

Housing & Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel Agenda

Place

Committee Rooms 4 & 5, Town Hall, Wellington Street,
Woolwich SE18 6PW

Date

Thursday, 25 November 2021

Time

7:00 PM

This meeting is open to the press and public and they are entitled to take photographs, film or record the proceedings.

Councillors

Clive Mardner (Chair)	Labour
Bill Freeman	Labour
Mick Hayes	Labour
Leo Fletcher	Labour
Averil Lekau	Labour
Dominic Mbang	Labour
Pat Slattery	Labour
Spencer Drury	Conservative

Tenant Representatives

Helen Ryan
Johnson Oyedeji

Members are reminded that officer contacts are shown at the end of each report and they are welcome to raise questions in advance with the appropriate officer. This does not prevent further questioning at the meeting.

If you require further information about this meeting please contact the Scrutiny Officer:
Raymond Bruce-Cathline
Telephone: 020 8921 5134
Email: Raymond.Bruce-Cathline@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Agenda

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
To receive apologies from Members of the Committee.
- 2 Urgent business**
The Chair to announce any items of urgent business circulated separately from the main agenda.
- 3 Declarations of Interest**
Members to declare any personal and financial interests in items on the agenda. Attention is drawn to the Council's Constitution, the Council's Code of Conduct and associated advice.
- 4 Minutes - 14th October 2021**
Members are requested to confirm as an accurate record the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2021.
- 5 Housing Revenue Account Scrutiny Report**
To note the framework and processes around HRA budget setting and subsequent actions taken to address budget pressures.
- 6 Housing Repairs Scrutiny Review Update**
To note the update on Royal Borough of Greenwich's Housing Repairs Service and its recovery following the covid-19 pandemic period.
- 7 Commissioning of Future Reports**
To note the work items that are scheduled to be presented to the meeting of the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel taking place on 27th January 2021.

Date of Issue
Wednesday, 17
November
2021

Debbie Warren
Chief Executive

This meeting is open to the press and public, but measures may apply to ensure a Covid-19 secure environment.

Filming and Recording Meetings

This meeting will either be filmed for live webcasting through the Council's web site at <https://royalgreenwich.public-i.tv/core/portal/home> or will be webcasted and uploaded on the Councils YouTube Channel.

This meeting may be photographed (without the use of flash), filmed or audio recorded, except where the public is excluded because confidential or exempt items will be discussed. Any footage is likely to be publicly available.

By entering the room where the meeting is being held, you will be deemed to have consented to being photographed, filmed or audio recorded, and that will apply to any representation you make to the meeting. You will also be deemed to have consented to the possible public use of any images and sound recordings.

If you have any queries regarding the recording of meetings, please contact the Committee Services Manager at committees@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

PUBLIC INFORMATION

SAFE USE OF COUNCIL MEETING ROOMS

The local authority is required to make all its public meeting spaces Covid-19 secure.

You should not attend a Council committee meeting if you have or are experiencing any COVID symptoms.

To comply with this the local authority –

- requests all attendees, unless medically exempt, to wear a face covering. Guidance on face covering can be found on the [Government's website](#). Face coverings can be removed when speaking at the meeting.
- requests all attendees to undertake a lateral flow test before attending meetings, and if positive you must not attend this meeting. These are free, and are available at certain sites or kits can be acquired for home testing. Please see the [Council's website](#) for more details.
- requests all attendees to wash their hands thoroughly or use sanitiser before entering the meeting rooms.
- requests all attendees to scan the QR code via NHS COVID-19 App to check-in or provide their name and contact details to the Committee Services / Scrutiny officer clerking the meeting before being admitted entry to the meeting rooms.
- requests all attendees, where possible to maintain social distancing in the committee rooms.
- will aim to keep in person meetings no longer than is necessary with the option of including short breaks at the Chair's discretion.

Council Meetings are open to the press and public to attend, except where personal or confidential matters are being discussed.

Full Council Meetings will be filmed, for live webcasting through the [Council's website](#). Other meetings will be recorded and added to the Council's YouTube

Channel shortly after the meeting has finished. The recording of this meeting will be available to view for one year after the meeting.

For all meetings the general rule is that the Chair has discretion with regard to speakers and speaking times. Some committees have defined specific rules.

HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL	
TITLE Declarations of Interests	ITEM NO 3
CHIEF OFFICER Chief Executive	

I. Decisions Required

The Panel is requested to:

- I.1 Note the list of Councillors' memberships (as Council appointed representatives) on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies.
- I.2 Request that Members orally declare any personal or financial interests, including those detailed, in specific items listed on the agenda as they relate to matters under discussion.

2. Members' Interests

- 2.1 Appended to this report is a list of the outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies that each member of Council has been appointed to by the Council or the Leader. The list does not include bodies with which a Member is involved in a personal or private capacity.

Personal interests

- 2.2 A Member has a personal interest where any business is likely to affect:
 - (a) them, or
 - (b) a relevant person or a relevant body (where the Member is aware that they have the interest);

more than a majority of those in the ward you represent.

