MINUTES OF THE Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Tuesday, 13th October, 2026, 18:30

PRESENT: Councillors: Luke Cawley-Harrison (Chair), Bethany Anderson, John Bevan, Seema Chandwani, Simon Clark, AJ Egemonye and Elara Shurety

300. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting, and Members noted the information contained therein'.

301. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

302. URGENT BUSINESS

The Panel noted that there had been an updated set of slides tabled at the meeting as part of Item 11 on the KPI update.

The Chair advised that he was going to alter the published order of the agenda, in order to take Item 11 immediately following Item 8 on the Resident Advisory Panel. N.B. The minutes follow the order that agenda items were considered in the meeting, rather than the order set out in the published agenda.

303. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Chandwani and Cllr Shurety both declared that they were Haringey Council leaseholders.

304. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

305. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting on 9th March were agreed as a correct record.

306. 2026/27 FINANCE UPDATE - QUARTER 1

The Panel received a report which provided details of the Council's financial position at Quarter 1 of the 2026/27 financial year including the General Fund (GF) Revenue and Capital, and Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The report was originally published as part of the agenda papers for Cabinet on 15th September 2026. Overview and Scrutiny considered the report at its meeting on 17th September. The Panel was asked to scrutinise the elements of the budget that were relevant to its remit. The report was set out in the agenda pack at pages 11-84. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing & Health was present for this item, along with; the Director of Housing, the Assistant Director (AD) of Repairs and Compliance, the AD for Asset Management, and the AD for Housing Management. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Co-Deputy Leader was also present for this item. The Head of Finance for Adults, Housing and Health was also present online. The following arose in discussion of the report:

a. The Chair enquired about the impact of the Renter's Reform Act on the availability of private-sector housing in the borough. The Chair also questioned whether there was appetite in the market to work with the Council going forward. In response, officers advised that there had been a reduction in PSL properties available in the market, as landlords reclaimed their properties ahead of the legislation coming into force. Officers stressed that private sector landlords were one of the most cost effective form of temporary accommodation for the Council. The Panel was advised that the Council was seeking to strengthen its offer to private sector landlords and was also working to secure longer term arrangements with landlords for their properties, in exchange for a higher proportion of upfront payments.
b. The Panel queried the extent to which there were budget pressures arising from delays in the housebuilding programme in respect of Temporary Accommodation. Officers agreed that Housing Delivery would provide a written response. (**Action: Taryn Eves).**
c. The Panel enquired whether the Council was at risk of losing any GLA funding, given the deadline of September 2026. The Cabinet Member advised that the deadline for the latest tranche of funding was 5th November and that the outcome of this bidding process would be announced in due course. Officers would provide a response in writing. (**Action: Taryn Eves).**
d. The Panel sought assurances around whether there were additional costs/savings that arose from the Council moving people out of hotels and into other forms of temporary accommodation. In response, officers advised that this saving had been delivered early, and was part of the wider savings proposals put forward in Housing Demand. Officers drew attention to the fact that there was an assumption made in-year that some of those people moved from hotels would require private sector leases. The saving had also led to an increase in nightly paid accommodation.
e. The Panel raised concerns about delays to some works with particular contractors, such as the works at Broad Water Farm. The Panel sought assurances around whether there was a financial impact. In response, officers acknowledged that there were delays in the refurbishment project at BWF as a review of projected work and projected expenditure were carried out, due to the fact that costs were rising above what had been budgeted for.

