

# CABINET

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Wednesday, 30 June 2021 at 5.30 p.m.

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## PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY QUESTIONS AND OFFICER RESPONSES

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	<b>PAGE NUMBER</b>
<b>5. OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	
<b>5.1 Chair's Advice of Key Issues or Questions</b>	
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to report on any issues raised by the OSC in relation to unrestricted business to be considered.	<b>3 - 20</b>

If you require any further information relating to this meeting, would like to request a large print, Braille or audio version of this document, or would like to discuss access arrangements or any other special requirements, please contact:

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**Cabinet 30 June**  
**Pre-decision scrutiny questions**

- 1. ITEM 6.1 ANNUAL COUNCIL PERFORMANCE & DELIVERY REPORT 2020/21**
- 2. ITEM 6.2 COVID-19 RESPONSE – ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21**
- 3. ITEM 6.3 COVID RECOVERY FUND**
- 4. ITEM 6.4 ADDITIONS TO APPROVED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020-21 TO 2023-24**

## Overview & Scrutiny PDSQs 28.06.2021

### Item 6.1 Annual Council Performance & Delivery Report 2020/21

Questions	Response
<p>1. Outcome 5: Proportion of the population who live in LTN the target was not met. Are there likely to be further delays with the project (as it progresses, and residents continue to oppose)?</p>	<p>All public consultations so far have received relatively high response rates, and with overall support expressed for the proposals that have been put forward.</p> <p>Delays in the implementation of LTNs relative to the target have been caused by a variety of reasons and we are not planning on catching-up with an accelerated roll-out to make up for slower progress than initially anticipated at the start of the scheme. It is important to get these things right and doing that takes time.</p> <p>Some delays can occur at public consultation stage, especially where there is high feedback with different lots of suggestions to be added or changed and time needed to reflect on responses and the best way forward.</p> <p>After public consultation the results of that consultation are reported to Cabinet alongside the recommendation from the service about whether the LTN should progress and what the design should look like (having taken into consideration, where possible, the results of the consultation).</p> <p>Delay can also occur prior to and during the build phase - these are where there have been issues with supply (obtaining materials from Europe) and significant delays due to Covid restrictions.</p> <p>Finally, it should be noted that this indicator needs some further definition, as it only currently records completion when an entire scheme is complete while, obviously, large parts of a scheme may be</p>

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	<p>completed many months before the entire scheme is finished, and residents will therefore ‘incrementally’ benefit from a scheme as it progresses.</p>
<p>2. Outcome 9-11: Staff sickness - With people working from home in future could this target change to improve sickness and absence rate?</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 8</p>	<p>Since the Covid-19 pandemic there has been an increase in sickness absence. It is too early to say whether a shift in working pattern has had a positive impact on sickness absence as we are living in unprecedented times. If we remove Covid-19 absence, our rates of sickness absence have seen a reduction from pre-pandemic times. However, it is difficult to attribute this to a shift in working pattern and it is likely also a result of long periods of lockdown where there was further restriction on movement and far less human interaction with one another. Removing Covid-19 absence is also not a true reflection of underlying sickness absence as a large proportion of Covid-19 absence was recorded as self-isolating and not confirmed through a test. In these instances, the absence may have been a cold / flu or other viral infection.</p>
<p>3. Page 40: Of the 260 people provided with emergency accommodation, how many are still in emergency accommodation? Are all 180 with a positive move on still in secure accommodation?</p>	<p>There are 43 people still left in emergency accommodation. In terms of those we have moved into secure accommodation, we do not systematically monitor whether placements are sustained as individuals are moved on to a range of housing options including PRS, the GLA schemes, approaches to other LAs and our hostel sector.</p> <p>The remaining 43 people are all receiving appropriate support to move on. This includes those who have no recourse to public funds (we are committed to keeping them in emergency accommodation until there is a decision from the Home Office); some with complex needs and/or who are medically vulnerable; some who are waiting for specific vacancies to become available; and some who were provided secure accommodation but have come back into emergency accommodation.</p>

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4. Page 53: What was the number of increases in hospital discharges and what measures are being put in place to address the increased need?

