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## **AGENDA FOR THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee are summoned to be held remotely by Zoom on, **2 March 2021 at 7.00 pm.**

Link to meeting: <https://weareislington.zoom.us/j/91620950414>

Enquiries to : Ola Adeoye  
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Despatched : 22 February 2021

### Membership

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan (Chair)  
Councillor Marian Spall (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Theresa Debono  
Councillor Troy Gallagher  
Councillor Phil Graham  
Councillor Mouna Hamitouche MBE  
Councillor Gary Heather  
Councillor Gulcin Ozdemir  
Rose Marie McDonald (Resident Observer) (Co-Optee)  
Dean Donaghey (Resident Observer) (Co-Optee)

### Substitute Members

Councillor Santiago Bell-Bradford  
Councillor Alice Clarke-Perry  
Councillor Vivien Cutler  
Councillor Osh Gantly  
Councillor Sara Hyde  
Councillor Jenny Kay  
Councillor Roulin Khondoker  
Councillor John Woolf

**Quorum is 4 Councillors**



**A. Formal Matters**

**Page**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declaration of Substitute Members
3. Declarations of Interests

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest\*** in an item of business:

- if it is not yet on the council's register, you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent;
- you may **choose** to declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest that is already in the register in the interests of openness and transparency.

In both the above cases, you **must** leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If you have a **personal** interest in an item of business **and** you intend to speak or vote on the item you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent but you **may** participate in the discussion and vote on the item.

- \*(a) **Employment, etc** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of your expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of your election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between you or your partner (or a body in which one of you has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences**- Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which you or your partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

This applies to **all** members present at the meeting.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting
5. Chair's Report
6. Order of Business

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7. Public Questions

For members of the public to ask questions relating to any subject on the meeting agenda under Procedure Rule 70.5. Alternatively, the Chair may opt to accept questions from the public during the discussion on each agenda item.

<b>B.</b>	<b>Items for Decision/Discussion</b>	<b>Page</b>
1.	Housing Associations in Islington	9 - 18
2.	Mini Review - Triage System - Presentations	19 - 40
3.	Quarterly Review of Housing Performance (Q3 2019/20)	41 - 46
4.	Work Programme 2020/21	47 - 48

**C. Urgent non-exempt items (if any)**

Any non- exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgent by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

**D. Exclusion of press and public**

To consider whether, in view of the nature of the remaining items on the agenda, any of them are likely to involve the disclosure of exempt or confidential information within the terms of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in the Constitution and, if so, whether to exclude the press and public during discussion thereof.

**E. Confidential/exempt items** **Page**

**F. Urgent exempt items (if any)**

Any exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgently by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

The next meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee will be on 23 March 2021

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London Borough of Islington

## **Housing Scrutiny Committee - 12 January 2021**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held on 12 January 2021 at 7.00 pm.

**Present: Councillors:** O'Sullivan (Chair), Spall (Vice-Chair), Debono, Gallagher, Graham, Heather, Ozdemir and McDonald (Co-Optee)

**Also Present: Councillor** Ward

### **Councillor Michael O'Sullivan in the Chair**

**220 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)**

Apologies were received from Councillor Hamitouche and Dean Donaghey

**221 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)**

There were no declarations of substitute members

**222 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest

**223 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2020 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

**224 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)**

The Chair stated that at the previous meeting in relation to the scrutiny review of PFI Properties it was stated that there were a number of work streams taking place and details of these should be notified to the Committee

In addition, the Chair referred to the litigation process that is currently taking place by some residents against Partner and that the Committee needed to receive details of these as they would become liable for litigation purposes when the transfer takes place

Reference was made to the proposed visit to Brewery Road and that this has still not taken place. The Chair stated that he would pursue this with Councillor Ward to ensure a Zoom visit is arranged and Members would be notified of the date

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the additional information referred to above with regard to Partner PFI properties be submitted to the Committee at a future date

- (b) That the Chair be requested to discuss with Councillor Ward a date for the Brewery Road visit and inform Members accordingly

**225 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)**

The Chair stated that the order of business would be as follows- Agenda item B2, Agenda Item B4, Agenda item B3, Agenda item B1, Agenda items B5 and B6

**226 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)**

The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions

**227 HRA BUSINESS PLAN - A PRESENTATION BY CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING (Item B1)**

Maxine Holdsworth, Director of Corporate Housing was present for discussion of this item and outlined the presentation, copy interleaved

During discussion the following items were raised –

- HRA – All Council's with housing stock must maintain a separate account for the responsibilities as a landlord. This account is ringfenced and can only be used for income and expenditure on things related to being a landlord. All capital and revenue expenditure on landlord services is contained within the HRA. There is a 30 year business plan and it must balance over the 30 years. Gross Budget HRA 2020/21 £223m, Income £223m
- Business Plan – ensure as a landlord able to manage costs of both longer term investment and day to day management of stock, reviewed annually, on a yearly basis income and expenditure will not always match and reserves are built up to provide support in those years where higher investment needed. Budget agreed annually at Council
- Income derived from rents and service charges, leaseholder charges, PFI credits, Right to Buy receipts, Income from New Build
- Expenditure – Investment in existing homes and building new homes, day to day repairs and maintenance, management of tenancies, Service delivery overheads, PFI contract costs, maintaining estates and non-housing assets, interest on debt held
- HRA Business Planning – Key factors – majority of income comes from tenants rents and leaseholder service charges. Rents are regulated by Social Housing Regulator and Government. Leaseholders charges must accurately reflect amounts spent by Council on maintaining, managing homes and estates and service costs
- Spending drivers – investment need, day to day repairs and maintenance, homes management, tenancy management, ASB, housing related support
- In order to predict income and expenditure over 30 years assumptions are built into the plan – borrowing is not repaid during the life of the Business Plan, new build schemes need to be self-sustaining, income needs to be maximised, and assumptions are updated annually
- Key pressures on plan – UC has reduced ability to collect rent, return of PFI2 results in reduced income as PFI credits come to an end, investment in stock has to be accommodated by the business plan, expected changes to fire safety requirements, investment in energy efficiency
- Schemes have been affected by lockdown, however budget for improvements on existing estates is £38.7m
- Noted that Islington has the second highest proportion of Council housing in London
- Planned that all new build properties would be zero carbon

## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 12 January 2021

- A Member expressed concern of a perception of two tiers of social housing developing in the borough, nice new build adjacent to older social housing often in poor condition, particularly in high rise blocks. It was stated that new build and older stock were facilitated by different budgets, and that consideration needed to be given in the cyclical programme to prioritisation of schemes on older blocks
- In response to a question it was stated that the new procurement strategy placed more emphasis on social value when awarding contracts, with at least 20% being awarded on social value

### **RESOLVED:**

That the presentation be noted and a 6 month progress report be submitted to the Committee on the Business Plan

The Chair thanked Maxine Holdsworth for her presentation

228

### **THAMES WATER - BILLING ARRANGEMENTS FOR TENANTS (Item B2)**

Michael Benke, Kevin Dix, and Andy Mitchell were present from Thames Water, together with Adam Jenner, Head of Income and Home Ownership L.B.Islington, and during discussion the following main points were made –

