

Overview & Scrutiny

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To:

Cllr Guy Nicholson, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management & Regeneration

Housing Improvement Plan (Suggestions for Improvement)

The Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission recently reviewed the Council's progress against delivering the priorities and actions outlined in the [Housing Improvement Plan](#) (HIP). This was seen as timely given that the HIP was refreshed in July 2025 based on learning from the previous year of the wider improvement programme's delivery and findings from the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH), Housing Ombudsman (HOS) and Resident Scrutiny Panel.

The Commission's scrutiny of the HIP included a substantive update on its six key themes at our meeting on 8th December 2025 (health and safety, repairs, learning from complaints, knowledge and information management, oversight and workforce and policy and procedure), as well as receipt of the annual housing complaints report at our meeting on 20th October 2025.

This was the first time the annual housing complaints report had been considered by the Commission, having previously been considered by Scrutiny Panel alongside council-wide complaints performance. This change has helped us to more holistically consider housing complaints alongside performance monitoring and policy development.

The video recordings, alongside the agenda papers and minutes, provide a public record of the meetings:

- Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 20th October 2025: [video recording](#), [agenda papers](#) and [minutes](#)
- Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 8th December 2025: [video recording](#), [agenda papers](#) and [minutes](#)

As part of the scrutiny process, the Commission also undertook a [site visit to Florfield Depot](#) and spoke with frontline operatives and management staff across Building Maintenance & Estates Services to hear about their views on the progress made and what they might like to see happen going forward.

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The Commission would firstly like to place on record its thanks to Rickardo Hyatt, Group Director Climate, Housing & Economy, Helena Stephensen, Acting Director Tenancy & Homeownership Services, Kain Roach, Operations Director HRA Property Services, Tom Harrison, Assistant Director Housing Transformation and Lindsey Matthews, Assistant Director Building Maintenance & Estate Environment for their engagement.

We are also grateful to the frontline operatives and management staff who showed us around Florfield Depot and shared their views and experiences with us. Staff are well placed to tell us what will make their jobs easier, what will help them manage demand and what will have the best impact for residents.

We would like to thank Steve Webster and Zara Shoorvazi, Resident Liaison Group Co-Chairs, for sharing their views and experiences. Their engagement with the scrutiny process is a testament to their commitment to holding the Council to account and championing the issues that matter to residents.

Finally, the Commission would like to thank you in your capacity as Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Management & Regeneration for your contributions and ongoing engagement with the scrutiny process.

On the evidence provided and through consultation with officers, members of the Commission have outlined their findings and made 16 requests for further information or suggestions for improvement for your consideration, which it is hoped will contribute further to the positive work that is already taking place.

We look forward to receiving your response in due course.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Joseph Ogundemuren
Vice-Chair, Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

Cc:

- Caroline Woodley, Mayor of Hackney
- Rickardo Hyatt, Group Director Housing, Climate & Economy
- Helena Stephenson, Acting Director Tenancy & Homeownership Services
- Kain Roach, Operations Director HRA Property Services
- Tom Harrison, Assistant Director Housing Transformation
- Lindsey Matthews, Assistant Director Building Maintenance & Estate Environment
- Matthew Curran, Assistant Director Building Safety
- William Walker, Assistant Director Property and Asset Management
- Ben Bradley, Head of Mayor and Cabinet Office
- Pamela Leonce, Housing Advisory Panel Chair
- Steve Webster, Resident Liaison Group Co-Chair
- Zara Shoorvazi, Resident Liaison Group Co-Chair

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Suggestions for improvement

The Commission recognises that the regulatory environment within which social landlords are operating has changed significantly in recent years, with the introduction of the RSH and a new set of consumer standards, the strengthening of the role of the HOS and the introduction of the Building Safety Act. These new requirements are both necessary and welcomed, particularly in the wake of high-profile, avoidable tragedies like the Grenfell fire and the death of Awaab Ishak.

The Council's self referral to the RSH in June 2024, subsequent [regulatory judgement](#) and the [special investigation report](#) from the HOS in May 2025 highlighted that residents have not received the level of service they should be receiving for a number of years. Despite the tireless efforts of housing staff who have been working under increasingly difficult circumstances, the structures, procedures, systems and data to effectively carry out their roles have not been in place to help them carry out their roles effectively.

The centrality of the new integrated housing management system (IHMS) to delivering housing services effectively and at scale is well recognised. Its ongoing rollout is welcomed but long overdue. For too long, staff have lacked a single, central space to store, maintain and use the information they collect. Too many residents have had to tell staff what they need over and over again with no continuity in how their cases are handled.