A **relevant person** is defined as the member's spouse or civil partner, a person who they are living with as husband and wife or as civil partners, or a person with whom they have a close association.¹

¹ See the guidance in Annex I of the Code of Conduct

A **relevant body** is defined as (a) any organisation, school governing body or outside committee or trust which they have been appointed to by the Royal Borough or by the Leader, or (b) any other voluntary organisation, school governing body or commercial organisation where you are a management committee member, school governor, trustee or director.

- 2.3 Members must declare the existence and nature of any personal interest at the start of the meeting, or when the interest becomes apparent. Members must say which item their interest relates to.
- 2.4 A Member who has a personal interest may stay, speak and vote, except where the business:
- (a) affects the financial position of the Member or any person or body described in paragraph 2.2 above, or
 - (b) relates to an interest that would be affected financially or relates to the determining to any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the Member or any person or body described in paragraph 2.2 above

Financial Interests

- 2.5 A Member has a financial interest where any business relates to or is likely to affect an interest set out in paragraph 18 of the Code of Conduct, and which is the Member's interest or the interest of a person described in paragraph 2.2(a) above.
- 2.6 Members must declare the existence and nature of any financial interest at the start of the meeting, or when the interest becomes apparent. Members must say which item their interest relates to.
- 2.7 A Member who has a financial interest must leave the meeting, but may attend to make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the business, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, and provided they leave the meeting immediately after doing so. The Member must not participate in the discussion nor the vote.

General

- 2.8 The Code also requires Members to declare interests in relation to relevant bodies for six months after ceasing from being a member and take the appropriate action in relation to financial interests.

Background Papers

Agenda and Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council – 19th May 2021.

Report Author: Raymond Bruce-Cathline, Scrutiny Officer
Tel: 020 8921 5134
Email: raymond.bruce-cathline@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Reporting to: Nassir Ali, Scrutiny Manager
Tel: 020 8921 6160
Email: nassir.ali@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Councillor	Organisation	Role	Governorship
Drury	Eltham United Charities	Member	
Fletcher, L	Blackheath Joint Working Party	Member	
	Greenwich Blue Coat Foundation	Member	
Freeman	-		
Hayes	Greenwich Pensioners' Forum	Member	
Lekau	Environmental Protection UK	Member	
Mardner	-		Abbey Wood Nursery School
	-		St Pauls Academy
Mbang	Greater London Forum for Older People	Member	
	New Charlton Community Centre	Member	
	Overview & Scrutiny Joint Health Committee	Deputy	
	Town Twinning Association Executive Committee	Deputy	
	Walpole Estate Management Board	Member	
Slattery	Greenwich Charities of William Hatcliffe and the Misses Smith	Member	
	Greenwich Leisure Ltd	Member	

ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH
HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2021 AT 7:00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Members:

Councillor Clive Mardner (Chair), Councillor Pat Slattery and Councillor Spencer Drury.

Tenant Representatives

Johnson Oyedeji

Officers

Senior Assistant Director of Repairs and Investment, Head of Strategic Asset Management and Scrutiny Officer.

Others in attendance

Gilles Cabon (Chief Executive Officer of Greenwich Inclusion Project (GRIP))

The Chair made introductions and advised the attendees of the relevant procedures of the meeting.

Item

No.

1 Apologies for Absence.

Apologies received from Cllr Mick Hayes, Cllr Leo Fletcher, Cllr Bill Freeman, Cllr Anthony Okereke, Cllr Dominic Mbang and the Director of Housing and Safer Communities.

2 Urgent Business.

ITEM NO: 4

There was no urgent business.

3 Declaration of Interest.

Resolved –

That the list of Councillors' memberships as Council appointed representatives on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies be noted.

4 Minutes.

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 6th September 2021 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

5 Reports from organisations that provide support and advice to vulnerable Groups.

The Chief Executive of GRIP introduced the report. He stated that their mission is to create a racially just and inclusive society in Greenwich, where racial diversity is valued and people live free from prejudice, discrimination, harassment and hate crime because of their race or religion. He added that their main areas of work were community-based hate crime support and education, strategic race equality support and resettlement support (Greenwich Sanctuary Project).

The Chief Executive of Grip stated that the community-based hate crime support service involved supporting victims of hate crime with advice and support, contacting police and others on their behalf and attending meetings to present a complaint. He revealed that between the year 2020 to 2021 90 people had been given advice, support and advocacy.

The Chief Executive of Grip stated that strategic race equality support involved attending various strategic partnerships to articulate concerns expressed by racial minority communities and supporting direct consultation with racial minority communities. He stated that they also comment on strategic plans and proposals.

The Chief Executive of Grip stated that for resettlement support community volunteers provide a range of support to families settled in Greenwich under the UN Vulnerable Persons Programme.

In response to a question from the Panel, the Chief Executive of GRIP stated that dedicated English language lessons are an important aspect of the work they do. He emphasized the need to prioritise English language lessons as part of steps to creating inclusivity. He advised that generic English language classes were not effective and that there was a need to provide English language lessons specific to the needs of refugees and individuals who have no English language background.

