

## **metroSTOR Webinar**

### **High-rise Waste Management Working Group Webinar**

18.10.23

**Guest Speakers:** Andrea Tidy, Estate Services Manager  
and Tom McCarthy, Estates Team Leader

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#### **Guest Speakers:** Andrea Tidy, Estate Services Manager and Tom McCarthy, Estates Team Leader

The London Borough of Hounslow decided to close their refuse chutes a part of their measures to reduce fire risk following Grenfell, while also addressing ASB and bulky waste issues.

The reasons for this were explained thoroughly to residents and Councillors to get their support, assisted collections were offered to residents registered as vulnerable, and some of the proposed locations were changed to minimise impact.

The programme was rolled out in 2021, and while there were a few instances of bags being left on landings initially, it was no more than previous and was quickly dealt with. The buildings are cleaner with less smell and less work for their caretakers.

The importance of getting all stakeholders on board was underlined, and involves close cooperation with the waste team, contractors and estate improvement officers with regular detailed resident engagement with residents.

Recycling has increased dramatically, and we look forward to sharing more information on this once the detailed data has been collected.

Most of the change in resident behaviour is achieved by making it easy for them to dispose of their waste and recyclables correctly and focusing on the benefits, but there does need to be an enforcement mechanism in place as well.

The chutes have just been locked off for now, but it was agreed that there are opportunities for repurposing for ventilation or service shafts.

Resident feedback has been very positive, although not measured with a formal process as yet, important to have regular cleaning and very clear recycling signage.

Original business case included savings in caretaking and waste management costs to demonstrate that the investment would be self-funding in time.

Location of the facilities is important for accessibility for residents and bin crews, as well as the safety distance from dwellings to reduce fire risk.

Question raised on obligation under the Building Safety Act to consult with residents over fire safety works, will seek advice on this.

Please share relevant experience and documents that you have available, look forward to the next event

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**Guest Speakers:** Andrea Tidy, Estate Services Manager  
and Tom McCarthy, Estates Team Leader

*Nigel Deacon*

So thank you for joining. Welcome to the metroSTOR webinar where we will be looking at the Hounslow case study where they closed a number of refuse chutes for reasons of fire safety, recycling, etc. We're going to be learning more about that kindly with the assistance of Andrea Tidy and Tom McCarthy. We'll do some formal introductions in a moment.

The session will be recorded, a number of people have asked if they can have a recording, there will be slides, there'll be a transcript, there'll be other resources we'll be able to share. For those that just joined, usual housekeeping rules, if we can have the mikes off please, there will be space for you to ask questions. Also, feel very free to leave comments and questions in the chat, which we'll try and pick up as we go along.

So warmly Welcome Andrea Tidy. Andrea, please tell us a bit about yourself and what you do.

*Andrea Tidy*

Hi everyone, my name's Andrea Tidy, I'm the estate services manager for the London Borough of Hounslow. So my remit basically is looking after the estates and managing the caretaking service and part of that remit involves waste management.

*ND*

Thanks, Andrea, I really appreciate you sparing us a few minutes today. I know you won't be able to be with us for the whole session, but we'll make the best use we can of your time. And Tom McCarthy, tell us a bit about what you do.

*Tom McCarthy*

Hi everyone I'm Tom McCarthy, I'm one of the estates team leaders, I monitor and manage all the major estates and on the London Borough of Hounslow. I've been here about five years now under Andrea, and I'm trying to lead with waste recycling and the metroSTORs due to coming from the waste stream industry.

*ND*

Thanks, Tom. So the things we wanted to look at today, a little bit about why the London Borough of Hounslow made that decision, to close the refuse chutes. But how did they do it? How did they go about it? I should have said, what were the issues probably, not, were there any issues. Because of course there were always issues, but how did we, you know, how did we overcome them? So Andrea, can I ask you then a bit about how Hounslow arrived at that decision? Was that a difficult process to get people on board? How did they go about that? And when was it? I suppose this is going back a few years now isn't it?