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In May 2020 an Integrated Discharge Hub was set up at the Royal London Hospital and changes were made in how the hospital social work and clinical teams work together to manage demands related to the pandemic and to ensure timely and safe discharge in order to free up hospital capacity. To be referred to the hub, the expectation is that the individual has follow up support needs after discharge, either from primary care, health specialism, community health care, adult social care (including reablement), rehabilitative care, voluntary support, or a combination of these mechanisms.

In May 2020, 116 Tower Hamlets residents who had been admitted to hospital were referred to the Integrated Discharge Hub. In March 2021 this total had increased to 221 for the month.

Since 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020 when data began to be recorded for IDH activity up to 31/3/21 there were 1,985 Tower Hamlets residents who were referred to the IDH, many of whom were not previously known to adult social care.

There has been a general overall rise of 7% in hospital discharges of existing ASC clients in Q4 20/21 compared to Q4 19/20. Note that this indicator is focused on new clients who use ASC services for the first time on discharge rather than clients already receiving support from ASC.

Between 1st September 2020 and 31st March 2021 there were 796 instances of hospital discharges which resulted in a 'Discharge to Assess' plan being put in place as the individuals required follow up support from health or social care on leaving hospital. The numbers peaked in December during the second wave surge - 140 D2A plans

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	<p>were started in December 2020.</p>
<p>5. Page 58: Is there a breakdown of where in the borough the 119 residents supported with their Universal Credit application live?</p>	<p>The service holds address data but does not usually undertake this kind of mapping work: in normal circumstances patterns of need can be established by monitoring the varying levels of attendance at the different outreach locations across the borough.</p> <p>The past year has been different has support has been provided by phone.</p> <p>If required, the service can generate a report mapping the location of residents supported by postcode.</p>
<p>6. It is to be expected that Covid-19 has had significant impact on the council's performance. What steps have been taken to strip out Covid effects from the data to assess underlying performance? Two specific questions may help focus this:</p> <p>A) On school attendance, are absences related to Covid-19 recorded differently from other absence? Are we therefore able to see the rates of non-Covid-19 absence?</p> <p>B) Where Covid-related reasons for underperformance have been given, have these been accepted at face-value, or has evidence been presented? For example, where staff absence levels have been higher due to Covid, do these correspond with areas of lower performance?</p>	<p><u>School attendance</u></p> <p>Reporting in our Strategic Plans is based on a twice termly voluntary collection of attendance from all schools. We have advised and supported schools to follow DfE guidance on coding for Covid-19 related absence. We are not able report on the level of Covid-19 related absence as this has been excluded from overall absence calculations.</p> <p>Attendance across our schools has been relatively stable five years prior to the pandemic without large fluctuations in absence apart from exceptional circumstances for individual schools. The impact of the pandemic on absence can be seen clearly due to the average absence increasing significantly during this period.</p> <p>During the pandemic, the DfE has put in place daily reporting by all schools to the department. The DfE data from the daily return gives us an indicator which allows us to continuously track and monitor on a weekly basis the overall operational trends and pick up on some</p>

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individual school information, but it is dependent on the number of schools that complete it daily/weekly and some other variables such as the inclusion of the whole of the whole cohort so cannot be used for accurate performance monitoring at corporate and directorate level. The daily returns inform our work with schools to recover attendance levels.

We will continue to track average absence on a twice termly basis as we have always done to determine how long lasting the impact of Covid-19 is on school absence.

### Covid-19 related reasons

Where Covid-19 related reasons are given, these are largely related to very direct impacts of restrictions in place at various points in the year or related to redeployment of staff away from their normal duties. Examples include:

- the temporary suspension of all construction work and subsequent reopening with social distancing, impacting housing delivery.
- substantial furlough across the economy and an almost complete stop of hiring activity impacting WorkPath.
- the transfer of face to face services to online and the transition required in working practices, customer engagement and outreach impacting welfare advice services.
- restriction on property viewings and the required shift to virtual viewing impacting lettings.
- school closures and restrictions in access to healthcare at peak times impacting the number of referrals to children's mental health services.

