

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Committee Response Tracker – March 2023

	Date of meeting	Query raised	Response/ Update
UPDATES ON RESPONSES FROM THE OCTOBER 2022 MEETING			
4.	20 October 2022	<p>Budget Monitoring Report:</p> <p>Members asked for further information on the cost pressure faced by Islington Lettings. It was queried how many people were in the scheme, and the impact of the revised arrangements on residents.</p>	<p>Response December 2023: Housing Needs and Strategy</p> <p>The council currently have 10 households residing in Islington Lettings properties. This is planned to reduce to zero by the 31st of March 2023. 8 of the 10 households have been offered permanent council housing accommodation to protect their future housing security. 6 of the 10 households have accepted the offer of permanent Islington Council accommodation and are waiting to move into their new homes once the voids work have been completed. 2 of the 10 households are waiting to view the council property offered. The remaining 2 households are waiting offers of permanent accommodation.</p> <p><u>Update March 2023:</u></p> <p>The council currently have 1 household residing in Islington Lettings properties. This is planned to reduce to zero by the 31st of March 2023. The remaining household is waiting offers of permanent accommodation.</p>

11.	20 October 2022	<p>Corporate Performance Report</p> <p>The Committee welcomed the progress made on voids performance and requested further data on this, in particular in relation to the number of households choosing to downsize, the time taken to process voids, and so on.</p>	<p>Response December 2023: Housing Needs and Strategy</p> <p>In the 2021/2022 fiscal year the council re-housed 145 households seeking to downsize into smaller accommodation.</p> <p><u>Update February 2023:</u> Officers have been asked to provide further information on the current processing time for voids. The 26 January meeting noted that this will be progressed via the Housing Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p><u>Update March 2023:</u> As of the 15th of March 2023, there are 676 households seeking to downsize to smaller properties.</p>
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RESPONSES FROM THE DECEMBER 2022 MEETING

21.	5 December 2022	<p>Detail of previously agreed savings now considered undeliverable</p> <p>In relation to point 7, on the status of previously agreed savings now considered undeliverable, the papers noted that the detail would be included in future budget monitoring reports. A member commented that this detail was not yet available and suggested that the information would help to inform the scrutiny of the budget setting process. The Committee asked if it was possible for this detail to be provided in a standalone document and the officers present advised that this would be prepared and circulated.</p>	<p>Response: Finance</p> <p>A savings tracker for 2022/23 was appended to the papers for the January meeting.</p> <p><u>Update February 2023:</u> A summary of savings considered undeliverable over the past six financial years is appended. The Chair has requested that further detail of specific savings be circulated to members.</p> <p><u>Update March 2023:</u> A further update has been requested from officers.</p>
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RESPONSES FROM THE JANUARY 2023 MEETING

27.	26 January 2023	<p>Presentation from the Borough Commander – Annual Crime and Disorder Report</p> <p>The Committee requested workforce data from the local police service.</p>	An update is provided in the Executive Member presentation elsewhere on the agenda.
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RESPONSES FROM THE FEBRUARY 2023 MEETING

28.	21 February 2023	<p>Chair’s Report - Outstanding HR Queries</p> <p>Further to points 19 and 22 above, the Committee requested that the informal meeting with officers be arranged to discuss the HR issues previously raised.</p>	<p>Response: Human Resources</p> <p>A meeting took place on 13/3/23 between the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Director of HR and the Chair, Vice-Chair and committee members to agree how reports will be received by the Committee on HR matters and which matters should come within the terms of reference of other council committees. Deep dive reports into sickness absence and contingent workers which were paused for the 2022/23 scrutiny year will be reintroduced for 2023/24 at the committee’s request.</p>
29.	21 February 2023	<p>Chair’s Report & Budget Monitoring Report – New Build Data</p> <p>Members noted concerns about the financial viability of the new build programme in the current economic climate and requested comparative information and benchmarking against boroughs’ New Build schemes; including the number of homes planned to be delivered, the progress against this, what we can learn from them, and financial monitoring comparisons over the past ten years.</p>	<p>Response: New Build Homes</p> <p>An update has been requested from officers.</p> <p>Note: This matter would fall under the terms of reference of the Housing Scrutiny Committee.</p>