*AT*

it is indeed ,Nigel. So I mean it was kind of on the back of Grenfell and also our fire safety inspections that were carried out and the recommendations that came from that, and working with the London Fire

Brigade. And so of course as we all know, any chutes is a fire hazard and also alongside that in chute rooms and those type of areas, you tend to get a lot of anti-social behaviour in terms of rough sleeping, drug dealing and drug taking and bulk refuse being chucked in there for the caretaker to drag down the next day, which, you know, all of those increase the risk to your building in one way or another. So, when the fire safety audits were carried out, one of the recommendations was that we look at closing the chutes, and also the on the back of the Grenfell report as well, which also highlighted the danger of chutes in high rise buildings, well in any building. I believe the first one that we did this, we had a fire very close to one of our buildings which caused significant damage. So, we put metroSTOR units into area because of the fire safety rating on them, and also the fact that we could move them if it didn't work, so they were almost portable, if you like, we could pick them up and take them somewhere else if it didn't work. It did work there, and we haven't had a fire in that area since.

We then started to look at our high-rise buildings and we decided that we would pilot it on the six Brentford Tower blocks, which are 22 storeys high. We have an adjoining estate called the Haverfield, which are low rise but also had lots of problems and anti-social behavior in the chute rooms, and dumping, all the things that I mentioned before which impacted on the building, not just on the building itself, but on the caretakers' time and on the residents' satisfaction with the building that they lived in. So, we started, we closed the towers first, we spoke to the residents, and it was quite difficult at the time when we were doing it, and there was a big learning curve obviously, and with the ones that we did at Brentford towers, we met with metroSTOR on site, we met with the waste and recycling team, and basically any stakeholders, local councillors. We got them on board as well, and we discussed what, you know, discussed what impact that it would have, what it was likely to look like from the residents point of view, etc.. And we notified the residents that we were going to do this, it wasn't really a consultation because on the grounds of fire safety, there was nothing really to consult on, we needed to do something. We did, however, consult on the locations and on the feedback that we got from that, some of the locations we moved, some of them we couldn't move due to either what was running underground or due to the pulling distance for the caretakers and the bin crews. And but we fed back to the residents with the reasons why we couldn't do them.

So we started to close them, we did a program, I think we did them two at a time with the tower blocks, giving them space for us to deal with any teething issues that the residents found. I think one of the teething issues was obviously people who have got vulnerabilities, so we overcame that by offering assisted collections from our caretakers, of using the time that was freed up from them, having to walk the buildings, clear all the chute rooms every day, you know, spend the hours trying to unblock chutes, etc. And so, it freed up some of their time so they were able to do other things, one of which was they assisted collections for the residents who were vulnerable.

Having said that, out of the six tower blocks, I believe we only have is it three assisted collections, Tom, two or three? Very minimal,

*TM*

Yeah, three assisted collections.

*AT*

So yes, that's out of six 22-storey tower blocks. So, you know, that was a relief actually because I had had visions from my caretakers spending entire days picking up people's rubbish. We used the criteria that they needed to be vulnerable on our housing management system, needed to be registered as vulnerable on our housing management system. So, we worked with the residents on it. And I have to say that we did have instances of people leaving stuff outside the doors, and people using the bin shelters inappropriately, but we dealt with them, the estate improvement officers and the caretakers talking to each other. We managed to

deal with those individuals.

And on the whole, I'm not saying it's perfect, but on the whole, the bin stores have been used correctly, and it has had a significant impact on the buildings themselves. We no longer getting complaints about smells. We didn't have one complaint through the summer from from Brentford Towers about smells in the bin rooms, the chute rooms and those types of areas. We think there's been a significant decrease in anti-social behaviour in those areas, and it's probably moved outside the block, but at least it's not inside. And the dumping of bulk waste, yes, it still happens, but it tends to happen outside now and not inside, which again decreases the fire risk to the building and also frees up the caretakers' time a bit more, having to take this rubbish down.