f. The Panel queried whether there had been any work done to approach private sector landlords who were looking to exit the market and for the Council to buy those properties. In response, officers confirmed that they shared intelligence with the acquisitions team in these situations and that there had been instances were the Council had been able to purchase a property before it had come to the open market.
g. The Panel noted that the HRA deficit was projected at £3.47M and the Panel contended that this figure was largely down to empty properties/voids. The Panel questioned what the council tax costs were from empty properties. **Clerk's note – Officers have advised in writing that the council tax cost to the HRA is forecast at 2.2m for this year.**
h. The Panel queried what the impact of not making the in-year savings target would be on housing improvements. In response, officers advised that that the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account were both ringfenced and that there would be no impact to the HRA if the Council was unable to make savings in the General Fund. Savings that were not met in the General Fund would ultimately either reduce the amount of money available within the General Fund for services, or increase the amount of money the Council needed to borrow. Officers highlighted that there were instances where the Council acquired properties through the HRA in order to discharge its housing duties. The Cabinet Member set out that a failure to turn around voids meant that the Council was paying significantly more in council tax and that there was also no rent receipt coming in for that property. The Cabinet Member highlighted the fact that there was a Major Works programme of £570m that was ringfenced and that this was in the process of being mobilised.
i. The Panel questioned whether there was a budget constraint on undertaking repairs. In response, officers advised that there were no budget savings proposed around the repairs department and that, if anything, this was an area that the Council was looking to provide additional investment in. The Panel was advised that previously a financial assumption was made that repair costs would have started to decease by this year, but that assumption was being reevaluated.
j. The Panel questioned whether the budget pressures outlined in the report would undermine the Council's ability to meet the Decent Homes standard. In response, officers advised that there was a 10-year capital investment programme in place to meet Decency and that this was not affected by pressures in the revenue budget.
k. The Panel questioned the extent to which the capital investment was over-budget. Officers advised that the capital budget was not over-budget. Instead, historically, this was some thing that was usually under-budget. In response to a request for clarification, officers advised that they had tested the market for value for money as part of a recent procurement exercise. It was commented that the problem tended to be scope-creep i.e. that there was more work to be done than had originally been thought, rather than the work costing more. The Panel questioned what the reporting mechanism was for ensuring the capital programme was being delivered. In response, officers advised that their

internal governance arrangements were that they reported back to Capital Board, including regular updates on planned progress.

l. The Panel queried whether there was a correlation between delays in carrying out repairs and additional costs when carrying out works to schemes. In response, officers confirmed that they undertook stock condition surveys as an initial part of the process, and that this showed the extent of works required for a particular scheme. The Asset Strategy was agreed in 2023 and this sets out the priorities for investment. One of the priorities was around whether a property had a high number of repairs. Officers commented that the main contributing factor to why capital works suffered from scope-creep was the fact that the housing stock had suffered from a lack of investment over a long time.
m. The Panel noted that Cabinet agreed a Major works programme of £570m in February 2026. The Panel commented that under the spend profile for the scheme, it was presented as being £57m spent every year over ten years. The Panel questioned how much money had been spent so far. In response, officers advised that the spending profile was not flat and that they were still in the process of mobilising the contract, with schemes only starting on site in August at the earliest. Officers set out that a significant proportion of the investment would need to be spent by 2028 in order for the Council to meet its decency target. The Panel was advised that less than £10M had been spent so far this year. Officers agreed to circulate a ten-year breakdown of the spend on the Major Works programme, as well as a breakdown of spending by ward. **(Action: Christian Carlise).**
n. The Panel requested that regular financial updates on the spending for the Major Works programme be included in either future budget monitoring reports, or else as part of future KPI updates. **(Action: Philip/Kristian).**
o. The Panel requested more information about the financial impact on the acquisitions programme arising from delays in turning around empty properties. In response, officers advised that TA acquisitions sat in two places, in the revenue budget of the General Fund and in the capital budget of the HRA. Officers advised that by the end of Q2 the service was on track to have completed on 82 homes, with a further 100-120 homes to be completed upon by the end of the year. Officers commented that some block acquisitions had slipped from this year to next year, but that the service expected to be on track with its acquisitions.
p. In regard to the rent convergence programme, officers advised that there was a net-benefit to the Council of around £2m, but that the programme had resulted in an increase in subsidy-loss as a result (arsing from the Council only being able to claim 90% of the LHA rate based on 2011 rates). Officers confirmed that the projection for rent convergence was on target.

RESOLVED

That the Panel gave consideration to the contents of the report and, following questions to the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing & Health and the Director of Housing, submitted any recommendations that arose to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

307. RESIDENT ADVISORY PANEL- REPORT ON ENGAGEMENT

The Panel received a report which set out the Resident Advisory Panel (RAP) resident-led scrutiny review of resident engagement. There was also an accompanying presentation that tabled at the meeting. The RAP Resident Advisory Panel (RAP) completed a resident-led scrutiny review of resident engagement across Housing Services. The review examined whether residents experience the principles of the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2025-2028 in practice. The review resulted in 20 recommendations intended to strengthen resident influence, accountability, communication and service responsiveness across Housing Services. Housing Services agreed to accept all 20 recommendations in principle.