The HOS report recognised the importance of scrutiny and oversight in holding the Council to account for the housing services it provides, and in particular the ongoing need for both internal and resident-led scrutiny structures to be provided with timely, transparent and insightful information and data to effectively carry out their ever important roles, and keep a focus on the root causes of service failings and their impacts.

We were therefore encouraged to see the strategic importance of these matters reflected in the accelerated HIP agreed in July 2025. The HIP targets significant investment into Housing Services' capacity and its ability to provide a more efficient and consistent level of service. The agreement of the HIP was an important step in the Council's improvement journey, providing residents with a set of clear milestones, measures of success and lines of accountability.

Clearly, the improvement journey will take time. The scale of change needed is significant, as is the range of pressures facing large, inner city social landlords in particular. However, the Council must not look for excuses and remain steadfast in its drive to improve the housing services it provides to residents.

Residents rightly expect to live in a safe, warm and dry home and receive high-quality, human-centred services from their landlord. The Council must also not lose sight of the fact that these homes not only offer a lifeline to residents who cannot afford to buy or rent a home privately, but provide them with the foundations needed to thrive in their lives more generally, for example by improving health or education outcomes and boosting jobs and employment opportunities.

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Health and safety

The RSH's regulatory judgement highlighted that the Council was failing to ensure that it meets a number of legal requirements in relation to health and safety, including gas servicing, electrical safety, asbestos, water safety and lift safety requirements. Clearly, ensuring we hold valid compliance certificates for our properties and have completed identified remedial works is of the utmost importance.

The Commission was encouraged to hear that, since referral to the RSH in June 2024, the Council has achieved 100% compliance across fire, water and asbestos, gas safety has typically been above 99.5% and compliance for LOLER lift checks has consistently been above 95%. This is a clear and sustained improvement across all Safety & Quality Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

We heard that reaching 100% compliance for gas safety has been challenging due to some residents failing to give access for gas safety checks, often requiring repeated attempts and in some cases even access injunctions. This can lead to significant financial, time and administrative costs, and we would encourage the Council to look at how its current gas safety access process could be adapted to assist operatives struggling to get into properties to do works and other compliance checks.

Whilst the Council is consistently above 95% compliance for LOLER lift checks and performs monthly servicing on 100% of lifts, in actual fact lift safety compliance targets are still not being met. It is imperative that the Council ensures that all lifts, including passenger lifts, stairlifts and hoists in communal areas, are safe, maintained, and subjected to regular thorough examinations.

We recognise that many lifts are old, outdated and require extensive maintenance to remain operational. Two new maintenance contractors have been procured to better manage maintenance, but in reality a significant amount of them need modernising or replacing. This will not only improve the quality of the lift service for residents, but also reduce future maintenance costs and breakdowns.

The new lift replacement programme to renew or replace the worst performing 120 lifts is therefore welcomed, with priority to be given to the 41 lifts that break down most frequently. Once this timely renewal and modernisation work has been completed, we hope that a more effective rolling programme of lift maintenance is established. We also urge the Council to ensure contractor performance is closely monitored to minimise disruptions and ensure value for money for residents.

Clearly, the Council has further to go to become fully compliant with all Safety & Quality TSMs. However, we feel somewhat assured by the fact that the RSH seems to feel that performance is within tolerable limits with focus now shifting to measures being put in place to prevent regression once their engagement ends.

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Electrical safety check performance continues to be well below targets at just below 44%. We understand that unplanned absences in the procurement team have delayed the tender for an electrical safety contractor, who is unlikely to be in place until April against an original target of Q3 25/26.

This is concerning not least because of the risks of faulty, overloaded or uncertified installations, but also because the RSH plans to introduce a new TSM for electrical safety to cover the 2026-27 reporting period onwards. We are therefore keen for the service to provide us with evidence that it is making sufficient progress and improvements to hit its target of 70% compliance by March 2026 and 100% compliance by March 2027.

Overdue fire safety actions are also increasing, although it should be said that the percentage of actions completed continues to rise too. We were told that the true figure of outstanding actions is likely to be lower than currently reported, with duplicate actions and outstanding actions that have been completed being identified as data is transferred to Shine.

We also recognise that national factors are impacting on remediation progress, such as capacity issues at the Building Safety Regulator and high levels of demand as the Council absorbs the workload previously delivered by the private sector. Nonetheless, this is a considerable risk and we will continue to closely monitor progress to address all outstanding fire safety actions in the coming months, particularly the 16 outstanding high-risk actions as of November 2025.