Responding to a question, the Chief Executive of GRIP stated that they have a good relationship with the police and landlords. He however added that there is an element of frustration due to the lack of response from police and landlords on issues relating to hate crime. He suggested that frontline staff needed to be educated to improve their sensitivity to hate crime.

In response to a question from the Panel the Chief Executive of GRIP stated that the Syrian families were predominantly living within Charlton, Woolwich Common and Eltham West. He added that with the Syrian community integration would be easier due to large number being children. He added that children were easier to integrate. In relation to the Afghanistan families, he advised that it was too early to tell although the Borough has already begun to provide accommodation for the Afghanistan families. He further explained that to the best of his knowledge the borough has agreed to provide accommodation for eight Afghanistan families with two already in the borough being provided support by the nil recourse team, another two also in the borough but waiting to have their status approved as being part of the eight and the remaining four in hotels.

Responding to a question from the Panel, the Chief Executive of GRIP stated that over the course of the last twenty months they have recruited sixty volunteers and at any one time there are a minimum of thirty-five active volunteers. He added that the current available pool of volunteers was forty-five. He further explained that each family had at least one volunteer working with them on English language and two volunteers on befriending activities.

The Panel

Resolved -

That the report from organisations (GRIP) that provide support and advice to vulnerable groups be noted.

6 Stock Condition Survey Report

The Senior Assistant Director for Repairs and Investment summarised the report. He stated that the stock condition survey happened in 2017 and that despite being four years old the document was very valid.

In response to a question from the panel, the Senior Assistant Director for Repairs and Investment and Head of Strategic Asset Management stated the data used for the stock condition survey is from a live document. They explained that the data changes regularly partly due a property reaching a certain age or when it is manually updated. They further explained that due to the live nature of the system new properties are being added whereas old properties which have been worked on are being taken off making it difficult to track changes based on the raw data alone.

The Panel

Requested to receive improvement figure from the previous financial year.

Action: Head of Strategic Asset Management

The Panel

Resolved -

That the Stock Condition Survey (SCS) carried out in 2017 and the outcomes be noted.

7 Housing Contracts Variation Report

The Senior Assistant Director for Repairs and Investments introduced the report and explained that the report contained contract variations from the last twelve months.

In response to a question from the Panel, the Head of Strategic Asset Management stated that before any work relating to kitchen and bathroom is done there is a need for an intrusive asbestos survey. He added that majority of the variation relating to kitchens and bathrooms was for asbestos and others for heat detectors.

In response to a question from the Panel, the Head of Strategic Asset Management stated that they are trying to get many things done inhouse although some things will have to be outsourced.

The Panel

Resolved -

That the contract variations that have taken place over the past 12 months for Housing and Safer Communities be noted.

8 Commissioning of Future Reports

The Panel noted the work items that were scheduled to be presented to the meeting of the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel taking place on 25th November 2021.

The Panel

Resolved -

That the commissioned future reports be noted.

The meeting closed at 9:00pm.

HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL	DATE 25/11/2021	ITEM NO. 5
TITLE HRA Expenditure	WARD(S) All	
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Housing and Safer Communities	CABINET MEMBER Housing and Safer Communities	
DECISION CLASSIFICATION Information Only	IS THE FINAL DECISION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT TO BE MADE AT THIS MEETING? NA	

1. **Decision required**

This report makes the following recommendation to the decision-maker:

- 1.1 To note the update on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)'s framework and processes around budget setting and subsequent actions taken to address the budget pressures.

2. **Links to the Royal Greenwich high level objectives**

- 2.1 This report relates to the Council's agreed high-level objectives as follows:
- A strong, vibrant, well run borough.

3. **Purpose of Report**

- 3.1 This report is requested by Housing Anti-Poverty Overview and Scrutiny for the purposes of good governance.

4. **Introduction and Background**

- 4.1 The HRA budget setting process is governed by various pieces of legislation included in the Housing act 1985, the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and Local Government Act 2003.

- 4.2 The HRA is a ring-fenced account which is required to set a balanced budget annually.

- 4.3 Central Government rent policy is mandatory and determines the level of increase or decrease per year.
- 4.4 The current RBG policy requires an increase in rents by up to CPI plus 1% for each of the 4 years commencing from April 2020.
- 4.5 A Cabinet decision setting rents and service charges is made annually in the February preceding the start of the financial year on the 1st April.

5. Budget 2021-22

- 5.1 Cabinet met in February 2021 and agreed the HRA budget for 2021-22.
- 5.2 It was agreed that in line with Government policy rents would be increased by CPI plus 1%.
- 5.3 It was agreed to apply full cost recovery to Tenant service charges. In 2016 members agreed to separate service charges from rents and uplift them by 1.5% annually. The 1.5% increase has not kept pace with the true cost to the Council therefore full cost recovery equalises the position.
- 5.4 As set out in the MTFS, after applying the 1.5% rent increase, the financial effects of changes to stock numbers, the 1.5% increase to Tenants Service Charges, inflationary pressures for staffing and repairs, 1.5% construction inflation, there remained a gap of £3.862m for 21/22. The proposals to meet this gap and which have been applied to the HRA Business Plan are shown in Table I.