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	<p>The Mayor, as part of his oversight role, meets with portfolio holders and Corporate Directors formally once a quarter to review and challenge performance, including Covid-19 related performance impacts.</p>
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Item 6.2 Covid-19 Response – Annual Report 2020-21	
<p>1. Can we have an update of the Appendix C: 2020-21 Covid-19 Financial Forecast Summary at 22 February 2021 provided to the 3rd March 2021 Cabinet meeting to understand the financial impact of COVID on the Council</p>	<p>That appendix is currently being finalised as part of the overall Council financial outturn report and will be presented to Cabinet on 28 July 2021.</p>
<p>2. Page 7 of the report is unclear did LBTH provide 530 laptops + £50k in total?</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Page 91</p>	<p>LBTH has secured 10,478 devices for our children through the DfE programme. This distribution of devices is the largest overseen by any London Borough by a significant margin. For comparison the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest distribution was by Hackney at 6691.</p> <p>The Council has committed £50,000 which has secured a further 280 laptops. We have then donated a further 250 of the council's old laptops: These are currently being refurbished and will then be distributed.</p>
<p>3. Page 97: Is the Covid-19 Response – Annual Report 2020-21 able to address the deaths in our care homes and the subsequent investigation into care home provision and its findings?</p>	<p>The Covid-19 Response Annual Report provides an overview of our response to the pandemic over the last year. It provides a short summary of our response in relation to care homes in Appendix I.</p> <p>Our response to the pandemic in relation to older people's care homes was discussed in-depth at the 8 February 2021 Health and Adults Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting.</p>
<p>4. Page 101: Parks and open spaces – Victoria Park was closed for a short</p>	<p>On Wednesday 25 March 2020, the council together with the police made a joint decision to close the park when visitors failed to observe</p>

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time: could the dates of park closure be circulated as well as a confirmation of the reasons why the decision was made to close the park at that time?

social distancing guidance. The council developed a number of control measures to reopen the park to help support the mental health and wellbeing of residents during that time; the park was reopened on Saturday 11 April 2020. The health and safety of residents has remained a priority and compliance with the control measures and the government's guidance on access to green space and social distancing meant that the park has been open since that date.

Item 6.3 Covid Recovery Fund

1. Appendix 1 proposes £17,400 to the London Buddhist Centre for Mindfulness/Meditation. This seems to contradict the council's commitment/duty not to fund specific religious activities. Further, residents who belong to other faiths might be unable to engage in spiritual activities at a centre explicitly linked to a particular faith. If a mindfulness service is necessary, can a secular delivery partner be found so that residents of all faiths and none can access council-funded well-being services?

Organisations linked to specific faiths can deliver non-religious activities to support residents and be funded by the Council to do so. The proposed funding is for secular courses and is open to everyone. Breathing Space London (BSL) run by the London Buddhist Centre has been supporting residents in Tower Hamlets over 15 years offering guided meditation and mindfulness practice which supports residents experiencing mental and emotional difficulties.

From the Breathing Space London website:

“Breathing Space London is the London Buddhist Centre's mental health and wellbeing project. We run secular courses and events that teach you the basic theories and applications of mindfulness and kindness practice. The courses are open to anyone and you don't need any interest in Buddhism to join in”

The proposal recommended to be funded by the Covid Recovery Fund comprises:

10 breakfast or lunch club taster sessions – these will provide a short mindful movement session followed by guided meditation, a free healthy breakfast or lunch and will be hosted at various locations across the borough, including community centres, colleges, cultural venues, parks. A maximum 400 residents offered a space.

2 x 5 day 'bounce back' mindfulness course – includes mindfulness and movement courses, simple yoga exercises and tools to sustain wellbeing, approach difficult emotions such as trauma and loss and make wise choices to stay well. Maximum 650 residents (50 in person and 600 online places).



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Questions	Response
<b>Item 6.4 Additions to Approved Capital programme 2020-21 to 2023-24</b>	
<p>12. 5.1 <i>In September 2020, Cabinet approved a budget of £232.768m for 2020/21 – 2022/23 to contribute towards the delivery of the first 1,000 council homes. The first 1,000 council homes programme is shown in Table 2 below.</i></p> <p><i>Table 2 – First 1,000 council homes programme</i></p> <p>Appendix 2 only shows the budget for part of the 1,000 homes programme i.e. the Council built homes and the S106 homes at Barchester Court</p> <p>Where is the budget for the stock acquired from Poplar Harca 147 homes, and the budget for Property purchases (including out of borough) 249 homes?</p>	<p>The purchase of the 249 homes from Poplar Harca was funded by the General Fund, because these homes are being used as temporary accommodation, for which the General Fund has responsibility.</p>
<p>13. Where is the budget or the cost of the purchase of Angela Court on Burdett road?</p>	<p>A budget of £6.990m was included in the HRA programme for the purchase of Angela Court in 2019/20. This was part of the £30.820m outturn for 2019/20, set out in Appendix 1f of the report to Cabinet in September 2020.</p>
<p>14. Two of the new community centres being built have a primarily religious purpose, how are we ensuring under our Equalities Duty under religion that all religious groups (or none) have equal access to local government built buildings? for example the church displaced by the construction of Blackwall Reach?</p>	<p>Where community space is included as part of a council-led new build scheme, this is re-provision of existing community space. Whilst the primary activity that is expected to take place in the community centres referred to is faith-related, the terms of the lease will require that access to the wider community is facilitated. Full Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out for the council-led schemes in the housing capital programme which include community provision. This will supplement the programme-wide Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out for the housing capital programme as a whole.</p>