So all in all, it's been a positive experience. We then continued to roll this out across our stock using the product. We became more organized and asset management got involved, and we've got a project officer, John who works closely with Tom on metroSTOR and we've closed the vast majority of our high-rise blocks. We've also identified and closed chutes where we have anti-social behaviour on the low-rise blocks that were of particular concern. So going forward, we now have I think it's a ten-year plan, might even be five because we're going at quite a pace, to close all the chutes in the Borough and have all the waste external.

And that's in line with, you'll notice that if you've got new-build buildings going up, none of them have chutes anymore. They will have designated bin areas, or bin rooms, but they no longer have the chute system in place. I think with residents getting used to them, the key point was communicating. We've got better, much better as we've come along, and our estate improvement officers and metroSTOR have worked together to design a letter to go out to them, you know, that includes all the information that they need, all the maps that they need and anything that they want, you know, to feed back on, the estate improvement officer will listen to that. And if we can, if there's a valid reason for changing the plans, I'm going to talk to metroSTOR, and we do that. As I said before, if we can't and there's no valid reason, then we'll explain that to the residents and we go ahead with the plans.

I think that kind of, in a very, very short, tight nutshell... The waste and recycling, getting them on board was really important, making sure that there were dropped curbs in place, making sure that they were able to collect the waste properly, or that the caretakers, if they were pulling the bins, that they were able to pull them effectively, they were able to change the bins round into the bin stores, etc., when they when they got full.

So, I think you need to involve all your stakeholders, anybody you think could possibly be impacted by this change, get them on board at the very beginning, and make sure that your communication with your residents is really robust, and it tends to go a lot smoother as we've gone along. We've refined the process, we've worked with metroSTOR to even change the design of some of the units as well. We've had skirts put on some units where over-spill was an issue. We've looked at different lock systems, we've got estates that are kind of mixed tenure, so we will have flats, we will have maisonettes and we will have houses both rented and private on our estates. So that was a bit of a challenge as well because the houses and the maisonettes tend to be on fortnightly collections on wheelie bins and not like that, you know, before metroSTOR was installed they would just go and dump it in the nearest big bin that they could find, which meant that there was nowhere for the residents who lived in those buildings to put their rubbish and it got over-filled too quickly. So on those estates we fit different locks, etc. to stop that from happening.

*ND*

No, that's super helpful. Have you got time to take a couple of questions, Andrea, before you...

*AT*

I can give you another 5 minutes if that's okay.

*ND*

That would be awesome if you could. I've got one from Martin Greenway and one from Lindsey-Ann Wilson, if that's okay. Martin, please fire away.

*AT*

Martin, Hello!

*MG*

Oh, Hi! Yeah, just to endorse all the work that Andrea and Tom have done, I used to work at Hounslow, so I know the problems that there were before this change was effected. And no, well done, it sounds like a really, much improved situation. I just wondered if there's been any work done to measure the improvement in recycling rates, because we're all under pressure to get our recycling rates up, especially, I know here at Enfield our recycling rates for tower blocks is dire. So, if there's been any work done to work out how much more you have improved recycling I'd be interested.

*AT*

Tom's probably best placed to answer that because he's more in contact with the waste stream.

*TM*

Yes, so I work closely with one the field officers for the waste and recycling, James Meehan, and they're doing an analysis at the moment to see how much the increase in cardboard and the plastics are, and we're reducing it down from one to the three 240L bins for glass now so that's staying stable pretty much. But it's more the increase in the cardboard. So we've gone from one collection of one bin a week to two collections of two bins for both cardboard and plastic on a weekly basis. So the increase is there. And by getting that frequency as well, we reduce the amount of contamination as well, as it's not being sent to a dirty MRF. Yeah, but Jim's doing a project at the moment to see how much the waste stream has gone up.

*ND*

Thanks, Tom. I appreciate it. Martin, thank you very much. Lindsay-Ann please,

*LW*

Yeah, our question were going to be the same actually about recycling. We've got 19 high rise blocks in Bradford with virtually no recycling facilities at all. But obviously people throwing it down the chutes, they're not going to come down with the recycling separately. So that that was really my question as well. It sounds like it's quite an effective way of increasing recycling if they've got to come down with the rubbish, they're more likely to try and separate and recycle. So that's a really positive point, yeah.