- Members noted that a letter had been circulated before Xmas to tenants and a further letter would be circulated in the near future, together with information on the Council's website. The view was expressed that this should include provision for those for whom English is not their first language
- Thames Water stated that there would be a number of benefits from Thames Water doing direct billing to tenants and they would ensure that residents were communicated with effectively, and they wished to have a more direct relationship with tenants
- It was noted that work had been taking place with the Council, in order to have direct billing to tenants, and that they had formed a good working relationship. Members were informed that Thames had been working with other London Boroughs over the past 4 years to transfer tenants to direct billing, and that this should ensure a smoother process with Islington tenants
- Thames stated that tenants would also benefit from a number of possible discounts that they could apply for such as a reduction in bills if tenants earned less than £19000 per year, and other measures to reduce bills. Thames stated that they would be writing to residents that week to inform them of the new arrangements
- It was noted that tenants transferring to Thames would have previous water charge arrears cleared, and Thames would only as a last resort employ debt companies. Thames would attempt to engage the tenant to ensure this did not happen
- A Member expressed the view that negotiations between Thames and Housing had been taking place for a considerable period of time, and yet Members had not known of these proposals until relatively recently. This had meant that tenants, especially vulnerable tenants, were concerned about the proposals and this was unacceptable. It was stated that Housing and partner organisations are doing some work with vulnerable tenants, and Thames had arrangements for dealing with vulnerable tenants
- In response to a question it was stated that bills would not increase for tenants as a result of the change, as there would be an equivalent reduction in their service charge on the rent account
- It was stated that tenants could request a water meter be installed to control bills, however this would be dependent on an assessment of the technical difficulties of installing a meter at a property, and each application would be dealt with on its merits. Thames had a specialist metering team that dealt with such applications

## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 12 January 2021

- In response to a question as to the average bill and price schedule that is payable for Islington residents, it was stated that whilst this would vary from property to property dependent on size, however such information could be circulated to Members
- A Member referred to the fact that the reputation of Thames in the borough was not high following floods in the borough, and that he was concerned that many elderly tenants would not be able to set up direct debits and alternative payment arrangements needed to be put in place. It was also stated that tenants were concerned that bills would be increased in the future. Thames stated that they would circulate details of the options available for tenants to pay their water bills
- Discussion took place as to the reason Thames had decided on direct billing and it was stated that OFWAT had recommended that water companies should be in closer contact with their customers and knowledge of their circumstances
- Thames stated that a number of payment measures were in place and tenants should not be disadvantaged by not paying by direct debit or if they were not technologically aware
- In response to a question as to billing, it was stated that the rent account sent to residents would exclude water service charges and that direct billing to Thames would be made clear to tenants and that Thames would also be contacting tenants in March. Rent officers will also be briefed as to the new arrangements in order to assist tenants
- In response to a question as to whether Thames could apply an automatic discount to vulnerable tenants, it was stated that Thames did not have this level of information and it was noted that legally this information could not be passed to them by the Council. However, the Council are working with support organisations and partners to work with vulnerable residents to ensure discounts are applied wherever possible. It was stated that communications from Thames and the Council should highlight discounts that may be available for vulnerable Council tenants and partner organisations, including Partners for Islington
- Noted that there would be no change to Housing Benefit for tenants as a result of direct billing from Thames
- Members expressed concern that this proposal had been discussed with officers and Thames for some time and that Members were not aware until relatively recently of the proposals and this did not auger well

### RESOLVED:

- (a) That Thames Water be requested to report back to the Committee in 6 months on progress of direct billing to tenants, and the Executive Member Housing be requested to liaise with officers to ensure that communication with residents on the proposals is effective and informative of the new arrangements
- (b) That Thames Water be requested to provide information to tenants on measures that can be taken to reduce bills by conserving water
- (c) That details of the average water bill and pricing schedule for Islington properties be provided to Members of the Committee
- (d) That details of the options available for payment be circulated to tenants

The Chair thanked Michael Benke, Kevin Dix, Andy Mitchell and Adam Jenner for attending.

## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 12 January 2021

Hannah Bowman, Head of Strategy, Improvement and Partnership was in attendance, together with Miles Langham and Christine Croome of Octavia Housing Association who made a presentation to the Committee

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- Noted that Octavia experienced similar problems with dealing with street properties as many other organisations/Councils
- It was noted that Miles Langham had previously worked with Genesis Housing Association and issues such as lack of keys to obtain access, lack of communication with residents, sub-letting, lack of tenants organisations were similar to both organisations, and measures had been taken to try to address these
- Properties were often not suitable for disabled tenants as they were often not on ground floor or have disabled access
- Genesis had a 7/8 year cyclical programme as this was more cost effective than day to day repairs and had two main contactors to do the work, as Victorian properties were difficult to work on to carry out repairs
- Main problems encountered with street properties include – roofing works and cost of scaffolding, (scaffolding could substantially increase the cost of works), thermal efficiency, cold/dampness/condensation. Staff were trained how to respond to condensation problems and advice was also offered by the Green Energy Doctor service. Often structural issues due to many properties being built on London clay, and issues with external party walls. Noise is also a problem, and whilst Octavia had tried floating floors these had not been particularly effective
- In response to a question as to planned cyclical maintenance it was stated that this is an opportunity to provide external wall insulation, but in a conservation area there needed to be effective communication with Planning
- Reference was made to the cost of scaffolding as this is often difficult to erect on Victorian properties, especially if there is no side access, and there is also a need to retrofit homes, which could cost approx. £20/30k per flat. In addition there needed to be compliance with fire regulations, which meant that flats had to be accessible. Octavia were looking to install a front lobby system so that access could be obtained. Octavia stated that they would circulate details of the retrofitting information to Members
- Octavia stated that there were not any significant problems with heating in street properties, and they all had gas boilers. Communal boilers tended to be installed on newer schemes and supported housing blocks
- In response to a question it was stated that information would be provided on improvements to properties made by Partners during the contract, and the handback survey would provide more information

### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That details of the Octavia retrofitting service be circulated to the Committee
- (b) That the implications of the cost of scaffolding be considered as part of the scrutiny review

The Chair thanked Hannah Bowman, Miles Langham and Christine Croome for attending

## **230 MINI SCRUTINY REVIEW - TRIAGE SYSTEM - PRESENTATION AND SID (Item B4)**

Jo Murphy, Director of Homes and Communities was present, and outlined the SID for Members

During discussion the following main points were made –

- Noted that the service were receiving 1700 calls and that these related to ASB, concerns about neighbours, transactional enquiries etc. and that the aim is to resolve enquiries at the first point of contact. Staff could also refer callers to other statutory organisations, voluntary sector or advice organisations if appropriate

**RESOLVED:**

That the SID be approved.

The Chair thanked Jo Murphy for attending

**231 MINI SCRUTINY REVIEW - COMMUNAL HEATING - SID (Item B5)**

Simon Kwong, Director of Housing Property Services was present for discussion of this item

During discussion the following main points were made –

- Noted that there is a need to consider how communication with residents can be improved and the implications of moving to net Zero Carbon regarding issues such as insulation/thermal efficiency and retrofitting. In addition there needed to be consideration given to heating charges

**RESOLVED:**

That the above be noted and the SID be approved

The Chair thanked Simon Kwong for attending

**232 WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21 (Item B6)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted

**233 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Item )**

A Member referred to the high COVID infection rates on a number of estates, especially in high rise blocks in Bunhill Ward, and expressed the view that there need to be a focus on a more rigorous cleaning regime, especially in relation to refuse chutes, lifts, communal areas etc.

Members were informed that work is taking place with Public Health to identify areas of high infection, however cleaning had been increased on estates, and work is taking place with TfL to identify how cleaning measures take place on London Transport to ascertain if this would be useful to implement on estates

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Director of Housing investigate with Public Health areas of high infection and possible measures that could be taken on estates with respect to additional cleaning measures in order to assist in reducing such infections
- (b) That it be noted that an additional meeting of the Committee would be arranged for 23 March 2021 and confirmation of this would be notified to Members of the Committee

The meeting ended at 9.20 p.m.