The report was introduced by Chisa Enumah, Head of Community & Resident Engagement as set out in the agenda pack at pages 85-150. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing & Health was present for this item, along with; the Director of Housing, the Assistant Director (AD) of Repairs and Compliance, the AD for Asset Management, and the AD for Housing Management. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Co-Deputy Leader was also present for this item. The presentation was introduced by two members of the RAP, Esther Emmanuel and Valdet Palmer, along with the independent mentor to the RAP Graeme Beedham. The following arose in discussion of the report:

a. The Chair passed on his congratulations and thanks to the RAP and everyone involved in producing a fantastic piece of work.
b. The Panel commented on the fact that there tended to be a difference between Right to Buy leaseholders and those leaseholders who bought their property through the private market, in terms of their relationship to the Council and their ability to navigate Council services. The Panel queried whether any distinction was made in the report between these two groups. In response, the RAP advised that there was no distinction made and that they engaged with Council leaseholders as one group, that combined RTB leaseholders and those who bought their property privately.
c. The Panel sought clarification around what earlier resident involvement should look like. In response, the RAP advised that the recommendation was around the fact that there should be a general principle that the Council should involve residents at the earliest possible stage and across a broad range of scenarios.
d. The Panel queried what made the members of the RAP want to be involved in this process and queried whether they felt they had sufficient access across the different Council services. In response, the RAP commented that this was the third review that they had carried out and that the level of engagement that they had from officers was good. It was felt that the officers were helpful and that they understood that the RAP wanted to work with them constructively. In contrast, it was felt that engagement during the first review was not as forthcoming. A member of the RAP commented that she had been a tenant for forty-plus years and that she got involved because the project looked and sounded right and she was confident that it wouldn't be just a tick-box exercise. The RAP commented that it was a positive experience overall and that the motivation was that they wanted to support the Council and to be responsible residents.
e. For the benefit of the new members of the Panel, the Chair asked for Officers to give a brief overview of the different types of residents groups that the Council worked with. In response, it was set out that the Resident Voice Board

was the main strategic board. The Residents Advice Panel provided a scrutiny function and they had an independent mentor. There are also service specific improvement groups - called continuous improvement groups, for different services. The Panel was advised that there were also task and finish groups. Officers agreed to circulate a structure chart showing the different residents engagement groups. The Chair asked that information on how residents could get involved with these groups also be circulated. **(Action: Chisa).**

f. The Panel commented on dissatisfaction rates being quite high, with 50.1% of residents dissatisfied and 40.9% of residents being very dissatisfied. It was suggested that a lot of the dissatisfaction stemmed from a lack of trust in the Council. In response to a question around resident associations, officers advised that there were 19 formally recognised resident associations in Haringey and that there were 11 further groups who could potentially become resident associations in the future. Officers advised that resident associations weren't engaged with directly as part of this review, but that 831 residents were surveyed. In regard to co-production, officers advised that the Residents Voice group met with the Council regularly. The continuous improvement groups also met with the different heads of service to co-design how services could be improved.
g. The Panel commented that one of the key reflections when they read the report was around a lack of empathy towards residents. It was questioned whether there were some practical steps that could be taken to improve this. The use of systemic practice training was suggested for housing officers. In response, officers acknowledged these comments and suggested that the recommendations arising from the review were far-reaching and that the service would look at training as part of refreshed competence standards. Officers set out there were a number of formal structures that for residents to engage with the Council, and that there was a Voices in Action event taking place the following day. The Panel were assured that there was a resident chair of the continuous improvement groups and that this was an important part of the overall engagement process.
h. The Panel sought assurances around whether there were any gaps identified in terms of groups it was difficult to engage with as part of the review. In response, the RAP advised that engaging with under-35s was difficult and that part of reason was attributed to having a session to engage with them at the wrong time of day. Leaseholders and residents with disabilities were also identified as groups with lower engagement rates.
i. In response to a follow-up question, the RAP commented that the ability to access information on the website, and knowing where to look on the website was a big thing for both residents with disabilities and leaseholders. The RAP, in general, advised that leaseholders tended to feel disenfranchised and that they felt that there was a lack of communication from the Council.
j. The Panel queried whether there was a delivery plan in place for the 20 recommendations and when the delivery plans would be available. In response, officers advised that the service had agreed to accept all 20 recommendations in principle but that the timelines for delivery were still be developed, with engagement required across a number of different services.
k. The Panel sought clarification around whether any of the recommendations were expected to be more challenging to implement. In response, officers advised that some of the actions aligned with work that was already going

ahead and delivery of those actions would happen sooner. Some of the actions would require the service to reprioritise some of the work that they were doing. An example of an area that would take longer to implement was updating the website and improving the digital offer more generally, including having the capability to track repairs online. Officers set out that there was also a lot of work to do around the end-to-end plan to improve communication with leaseholders, including around major works.

l. The Panel commented on the feedback from residents showed importance of experiential performance indictors and that this was something to consider around what KPIs were presented to the Panel.