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Agenda Item 4

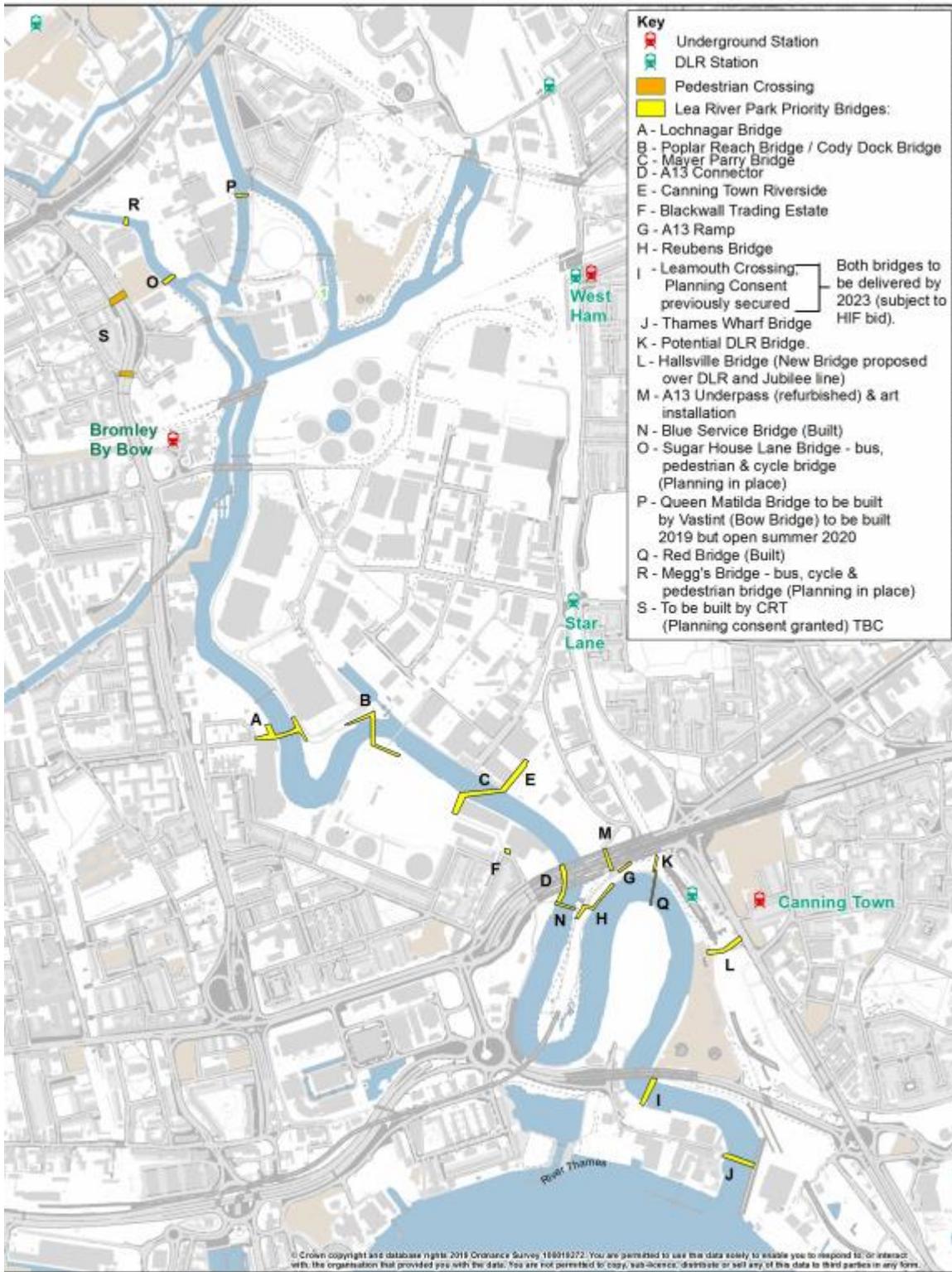
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	<p>The Blackwall Reach scheme is a housing association led project. The displacement of the church as part of this scheme will be investigated and a further response prepared.</p>
<p>15. Can we have a map of where the 3 bridges will go (Mayer Parry Bridge, Lochnagar Bridge, Poplar Reach Bridge) as not clear which ones they are?</p>	<p>See attached map</p>
<p>16. Page 121: Why is the 'Additions to Approved Capital programme 2020-21 to 2023-24' being presented at this stage and not updated as part of the Quarterly Monitoring Report prepared by Corporate Finance for July?</p>	<p>In June 2019, the Mayor in Cabinet agreed the recommendation to adopt proposals for capital reports to be presented to Cabinet in-between finance quarterly monitoring as required, to avoid delays to delivery. There are schemes listed in the report for which approval is required ahead of the July report to enable delivery to proceed at pace.</p>
<p>17. Page 124: How was the figure of 2.980 for the Buy-back programme loan reached? Has the council considered transferring the released funds from the Modular homes to the Buy-back programme?</p>	<p>The budget allocation for the loan to PLACE Ltd was £3.820m. The removal of the loan from the capital programme has enabled (a) £0.840m to be allocated to the Sewardstone Road project; and (b) £2.980m to provide additional funding for the Buy-Back programme.</p>
<p>18. Page 125: The Savills report was sent to officers in August 2020 and the contents updated with the Mayor and Lead member for Housing in September/October 2020. Overview and Scrutiny have requested copies of these reports for a number of months. Has the cabinet reviewed the draft reports? If not, what is the reason for the delay?</p>	<p>The guidance from Savills was received as a part of an on-going exercise to assist the Council understand how much it could afford, including HRA borrowing capacity and use of reserves to help us develop a strategy. Since then there have been a series of recasting of assumptions for the HRA Business Plan that were not in the report. The position has moved on since we received it. As such there is no final report as such ready to be released as it's a work in progress.</p> <p>Secondly, we feel that it will aid members if officers took them through the report to explain it. We have a slides presentation, which itself has changed many times over the last year and been shared in various iterations with some Cabinet Members at a number of meetings to illustrate the HRA's financial position. This reflects the current position that is not evident in the report.</p>

