

Date:	19 May 2021
Report of:	Councillor Paul Swaddle OBE
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City
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1. City for All Vision and Strategy (2021 – 2022) – Finance and Smart City Priorities

1.1 Thriving Economy

1.1.1 Support for Cultural Institutions

We are working with our cultural partners to input digital and offline cultural events into our new events database, and featuring more regular promotions in our resident newsletters and Citysave website.

We have developed opportunities for our cultural partners and creatives to takeover void retail units this year for no cost, in collaboration with Heart of London Business Association (HOLBA) and other Business Improvement District (BID) partners. Good progress has been made to secure pop-up occupiers for circa 40 void premises. Initial discussions have been held with organisations whose core purpose is discovering and curating creative talent. The aim of this project is to activate in line with the profile of each local area and enhance streetscape experience.

We also continue to work with our cultural institutions to enable a festival of outdoor arts, *Inside Out*, from August this year.

1.1.2 West End Recovery – Animation Strategy

Work is progressing well on an animation strategy to support the recovery of the West End, working alongside external stakeholders to curate a programme of temporary, cultural and artistic interventions to animate the local area. An 'Animation Strategy Roundtable' was held with BIDs and Landowners in late April to further engage local partners.

1.2 Greener and Cleaner

1.2.1 Reduce Carbon Emissions - Decarbonisation of operational estate

We have since awarded a contract to Vital Energy to deliver our energy efficiency programme utilising the circa £13million funding received from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

1.3 Smart City

On Wednesday 17 March, we hosted our 'call for ideas' event with PwC to hear from our partners on their proposals on how we can collaborate together to deliver our City for All vision. The Call for Ideas initiative aimed at engaging tech innovators with a focus on start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises to compliment our ongoing engagement with Big Tech companies, such as Microsoft, Hitachi and Google.

Challenges and opportunities in the borough were set out in the context of our City for All priorities, alongside the Council's smart vision and shared with relevant organisations spanning the Council's, PwC's and Connected Places Catapult's (CPC) networks.

107 businesses and organisations were represented at the breakfast briefing held in March, which was followed by 115 individual project proposals, in addition to emails suggesting other types of support and collaboration.

PwC and CPC, our strategic partners on the smart strategy, are assessing these submissions against our City for All ambitions and will recommend which to explore further as part of our Smart Blueprint. Additionally, further in-depth conversations will take place on a Tech Partner Day with organisations such as Google, Fujitsu, Apple, O2, Vodafone and Tech Mahindra to explore more ambitious partnership proposals.

1.3.1 Facilitate Connectivity

Throughout lockdown, the Council has continued to work with our partners to facilitate full-fibre broadband to our housing stock. As of the end of March, 80% of our housing stock has been connected to full-fibre capability.

To support homeschooling, the Council is working with fibre providers including, G.Network, Community Fibre and Hyperoptic to provide free broadband to support families who are struggling with home schooling. To date, 60 households have been determined as eligible and we are working with providers to connect them.

1.3.2 Driving Digital Equality – Digital Inclusion programme

Overall, the digital inclusion programme is on track with the virtual hub, data project, and tailored digital support for priority groups projects now on delivery stage. Engagement with Ebury Edge and Church Street regeneration teams and stakeholders is ongoing with focused digital inclusion projects identified for these areas. Meetings held with partners to package and co-deliver an end-to-end support for residents and for businesses to help them build digital skills, confidence and capabilities and find employment opportunities and thrive in the digital world.

2. Cabinet Member Decisions (March – 10 May 2021)

Since the last report, as Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City the following decisions have been made:

- Kemp House, Section 106 Variation;
- Update to the Procurement Code;
- Coroners Court Extension - Section 106 Unilateral Undertaking Relating to Development and Stopping Up Order;
- Digital Partners Framework;
- Additional Restrictions Grant Scheme - Closure of Round 2;
- DHP Review – March 2021;
- DHP Review – April 2021;
- Policy Guidelines for Discretionary NNDR reliefs, including NNDR Hardship Relief;
- Ratings Review Panel Recommendations - 9 March 2021; and
- Council Tax, NNDR, Housing Benefit Overpayments, Former Client Rent Arrears and Sundry Irrecoverable Debt, Quarter 4 2020/21.

3. Key Performance Indicators

As of quarter 4:

- 91.06% of Council Tax has been collected;
- 88.76% of Business Rates has been collected;
- 0 incidents attracting fines under the new GDPR legislation; and
- 4.9% of calls to our Agilisys contact centre abandoned.

3.1 Contact Centre Performance

The Agilisys contact centre performance for call handling is measured on a weekly basis. Since the start of 2021, Agilisys have met most of their targets, however there was a dip in the month of April which saw performance drop to below the expected targets and longer wait times than usual (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Agilisys In-Hours Contact Centre Call Handling (January – April 2021)

Month	Volume of calls answered		% of all calls answered (target 95%)		% of calls answered in 30 seconds (target 70%)		Average time to answer (seconds)		Maximum call wait time (target 480 seconds)		Average handle time (seconds)	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
January	13,836	16,663	94.70%	98.80%	74.10%	90.10%	38	10	819	733	226	251
February	12,325	15,533	95.80%	98.60%	77.90%	77.90%	30	10	804	559	227	242
March	16,331	15,547	95.70%	95.80%	72.10%	78.20%	32	29	964	518	227	227
April	14,918	9,859	88.40%	98.10%	43.40%	95.50%	106	10	963	517	251	247

This was noticeably poorer in the week following the Easter bank holiday weekend, when we would be expected to receive higher call volumes. This increase in demand was unfortunately compounded by resourcing issues such as long-term sickness, unplanned sickness and leave absences, as well as agents providing essential support to improvement projects. Agilisys have acknowledged and addressed these issues and recruited additional full and part time resource to increase capacity.

The contract manager is also working with Agilisys to analyse wait times to identify any specific times of concern and opportunities available to manage these better. Options for automated messaging regarding busy and quiet times and the offer of call backs are now possible with Agilisys's new telephony platform and are being actively investigated.