*AT*

One of the things that we did do on Brentford Towers and the Haverfield, we got the local school involved and we got the children to produce artwork, so we've made it like an engagement thing as well. And we had the children's artwork wrapped onto the bins.

*LW*

Ah, brilliant.

*AT*

Yeah, it's certainly more aesthetically pleasing.

*TM*

Another thing that they tried, the waste team years ago, going to the schools first of all, because actually that's the best place to start. Teach the children then they'll teach their parents. They also gave them like a bag for life. So they could put their recycling into that bag to bring down, and because in the high-rise you've got a shortage of internal spaces,

So we give them the bag for life, they put their cardboard and plastic in and they could bring it down put in place, nice compact as well. Otherwise, you've got three bins in your kitchen and where does that go? It just goes back into the one. But having ideas like that is another thing to look at, and that's what came from the waste team with Nicola and Natasha and Naomi years ago, and they pushed that well,

*LT*

Brilliant, fantastic work.

*ND*

No, that's really helpful, thank you. Paul Baxter, I think you might be next, do you want to come in there?

*PB*

Thanks very much. I'm from Edinburgh Council and my housing colleagues are going to introduce this idea to a couple of high rise blocks in Edinburgh. I've been brought in, involved in anticipation of the lack of cooperation, folks dumping bags in the stairs, Andrea. I'd be interested to know what route you took that you found most successful, and not necessarily enforcement, but encouraging folks to do the right method.

*AT*

I think that's more around them having an understanding of the impact, not leaving their bags on the, you know, outside their doors or on the stairs, will have you know, especially on the emergency services. It's not just an impact on your staff, but it's also an impact on the emergency services. They have to go into a building to fight a fire, the lights are out and you've got black bags all over the floor, the likelihood is they're going to injure themselves and it impedes their ingress routes into the building. So, I think, you know, getting people to understand that, not just the fact that, you know, it's you know, it's not nice and it's going to leave smells in your corridors and, you know, it creates extra work for your caretaking staff. But it also has a massive impact on the emergency services. If something goes wrong, our ambulance services are trying to get somebody out of a building, they've got bags all over the place, they can't do that effectively. And also they run the risk of a fire within the building still, because they've left a bag there and you know some little joe's come along with a lighter and he's feeling bored, you know. So I think it's about giving them the understanding and, you know, that information of the impact that it can have.

Our improvement officers have been very good. So, the caretakers work closely with the improvement officer. So, if they can identify residents that are doing it, the improvement officer can have a word. And failing that, then we would look at moving to sanctions.

*PB*

Thank you.

*ND*

Very helpful, Andrea. Thank you. And Ronan, I think you were up next.

*RF*

I work for One Manchester in Manchester, I look after the low rise buildings that have got chutes in as well. And I'm just wondering, if people are all transporting the waste down, lifts and stairs and that, has this increased the amount of cleaning that the caretakers have to do, like people, like spills from bins going downstairs or in lifts, creating hazards, slip hazards.

*AT*

I'll let Tom answer that one.

*TM*

No, not really. I'm saying because the chutes we've got are quite small and people use the large refuse bag, 90% of people would bring the bags down themselves anyway. So again they don't want the smell in their properties. So the lifts get done, they might get the odd bit here and there, but it's nothing new to what we were doing before. And some people will take the black bag and split it all apart and throw it down the chute, which is the only change we had. But 90% of the time, it's very minimal on the extra work there, but it's actually keeping the buildings cleaner because there's no smell. If people leave the bags outside the front door. Again, it's where we're trying educate them first of all. But yeah, again, sometimes some people like double bag especially in properties to control the smells. But yeah okay most people just bring the bag down on a daily basis, so on the school run. And if the caretaker's done it a little bit later we might have to mop up once or twice but not as frequent as before.

*RF*

Okay, great.

*ND*

That's very helpful, thanks. So got a question from Dave Broomfield, I think.