As recommended by the [Grenfell Inquiry Phase 1 Report](#) in 2019, landlords of high-rise properties should prepare residential personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) for all residents whose ability to self-evacuate may be compromised (such as residents with reduced mobility or cognition). From April 2026, the implementation of residential PEEPs will become a statutory requirement. This has been coming for a long time, and is much needed.

We were therefore concerned to see the HOS highlight in its special investigation report that the Council was one of only five local authorities which had not issued any residential PEEPs since 2017. We were told that a number of person-centred fire risk assessments (PCFRA) have been completed since 2020, but to our knowledge there have been no PEEPs issued as a result.

Whilst we appreciate that PEEPs are not yet mandatory, many local authorities have already taken steps to ensure they are ready to deliver PEEPs. It should also be noted that the Council's PCFRAs have been limited to residents above the age of 18, yet in the new guidance children are explicitly included as a group that may need specialised assistance and may not fully understand evacuation rules. We are keen therefore to better understand the Council's overall preparedness for the new requirements.

The Commission therefore suggests that:

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- 1) Housing Services reviews how its current gas safety access process could be adapted to assist operatives struggling to get into properties to do works and other compliance checks.

This should include a review of the tenancy agreement itself and all reasonable steps taken to gain access, from initial notification to follow up attempts, and involve collaborative working with Legal Services to streamline the gas safety injunction process where possible.

- 2) Housing Services sets out its action plan to improve electrical safety check performance and hit its target of 70% compliance by March 2026 and 100% compliance by March 2027.

This should include an explanation of its overall preparedness for the introduction of a new Regulator of Social Housing Tenant Satisfaction Measure for electrical safety to cover the 2026-27 reporting period onwards.

- 3) Housing Services provides an update on progress to address all outstanding fire safety actions since November 2025, with a particular focus on the 16 outstanding high-risk actions, as well as future plans to keep the backlog under control once it has been cleared.

- 4) Housing Services sets out its overall preparedness for the new statutory residential personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) requirements due to come into effect in April 2026.

This should include the steps that the service has already taken since 2019's Grenfell Inquiry Phase 1 Report to identify and mitigate fire risks for vulnerable residents, as well as future plans to ensure it is ready to promptly issue PEEPs in line with the new legislation.

Repairs

The RSH's regulatory judgement and HO special investigation highlighted a number of issues with the repairs and maintenance service. Fundamentally, living in a home in a poor state of repair can have a big impact on residents who should expect an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service. For too long this has not been the case.

We were therefore pleased to hear that a number of measures have been introduced since the self-referral to the RSH to improve the speed and quality of the repairs service, drive down the repairs backlog and meet the Council's responsibilities under Awaab's Law. This has been driven by increased contractor capacity, new policies and procedures and some improvements to repairs diagnosis.

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We were told that non-emergency repairs completed on time were at 86.7% for the year to date, placing the Council in the upper quartile compared to its benchmarking group. The service is now consistently attending over 90% of plumbing leaks by the end of the next working day. A significant contribution to this performance has been expanded contractor support, with all new contractors operating at full capacity a quarter ahead of schedule.

Emergency repairs within target were at 72.29% for the year to date, which is significantly lower than the 96% target. Whilst we recognise that there are higher degrees of variance for this measure and there has been improvement since August 2025, we are keen to better understand what action will be taken to ensure emergency repairs are completed within the target time once the winter peak passes.

Targets to reduce the repairs backlog to below 500 cases and ensure no repairs are over three months old have not been met. Whilst disappointing, there are signs of improvement and we would like to highlight that the repairs backlog has seen a decline of 68.1% from the October 2024 peak. Only 89 of these were over three months old in November 2025, compared with 586 in June 2025, most of which are due to issues such as denied access, hoarding or legal disrepair and litigation.

The backlog of damp and mould cases has similarly declined by 61.4% over the same period, and the average time to resolve these cases is comfortably within the 56 day target. We were told access issues were the biggest driver of overdue damp and mould cases, typically involving residents with additional needs. This highlights the importance of the repairs team working closely with contractors and trusted housing officers to help gain access to carry out works.

Building Maintenance operatives told us about some of the challenges they face on the ground in providing a more effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service. We heard, for example, that the Council's Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN), School Street and Bus Gate initiatives hinders their ability to respond to jobs, resulting in increased journey times, operational delays and compromised service delivery to residents.