6 **HRA Budget 2021/22**

Table I: Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22

Description	2021/22 £000
Opening BP Gap/Surplus	1,498
Pay Inflation	301
General & Repairs Inflation	318
Vehicle Rates	119
Stock Loss (RTB disposals)	505
Budget Realignment	271
Contribution to in year projected Structural Deficit	850
Total	3,862
Proposals to meet Gap	
Rents & Service charge 1.5% increase & relets	(1,152)
CEC and Recharges Reduction	(1,000)
Increasing Leaseholder Collection	(780)
Caretaking Income	(500)
Efficiencies in Tenancy Services	(180)
Increased Garage Income	(250)
Total	(3,862)
Gap/ Surplus	0

A 2% pay increase was allocated to staffing budgets for 20/21 but the actual pay increase was 2.75% so the additional 0.75% requires funding of £301k. Repairs inflation of 1.5% has been applied to all Repairs budgets at a cost of £318k.

Vehicle rates increased by 10% in 20/21 but no funding was given as the increase was not known at the time of setting the budget. The main areas within HSC that have vehicles are Caretaking and R&I and the cost of the increase is £119k. These charges include a contribution to the replacement fund.

It was estimated that by the 31st March between 80 – 100 RTB sales would have been completed. The impact on loss of rental income is estimated at £505k.

As with the General Fund a review was carried out on all budgets and realignment was carried out where needed at a cost of £271k.

There is an on-going budget deficit within R&I to help reduce this deficit in

2021/22 £850k has been allocated against these budgets.

All the above have resulted in a gap of £3.862m.

7. Budget 2021-22

7.1 Government rent policy reverts to a CPI + 1% increase from 2020/21.

7.2 In summary the HRA budget position for 2021/22 is set out in the table below

Table 2: Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22

HRA Budget position	2021/22
Income	
Rent	(96,475)
Tenant Service Charges	(15,297)
Leasehold Charges	(5,281)
Other rents (non-dwelling)	(2,822)
Other Income	(2,013)
Contribution to Expenditure(MWB)	(3,769)
Interest on balances	(10)
Total	(125,667)
Expenditure	
General Management	28,945
Repairs	21,467
Other Budgets, rents and rates	29,131
Capital Financing	16,404
Depreciation MRR	28,916
Total	125,667

8. HRA monitoring Position at Q1 2021/22

As at June 2021 the HRA was reporting a pressure of £3.1m on the HRA.

Details are shown below:-

Service Area Analysis	2021/22 £m
Asset Management	3.7
Estates	0.7
Rents and Voids	0.9
General Department costs	0.1
Repairs and Investment	(0.5)
Housing Services	(0.5)
Tenancy	(0.3)
Leaseholder Service Charges	(1.0)
Total	3.1

The pressure of £3.7m on Asset Management is broken down into further detail below.

Table 2: Asset Management Forecast as at June 2021

	Budget 2021-22 £	Forecast Outturn 2021-22 £	Variance £
Expenditure			
Direct Labour	10,290,658	13,233,285	2,942,627
Apprentices		274,279	274,279
Materials	3,575,000	3,540,616	(34,384)
Sub-contractors	7,600,000	9,064,046	1,464,046
Indirect overheads	4,026,942	3,708,739	(318,203)
Central Costs	941,750	941,750	-
Total Expenditure	26,434,350	30,762,715	4,328,365
Income			
Total Income	(26,434,350)	(27,081,657)	(647,307)
(Surplus)/Loss	0	3,681,058	3,681,058

8.1 The pressures reflect the structural costs in the Asset Management service around direct labour and sub-contractor which have been ongoing for a number of years. Covid 19 lockdown saw a significant decrease in the number of repairs undertaken as the service moved to essential repairs only for nine months before remobilising in a planned way to ensure safe working practices. This had a number of financial effects as fewer repairs have meant less income for the DLO resulting in an overspend on the Asset Management budget due to wages and subcontractor costs with the DLO not generating sufficient income.

- 8.2 Another financial effect is the loss of income through voids which is currently forecast to the end of the financial year at approximately £2.4m. Voids rent loss as a percentage has risen from 1.64% at the end of March 2021 to 2.07% at the end of August 2021. As lockdown has lifted, voids have been prioritised and significant work is underway to get properties refurbished and let. As a result, the service continues to spend a significant amount on sub-contractors in order to clear the backlog as not all of the works can be undertaken by the inhouse team.
- 8.3 An upgrade of housing systems is being undertaken to better support job scheduling, management and improved monitoring and performance. The quickest and most cost-effective way of doing this is improving and investing in our current housing systems and new contracts have been agreed with NPS, Civica and Advanced in support of the council's digital strategy.
- 8.4 Changes in working arrangements, improved systems and reforms to the trade staff Pay and Reward Scheme are expected to generate improved productivity to enable more work to be done in-house. Part of this capacity will be utilised to start delivery planned maintenance programmes.