*DB*

We've got a number of high-rise buildings with spiral staircases, mezzanine floors and ventilation issues. We expect part of the solution in these buildings is to reuse the refuse chutes as ventilation shafts. Have you done that in any of your buildings?

*AT*

No, not as yet. It may be something they consider doing later on. At the moment, we will be removing the chutes at some stage, at the moment we have them locked off, there are plans in the future to remove them altogether. So perhaps at that stage that we're looking at, they will look to see whether they can be used as ventilation systems. It's quite good idea, actually, I might nick that!

*ND*

A very interesting question, Dave, that would be good to come back to again, I think at a later point, thank you, Tony I think is next, Tony Charles.

*AC*

Yeah, Hi, I'm from Leeds City Council. I just wondered in view of what's happened and everything and all these improvements, if there's any work being done as regards measuring social impacts, tenants, you know, improvement in their wellbeing, I don't know if that's been done or if it's being considered?

*AT*

It hasn't been done. I do believe that there are plans to send out like a like a resident engagement survey, if you'd like, to kind of capture that information. But it hasn't been done, but I'd like to push it forward.



*ND*

You've probably got indications, I guess, for the residents you talk to, though?

*AT*

Yeah. I mean, to be fair, the vast majority of the residents initially, you know, you had a little bit of resistance. But we've had residents come back to us and say to us, actually, you know what? It is much better. You know, it's like with anything, isn't it? And you also have quite a high turnover of residents mostly, so for residents that are moving in this is going to be the norm. You know, in five years' time, this will be the norm. You know, nobody will remember putting rubbish down the chute. Would be a bit like VHS videos, maybe something you remember probably fondly, but, you know, life is changing, Life has moved on.

And I do think that a lot of people like to think that they're doing their bit for the environment. We lead very busy lives and often we don't get inputs into environmental change, if you like. So by recycling, a lot of people see that they're able to do something for the environment.

*ND*

That's very good Andrea. Were you going to come in there, Tom?

*TM*

Yes, mate. Just on that one quickly again, it's about housekeeping of the Metro stores. So again, our caretakers used to wash our bin rooms out every week. So we've installed that going across, that they sweep out the metro stores every week. That way it's not really building up any smell, any animals trying to get in there. So that's another thing to consider when you're doing it, is to make sure your service still maintains those areas.

*ND*

Great, thanks Tom. Next question I think we have from Harriet Turpin. Hello Harriet, how are you?

*HT*

Well, I was just getting myself off mute. Hi. Really interesting to hear what you guys have been doing because obviously in Hackney we run a very similar program where we've closed down the chutes and built bin stores. And I just had a couple of questions around kind of how you got buy in internally for this type of work. Obviously, it's not the cheapest type of work to do, but it's just obviously working with different teams. So I just wondered how you got buy in from those internal stakeholders to roll this out, because you said that you're working to close all the chutes over a ten year period. Is that a kind of internal policy across housing or how did you come to that kind of policy essentially? Sorry, I think you're on mute.

*AT*

Sorry, my puppy's just waking up, so I'm trying to stop him from barking. I think we did it mostly on the back of the fire safety orders and working with the London Fire Brigade and their reports, we'd had a couple of buildings that had like warnings put on them. It did go to cabinets, I believe that was agreed by Cabinet, I think that's how we got we got the full buy in, was getting it approved by cabinet, this plan. And it is cost saving in the long run, if you look at it in the very long term, because you're not having to deal with blocked chutes, you're not having to deal with internal fires, your staff are not having to clear out these rooms, not having to deal with the anti-social behavior, etc. So in the long term, they actually paid for themselves, if you look at it that way. And I think that was certainly the spin that I put on it in my report, that these would pay for themselves eventually.

ND

Would you be happy to share the cabinet report, Andrea?

AT

Yep, if I can find it, it was quite a while ago so I'll see if I can find it.

HT

I guess there's also the waste tonnage.

AT

Yes, the recycling impacts on recycling, as Tom said, it has massively increased and that helps the borough meet another of its targets.