As highlighted to us in the 2024/25 annual complaints report, a significant number of cases where missed appointments or delays in being able to attend to carry out works result in complaints. We understand that much of this has been down to not having enough operatives available to respond, particularly during the winter months, but we also are keen to understand what impact the Council's LTN, School Street and Bus Gate initiatives is having on the service's ability to attend to jobs within target timescales.

Concerns were also raised around not having the necessary systems and processes in place for the effective procurement, storage and usage of materials for repairs, maintenance and retrofitting. The need for more effective management of supply chain disruptions was highlighted, including more joined up working with Housing Delivery & Regeneration during the design phase for new builds to ensure building materials have a longer lifespan and are easily replaceable.

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The need for digital inventory systems for stock management was also highlighted. Operatives told us that many inventories have been paper-based since the cyber-attack in 2020, and felt that a digital solution would help to improve first-time repair rates through better stock availability and mobile access to stock information, and reduce costs through optimised stock control and supplier management.

An area of continued frustration for residents is the number of follow-on works that can occur after an initial repairs visit. Not only can this be generally inconvenient for residents, it can lead to missed work or lost earnings. Excessive, unresolved or repeat repairs can also create or exacerbate medical conditions or mental health needs.

It was therefore concerning to see that the Council is not meeting its target for reducing the number of follow-on works raised. An important aspect of this is improving how follow-on works are recorded and reported, particularly to help analyse cases and use that data to drive improvements. It therefore seems likely that improvement will be dependent on the release of phase 2 of the IHMS.

This was echoed in our conversations with frontline operatives, who shared their frustrations about not being able to record and respond to repairs jobs efficiently due to outdated digital solutions. Clearly, having access to tablets and phones to capture photos, notes and electronic signatures, and specific applications to allow operatives to view job details, update repairs status and access property history instantly, will help them to complete more repairs in a single visit.

Some concerns were also raised regarding how repairs and maintenance issues are triaged at the customer call centre. Whilst progress has been made in recent years to help customer call centre staff to understand and record the urgency or complexity of repairs, as well as the needs and vulnerabilities of the individual making the request, operatives highlighted repeated issues with information not being fully recorded or accessible to them remotely, leading to delays and repeat visits.

The repairs diagnostic tool is central to progress in this respect, and it is acknowledged that there have been difficulties in implementing the tool due to limitations in existing systems that force call centre agents to follow a specific workflow. We hope that the learning from this will be taken into the implementation of the second generation diagnostics tool, which we were told is due to be implemented as part of the wider IHMS from May 2026.

Operatives should be fully supported to be proactive in carrying out repairs and, where necessary, go beyond the scope of the reported repair to negate the need for a future repair and minimise recalls. Having said this, we appreciate that some works cannot be completed in a single visit. In these cases it is crucial that the repairs team proactively schedules appointments for follow up visits and keeps the resident informed throughout the process - treating them with respect and dignity throughout.

Ultimately, we want the Council to move to a more proactive approach for repairs and maintenance, identifying and fixing potential repairs issues before they become an

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emergency. Over the years the Council has found itself stuck in a reactive maintenance cycle where urgent repairs and emergency call-outs understandably take priority, but this has led to inefficiencies, delays to planned works and poor outcomes for residents.

The importance of stock condition and property profile data for long-term maintenance is particularly important in this respect. Building Maintenance operatives and management staff told us that a better understanding of the age and condition of building components would help to prioritise repairs and improvements and, whilst the challenges around access and budgets were noted, it was felt that progress on building a clearer picture of stock condition could be quicker.

The success of the property MOT pilots in reviewing damp and mould issues within properties where intel suggests there may be a wider issue in the block was also highlighted, which has helped to address issues early and develop future works programmes. This reduces reliance on residents reporting issues, helps to identify hidden issues and supports the service to anticipate and prioritise interventions before they escalate. We would like to see this success built upon, with data reviewed at a wider scale to identify homes that have, or may be at risk of, developing problems.

The Commission therefore suggests that:

- 5) Housing Services sets out its action plan to ensure emergency repairs are completed within the target timescales 96% of the time by the revised target date of Q1 2026/27.

This should include further information on the root cause analysis for the challenges experienced in attending emergency repairs on time to understand the key drivers and how these insights will be utilised to inform improvement measures.

- 6) Housing Services sets out the business case and options appraisal in regard to a full, borough-wide exemption for all Building Maintenance operatives from Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, School Streets and Bus Gates.

If a borough-wide exemption has been duly considered and subsequently rejected, this should include a rationale which clearly explains why the proposal was not taken forward and the alternative options currently being considered.