RESOLVED

The Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel:

I. Noted the Resident Advisory Panel's scrutiny review of resident engagement and the evidence gathered through the review;
II. Noted that Housing Services has accepted the 20 recommendations in principle and the Council response;
III. Noted that a cross-service management action plan is being developed in response to the accepted recommendations.

308. KPI UPDATE

The Panel received a presentation which provided an update on a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) relating to the Housing service. An updated set of slides was included in the tabled papers pack. The Panel noted that slides 19 and 24 in the version published as part of the original agenda pack contained incorrect information. The Chair commented that the Panel had read the presentation in advance and requested that the Panel moved straight to questions. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing & Health was present for this item, along with; the Director of Housing, the Assistant Director (AD) of Repairs and Compliance, the AD for Asset Management, and the AD for Housing Management. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Co-Deputy Leader was also present for this item.. The following arose in discussion of the report:

a. The Panel commented that the KPI's that were reported on the website presented an overly positive impression of performance within the Housing service, and omitted data on some areas that were key for residents, such as damp and mould. In response, officers acknowledged that they were looking at what performance information they provided to residents in order to provide a clear picture of how the service was performing. It was commented that it was also important to make sure that information was up to date and to give a full picture of the service's performance. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that some of the indicators being reported on the website were not the issues residents would care most about. The Cabinet Member set out that the administration had made a commitment to be open and transparent about how the organisation was performing. The Corporate Director commented that

presenting tenant satisfaction measures was an important element of this, similarly it was important to show comparative benchmarking data.

b. The Panel sought clarification around why this data was being collected and what its purpose was. It was suggested that the overall picture that it presented seemed to be a glossed-over version and the Panel questioned whether it told them the information they wanted to know. In response, officers advised that the picture that it tried to present was to some degree dependent upon the audience. For the Scrutiny Panel, the Director Housing suggested that he would like to present a report that showed that the key areas of landlord responsibilities were being delivered, that compliance was on-track and the level of improvement was going in a particular direction. Where this wasn't the case, the report should show this and set out how the service was going to get to the required level of performance. It was stated that some of the indicators reported on statutory compliance measures, such as repairs and complaints. The Corporate Director commented that the report did not give the service a clean bill of health and that it highlighted a number of areas of under-performance, such as first time fixes. Officers advised that the service was looking at re-vamping the format of the KPI suite in improve the look and feel of it and to make the information more accessible.
c. The Panel queried whether the service was measuring the same indicators as other authorities and whether there was an industry standard. The Panel suggested that they would like to see something that wasn't oversimplified and something that provided context. It was suggested that contextual data would provide assurances that the service was measuring 'apples with apples'. Officers advised that there was raft of operational data sets that sat below this set of KPI's and that a range of information could be provided. The Panel was invited to provide areas of particular interest and these could be factored in to the report in future. Officers acknowledged that the report perhaps provided too much information and not enough insight and that it could also be clear about what good looked like elsewhere. Officers agreed to give some consideration as to how the performance information presented to the Panel could be changed going forward. **(Action: Kristian).**
d. The Panel commented that water leaks were a big problem and that they would like to see some assurances that the service was monitoring the number of cases where staff were refused access to a property to address problems such as leaks.
e. The Panel raised concerns about TA figures going up, particularly given historical issues in this area. In response, officers advised that performance in this area had improved slightly in the last two months, with more people leaving TA than entering it. It was commented that one of the main drivers of an increase in people entering TA was that there had been a 54% increase in the number of victim survivors of domestic since Quarter 2 of 2025/26. The Cabinet Member commented that the Council was pulling together an internal working group from across the Council and partners to look at the increase in domestic abuse.