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	<p>It is suggested that officers attend a session with O&amp;S to guide them through the Savills advice as it is and slides and importantly explain the implication of investment decisions and the challenges that the HRA faces.</p>
<p>19. P125: If the full scheme-specific budget approvals have not been presented to Cabinet since September 2019 is there a risk that the full impact to the HRH needs to be urgently considered by cabinet?</p>	<p>The funding for the first 1,000 has been identified and allocated and has been built into the HRA Business Plan. Therefore, there is no risk.</p>
<p>20. Page 132: Regarding the changes to the Modular homes potential loan to PLACE Ltd, has the risk to the council been reviewed by the audit committee?</p>	<p>The risk to the council of changes to the potential loan to PLACE Ltd have not been reviewed by audit committee. The risk itself has been assessed as low, because the loan to PLACE Ltd was not its only funding stream and the council is still able to access a service from PLACE Ltd to enable the delivery of 16 new modular homes at Landon Walk.</p>
<p>21. Page 133: Have the risk management implications of the HRH spend listed in Appendix 2 as of March 2021 been reviewed by the audit committee?</p>	<p>The risk management implications of the HRA spend listed in Appendix 2 as at March 2021 have not been reviewed by audit committee.</p>
<p>22. What are the reasons for the contingency increase from 1.837 to 20.992 listed in Appendix 2</p>	<p>The contingency (unallocated) budget as at June 2021 is £1.837m (as shown in the column shaded grey). This has reduced from £20.992m as at March 2021. The reason for the reduction is because the balance of £19.155m has been allocated to other schemes across the programme where changes to budgets have been required.</p>

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