- 7) Housing Services sets out how the new integrated housing management system will support more efficient processes for the procurement, storage and usage of materials for repairs, maintenance and retrofitting and timelines for delivering them as soon as possible. This may include, for example, new digital inventory systems for stock management.
- 8) Housing Services sets out the mechanisms in place to facilitate collaboration and joined up working with Housing Delivery & Regeneration during the design phase for new builds to proactively ensure building materials have longer lifespans and are easily replaceable.

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- 9) Housing Services expands the recent damp and mould property MOT pilots to a wider, more proactive inspection scheme to identify homes that have, or may be at risk of, developing problems, more effectively resolve damp and mould issues and ensure compliance with safety standards.

A full cost-benefit analysis should also be undertaken beforehand to assess whether the expansion can be self-funded from a reduction in responsive repair costs.

Learning from complaints

The HO's special investigation was prompted by concerns from its complaints casework about the Council's overall maladministration rate and severe maladministration rate between April and October 2023, with that trend continuing in cases determined between October 2023 and June 2024.

We recognise that the Council has faced significant challenges, including the cyber-attack in 2020 and those shared across the sector such as the Covid-19 pandemic, increasing demand and insufficient budgets. These are particularly acute in London due to higher levels of overcrowding, a higher proportion of residents living in high rise blocks and older housing stock, and London landlords consequently face disproportionately high complaints levels.

In addition, the Council is one of the largest social landlords in the country with over 1,000 homes. We appreciate the complexities of managing larger organisations and the difficulties in providing a personal service at scale, which is again reflected by larger landlords typically receiving more complaints than smaller landlords.

That being said, the reality is that the Council recorded the [highest number of housing complaints in England](#) in 2024/2025, receiving 5,982 in total. Whilst this can be seen as indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process, it is nonetheless concerning that the number of complaints continues to rise year on year - with the volume of stage 1 complaints increasing by 100.9% between 2021/22 and 2024/25.

As highlighted by the HO, it is imperative that the Council properly analyses and identifies the root causes of complaints and learns from them. The Council has begun to make better use of the root cause analysis functionality on OneCase, but there is scope for more improvement. This has been recognised, and improvements in the way this critical data is generated and utilised for both primary and secondary classifications and causes are planned for 2025/26.

In line with the sector as a whole, repairs issues continue to drive increasing stage 1 complaint volumes, with Building Maintenance consistently receiving around 59% of all stage 1 complaints each year. The key drivers of these complaints such as leaks, heating, hot water and contractor related issues have already been touched upon. These are being compounded by delays and a lack of communication, and we will retain a keen interest in the

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impact that the various improvement measures being implemented have on complaints volumes.

We were encouraged to hear that, despite rising complaints volumes, average handling time and the proportion of stage 1 complaints resolved in time has improved year on year. The Council's annual TSM satisfaction survey for 2024/25 also showed an increase in overall stage 1 complaints handling satisfaction amongst tenants from 52% to 58% from the previous year, although satisfaction was lower in relation to the delivery of actions promised and confidence that issues will be resolved.

It must be highlighted that the response rate to the complaints satisfaction survey has historically been low, with just 87 respondents for Q4 2024/25. We have raised concerns about the impact that low response rates to satisfaction surveys has on the reliability of the data previously, as it reflects only a small proportion of residents' views. Clearly, this can lead to misleading insights if the Council is not transparent and objective when presenting this data.

To improve the reliability of this data, more needs to be done to increase response rates. The service should consider how it can make both the stage 1 and newly introduced stage 2 satisfaction surveys more accessible and engaging, when it might be best to send them and how many reminders it should send, and it may also want to consider offering incentives to respondents like entry into a prize draw, discounts or gift cards. The same can also be said for other resident satisfaction surveys.

It is also difficult to draw meaningful insights from this data without a sense of the individual complaints of each respondent. For example, fixing a minor decorative issue quickly is more likely to get a positive response than a more complex damp and mould problem which may take longer to address. Satisfaction survey data should also be cross-cut with complaint categories to add to its completeness and provide better insight.

We also note that, in its [review report into the Council's preparation for consumer regulation](#), Campbell Tickett highlighted that 2023/24 resident satisfaction surveys did not collect or analyse data for any of the protected characteristics except age, which was described as a significant oversight in understanding the equity of service outcomes for all residents. We are keen to understand whether this has since been addressed.