HT

We've seen it almost double on some of the estates. That's very interesting. Thank you so much.

ND

Yeah, thank you. George, George Norval, how are we doing?

GN

Hi, Andrea, I'm on and all, finding this all really interesting. I suppose it's just a follow-on question to one that my colleague Paul asked. We've got a number of other people on the call from Edinburgh Council because we are looking at investing quite a lot of money. One of the problems we have is that seven of every ten homes are allocated in Edinburgh, for Edinburgh council, are allocated for people who are homeless, so we have quite a high concentration of people within high flats that have got complex needs, and our concierge service that provide a range of services, whether we are 24 hour help or an 18 hour service, they are constantly trying to encourage residents to dispose of waste actually in the chutes at the moment, which is a problem in itself with people just choosing to leave black bags around in common areas, foyers, bin stores. so on particularly. I suppose one of the big concerns are concierge have is that they'll continue to do everything they can, show some flexibility, they'll engage in things like assisted bin collections, but we are going to consistently see people with vulnerabilities and additional needs moving in high flats. You know, I'm particularly interested to learn a wee bit about the estate improvement officers, because it's something Paul and I have discussed at length. You know, do we need the sanction here of someone with a fixed penalty approval, You know, responsibility, for example, under, you know, terms environmental crime, It would obviously be the last point of the game really for us, we would try and encourage people, we are at the moment allowing them to reflect on their behavior in terms of the risk of fire. At the time of switching off these chutes, we are investing huge amounts of money to almost glaze parts of buildings, which then worry me about increased fire risk where, you know, we don't have the balconies anymore. The glazed offs will increase that additional fire, heat and smoke as well. So there's just that over overriding, what we could hear about the role of the, you know, the improvement officer just to see if it's something that, you know, we probably need. Thanks.

AT

Okay. Well, we have an enforcement team which is the borough enforcement team who can issue FPNs, estate improvement officers don't issue FPNs, they would be more on the engagement side. So they would engage with the tenants and they would try to educate them. And you know if the worst comes to the worst and they continue with the behavior, then it would be a sanction on that tenancy. And the estate enforcement officers, it's a little bit tricky because from what I understand, they can't issue fixed penalty notices for items that are dumped inside the block, is that right, Tom? Because they're not considered fly-tipping unless they're external? Correct me if I'm wrong on that.

TM

we're working at the moment. So they are doing some work on it with regards to bags being left inside the buildings because it's away from their properties. So I think it's called a CPN, rather than the FPN. So they are still able to look to give a fixed penalty notice. But again, education's the biggest part. You know, some people love to be told, but if you show them a picture of, like again, we've done brochures, showing them where each bag goes to. That's, again, because people understand it, and it works well for our community who's not first language is English. A picture shows them. And again, even with MetroSTOR, we're changing the designs on the front of all Metro stores going forward.

AT

Yes, we've got more signs to help people whose first language isn't English. It is a tricky one. I mean, and you're always going to have, you know, the odd tenant here and there who's not going to play by the rules. But I think when you're thinking about it, it's important not to make a huge issue of that because it is something that can be dealt with on an individual basis. and you will probably find, you know, if you can get the vast majority of people doing it, then you're onto a winner. And you will also find that, certainly on Brentford Towers, people don't like to see their bin shelters being abused. You know, they're quite fond of them now, you know, especially if they're wrapped in the children's art. So they'll tell other residents, don't do that, you know, or put that in there, you know, don't leave it in the hallway. So, you know, you get a bit of social policing going on as well, which is great for building communities because that's eventually what we're all aiming for, is to rebuild these communities.

ND

Yes, very helpful. Thank you, Andrea. Aiste, I think we have a question?

AG

Hi, Yeah. so we actually looking to this as well, but I'm from Kensington and Chelsea Council, so space is very limited in our area and recently we were told that the space between the, the flat or the building itself to the units or the way storage area can't be more than 30 metres, is that correct? Is that something you come across as well?