30.	21 February 2023	<p>Annual Report of the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance – comparisons on complaints handling</p> <p>The Committee requested comparative information and best practice on how other local authorities structure their complaints handling function, and if there is any Ombudsman advice on the best way to structure complaints services. It was noted that the team that responded to complaints was a standalone service and it was queried if other local authorities embedded complaints officers in other services. The Executive Member advised that this would be looked into.</p>	<p>Response: Community Engagement and Wellbeing</p> <p>A comprehensive complaints improvement plan has been initiated to ensure action across three key areas: strengthening operational management, undertaking a full service review and improving governance.</p> <p>As part of this improvement plan we are looking at best practice on how other local authorities manage complaints. We are also due to meet the External Training and Relationship Coordinator at the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman on 15 March to seek advice on this issue.</p> <p>At present, stage 1 complaints are dealt with by the relevant service area and stage 2 complaints are dealt with by a centralised complaints team.</p> <p>Although initial indications are that this appears to be both common and recommended practice, we are exploring a number of options to enable an informed decision to be made about the best approach going forward.</p>
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31.	21 February 2023	<p>Annual Report of the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance – new draft workforce strategy and partnership agreement with trade unions</p> <p>A member requested further information on the above and suggested that this could also be considered in an upcoming meeting with HR officers. The Executive Member advised that members had a role to play in this work and he would discuss outside of the meeting.</p>	<p>Response: Human Resources</p> <p>It was agreed that members of the committee would have an opportunity to comment on a draft of the Workforce Strategy before it is finalised. This is being scheduled on the committee’s work plan and is proposed to be reported in June 2023.</p>
32.	21 February 2023	<p>Budget Monitoring Report – Automated Toilets</p> <p>A member noted that £50,000 had been allocated towards the provision of automated toilets in the borough and queried exactly what this would be spent on. It was advised that an update would be sought from the responsible service.</p>	<p>Response: Community Wealth Building</p> <p>The £50,000 was to accelerate the feasibility and the planning pre-app so we could move this project forward as soon as possible.</p>
33.	21 February 2023	<p>Budget Monitoring Report – Heat Metering</p> <p>The Committee noted the requirements to install end-point heat meters in council properties, as detailed in the report, and requested a progress update.</p>	<p>Response: Homes and Neighbourhoods</p> <p>As of January in existing stock there are 607 homes subject to the metering requirements. We have installed 305 meters to date. All 302 remaining residents have been contacted requesting access by the contractor Switch 2. The programme is due to complete in August however this will depend on access.</p> <p>The assessment tool that establishes if a block requires meters is driven by gas prices. We are rerunning the assessment between January and April 2023 to see if more blocks now require meters. It is assumed around 3000 units will be in this new requirement and procurement for installation services</p>

			<p>is also underway. The roll out of new meters is expected to take until 2025 but this will depend on several factors including access. Due to their system design some units will not be able to have meters fitted.</p> <p>We cannot develop a precise timeline or block details for the second wave of installations until we have completed the assessment and procured a contractor estimated this will be in Q1 2023/4.</p> <p>Note: This matter would fall under the terms of reference of the Housing Scrutiny Committee.</p>
34.	21 February 2023	<p>Corporate Performance Report – Fairer Together Hubs</p> <p>A member noted concerns expressed by local community centre coordinators about the role of the council’s Fairer Together Hubs and suggested that vacancies for Community Centre managers and officers had not been advertised to the relevant local networks accessed by voluntary and community sector organisations. Officers highlighted the council’s internal-first approach to recruitment and offered to review this further outside of the meeting.</p> <p>The Committee also asked for further information on this work and clarification on which scrutiny committee was responsible for scrutinising the Fairer Together Hubs.</p>	<p>Response: Community Engagement and Wellbeing & Law and Governance</p> <p>The three Access Islington Hubs detailed in the Islington Together 2030 Plan will help residents to access a range of services across the council. They do not fall within the remit of any of the subject focussed scrutiny committees and the appropriate scrutiny committee is therefore Policy and Performance.</p>