In any case, it remains concerning that the majority of satisfaction survey respondents for 2024/25 have not seen the actions promised in their complaint response completed (46.5%), and are not confident that the issues raised in their complaint have been or will be resolved (51.3%). This is also reflected in the sharp increase in the rate of escalations to stage 2, which rose 20.1% in 2024/25 from the previous year.

Clearly, this represents a significant area for improvement going forward. We were pleased to see this recognised, with a number of actions being prioritised to reverse this upward trend including the continued roll out of the stage 1 complaints quality assurance (QA) framework (sampling 10% of the stage 1 complaints closed each month), a new internal training course

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for complaints handlers and a corrective actions tracker to ensure the relevant service area is delivering on the actions that it says it will be taking to resolve complaint issues.

It is important to highlight that a decline in maladministration findings has been observed since the HO report, with the proportion of maladministration findings now being comparatively lower than other large local authority landlords (75% vs 80%). This, along with average handling time and the proportion of stage 1 complaints resolved in time improving year on year, shows the first signs of the HIP improving complaint handling, although it is from a high failure rate and focus cannot be diverted.

The Commission therefore suggests that:

- 10) Housing Services considers how it can increase response rates to both the stage 1 and newly introduced stage 2 satisfaction surveys by making them more accessible and engaging. Satisfaction survey data should also be cross-cut with complaint categories (classifications and causes) to add to its completeness and provide better insights for decision-makers.

The learning from this exercise should also be taken and applied to other resident satisfaction surveys such as the annual STAR survey to increase response rates, better understand the data and identify wider trends in satisfaction.

- 11) Housing Services sets out the steps it has taken since the Campbell Tickett review into the Council's preparation for consumer regulation in 2024 to collect and analyse data for protected characteristics across all resident satisfaction surveys to better understand the equity of service outcomes for all residents.

Knowledge and information management

The HOS's special investigation report outlined the importance of knowledge and information management (KIM). Whilst acknowledging the impact of the cyber-attack, the HOS highlighted the significant challenges that operating without key systems and data continues to cause the Council, which is having a negative affect on its performance and residents' lives.

Poor KIM has hampered the Council's efforts to horizon-scan and identify risk, proactively address hazards, fully comply with legal and regulatory requirements and, ultimately, provide a high-quality service to residents. We were therefore pleased to see this recognised in the HIP, with a number of workstreams in place to implement new systems, improve the data literacy of staff and improve the quality of data held.

At a basic level, reliable workplace Wi-Fi is an absolute necessity for operational efficiency and staff productivity. Poor Wi-Fi connectivity at Florfield Depot was highlighted as a significant challenge, with staff telling us that they regularly experienced signal issues leading to issues processing jobs, communicating with residents and colleagues and accessing essential information and data as a result. Housing staff based in Hackney Service Centre do

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not experience the same problems and so, clearly, a more reliable network is needed at the depot.

We have already touched upon the centrality of the new IHMS which is on schedule for a phase 1 release in April 2026 and is due to be fully operational by the end of 2027. This is encouraging, but we do have some reservations about the phasing for its implementation. We recognise that a phased rollout is necessary to allow for testing, learning and minimising immediate disruptions, but we would have liked to have seen frontline services like repairs prioritised, recognising that frontline staff often act as the face of the service and that repairs issues are a key driver of resident dissatisfaction.

An important point already made, but we would like to highlight again, is that the records made by operatives will impact the experiences of residents – both positive and negative – and will inform the decisions made by leaders. Challenges around data need to be considered in both the strategic sense and in respect to practical application at the day-to-day operational level. As such, it is imperative that operatives are clear on what needs to be recorded, have the right tools to do so, and that the accuracy of data recorded is routinely checked.

We were pleased to hear that a document management system is now live with housing officers, contact centre staff and colleagues in Benefits and Homelessness Prevention. This is an important step in ensuring the efficient, secure and compliant storing, protecting and retrieving of records. In time, we would hope that other council services like children's and adults' social care and even partner agencies like the NHS will be able to make use of this system, making information sharing and collaboration easier at both a strategic and operational level.

We were also pleased to hear that the Council is likely to hit its target of holding additional needs data on 50% of residents two quarters ahead of schedule. As highlighted in our [previous letter on residents sustainment and vulnerability](#), as access to housing becomes more restricted in the borough, the Council is housing more tenants with complex vulnerabilities and holding this data is integral to recognising, adjusting and responding to their individual circumstances.

