Board, Local Account of Adult Services and Healthwatch annual reports as well as Quality Accounts of local NHS providers and national consultations e.g. the NHS Long Term Plan); or Living in Hackney (the annual Community Safety Plan).

At the start of the municipal year each Commission **writes to all its own key stakeholders**, the relevant Cabinet Members, relevant Directors and requests suggestions for topics. They are also influenced by issues in the **media and social media**, issues coming up through **Member surgeries, performance reports** on local services e.g. poor CQC or Ofsted ratings, concerns of local third sector, community groups, TRAs, local health or schools campaigners etc They are also influenced by the need to ensure the **manifesto commitments** of the Mayor are being delivered and the priorities of backbench councillors as well as the need for the borough to respond to or be ready for a major **change in the law or new government guidance** which might have significant local impact. All of these are weighed up and the Commission tries to come up with a balanced programme of work leaving space to be able to respond to **urgent issues** (a health crisis, floods etc) which will demand their focus and attention.

Each Commission runs a **Cabinet Member Question Time** session with their relevant Cabinet Members where they are held to account. The Mayor's CQT sessions are held by the Scrutiny Panel. Scrutiny Panel as well as ensuring no overlap of the work of Commissions also looks at cross cutting issues in single items and requires the Cabinet Member and Group Director for Finance and Corporate Resources to present regular updates on the budget and the Overall Financial Position of the Council.

Commission Members during 20/21



Scrutiny Panel*

Cllr Margaret Gordon (Chair), Cllr Ben Hayhurst, Cllr Mete Coban*, Cllr Sharon Patrick, Cllr Sophie Conway, Cllr Sade Etti+, Cllr Peter Snell, Cllr Polly Billington, Cllr Clare Potter

Children and Young People

Members: Cllr Sophie Conway (Chair), Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Sade Etti+, Cllr Ajay Chauhan, Cllr Humaira Garasia, Cllr Katie Hanson, Cllr Clare Joseph, Cllr Sharon Patrick, Cllr James Peters and Cllr Clare Potter

Co-optees: Graham Hunter (until September 2020), Richard Brown (from November 2020) Justine McDonald, Luisa Dornela (until November 2020), Shabnum Hassan, Jo Macleod, Ernell Watson, Shuja Shaikh, Michael Lobenstein, Aleigha Reeves (until September 2020), Clive Kandza (until September 2020) and Raivene Walters (until September 2020).

Health in Hackney

Cllr Ben Hayhurst (Chair), Cllr Peter Snell (Vice Chair), Cllr Kam Adams, Cllr Kofo David, Cllr Michelle Gregory, Cllr Deniz Oguzkanli, Cllr Emma Plouviez and Cllr Patrick Spence

Living in Hackney

Cllr Sharon Patrick (Chair), Cllr Sade Etti (Vice-Chair until March+), Cllr Anthony McMahon, Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone, Cllr Penny Wrout and Cllr Anna Lynch

Skills Economy and Growth

Cllr Mete Coban (Chair until March)*, Cllr Polly Billington (Vice-Chair, then Chair from March), Cllr Richard Lufkin, Cllr Sam Pallis, Cllr Steve Race and Cllr Gilbert Smyth

*Cllr Coban stepped down in March on joining Cabinet and Cllr Billington was elected to succeed him.
+ Cllr Etti stepped down in March on joining Cabinet.

INEL Membership 2020/21 (as at April 2021)



City of London

Common Councilman Michael Hudson (Substitute: Common Councilman Christopher Boden)

Hackney

Cllr Ben Hayhurst (Chair from 10 Feb) (also Chair of Hackney HOSC)

Cllr Peter Snell

Cllr Patrick Spence

Newham

Cllr Ayesha Chowdhury (also Chair of Newham HOSC)

Cllr Winston Vaughan (Chair until 10 Feb then a Joint Deputy Chair)

Cllr Anthony McAlmont

Tower Hamlets

Cllr Gabriella Salva-Macallan (Joint Deputy Chair) (also Chair of Tower Hamlets HOSC)

Cllr Shah Suhel Ameen*

Cllr Mohammed Pappu*

Waltham Forest

Cllr Nick Halebi (also Chair of a Waltham Forest HOSC)

Cllr Richard Sweden (also Chair of a Waltham Forest HOSC)

Cllr Umar Ali

OBSERVER: Redbridge

Cllr Neil Zammett (also Chair of Redbridge HOSC and current chair of ONEL JHOSC)

*Cllrs Ameen and Pappu joined in February replacing Cllrs Shad Chowdhury and Cllr Kahar Chowdhury who had stepped down.

Contacts

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