35.	21 February 2023	<p>Corporate Performance Report – Homelessness Prevention</p> <p>A member asked about the number of homelessness cases prevented, and if those residents had stayed in their existing accommodation, or had moved to other accommodation. It was requested that this performance indicator be explained in more detail.</p>	<p>Response: Housing Operations & Corporate Performance</p> <p>The Homelessness prevention data is extracted from a central Government return which is published every quarter on the central Government web site. The definition of homelessness prevention has been designed by central Government and not Islington Council. Therefore, all councils across England adopt the same framework. The prevention of homelessness using the Government’s definition is homelessness has been prevented for 6 months from the initial date of the prevention approach. The service can provide data on this framework if required.</p> <p>Note: This matter would fall under the terms of reference of the Housing Scrutiny Committee.</p>
36.	21 February 2023	<p>Corporate Performance Report – Care Leavers in stable accommodation</p> <p>It was asked if future reports could include a performance indicator of the number of care leavers in suitable accommodation.</p>	<p>Response: Children and Young People’s Services & Corporate Performance</p> <p>Care Leavers are young people aged over 18 years old who have been in care. There are a number of legislative duties and guidance that ensures that Local Authorities “advise, assist and befriend” care leavers. This includes an allocation of a Social Worker or Young Person’s Advisor from 18 years of age up until the age of 25 years old. The Local Authority is required to apply the test and principle “what would you do for your own child?”</p> <p>Care Leavers in suitable accommodation is monitored by the Department of Education and there are set criteria to define what is suitable. The position as of</p>

end of January 2023 is that 89% of care leavers (aged 18-21) are in suitable accommodation. The current position is:

- Community Home / Residential Care 0.6%
- Emergency Accommodation 0.3%
- Gone abroad 0.3%
- In custody 3.0%
- Independent living 18.0%
- Not Recorded 7.8%
- Ordinary lodgings 1.2%
- Other accommodation 4.5%
- Semi-independent, transitional accommodation 38.4%
- Supported lodgings 3.0%
- With Former foster carers 11.4%
- With parents or relatives 11.4%

Islington have always performed well in this area. As of end January 2023 there were 52 of our care leavers are waiting for permanent secure accommodation as they are ready following an in-depth, individualised assessment to live in their own accommodation. This is a high number and creates financial pressure as in order to fulfil our duty to ensure suitable accommodation to care leavers, many of these young adults are stuck in their semi-independent provision even though they no longer require this level of support in their accommodation.

Other indicators measured are care leavers in Education, Employment and Training (60% currently against a target of 70%) and care leavers whom the Local Authority are in touch with (70% currently).

			The service is reviewing the Corporate Performance indicators to ensure a suitable measure for start of next financial year.
37.	21 February 2023	<p>Corporate Performance Report – Vaccine Hesitancy</p> <p>A member asked if performance indicators on vaccine hesitancy could include ethnicity data and for this to be tracked over time. This may provide more insight on how work to address vaccine hesitancy in the borough.</p>	<p>Response: Public Health & Corporate Performance</p> <p>The vaccination team confirmed that we do indeed have figures on vaccination uptake by ethnicity and while they reveal some higher percentages of unvaccinated children in certain ethnic groups, small numbers are often involved. While it is important for these individual children, we need to increase vaccination rates across the whole community in order to protect the population from outbreaks. Our response has focussed on developing the knowledge of parent champions in early years, many of whom do come from minority communities. The Integrated Care Board funding for improving engagement in vaccinations that was recently awarded will focus on ethnicity and other disproportionalities, informed by this data.</p> <p>Note: This matter would fall under the terms of reference of the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee.</p>
38.	21 February 2023	<p>Corporate Performance Report – damp and mould</p> <p>The Committee asked if performance measures relating to damp and mould could be detailed in future corporate reports. It was suggested that this may be an area for the Housing Scrutiny Committee to consider.</p>	<p>Response: Housing Repairs & Corporate Performance</p> <p>Officers are regularly reporting the Council's improvement progress on damp and mould to housing scrutiny including a detailed report at the meeting on the 13th March 2023.</p>