The Resident Data app has been well received by staff, and is already supporting initial tenancy visits and the tenancy audit programme. Whilst we recognise that reaching 100% is challenging due to access issues and some residents choosing not to share information, we do hope that the 50% target can be raised to maximise our ability to ensure residents receive quality support and make reasonable adjustments based on their unique needs to prevent disadvantages.

As already mentioned, accurate stock condition and property profile data is integral to informing the asset management strategy and programme of planned works. We were therefore pleased to hear that we are on track to hold stock condition data on 65% and 100% of stock as planned. Whilst we share the frustrations of the frontline staff who would like to see this happen sooner, we do appreciate that collecting this information takes time.

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Once we do reach 100%, we hope that maintaining up-to-date stock condition data becomes routine and we establish a rolling programme of inspections. And, of course, the Council needs to do more than just collect stock data – it needs to analyse and apply it too. We will keep a watching brief over how these stock condition surveys and property profile data translate into more effective asset management in the coming years.

Closely related to this point is ensuring that staff across the service are provided with the tools to effectively read, work with, analyse and interrogate data. This will empower them to transform data into actionable, meaningful insights and drive up standards across the service. Data literacy is a foundational skill for all employees, not just those in technical roles, and we were therefore glad to see that the Council plans to provide all housing staff with data literacy training.

The Commission therefore suggests that:

- 12) Housing Services develops an action plan to urgently improve the reliability of Wi-Fi connectivity at Florfield Depot to improve its reliability, speed and security and in turn boost productivity.

This may involve working with the current supplier to address persistent issues, or approaching alternative providers to assess whether their offers might provide better value for money.

- 13) Housing Services raises the current target of holding additional needs data on 50% of residents to 75% to better understand the diverse needs of residents and build the foundations for a more effective rolling tenancy audit programme.

Oversight and workforce

In its special investigation report, the HOS outlined its concerns about the way scrutiny and oversight was supported at the Council. It found issues with the data and information provided to internal and resident-led scrutiny structures and insufficient focus on the causes of service failings and their impact on residents. This led to a 'positivity prism' which prevented real learning and reflection.

Strong oversight and scrutiny starts with an understanding and appreciation of its benefits to both the organisation and residents. This needs to be centrally-led, with senior leaders clear about its importance, and their standards and expectations. This in turn helps to foster a working environment where staff, councillors and residents have direction, structure and guidance and adherence to the standards is routinely monitored.

For our part, we feel like there has been a step change in the service's transparency and openness to scrutiny. We are now being provided with more timely, transparent and insightful information and data to effectively carry out our role. This in turn is allowing us to develop better insights into service delivery and enable appropriate challenge. We hope this

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continues throughout the implementation of the HIP and once the service eventually moves to a business as usual position.

The establishment of the Housing Advisory Panel has provided a layer of independent and resident oversight and assurance for the delivery of housing services. Its role in challenging, reviewing, advising and escalating risk is welcomed, particularly in respect of additional resident engagement and the input of sector professionals, and we are keen to develop the ways in which our work can complement that of the Panel from 2026/27 onwards.

We were pleased to hear that the Council is rolling out a new corporate performance management framework, which includes separate performance dashboards for housing operational data and housing complaints data. This should help to provide a single source of truth, rather than departments all having their own datasets, thus ensuring all teams and scrutineers can access consistent, up-to-date and reliable information.

We heard that more detailed performance data is available at service level, giving housing staff real time data and insights. Additional functionality will be added as the new IHMS is rolled out, with performance indicators reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they align with service objectives. The monthly performance scrutiny meetings between assistant directors are a critical aspect of the new framework, ensuring leaders are regularly reviewing and addressing key issues and trends.

As we have already touched upon in regard to satisfaction survey data, if flawed, inaccurate or biased data is fed into these performance management processes, the resulting insights, decisions or predictions will inevitably be misinformed. We would like to highlight again that informed decision-making and oversight can only happen if effective KIM is in place, and as such we will be keeping a watching brief over how these two strategic priorities are taken forward concurrently.

The HOS highlighted that the Council does not currently have a QA framework for both stage 1 and 2 complaints, despite complaint handling issues that have been known for a number of years. We were pleased to hear that a QA framework is now beginning to be rolled out, with an initial focus on assessing the quality of stage 1 complaints. A wider framework will be finalised in Q1 2026/27, which will include amongst other things a new QA approach to repairs works ordered.

Integral to the delivery of the HIP is workforce development. To turn data and action plans into positive outcomes for residents, staff must be equipped with skills to do so. We were therefore pleased to see the creation of a workforce development plan which identifies the skills needed to use new procedures, systems and data, as well as wider training and development needs in respect of the core behaviours expected of staff.