**CHAIR**

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# Working together

Housing Scrutiny  
Committee

# Islington Housing Group



ISLINGTON

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**One Housing**

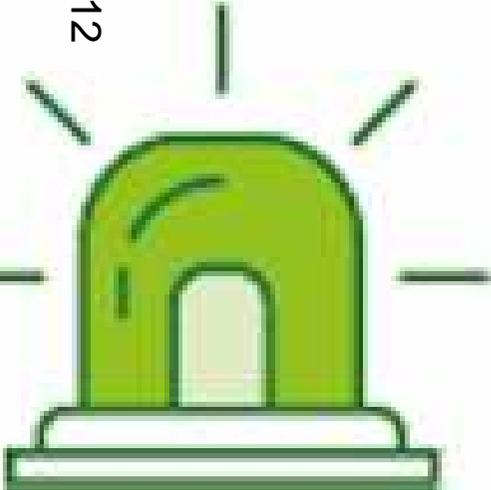
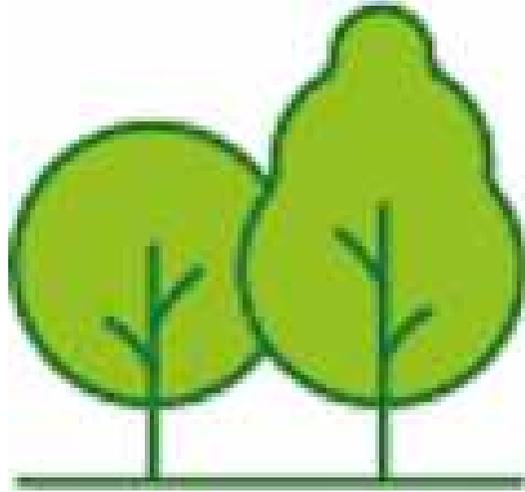


Convened and supported by  
Islington Council, Chaired by  
Ruth Davison, ISHA



# ISLINGTON

- **Towards a fairer Islington**
- We're determined to make Islington fairer. To create a place where everyone, whatever their background, has the opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life.



## Our priorities

To help bring our vision to life we have four clear objectives:

**Decent and genuinely affordable:** building new council homes, protecting renters, being a good landlord and preventing homelessness

**Jobs and opportunity:** delivering an inclusive economy, supporting people into work and ensuring young people have the best possible start

**A safer borough for all:** tackling ASB, ensuring young people are safe and encouraging a more cohesive borough for all

**A greener and cleaner Islington:** keeping Islington clean and tidy, encouraging greener travel, creating a healthier environment for all and tackling the climate crisis

## Decent and genuinely affordable homes for all

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### **Strategic/policy and operational/best practice sharing**

#### **Workshops:**

Addressing the shortage of specialist older people's housing

The impact of Universal Credit and supporting residents

Building safety

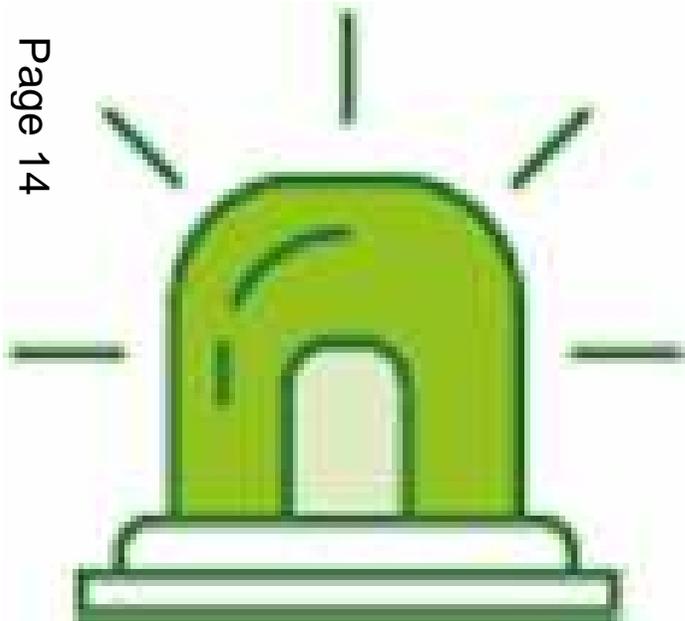
In our meetings:

- White paper, Government consultation on Section 21 evictions
- Making best use of homes – Homeswapper, high needs transfers for those with disabilities
- Issues of concern – disposals, housing risk red list requiring adaptations

# A safer borough for all

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- Covid – met monthly. What we were each doing to support residents (calls etc); rising ASB and domestic abuse and violence; repairs; building sites; voids and lettings; rent arrears
- ASB – Community safety team, HA
- Violence against women and girls
- Fostering
- Locality project

# Greener and cleaner Islington & Jobs and opportunities

- Transport strategy consultation
- Cycle storage
- Islington Sustainable Energy Partnership
- Angelic energy
- Youth strategy
- London Living Wage
- Islington Giving



# What next?

- Workshop on **greening our homes** and the climate emergency

## **Strategic issues and challenges**

- ***Housing White paper*** – with its seven commitments to residents including safe homes, action on complaints and a stronger Ombudsman, transparency on performance with KPIs, consumer regulation, a good quality home and help with home ownership
- Requirement for all homes to be ***EPC C by 2030 and zero carbon by 2050*** (part of ‘Decent homes 2’)
- ***Building safety scandal*** and the fallout for tenants, residents, associations and the building of new homes
- ***New Affordable Homes Programme*** – right to shared ownership etc
- ***Planning White Paper*** – end of S106 etc
- ***Supporting communities*** as we emerge from Covid



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Questions...&  
ideas and  
insights  
welcome

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# Housing Tenant Triage Team – summary of duties and functions

Page 19  
Housing Scrutiny Committee – 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

Kiran Aujla – Service Manager, Housing Services

# Why the Housing Tenant Triage Team was set up

- The Housing Triage Team was set up on the 16 December 2019 as part of the restructure of the previous tenancy management services within Homes and Communities
- The aim of this restructure was to streamline and improve how housing management queries are dealt with across the service
- To achieve the objectives and priorities in the departmental & corporate plan including improved early intervention, prevention and resilience
- The Triage Team is the gateway and acts as a single point of access/'front door' into housing management services for council tenants
- This team triages all incoming enquiries and service requests received by phone, email, correspondence or e-form submitted through the council's website
- There is one phone number for team (tel. 0207 527 5300) and one email address ([homesandcommunities@islington.gov.uk](mailto:homesandcommunities@islington.gov.uk)).