The outturn for financial years 2019/20 and 2020/21 in this area were as follows:-

2020-21 - £5.6m overspend (this was offset by a saving of £4.1m in repairs charges due to less work being undertaken).

2019-20 - £2.4m overspend

- 8.5 As at August 2021, there is a forecast overspend of £2.4m across the whole of the HRA. The £3.7m deficit on Asset Management is offset by a saving of £800k on the Repairs Service however the saving is unlikely to be ongoing as repairs begin following the lifting of lockdown. The loss of income due to the backlog of voids is offset by the increases in rent, service charges and rental income from garages leading to an overall loss in this area of £322k. There continues to be a favourable variance of £1.1m around leaseholder charges. Adverse variances on DMT salaries of £110k (agency staff), Estate Services of £643k and the Housing IT areas of £212k are offset by favourable variances in the Caretaking and Tenancy services of £295k and Housing Services of £558k.

9. **Available Options**

- 9.1 Overview and Scrutiny are asked to note the contents of this report.

10. Preferred Options

10.1 Overview and Scrutiny are asked to note the contents of this report.

11. Reason for Recommendation

11.1 Overview and Scrutiny are asked to note the contents of this report.

12. Consultation

12.1 No formal consultations have been carried out in connection with this report.

13. Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Legal including Human Rights Act	The purpose of this report is to update the Panel in respect of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA)'s framework, processes around budget setting and subsequent actions taken to address the budget pressures. No decisions are required, and no legal issues arise	<i>Azuka Onuorah</i> <i>Head of Legal Services</i> 15 th November 2021
Finance and other resources	The purpose of this report being presented to the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel is to identify the framework and processes around HRA budget setting and subsequent actions taken to address budget pressures. There are no decisions required from the report and therefore no direct financial implications. Any subsequent decisions would be subject to separate reporting and financial consideration.	Joanne Stark Head of Accounting & Business Change 11.11.21
Equalities	There are no equalities implications arising from this report.	Akosua Boachie

		Accountancy Business Change Manager 11 th November 2021
Climate Change	There are no climate change implications arising from this report.	Akosua Boachie Accountancy Business Change Manager 11 th November 2021

Report Author: Akosua Boachie, Accountancy Business Change Manager
Tel: 020 8921 3005
Email: akosua.boachie@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Reporting To: Joanne Stark, Interim Head of Accountancy and Business Change
Tel: 020 8921 5336
Email: joanne.stark@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Jamie Carswell, Director of Housing and Safer Communities
Services
Tel: 0208 921 8291
Email: jamie.carswell@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Housing and Anti-Poverty Overview and Scrutiny	DATE 25/11/2021	ITEM NO 6
TITLE Housing Repairs During COVID-19 Pandemic	WARD (S) All	
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Housing and Safer Communities	CABINET MEMBER Cllr Okereke, Cabinet Member for Housing	
DECISION CLASSIFICATION Information only	IS THE FINAL DECISION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT TO BE MADE AT THIS MEETING? NA	

1. **Decision required**

This report makes the following recommendations to the decision-maker:

- 1.1 To note the update on Royal Borough of Greenwich's Housing Repairs Service and its recovery after multiple lockdowns during the pandemic period.

2. **Links to the Royal Greenwich high level objectives**

- 2.1 This report relates to the Council's agreed high-level objectives as follows:

- A strong, vibrant, well run borough.

3. **Purpose of report and Executive Summary**

- 3.1 This report was requested by Housing Anti-Poverty Overview and Scrutiny for the purposes of good governance.

4. **Introduction and Background**

4.1 The Repairs and Investment (R&I) service has overall responsibility within the Housing and Safer Communities Directorate for maintaining and improving the Council's 25,679 housing stock (20,876 Council tenants and 4,803 Council leaseholders).

4.2 The service is typically responsible for:

- Keeping residents safe - ensuring that RBG meets its statutory obligations as a landlord, across all areas of compliance (fire, asbestos, gas, electric, lifts, water, play areas on estates etc.), and delivering an 'over and above' approach to safety.
- Bringing genuinely affordable homes back into use at a good standard – ensuring we maximise the supply of available social and temporary housing, managing the process of bringing homes back into use timely and efficiently, with satisfied customers.
- Delivering responsive repairs – carrying out day to day repairs to Council tenanted properties, and to communal areas.

During the Pandemic and Lockdowns

4.3 As an essential service, R&I were unable to work from home at the start of the pandemic in March 2020. A key challenge was how to maintain an efficient service whilst following the government's guidelines for Constructors sectors. To comply with the guidelines the service was reduced to urgent and emergencies repairs only.

4.4 Eight trade staff were redeployed to the COVID-19 recovery services to assist with the delivery of essential items (food and medical supplies). This reduced the workforce further, notwithstanding the 25 staff who were following the government's' guidelines and self-isolating due to underlying health issues.