f. The Cabinet Member stated that the introduction of the Renters Reform Act 2026 had seen a spike in Section 21 evictions as landlords rushed to evict tenants before the changes came into force.
g. The Panel queried whether the target of carrying out tenancy checks on 20% of properties a year was an industry standard. Officers advised that this was an internal target set by Haringey. Officers advised that Haringey had a rolling programme of stock condition surveys carried out year-on-year i.e. 20% a year. This meant that the Council should have a full picture of the condition of its housing stock every five years. In response to a follow-up, officers advised that they were mindful of the need to approach different groups of tenants differently based on their needs. Some tenants would need to be visited more often than others. The Chair suggested that there should be a degree of automation whereby multiple repair requests generated a welfare check on a vulnerable resident.
h. The Panel sought assurances around support plans and the confidence the service had that performance would improve with additional staff. In response, officers advised that that the drop in support plans was a resource issue caused by staff vacancies. It was reported addressing this was a priority for the service, but that they couldn't give assurances that this would improve in the short-term as further vacancies had had arisen.
i. The Panel queried what practical steps were being taken to improve access and home visits. In response, the Panel was advised that a home visit was a service open to all residents but that this was something requested by the resident themselves. Officers set out that they were increasing the number of staff in this team so that housing officers would have smaller patches to cover.
j. The Panel queried the number of emergency 24 hour repairs undertaken as part of Awaab's Law, were non-emergency repairs (including leaks) that had been logged as non-emergency repairs and not actioned. In response, officers acknowledged that there would undoubtedly be cases where this happened but that they didn't have any figures to hand. Officers agreed to provide a written response on the number of cases. **(Action: Scott Kay).**
k. The Panel commented that the compliance KPIs were useful but that it would be helpful to have previous years performance as context, particularly where we were reporting 100% compliance. Officers acknowledged that they were giving consideration to how to report compliance, given access issues and the need for a certificate in order to demonstrate compliance. It was commented that the Council had no enforcement powers under the regulations to force access to a property.
l. The Panel commented that the indicator around housing repairs completed within timescale, reflected the ability of the organisation to carry out lots of low volume quick repairs but didn't accurately reflect complex cases which were seen as the biggest issue by Members. In response, officers acknowledged this and highlighted the impact of significant works that arose that weren't in a planned programme. Officers set out that they had set up a minor works team specifically to address these type of repairs.
m. The Panel sought clarification about the reason for a significant drop-off in performance for the Awaab's Law indicator. In response, the Panel was advised

that there had been a discrepancy in how this indictor was recorded. The original timescale for the indicator was 13 days, but the subsequent guidance that was issued stated that works must be completed within 5 days. The dip in performance reflects the fact that the service had to start reporting on completed dates. Performance in this area had improved to between 95%-100%, but the indicator was a rolling year-to-date figure and so it would take some time for this to be fully reflected in the performance score.

n. **Clerk's note- the Panel made a number of recommendations at the end of the meeting around changes they would like to see to future KPI reporting:**

- The KPIs to differentiate between statutory compliance indicators and what is a service KPI.
- The Panel would like figures for the number of cases where officers were refused access to a building.
- The Panel would like average timescales for completing repairs.
- That the indicator for first time fixed repairs should relate to the first appointment rather than the first time someone from the Council attended.
- In general, the Panel did not want to see indicators that showed a flat line in performance every time. Instead, they wanted to see more of a breakdown on repairs so they could see what kind of issues were occurring/reoccurring i.e. plumbing issues or roofing repairs.
- The Panel would also like assurance around how the service forward planned its repairs i.e. in the winter do we prepare for a spate of roofing repairs and boiler repairs as people start to use the central heating system.
- Requested that it receives data on emergency repairs and the percentage of these that were originally logged as non-emergency repairs that were missed appointments.
- The Panel also requested figures for the average time taken to answer a Housing related customer service call.

RESOLVED
That the Panel noted the information contained in the KPI update presentation.

309. OVERVIEW OF EMPTY HOMES

RESOLVED

That the Overview of Empty Homes presentation was noted.