# Vision for The Service

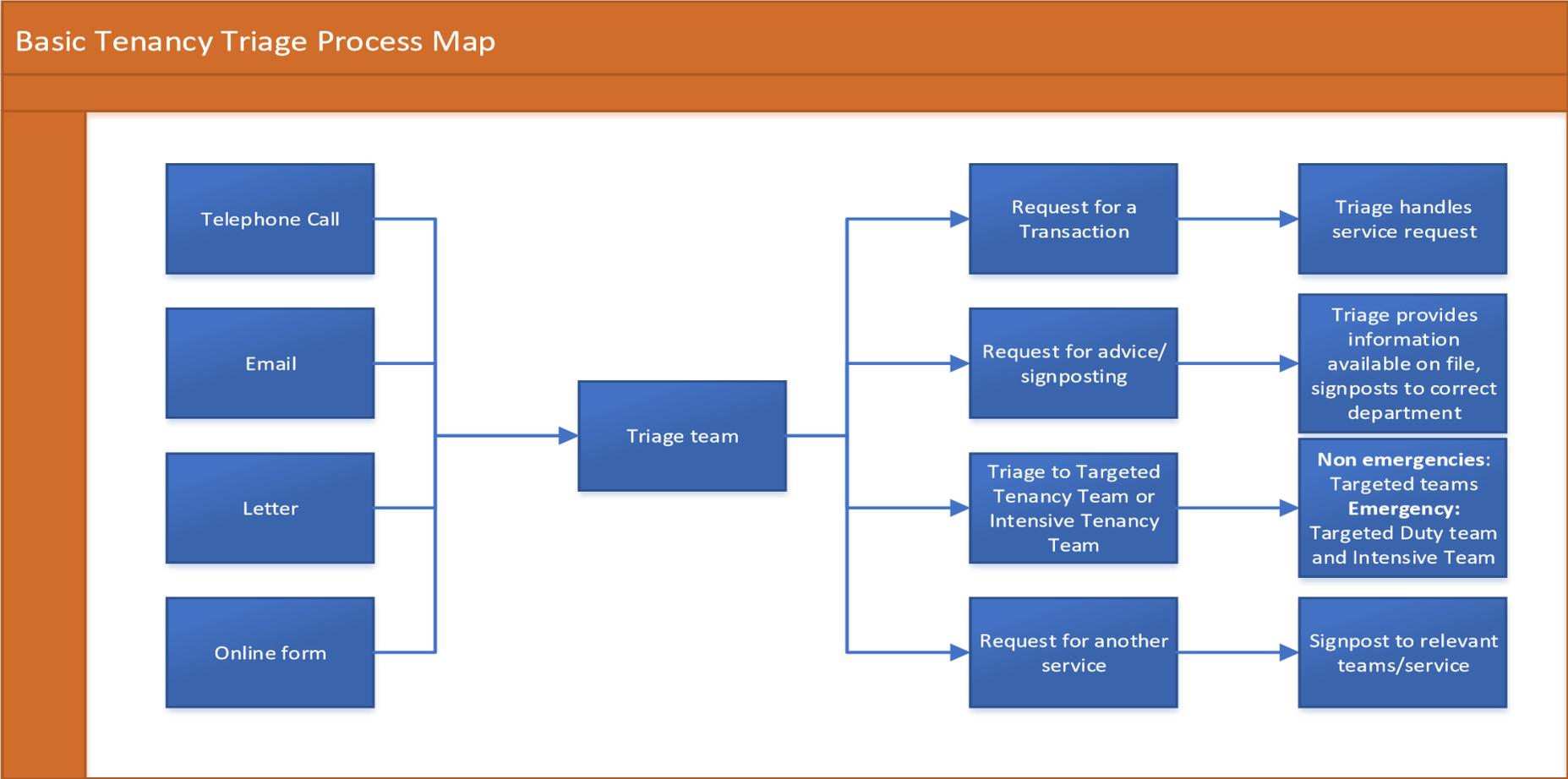
## From Restructure report

- To Provide a centralised, borough-wide service with the aspiration for developing self-serve options and online offers for residents with processes to provide digital solutions, developing 'on the day enquiry' technology and improving workflow'
- Staff in the Triage team are the 'face' of the service, developing a broad knowledge of the services available both within the new structure and across the wider partnership, managing expectations at all times. Staff will act as 'navigators' assisting residents to get the help they need quickly and efficiently, recognising the quality of the customer journey and experience is crucial to resident satisfaction
- Recognition that service is still being built with changes being made iteratively on a 3 year departmental Directorate Plan
- Prior to restructure residents had over 100 access points into tenancy management, which has been reduced to a single point of contact via Housing Tenant Triage Service.

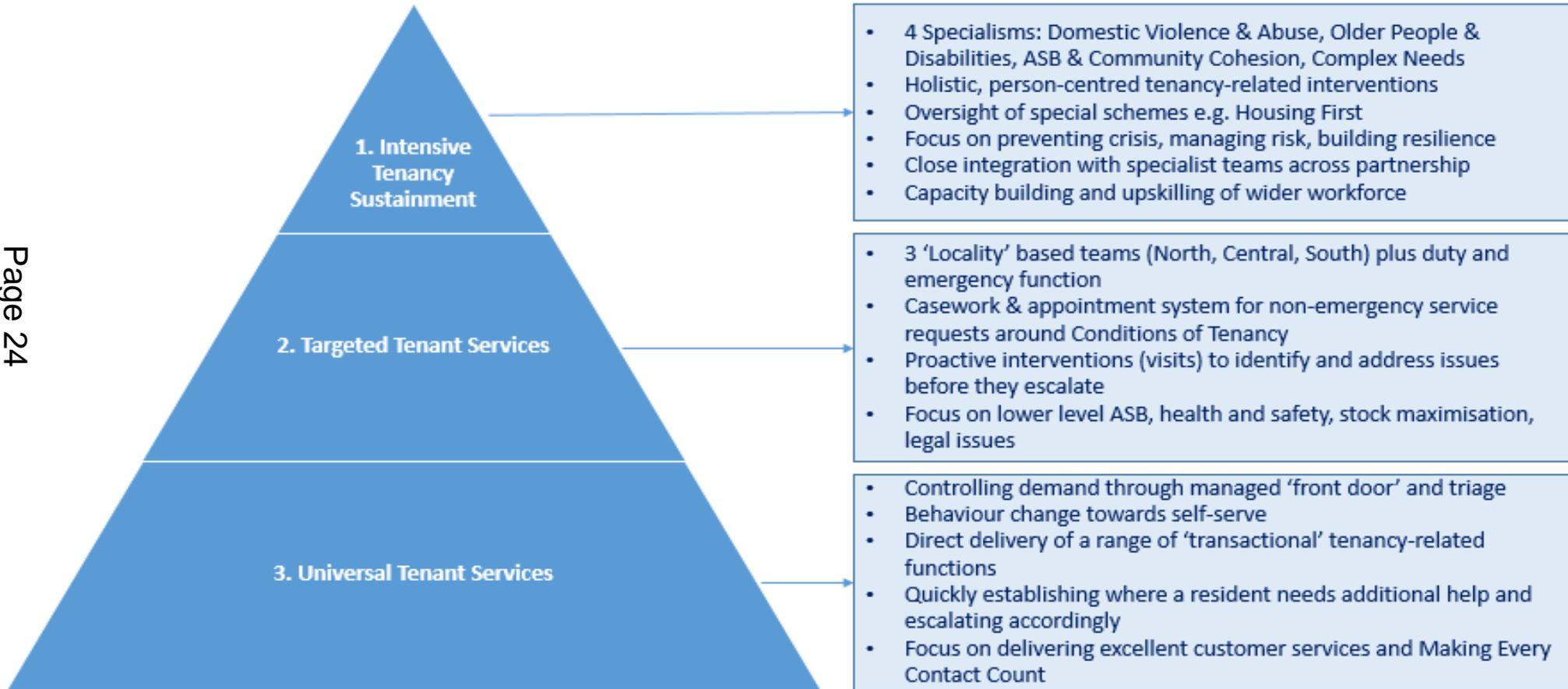
# Summary of current triage process and handover of work to other tenancy teams

- The team triage all enquiries and carry out a rapid assessment to see if the enquiry can be dealt with fully at the triage stage in a single exchange
- The Triage Team will quickly establish via the triage process where a resident needs additional help and escalate accordingly in a timely manner.
- The Triage Team will assess
  - The nature of the enquiry/service request
  - The urgency or complexity of the issue
  - The needs or vulnerabilities of the individual making the request

# Tenancy triage flow chart



# Three Tier Triage Model



# The urgency or complexity of the issue

- If the enquiry requires further investigation/casework, the Triage Team will log the query and pass it to the Targeted Tenancy Team –There are three locality-based tenancy Targeted teams ensuring the conditions of tenancy are met and that tenants are enabled to live well and thrive in their homes
- There is also a Duty Team that sits in the Targeted Tenancy Team, who will deal with emergencies such as fire, flood and urgent requests for temporary accommodation – The responsive duty team will deal with 'on the day' emergencies
- The intensive tenancy sustainment team offering holistic, housing-related help and support to our most vulnerable tenants at risk of tenancy breakdown