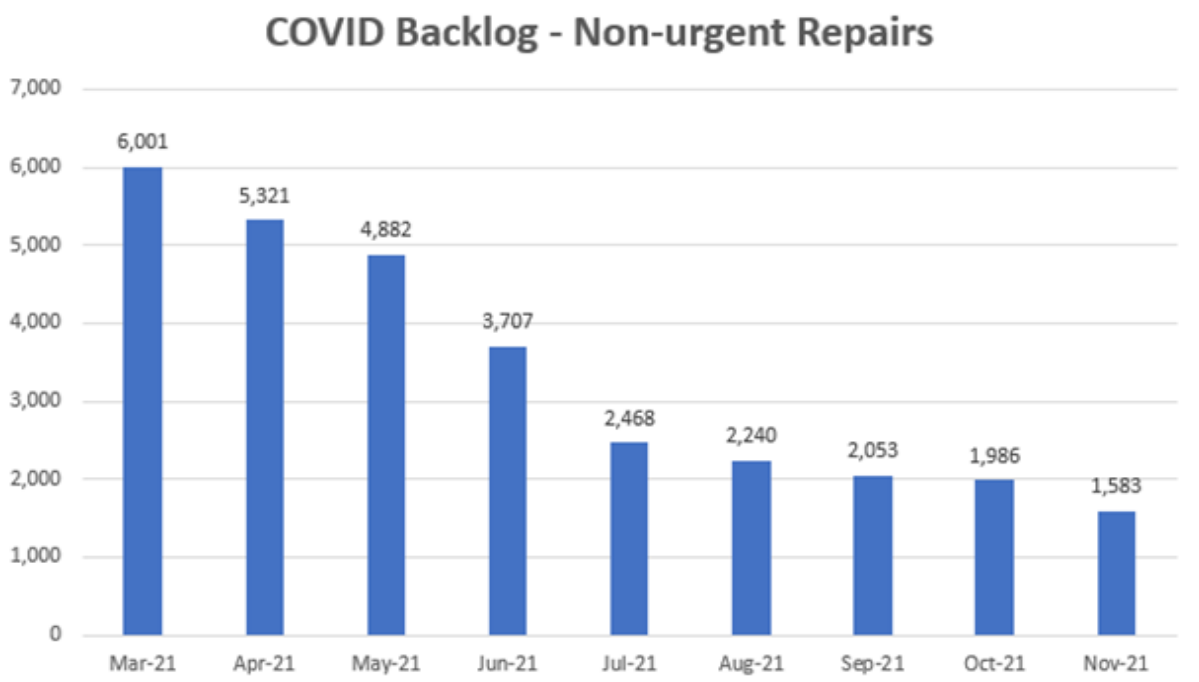
4.5 The telephony system prevented the front-line service, namely the Repairs Planners and Technical Administrators to work from home and, as such they were required to attend Birchmere daily. To ensure staff were working in a Covid safe environment a Standard Operating Procedure was developed for both office-based and trade staff working in Birchmere and across the borough's housing stock.

- 4.6 Trade staff visiting resident's homes were issued with full PPE and the Contact Centre was briefed to ask COVID-related questions before Trade staff entered residents' homes. When a repair was needed at a sheltered accommodation, enhanced PPE was used to protect vulnerable residents and those with disabilities.
- 4.7 In July 2020, the government announced the easing of the lockdown, and a full service was resumed. Residents were able to telephone and email repairs through to the Contact Centre and appointments were booked for routine repairs. Work also commenced on the backlog of repairs accumulated during the lockdown.
- 4.8 In September 2020, R&I experienced an outbreak of COVID, and this led to over 90 staff having to self-isolate over a three-week period, although, this mostly impacted the gas service, we reviewed the Standard Operating Procedure alongside colleagues in Public Health. They concluded that the COVID safety measures in place were adequate and there was nothing more Senior Management Team could have done to prevent the outbreak.
- 4.9 In October 2020, R&I experienced a further outbreak of COVID, which led to 50 staff in self-isolating. This had an impact on the responsive repairs service and severely impacted the ability to undertake repairs both in occupied and in void properties for over a month.
- 4.10 In November 2020, the government announced that Greater London was in Tier 3 which affected the construction sector and so R&I reverted to urgent and emergency repairs only. The government then announced the third lockdown in December 2020.
- 4.11 In December 2020, a new telephony system was introduced, which allowed some frontline staff to take calls from home. Not all staff were issued with laptops so many of the staff continued to work from Birchmere adhering to the Standard Operating Procedure.

- 4.12 In April 2021, A letter was sent to residents advising that the phone lines for routine repairs would reopen in June 2021. Messaging was also placed on the website and in Talk Housing.