A particularly important aspect of the new behaviours framework and training plans will be timely, transparent and honest communication with residents. Too often we hear from residents that have difficulties getting through to housing staff, have to repeatedly follow up on matters raised, or otherwise do not feel heard or respected in their interactions with staff.

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Clearly, staff need to do more to communicate with residents empathetically and transparently – and follow up on their concerns and suggestions in a more timely way.

The Commission therefore suggests that:

- 14) The Housing Advisory Panel provides an annual report to the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission setting out its assessment of how Housing Services is delivering against key performance measures and its progress in delivering the Housing Improvement Plan.

It is expected that the Chair of the Housing Advisory Panel attends Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission on an annual basis to present the report and answer any questions scrutiny councillors may have on its findings and future work programme.

Policy and procedure

The HOS highlighted the need to review or introduce various policies and procedures. Officers also told us there were a number of complaints that have been upheld in recent years due to policies and procedures either not being in place, not being followed correctly or incorrect / unclear advice being given based on officers' lack of knowledge of those policies and procedures.

When rolled out to staff with appropriate training and software support, new or updated policies and procedures should guide and enable consistent decision-making, ensuring services are fair, intuitive and transparent to residents. They set standards across the service, and ensure compliance with legislative, statutory and regulatory requirements.

Whilst recognising that many policies and procedures need to be introduced at pace, it is vital that leaders actively listen to staff and act on their feedback throughout their development. Staff are well placed to tell leaders what will make their jobs easier, what will help them manage demand and what will have the best impact for residents. This would also foster a shared ownership of policies and procedures, and a shared responsibility for applying them consistently.

However, the frontline operatives we spoke to felt that there had been limited engagement with them in developing the HIP and various policies and procedures being reviewed or introduced as a result. Whilst there have been some workshops for staff to come and share ideas, it was felt that more time should have been taken to understand what would make their jobs easier and improve resident satisfaction.

There was a general sentiment that improvement measures were taken by organisational leaders without proper consideration of how they would be delivered on the ground, and without acting on the feedback of frontline staff. Despite these officers often acting as the face of the service and building relationships with residents, it was felt that they are not always listened to and ultimately face the brunt of ineffective policies and procedures.

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From an oversight and scrutiny perspective, we are keen to see the long-term policy and procedure review schedule, and, where appropriate, how we will be given the opportunity to input into the pre-decision development process. Looking at policies and procedures before they are agreed provides an important means for elected representatives to influence and improve them, and scrutiny councillors bring a different perspective than that provided by cabinet members or officers, which can help decisions to be more robust.

Similarly, it is important that new and updated policies and procedures are evaluated after they have been agreed to assess their impact, effectiveness and implementation. Our role in this remains important, but we are also keen to see the establishment of a regular review cycle and associated training registers. We were told that this will be managed by the new Governance and Assurance function, and we look forward to seeing how this will work in practice as the regulatory landscape continues to evolve.

An overarching factor critical to the success of new or updated policies and procedures, and the delivery of the HIP more generally, is moving beyond siloed working practices. Departments within the service need to work more closely together to provide a 360-degree view of service delivery and outcomes, for example Property Services and Tenancy Management. Across the Council it will require more effective collaboration with ICT, Finance and Legal colleagues amongst others, and also with external agencies such as housing associations, health services and social care providers.

A pertinent example of this is the new [supporting residents with additional needs to thrive policy](#). As mentioned in our response to the draft policy, improved collaboration and joint working between council services and external agencies is a key factor in addressing vulnerability and reducing the risk of tenancy failure. Being clear on objectives, funding, governance and accountability is one thing, but helping to identify people who are vulnerable and link them to the right individualised support depends on behaviours and conversations between the people delivering those services.

The Commission therefore suggests that:

- 15) Housing Services sets out the engagement framework for how staff will be routinely and meaningfully involved in planning, designing and delivering new policies and procedures that will affect them.

This should outline how the service will move beyond just consulting staff to working directly with them to ensure their concerns and aspirations are understood and considered, and ensuring staff receive updates on how their feedback is being acted upon.

~~actively listening to the views and suggestions of staff at all levels when developing new policies and procedures that will affect them, as well as the mechanisms in place to integrate this insight into the development process and show staff how their feedback has been acted upon.~~

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16) Housing Services shares a list of all current policies and procedures, the long-term review schedule and the prioritisation process to provide assurance that policy and procedure reviews are on track and help scrutiny councillors to prioritise their own work programme.