# The needs or vulnerabilities of the individual making the request

- These situations may require the intervention of a specialist officer and the Triage Team would escalate their query to the Intensive Team due to the vulnerability of the resident or seriousness of the enquiry (e.g. Domestic Abuse or high-level Anti-Social Behaviour)
- The flowchart on the next pages illustrates the how the Triage Team deals with and refers on more complex requests for service to either the Targeted Team or Intensive Team, with four specialist area covering Domestic Violence and Abuse, ASB & Community Cohesion, Complex needs including mental health, Dual diagnosis, substance misuse, Hoarding and Older people and Disabilities

# Strengths and Opportunities

- **Strengths**

- Strong management and excellent staff team
- Clear vision and service development plan
- Willingness to learn and take on more 'tenancy-related' work
- Team is resilient and has continued to come in throughout crisis, inc. doing face to face work with customers
- Willingness to embrace change and take on more – e.g. sign ups
- Team has shown interest in upskilling and developing broad knowledge in tenancy e.g. DVA, ASB, tenancy related
- KPI suite – will help to measure and manage performance more effectively

- **Opportunities**

- Working more closely with Manny Lewis / MECC+ etc and Fairer Together agenda
- Investing in training will enable more calls to be dealt with first time, increasing efficiency
- Opportunities to add additional functions to triage e.g. income / hsg needs queries

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**Housing Scrutiny Committee – 02/03/21**  
**Summary of duties of Housing Triage Team**

**1. Background**

The Housing Triage Team was set up on the 16 December 2019 as part of the restructure of the previous tenancy management, anti-social behaviour and customer services teams within the Homes and Communities Service in Housing. The aim of this restructure was to streamline and improve how housing management queries are dealt with across the service. This is a centralised borough-wide service and The Triage Team is the gateway and acts as a single point of access/'front door' into housing management services for council tenants.

Prior to the launch of the Triage Team, there were around 100 routes into the service and it was not possible to easily measure the effectiveness of the service, arrange cover or ensure consistency of service.

This team triages all incoming enquiries and service requests received by phone, email, correspondence or e-form submitted through the council's website. There is one phone number for team (tel. 0207 527 5300) and one email address ([homesandcommunities@islington.gov.uk](mailto:homesandcommunities@islington.gov.uk)).

**2. Summary of current triage process and handover of work to other tenancy teams**

The team triage all enquiries and carry out a rapid assessment to see if the enquiry can be dealt with fully at the triage stage or should be passed to either the Targeted Team or Intensive Team. The Triage Team will quickly establish via the triage process where a resident needs additional help and escalating accordingly in a timely manner.

The Triage Team will assess:

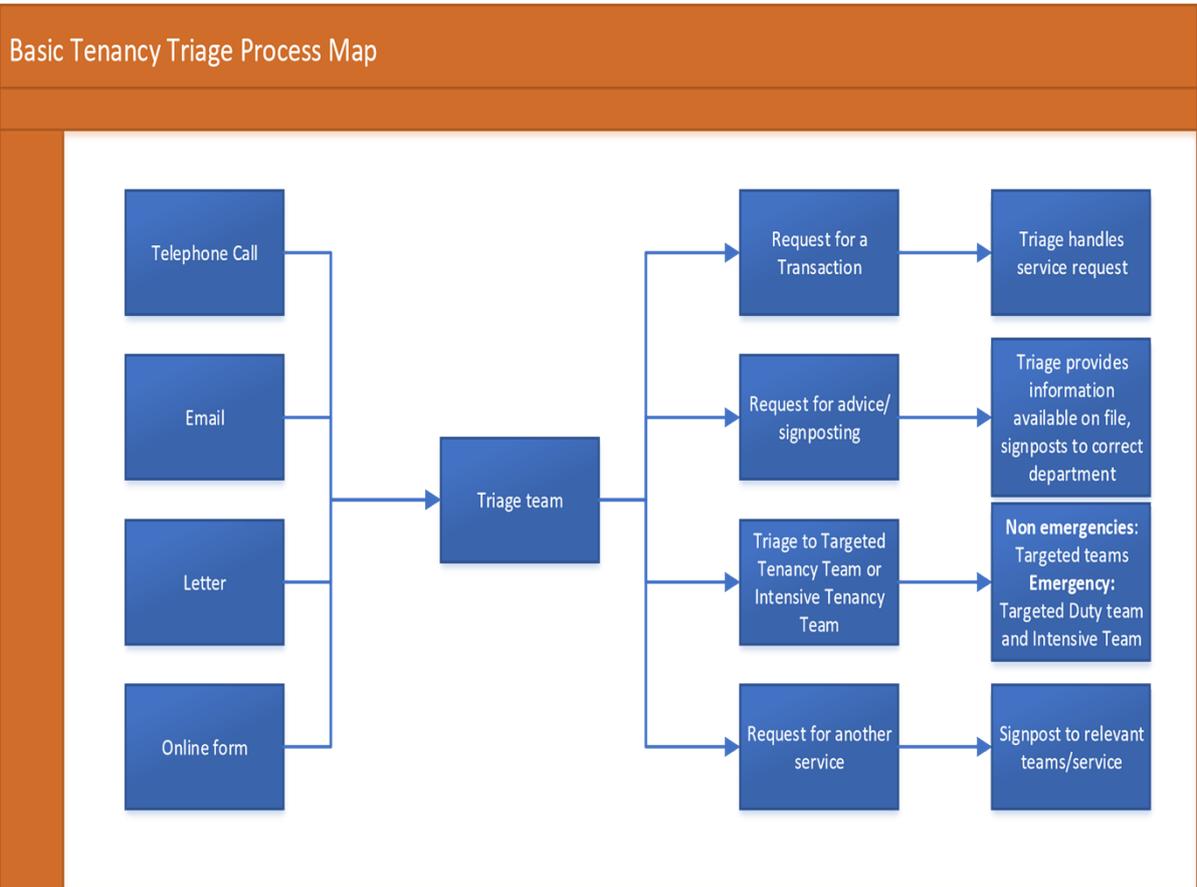
- I. The nature of the enquiry/service request - if it is transactional, the Triage Team will deal with this directly (e.g. send out tenancy related forms, update residents on information available on their housing file, deal with estate parking, garages, cycle, storage and fob requests). Where appropriate, the Triage Team will promote self-serve options available online through the council's website. The Triage Team also conduct and complete tenancy sign-ups for all new council tenancies.

The Triage Team will also signpost or handover queries that are dealt with by other parts of Housing Services and the council (e.g. Homeownership queries, repairs requests, rent queries, Housing Benefit queries, pest control queries, rehousing and homelessness queries)

- II. The urgency or complexity of the issue - if the enquiry requires further investigation/casework, the Triage Team will log the query and pass it to the Targeted Tenancy Team. There is also a Duty Team that sits in the Targeted Tenancy Team, who will deal with emergencies such as fire, flood and urgent requests for temporary accommodation, either as a task allocated or request for call back within 24/48 hours. The Duty Team are also responsible for conducting viewings for all new Council tenancies.
- III. The needs and vulnerabilities of the individual making the request - these may require the intervention of a specialist officer and the Triage Team would escalate

their query to the Intensive Team due to the vulnerability of the resident or seriousness of the enquiry (e.g. Domestic Abuse or high-level Anti-Social Behaviour)

The flowchart on the next pages illustrates the how the Triage Team deals with and refers on more complex requests for service to either the Targeted Team or Intensive Team.