Recovery after Lockdowns

- 4.13 In July 2021, following a review of the service and the Standard Operating Procedure, R&I were able to open to offer a full repairs service for residents. A strategy was devised where residents who has a pre-existing repair (pre- and post-lockdown) did not have to arrange a further appointment. These would be honoured in the date order and year that they were received.
- 4.14 At that point, R&I had accumulated over 6000 backlog repairs during 2019/20 and 2020/21. It was clear that the in-house team would not be able to clear the backlog whilst accepting routine repairs through the Contact Centre.
- 4.15 It was agreed that R&I procured contractors to assist with the backlog and 1500 jobs were forwarded to three main contractors.
- 4.16 As frontline staff were able to work from home following the installation of the new telephony and laptops, they were able to work longer hours during the day and at weekends to support the service to reduce the backlog of repairs outstanding.
- 4.17 Supervisors and managers were coming into Birchmere to support the trade staff throughout the lockdown so there were no changes to that arrangement.
- 4.18 The below graph gives an indication of the current movement on back log repairs jobs since April 20 to date.



5. **Current KPIs and Service**

- 5.1 Historically, R&I have met the majority of the agreed performance targets. However, the impact of Covid in the budget years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 have prevented the service from achieving some of the key KPIs. Improvements are being made for this budget year 2021/2022 with a view to normalising in 2022/2023.
- 5.2 The clearance of the backlog of repairs has not been as efficient as anticipated. Progress meetings have been held with the contractors and they have identified the issues as (a) loss of skilled labour due to Brexit and (b) shortage of building materials.
- 5.3 Due to the lack of progress in clearing the backlog, the number of complaints, and the creditability of the service, a decision has been made to clear the remaining backlog of repairs using the in-house team.

KPI Name	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2021/22 Target
Average in days taken to complete non-urgent repairs	9.34	22.83	25.74	15
Overall Re-Let Times (General Needs stock) - in days	76.11	136.35	118.81	56
% of non-urgent repairs completed in target time	90.68%	84.57%	75.42%	85%
% of urgent repairs completed in target time	93.98%	93.06%	95.92%	95%
% of responsive (but not emergency) repairs for which appointments made and kept	92.61%	92.59%	90.89%	92%
% of properties with gas serviced within the last 12 months (Snap Shot)	99.93%	99.62%	99.61%	100%
% of resident satisfaction with completed repairs	N/A	90.15%	90.19%	92%
% Repairs completed at first visit	88.53%	88.25%	85.69%	90%
% of rent loss due to void properties (quarterly)	1.33%	1.68%	2.13%	1.25%
Average time taken to re-let local authority housing - in days (BV212)	45.12	58.89	51.85	40
Number of void properties (snap shot) at end of reporting period	216	353	369	225
% of Fire Risk Assessments completed within last 12 months - <i>High Rise Blocks</i>	100%	100%	36.67%	100%
% of Fire Risk Assessments completed within last 12 months - <i>Other High-risk Buildings</i>	78.08%	100%	82.76%	100%

5.4 R&I's customer satisfaction remains high with over 91% of residents independently surveyed rating the services as very satisfied and fairly satisfied. Lessons learnt from the survey results are captured to ensure we continuously improve the service we are providing to residents.



5.5 Telephone performance is not where it should be, and we are aware that customers have been waiting more than an hour to get through. R&I will be undertaking a project to understand call demands and why residents are not accessing the online services. In addition, R&I have experienced a vast number of telephony outages in the past few months. This has led to customers experiencing long wait times and being cut off during conversations. This has been escalated at Director level and representatives from Avaya have provided 24-hour support whilst they identify and rectify the issues.

Item no.	Dashboard Monitor Description	Target	Previous Month	Reporting Month
1	Repairs Customer Contact			
ai	Contact Centre			
	Answered			4,995 71.89%
	Abandoned			1,953 28.11%
aii	Repairs Hotline (Birchmere)			
	Answered			4,938 34.89%
	Abandoned			3,215 65.11%
b	Repairs emails Received/Responded in Target Time			1,134 80.95%

- 5.6 The contact centre has also had a recruitment drive and has employed a further 4 customer service agents to support the telephone lines. They will commence training in November 2021.

Potential Impact of Future Lockdowns

- 5.7 It is not mandatory for employees in R&I to advise RBG whether they have been double vaccinated. However, informal discussions have identified that a considerable number of staff have been. It is, therefore, not envisaged that there will be a disruption to the service provided. Notwithstanding, the government's guidelines on construction work that may lead to the service only undertaking urgent and emergency repairs.
- 5.8 R&I will use the opportunity to carry out external or communal repairs on estates and work with colleagues across RBG services ensure that residents are supported.
- 5.9 R&I are now in a position where frontline staff can work from home and have access to the telephony, so the difficulties previously experienced have been eliminated.
- 5.10 There will still need to be staff at Birchmere to support the trade staff coming into the depot and as such a rota will be devised for staff to be in the office at least twice a week.
- 5.11 Stockpiled PPE and materials will help to ensure that R&I are able to maintain a service.

6. **Available Options**

- 6.1 Overview and Scrutiny are asked to note the contents of this report.

7. **Preferred Options**

- 7.1 Overview and Scrutiny are asked to note the contents of this report.