			<p>The Chair of housing scrutiny has asked that KPI's for performance management are developed as part of this work in consultation with the Executive Member for Homes and Communities and Housing Scrutiny committee.</p> <p>These are in development, however as outlined in the report there are emerging additional regulations in development by Central Government including amendments announced by ministerial statement to the Social Housing Regulation Bill which are expected to set out statutory obligations for the treatment of damp, mould and condensation and, further that Government are expected to publish additional guidance by Summer 2023.</p> <p>Given the expectation that Government will clarify and add specific obligations, officer advice is that KPI's are proposed for adoption once Government has clarified the obligations.</p> <p>Note: This matter would fall under the terms of reference of the Housing Scrutiny Committee.</p>
39.	21 February 2023	<p>Corporate Performance Report – turnover of voids</p> <p>The Committee asked if a new performance measure relating to the turnover time for voids could be included, noting the proposed new Housing Allocations Policy included a target date of 21 days. It was suggested that this may be an area for the Housing Scrutiny Committee to consider.</p>	<p>Response: Housing Repairs & Corporate Performance</p> <p>This is under discussion and an update will be provided.</p>

40.	21 February 2023	<p>Corporate Performance Report – occupancy of cycle storage</p> <p>The Committee asked if a new performance measure relating to the occupancy rates of cycle storage lockers could be included in future reports.</p>	<p>Response: Environment and Climate Change & Corporate Performance</p> <p>As at end of January, the paid occupancy rate across the whole capacity stood at 71%, rising to 87% including spaces that have been offered and awaiting confirmation.</p> <p>Occupancy rates fluctuate depending on when new hangars are installed; large batches of hangars are delivered each year over the course of several weeks as part of the borough-wide roll-out of bike hangars, which means the vacancy rate can become distorted shortly after delivery while we confirm rental spaces to applicants.</p> <p>The council is working on a digital platform, due to launch in the summer, which will simplify the way we offer and monitor bike hangar spaces and which will make running an accurate occupancy report more straightforward and allow the council to ensure a consistent approach is taken. By automating and speeding up the rental renewal process it is anticipated that the occupancy rates will also improve.</p> <p>The council does not recommend setting a new performance measure for occupancy rates as the rate is likely to vary considerably. The council recommends this is revisited in the summer once the new software platform has launched.</p>
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			<p>After a thorough ongoing audit, the resident waiting list for bike hangar space has been substantially reduced from nearly 7,000 to 2,500 and the allocation process speeded up.</p> <p>Note: This matter would fall under the terms of reference of the Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.</p>
41.	21 February 2023	<p>Monitoring Item – Challenging Inequality Performance Indicators</p> <p>Further to point 24 above, on the performance indicators relating to the Challenging Inequality programme, a member noted that the service had supplied proposed priority outcomes, rather than performance measures, and asked that this be reviewed and an update be provided.</p>	<p>Response: Community Engagement and Wellbeing</p> <p>There is a meeting to consider this issue on 21 March. It was agreed at the scrutiny meeting that proposed measures would be brought to the next update meeting (Q3) in May.</p>

Further to Point 21: Savings now considered undeliverable – Response provided by Finance (February 2023)

We have undertaken an exercise to work through the past 6 years worth of budget savings to identify themes which have caused savings to be missed.

Where COVID had a direct impact on timing of savings (ie we couldn't deliver it in crisis time but it was subsequently implemented) we have assumed delivered on time.

This has been a really useful exercise to undertake in terms of supporting our ability to challenge the robustness of proposals. Fortunately much of the learning had already been incorporated in to our budget setting processes for this year and we triangulate views of officers across many disciplines to assess delivery risk. This professional scepticism allows the budget to be considered robust where individual savings may hold risk.

In terms of dealing with the gap left by undelivered savings, our strategy is to put them back in to the gap the following year so that alternative proposals are found. Undelivered savings are reported through the budget monitoring process in a timely manner to allow management, executive and scrutiny functions to have full transparency of the savings and the reasons.

The summary by theme is as follows:

Non delivery reason	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	Grand Total
Delivered/On Track to deliver	20.028	20.089	30.663	12.794	9.593	22.579	5.109	120.855
Failure to achieve increase income	2.012	0.806	1.090			0.237	0.840	4.985
Cancelled due to service impact	0.500	0.050		0.981	0.070	0.950	0.100	2.651
Adverse consultation comments		0.500					0.027	0.527
Commercially difficult to adopt			0.500					0.500
Delayed delivery						1.123	0.700	1.823
Unable to engage required partners						0.375		0.375
Grand Total	22.540	21.445	32.253	13.775	9.663	25.264	6.776	131.716