# Complaints and Members Enquiries

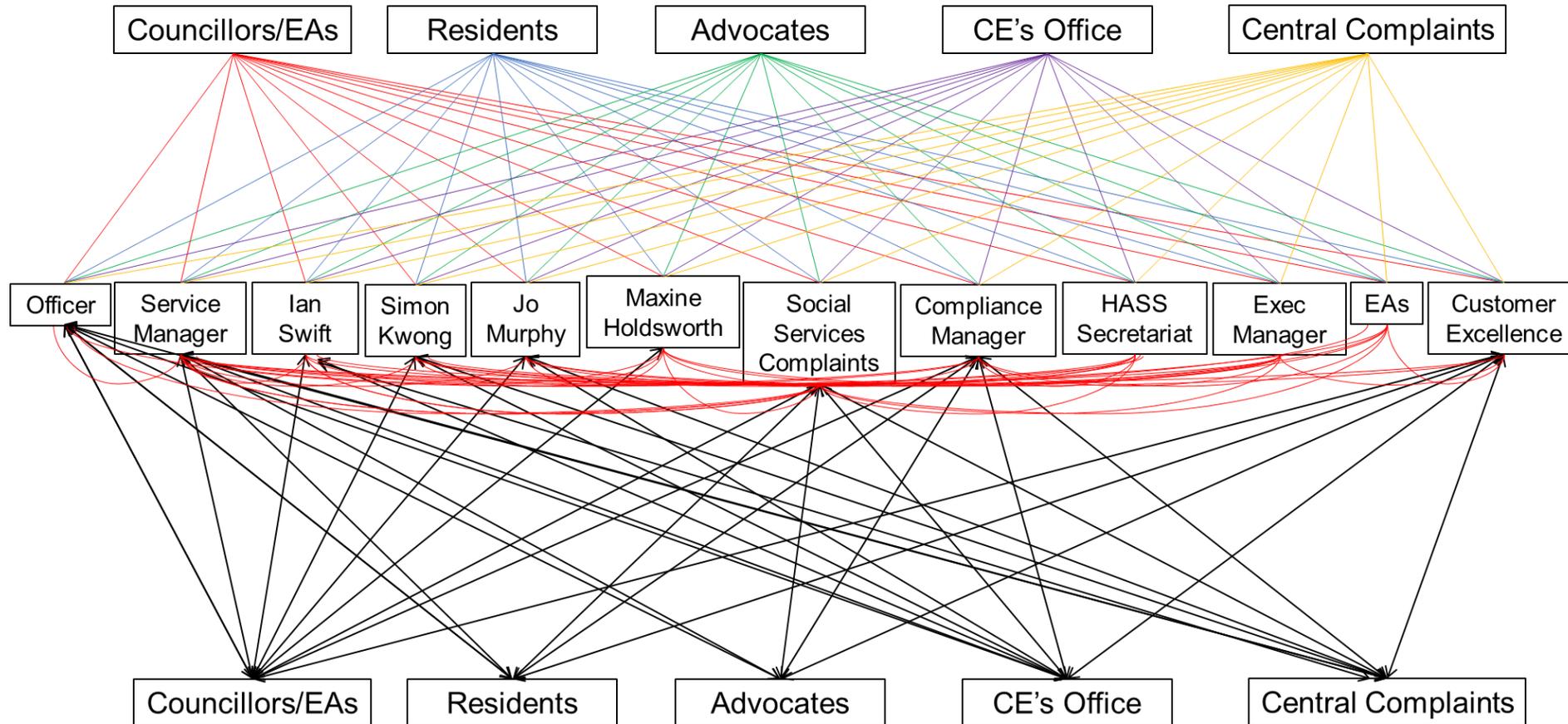
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Housing Scrutiny Committee – 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

Anna Turvey – Compliance Manager

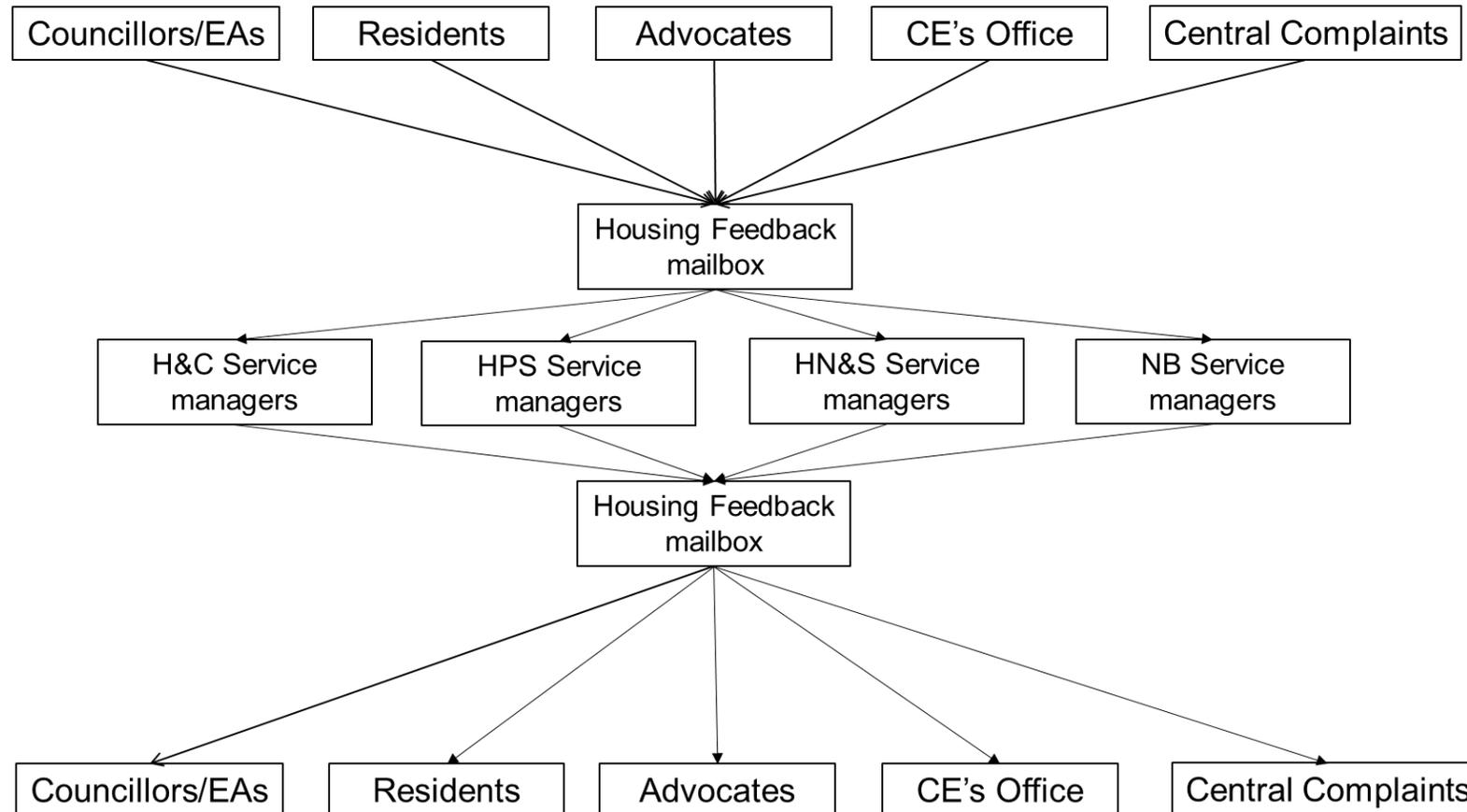
## Description of Service

- Created in 2018 to provide a dedicated point of contact for complaints and members' enquiries relating to services provided by Housing Needs and Strategy
- Incorporated Homes and Communities in December 2019
- Handles formal complaints and members' enquiries, **not** customer/resident enquiries
- Offers consistency and objectivity
- Enables one service to have oversight of all complaints and Members' Enquiries for Homes and Communities and Housing Needs and Strategy
- Staff are trained to identify urgent and high profile cases and to escalate appropriately