8. **Reason for Recommendation**

8.1 Overview and Scrutiny are asked to note the contents of this report.

9. **Consultation**

9.1 No formal consultations have been carried out in connection with this report.

10. **Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications**

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Legal including Human Rights Act	The purpose of this report is to update the Panel in respect of the Council's Housing Repairs Service and its recovery after multiple lockdowns during the pandemic period. As such no decision are required and no legal issues arise.	<i>Azuka Onuorah</i> <i>Head of Legal Services</i> <i>12th November 2021</i>
Finance and other resources	The purpose of this report is to update the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in respect of the Council's Housing Repairs Service and its recovery after the lockdowns. The financial implications of the lockdown on the Repairs and Investment budgets are covered in the HRA Expenditure Overview and Scrutiny Report. There are no further financial implications arising from this report.	<i>Akosua Boachie</i> <i>Accountancy Business Change Manager</i> <i>15th November 2021.</i>
Equalities	This report is for information only so there is no impact on equalities.	<i>Richard Parkin</i> <i>03/11/2021</i>
Climate change	This report is for information only so there is no impact on climate change.	<i>Richard Parkin</i> <i>03/11/2021</i>

11. **Report Appendices**

11.1 No report appendices.

Report Author: Richard Parkin – Senior Assistant Director of Repairs and Investment (Interim)
Tel No. 020 8921 3065
Email. Richard.Parkin@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Reporting to:
Chief Officer Jamie Carswell – Director of Housing & Safer Communities
Tel No. 020 8921 8921
Email. Jamie.Carswell@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL	DATE 25/11/2021
TITLE Commissioning of Future Reports	ITEM NO 7
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Communities & Environment	CABINET MEMBER

1. **Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to note the work items that are scheduled to be presented to the meeting of the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel taking place on 27th January 2022.
- 1.2 The Panel is asked to consider the scope of forthcoming reports and specify any detailed requirements.

2. **Background**

- 2.1 This report advises the Panel of items scheduled for its consideration for the municipal year 2021-2022.

3. **Report**

- 3.1 The Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel is scheduled to receive the following reports at its meeting on 27th January 2022:

27th January 2022 (Meeting 5)	
Item	Scope/Theme
Annual meeting with registered providers of social housing.	To receive a report registered housing providers.
Meridian Home Start (MHS)	To receive annual report on the progress of the development of MHS as a community benefit society and performance in providing homes at affordable rents.
Commissioning of Future Reports.	To agree the scope of reports for next Meeting.

- 3.2 The Panel is asked to consider the items outlined above, to determine any

specific requirements, prior to those reports being commissioned. This will ensure that its lines of enquiry are addressed, information provided is relevant and appropriate, and scrutiny practice is well directed and effective.

Appendix

Appendix B – Housing and Anti-Poverty Meeting Schedule – 2021/22

Report Author: Raymond Bruce-Cathline - Scrutiny Officer
Tel No: 020 8921 5134
Email: raymond.bruce-cathline@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Reporting to: Nassir Ali - Scrutiny Manager
Tel No: 020 8921 6160
Email: nassir.ali@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

**Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel
Draft Meeting Schedule 2021/2022**

<p>Meeting 1 Thursday 1st July 2021</p> <p>OCCURED</p>	<p>Voids turnaround</p> <p>Update on new structure of Housing Panels and Resident Engagement</p> <p>Cabinet Member Update</p>
<p>Meeting 2 6th September 2021</p> <p>OCCURED</p>	<p>Reports from organisations that provide support and advice to vulnerable groups - Her Centre, Greenwich Housing Rights, METRO, METROGAVS.</p> <p>Housing Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse – Victims of domestic abuse are funded by HB but those with nil recourse were not entitled to a space. Core rent was also not funded. The Panel was concerned that victims are not being adequately supported or protected and requested that this be looked at in more detail.</p>
<p>Meeting 3 14th October 2021</p> <p>SCHEDULED</p>	<p>Housing Contract Variations</p> <p>Stock Condition Survey – report on the current housing stock and the quality of living conditions for tenants.</p> <p>Reports from organisations that provide support and advice to vulnerable groups - GRIP</p>
<p>Meeting 4 25th November 2021</p> <p>SCHEDULED</p>	<p>Housing Revenue Account Expenditure</p> <p>Housing Repairs Scrutiny Review Update – response to covid-19.</p>

<p>Meeting 5 27th January 2022</p>	<p>Annual meeting with registered providers of social housing</p> <p>Registered Landlords - PA Housing's management of the Connaught Estate and Hyde Housing – the Cabinet member and Scrutiny Chair expressed concern about PA and Hyde Housing's approach to managing the estate and requested that representatives from PA Housing and Hyde be invited to a future meeting of HAP.</p> <p>Meridian Home Start (MHS) – annual report on the progress of the development of MHS as a community benefit society and performance in providing homes at affordable rents</p>
<p>Meeting 6 10th March 2022</p>	<p>RBG's Housing Obligations to Ex-prisoners – the Panel was advised at a meeting in September 2019 that the Housing Inclusion and Support Service was obligated to provide temporary accommodation for prisoners until they had established a five-year local connection. The Panel did not consider this to be cost effective and further information was requested.</p> <p>Social Mobility Delivery Action Plan – report on support given to vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Sheltered Housing Update</p> <p>Cabinet Member Update</p>