310. VOIDS MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Panel received a report which provided an update on housing voids performance and progress against the Council's voids improvement programme. The report outlined the findings of the review of voids management undertaken during 2026, the nature of the challenge facing the service, progress made to date and priorities for the remainder of 2026/27. The report was included in the agenda pack at pages 165 to 177. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing & Health was present for this item, along with; the Director of Housing, the Assistant Director (AD) of Repairs and Compliance, the AD for Asset Management, and the AD for Housing Management.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Co-Deputy Leader was also present for this item. The following arose in discussion of the report:

a. The Panel questioned whether, when someone left a property and gave notice of doing so, the Council undertook an inspection whilst they were still there in order to schedule works as soon as it became vacant. In response, officers advised that the Council did not always get notice of someone ending their tenancy, and that that where they did receive notice, the Council did not necessarily prioritise works according to when they became vacant. Instead, the Council was currently prioritising turning around larger void properties.
b. The Panel sought clarification about who was responsible for the management of voids. In response, the Panel was advised that the end-to-end process for the management of voids and tenancy management sat within Housing Management, who had oversight of the whole void process. The Repairs and Compliance team were responsible for the bit in the middle of the process i.e. scheduling the repair works. Within the Housing Management service, there was a Voids Strategic Coordinator.
c. In response to a follow-up question, officers advised that the Voids Coordinator was familiar with every single void in the pipeline and that they would flag up to senior management when there was a delay, as well as seek resolutions to any delays that occurred. The AD for Repairs and Compliance advised that once his team had received notification from Housing Management that they could enter a particular property, then he was responsible for the time it took to turn those repairs around. This was based on the priorities set by the service, and with a view to the wider voids that needed to be turned around. Officers gave assurances that there was heavy internal scrutiny of voids within the Housing Service. The Heads of Service within the operational teams met every two weeks to review the total number of voids, the number of outstanding voids, priorities and allocation of voids. There was also a weekly dashboard produced on voids to show what was progressing and what was not.
d. The Chair commented that he appreciated the level of focus on voids within the service, but that ultimately the voids numbers were up and had been for a number of years. The Chair sought clarification about where the process of turning around an empty property was breaking down. In response, officers advised that there were a lot of void properties within HRS and that the service had identified that it would never be able to clear the backlog with current resources. A significant number of these voids had, therefore, been batched into a programme of major works to be delivered, and that the service would return to managing the day-to-day turnover of voids. This day-to-day turnover of voids was affected by the development pipeline, for example, as there was a local lettings policy. It was also impacted by regeneration schemes. The AD for Repairs and Compliance advised that he was looking to increase capacity within the team to turnaround empty homes over the next couple of years, in recognition of the fact that the number of voids was increasing. Officers advised that there had been a net reduction of voids of 53 in the current financial year, and that this figure included 330 new voids. It was expected that there would be another 1000 new voids between now and September 2027. Officers set out that they had mapped out what was coming down the pipeline in terms of voids

and that they had made a commitment to halve the net number of voids between now and September 2027. The Chair commented that a halving of the net number of voids would still result in the overall number of voids increasing significantly.

e. The Panel queried the extent to which there was a voids strategy in place and questioned why there wasn't a level of forward planning, with the organisation having a rough idea of which residents might be in a care home in the next 5 years, and an understanding that certain age groups were likely to have children. The Panel sought reassurance that there was a structure in place and that the process was being managed strategically, rather than just reacting to fluctuating numbers of empty homes. In response, officers acknowledged that over the course of a year they would expect a certain number of voids to come up and that there were opportunities for forward planning. It was commented that part of this involved linking it with residents who were in unsuitable homes that didn't meet their needs and looking at what other options there might be. The Director of Housing agreed to take this away and give some consideration about forward projection and how to look at what demand might be in the future. **(Action: Kristian).**
f. The Panel commented on Broad Water Farm and the fact that the reason that residents had to be moved was because of the problems with the buildings themselves, with leaks, damp and mould etcetera. Residents being decanted from this site were a result of a failure to rectify repairs over period of months and years, it was questioned therefore, how a repairs person could be expected to turn these properties around in 30 days, given the fact that the repairs issues were the reason that the resident was moved out in the first place. It was suggested that cases where the primary driver was the condition of the property itself should be measured differently. Officers responded with an estimation that around 12% of empty homes were more complex cases and it was acknowledged that these should be a focus for the service. Officers acknowledged that having some kind of target for these seemed appropriate. It was suggested that officers needed to provide assurances to the Panel that there was a plan in place, that it was properly resourced, and that it was being properly tracked within the organisation.
g. The Panel requested that future updates on voids include comparative performance data with neighbouring boroughs in order to allow the Panel to understand what 'good' looks like. Officers commented that in terms of what good looked like, in the Regulator of Social Housing's quarterly return for private registered providers the median void loss position was around 1.5%, which would be around 200 homes for LBH. Officers clarified that void loss was higher for local authorities and that LBH's void numbers were on the high side for a London local authority.
h. In relation to paragraph f, the Chair commented that what he wanted assurances on was that the process for improving the void numbers was working. It was commented that there seemed to be too many opportunities for human error and for mis-categorisation of issues.
i. The Panel sought clarification about the extent to which the Council would offer compensation to neighbours who had been impacted by living next door to a