# Complaint/Members' Enquiry Journey – previous structure



# Complaint/Members' Enquiry Journey – current structure



# 2020 – Complaint and Members' Enquiries figures

Complaints	Total received
Jan 2020	19
Feb 2020	27
Mar 2020	33
Apr 2020	14
May 2020	18
Jun 2020	30
Jul 2020	31
Aug 2020	27
<b>Sep 2020</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Oct 2020</b>	<b>84</b>
Nov 2020	39
Dec 2020	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>416</b>

Complaints		
Average year to date	25	Percentage increase
Sep	74	196%
Oct	84	236%

Members' Enquiries	Total received
Jan 2020	133
Feb 2020	141
Mar 2020	139
Apr 2020	113
May 2020	117
Jun 2020	140
Jul 2020	136
Aug 2020	133
<b>Sep 2020</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>Oct 2020</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Nov 2020</b>	<b>180</b>
Dec 2020	111
<b>Total</b>	<b>1683</b>

Members' Enquires		
Average year to date	132	Percentage increase
Sep	186	41%
Oct	154	17%
Nov	180	36%

# 2020/21 – Challenges and changes

- Considerable increase in complaints and Members' Enquiries submitted to the service in Sep – Nov 2020
- Significant backlog of casework
- Recruited temporary resource to help to manage the situation and improve working practices
- As of 18 Feb 2021, cleared 71% of outstanding members' enquiries and 38% of outstanding complaints
- On track to clear backlog of casework by end of March 2021
- 2021/22 – team will be focused on further improvements to the service, more robust data collection and reporting and delivering the recommendation of the Housing White Paper.

## Housing Scrutiny Committee – 02/03/21

### Complaints and Members' Enquiries - Summary Report

#### Housing Feedback Team

The Housing Feedback Team was formed in 2018 in order to manage the volume of members' enquiries received by the Housing Needs and Strategy Directorate. The aim was to ensure consistency in the quality of responses, better response times and more robust data collection for the purposes of learning. It also freed up officer time within the services to enable them to carry out their roles and support more of the borough's residents and homeless clients. The service also investigates and responds to complaints about the service, offering objectivity in this regard. In December 2020, in line with the Homes and Communities restructure, members' enquiries and complaints relating to Homes and Communities were absorbed into this service.

Prior to the formation of the Housing Feedback Team, there were numerous entry points across the directorate for members to submit enquiries and for residents to submit complaints without a single point of oversight of either function. The Housing Feedback Team provides a dedicated, single point of contact for members and councillors who have enquiries in relation to any of the services provided by the Homes and Communities, Housing Needs and Strategy or New Build directorates, or who wish to address any issues raised by their constituents in relation to these service areas. The team is made up of experienced customer services officers, who will also investigate and address complaints submitted directly by residents or their representatives for these directorates, focussing on early resolution, learning and service improvement. The team is trained to identify urgent cases and to escalate these matters as appropriate.

#### Performance indicators and service targets

As with all teams within the council, the Housing Feedback Team works to the council's corporate procedures regarding complaints and members' enquiries. Target timeframes for responses are:

Members' enquiries: 10 working days  
Stage 1 complaints: 15 working days  
Stage 1 complaint reviews: 10 working days

The service does not currently work to any set KPIs. A benchmarking exercise is intended in Q1 of 2021/22 prior to proposing and implementing KPIs for the service.

#### Performance and satisfaction data

The Housing Feedback team is small, made up of four officers, and manages a very high volume of enquiries. Data for 2020 (calendar year) is set out below:

Complaints	Total received
Jan 2020	19
Feb 2020	27
Mar 2020	33
Apr 2020	14
May 2020	18
Jun 2020	30
Jul 2020	31
Aug 2020	27
Sep 2020	74
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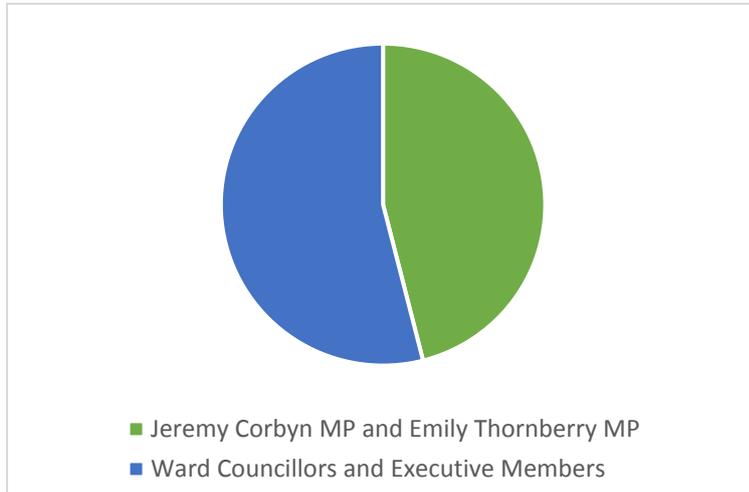
In the latter months of 2020, the service saw a considerable increase in both complaints and members' enquiries:

Complaints		
Average year to date		Percentage increase
Average year to date	25	
Sep	74	196%
Oct	84	236%

Members' Enquires		
Average year to date		Percentage increase
Average year to date	132	
Sep	186	41%
Oct	154	17%
Nov	180	36%

These increases, combined with staff shortages, led to a significant backlog of casework having built up in this period.

Despite this, the service overall receives very positive feedback, both from the support staff of the Executive Members and from Emily Thornberry MP and Jeremy Corbyn MP's offices, who are responsible for nearly 50% of enquiries submitted to the service:



Meetings are held bi-annually with staff from Emily Thornberry MP and Jeremy Corbyn MP's offices, the last one being held virtually in November 2020. At the meeting positive feedback was received for the service and the dedication of the team to positively resolving complaints.

In order to clear the backlog of outstanding casework and in recognition of the importance of maintaining the high level of service required in this area, temporary resources were brought in at the beginning of 2021. This has enabled the team to reduce the backlog of cases, whilst ensuring there is no decline in the quality and response times of new casework submitted to the service.

As of 18 February 2021, the team has cleared 71% of outstanding members' enquiries and 38% of outstanding complaints and is on target to clear all outstanding casework by the end of March 2021, at which point the temporary resource will be reduced and normal service will resume. The volume of casework will be closely monitored to ensure service levels are maintained and team resources will be reviewed in line with the level of complaints and members enquiries to ensure they are adequate.

#### Adding value

In addition to ensuring that members and residents have a single point of contact, that responses are of a consistently high quality and that we can improve services based on learning from complaints, the Housing Feedback Team can make a tangible positive difference to the lives of our residents. Unlike individual managers and services with many conflicting priorities, the Housing Feedback Team is always available to receive enquiries and to escalate where necessary. Common examples of this include imminent evictions and instances where families may be at risk due to harassment or domestic violence. In such situations, the team can escalate to the appropriate senior managers and liaise with all involved partners to bring about a swift resolution.