long-term void property. The Panel commented that a long term void property that needed repairs and had overgrown garden would impact the look and feel of a particular street. In response, officers advised that they did not offer compensation to neighbouring residents as part of a coordinated approach. Residents were free to raise a complaint through the normal complaints procedure and if the Council was found to have acted in a negligent manner then compensation may be awarded.

j. The Panel queried what percentage of voids were delayed because of repairs and what percentage were delayed due to administrative delays. The Panel also queried how many properties had been void for over a year. In response, officers advised that they didn't have the figures to hand, but that at least half of the properties were delayed due to significant repairs and the other half were put into the HRS rolling programme of fixing up voids. The long term void properties, with complex repair issues were allocated as part of the asset management programme, which was currently being mobilised. Officers clarified that the primary reason for delays to the complex repairs that were part of the asset management programme was because they were part of a long term back-log, which was exacerbated by industrial action taken by repairs staff. Officers set out that delays to turning around a particular property could also be because of a regeneration programme, such as the Love Lane estate.
k. In response to a follow up, officers advised that there were three teams of ten operatives who undertook void repairs. Each team had a target of ten properties a month (30 in total). Further repair work above that would then be allocated to a contractor who could undertake 13 a month. The total capacity within the void repairs team was 43 properties a month. In response to a further follow up question, officers advised that the team's ability to meet its 10 properties a month fluctuated according to staff absence/sickness levels. Officers advised that performance in meeting 30 properties a month was up and down. In Quarter 1, the team over-achieved the target and under-achieved the following month. Officers advised the Panel that they were looking to expand the external void repair capacity with two longer-term contracts.
l. In response to a question, officers advised that prelims were not an issue with the contractor, as they were paid on a unit rate, so there were no additional costs.
m. In relation to measuring the time taken between a void being handed over to a contractor and completed, officers advised that they measured timescales at all parts of the process. Examples of these timescales were basic compliance checks carried out within 2 weeks and turning around a non-complex void within 28 days. Properties that required major works would take longer, depending on the scale of works required.
n. The Cabinet Member advised that they recently hosted a strategic meeting of all internal partners on voids in order to get a 360 degree view on voids and the underlying issues involved.
o. The Panel commented that there was a link with the residents panel and the spatial implications of voids on the wider community. It was suggested that this should also inform the prioritisation of voids, given the impact of ASB and other issues that could arise from clusters of empty properties. In response, officers

acknowledged the need for a strategic approach to the management of spaces and places where there were significant clusters. This had already been done for Love Lane.

p. The Panel requested clarity around whether there was a voids strategy in place. In response officers advised that there was a strategy in place and that they would bring the strategy to a future Housing Scrutiny Panel meeting, when voids was on the agenda. **(Action: Philip).**
q. The Panel sought clarification about the extent to which there was a programme in place to address under-performance in voids. In response, officers advised that there was a programme in place, which had a number of constituent parts, including a weekly operational group.
r. The Panel suggested that there was wider communications point about needing to involve and engage with wider residents on an estate, even if they were not moving themselves under the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme. So that everybody on an estate knew what the expectations were around how long it would take to turn around the void properties.
s. The Panel agreed to have a follow-up meeting officers outside of the formal panel meetings to discuss voids further and agree how best to scrutinise the issue going forwards. **(Action: Philip).**

RESOLVED

That the Panel:

I. Noted the current position regarding voids performance;
II. Noted the findings of the review of voids management;
III. Noted improvements made against the Voids Improvement Programme; and
IV. Noted the priorities and next steps for the remainder of 2026/27

311. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

RESOLVED

That the work programme was noted.

312. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

313. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 17 November
- 14 December
- 6 April 2027

CHAIR: Councillor Luke Cawley-Harrison

Signed by Chair ……..

Date ……

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