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Chief Executive Department  
Town Hall, London N1 2UD

## Report of:

Meeting of:	Date:	Ward(s):
Housing Scrutiny Committee	2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2021	All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt
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## SUBJECT: Quarter 3 Performance Report: Housing

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The council has in place a suite of corporate performance indicators to help monitor progress in delivering the outcomes set out in the council's Corporate Plan. Progress on key performance measures is reported through the council's Scrutiny Committees on a quarterly basis to ensure accountability to residents and to enable challenge where necessary.
- 1.2 This report sets out Quarter 3 progress against targets for those performance indicators that fall within the Housing outcome area, for which the Housing Scrutiny Committee has responsibility.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note performance against targets in Quarter 3, 2020/21 for measures relating to Housing.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 A suite of corporate performance indicators has been agreed for 2018-22, which help track progress in delivering the seven priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan - *Building a Fairer Islington*. Targets are set on an annual basis and performance is monitored internally, through Departmental Management Teams, Corporate Management Board and Joint Board, and externally through the Scrutiny Committees.
- 3.2 The Housing Scrutiny Committee is responsible for monitoring and challenging performance for the following key outcome area: Housing: Delivering decent and genuinely affordable homes for all

## 4. Quarter 3 performance update – Housing

### 4.1 Key performance indicators relating to Housing.

Yes	Indicator	2018/ 19 Actual	2019/ 20 Actual	2020/ 21 Target	2020/ 21 Q3 YTD	On target?	Q3 last year	Better than Q3 last year?
H1	Number of genuinely affordable new homes (social rented or shared ownership) completed by the Council	70	63	111	0	No	39	No
H2	Number of genuinely affordable new homes (social rented or shared ownership) completed by Developers	174	89	118	106	Yes	89	Yes
H3	Number of planning permissions agreed for new council housing	109	0	43	3	Yes	0	Yes
H4	Total number of new council homes (net growth taking into account new homes and homes sold through right to buy)	99	25	54	-10	No	14	No
H5	Number of severely overcrowded households assisted to relieve their overcrowding	133	144	150	137	Yes	111	Yes
H6	Number of under-occupied households that have downsized	161	152	160	74	No	118	No
H7	Percentage of LBI repairs fixed first time	81.2%	87.7%	85.0%	93.7%	Yes	87.4%	Yes
H8	Major works open over three months as a % of Partners' total completed major works repairs	14.0%	17.0%	15.0%	21.0%	No	17.5%	No
H9	Rent arrears as a proportion of the rent roll - LBI	2.86%	3.92%	3.75%	4.84%	No	3.6%	No
H10	Rent arrears as a proportion of the rent roll - Partner properties	2.95%	3.71%	3.25%	5.08%	No	3.4%	No

H11	Number of households accepted as homeless	203	348	400	203	Yes	264	Yes
H12	Number of households in nightly-booked temporary accommodation	390	316	350	386	No	336	No
H13	Number of street homeless supported into accommodation	69	155	45	144	Yes	105	Yes

4.2 *H1: Number of genuinely affordable new homes (social rented or shared ownership) completed by the Council*

This indicator is behind target: new homes expected to be completed this quarter have been pushed back to Quarter 4 or early in 2021/22, primarily due to the constraints on the number of people who can be on site at a time. All on site schemes will complete but due to a revised timetable due to the pandemic. The council is still on track to meet its 2022 new homes target.

4.3 *H2: Number of genuinely affordable new homes (social rented or shared ownership) completed by Developers*

This indicator is on target, with 36 new homes completed on the Almeida Post Office site. A 12-home project at Hyde Village has slipped to Q4 completion.

4.4 *H3: Number of planning permissions agreed for new council housing*

This indicator is on target: Three new planning permissions have been agreed this year, in line with the anticipated schedule. The main bulk of planning permissions for this year are expected to come through in Quarter 4.

4.5 *H4: Total number of new council homes (net growth taking into account new homes and homes sold through right to buy)*

This indicator is behind target, due to the delays in completion as a part of H1. The indicator takes the number of council homes sold through right to buy away from the total number of new council homes completed. This therefore indicates that 10 homes have been sold under right to buy up to and including Q3.

4.6 *H5: Number of severely overcrowded households assisted to relieve their overcrowding*

This indicator is ahead of target – 137 households have been helped to relieve their overcrowding so far this year, which is ahead of the same position last year and the total annual performance from 2018/19.

4.7 *H6: Number of under-occupied households that have downsized*

This indicator is slightly below target. The profiled target for this point in the year was 120 households supported to downsize. This is linked to the challenges of helping people to move homes during the pandemic.

4.8 *H7: Percentage of LBI repairs fixed first time*

This indicator is on target: Performance against this indicator continues to be high, with a completion rate of 93.7% ahead of the target and the same point last year. This is partly due to the prioritisation of emergency repairs, and these have a higher first time fix rate than the average repair.

4.9 *H8: Major works open over three months as a % of Partners' total completed major works repairs*

This indicator is below target at 21% is below the target of 15%, this is due to the challenges of conducting major work during the latest lockdown.

4.10 *H9: Rent arrears as a proportion of the rent roll - LBI*

This indicator is below target: Rent arrears is one of the areas that have been hardest hit during the pandemic, with households losing income, more households moving on to Universal Credit, and a freeze on recovery activities.

Income recovery work resumed during the summer has brought the proportion down to 4.5%, but the combination of Christmas and the latest lockdown have pushed the figure back up again.

4.11 *H10: Rent arrears as a proportion of the rent roll - Partner properties*

This indicator is below target: As noted above, rent arrears is one of the areas that have been hardest hit during the pandemic, with households losing income, more households moving on to Universal Credit, and a freeze on recovery activities.

4.12 *H11: Number of households accepted as homeless*

This indicator is on target: 203 households have been accepted as homeless up to the end of Quarter 3, which is lower than last year's figure and better than the profiled target of 300.

4.13 *H12: Number of households in nightly-booked temporary accommodation*

This indicator is slightly below target. This indicator has been affected by the need to move rough sleepers in to temporary accommodation during the pandemic, and the difficulties around organising household moves. However, it is still ahead of the same point last year, despite these challenges.

4.14 *H13: Number of street homeless supported into accommodation*

144 people who were street homeless have been supported in to accommodation so far this year, ahead of the annual target and the same period last year.

## 5. **Implications**

### **Financial implications:**

5.1 The cost of providing resources to monitor performance is met within each service's core budget.

### **Legal Implications:**

5.2 There are no legal duties upon local authorities to set targets or monitor performance. However, these enable us to strive for continuous improvement.

### **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030:**

5.3 There are no environmental impact arising from monitoring performance.

### **Resident Impact Assessment:**

- 5.4 The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010).
- 5.5 The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

### **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The Council's Corporate Plan sets out a clear set of priorities, underpinned by a set of firm commitments and actions that we will take over the next four years to work towards our vision of a Fairer Islington. The corporate performance indicators are one of a number of tools that enable us to ensure that we are making progress in delivering key priorities whilst maintaining good quality services.

**Signed by:**



Maxine Holdsworth,  
Corporate Director, Housing

Date:17/02/2021

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## **HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021**

#### **2 MARCH 2021**

- 1) Housing Associations in Islington – An overview
- 2) Mini Review - Triage System – witnesses evidence /reports
- 3) Quarterly Review of Housing Performance (Q3 2019/20)
- 4) Work Programme 2020/21

#### **23 MARCH 2021**

- 1) Main Scrutiny Review : Partners for Improvement – witness evidence
- 2) Mini Review – Communal Heating - witness evidence/reports
- 3) Work Programme 2020/21

#### **19 APRIL 2021**

- 1) Triage System mini Scrutiny review – witnesses evidence /reports
- 2) Scrutiny Review: Partners for Improvement - Draft Report/Recommendations
- 3) Communal Heating – Draft recommendations
- 4) Work Programme 2020/21

#### **28 JUNE 2021**

- 1) Scrutiny Review: Partners for Improvement/Final Report
  - 2) Work Programme 2021/22
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- 3)Membership/Terms of Reference
  - 5) Communal Heating mini scrutiny review – Final report
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