AT

We do and don't. So we have precedents where we have bin corrals, in some of our other estates, we have bin corrals, and you know, some of them can be up to 50 metres away. Again, I think it's probably about engaging with your residents. And if you give them the plans, if they accept the plans, then they're accepting that they're going to have to carry their waste that far. You know, if they come back to you and say, no, actually we want it nearer, you can talk to them about why it may not be appropriate to have it nearer and see if you can engage on them that way. But it hasn't really caused an issue. We do try to keep them as close to people's properties, you know, as much, but you know, hey-ho, it gets your steps up if you have to walk a bit further to the bin!

AG

Yeah. So you didn't come across like a blanket rule that that has them?

AT

Yeah, not really. I think so.

TM

A colleague working on another estate was saying up to 16 metres, so 30 metres I keep, you know, that's a great one, you know, I'm happy with that. And again it's pushing the recycling, getting them as your first

bins so it encourages you to recycle more than the refuse and because there's less walking distance it's easier to recycle, so it's more encouraging them psychologically and mentally, they're going, I can take the recycling down, it leaves less refuse and I don't have to go as far next time.

*AG*

But surely that would feed into contamination as well. Sorry.

*TM*

A little bit. Yeah.

*AT*

Yeah. It's important not to underestimate the psychological side of this. I think if you can, use the psyche as well when you're thinking about people's behaviour, and what they do, and that's individuals for each estate. So for us that was really, you know, to make sure that the caretakers were involved because they know what goes on these estates and they know what the route of travel is, you know, they know that just because there's a pathway, that doesn't mean that the residents can walk on that pathway, they might walk across the grass. So, you know, it's about understanding those things as well and the caretakers. So just a line of information on that kind of thing.

*AG*

Of course. Thank you so much.

*TM*

With our artwork we're putting on this time, so instead of having plastic on, it's actually showing what plastics can go in there, and flat-packing the cardboard, so it's emphasised in those, it shows the pictures to people.

*ND*

Yeah, that's good. Just on the distances, Emma Harrison's just kindly popped a note in the chat, that the 30m distance from each dwelling, each flat, it's actually the front door of each flat, it's in the Building Regulations. Section 6 of the Building Regulations is applicable to new buildings and it doesn't strictly apply to retrofitting onto existing buildings unless it's, you know, subject to a building regulations application. But it's good practice, it is important that it is accessible for all residents across you know, across an estate. So it's definitely worth bearing in mind, but I'd say not essential when you're retrofitting. That's a conversation that we could certainly have with your colleagues to make sure we come up with something that they're happy with.

*AT*

I'm so sorry, I'm going to have to drop out. Can I leave you in Tom's capable hands?

*ND*

Andrea, we really, really appreciate it.

*AT*

Thank you, everybody, for joining, talk to you all soon. Bye.

*ND*

I think we've got down next... Marie?

*MD*

Yeah, I've got a few questions. Hello. And what is the frequency of your collections?

*TM*

And so again, it depends on the estate. So, each estate is different and some have weekly collections, some have twice weekly collections depending on, again that was all due to our storage areas and capacities for the amount of bins we could store within the buildings. They haven't changed as such, but with regards to recycling and putting more recycling in, because they were getting so filled by the flats around the property's being used, that's where we managed to get the increase for recycling.

*MD*

So, when you said the increase, what would you say twice a week?

*TM*

Yeah. So, we went from once a week for like one plastic, one cardboard to two collections per week for two plastic and two cardboard. And they do them like on a Tuesday and a Friday. So that way it's still three days in between. The next day it'll get full. And again, the reason for the second collection is I asked their manager to come over and start sweeping out the shelters because it was always spilling. So by getting a second collection, it keeps the waste contained in the bin, so there's less spillage and less problems for the caretakers.

*MD*

Okay. So you also mentioned that you've got estate improvement officers and caretakers. What sort of, the estate improvement officers, what sort of hours in terms of resources, how many blocks do they cover?

*TM*

It varies, so you've got the tenancy officers, then you've got housing, estate improvement, so they've got up to 1200 properties as well. But on each estate, they've got estates they monitor, they do the monitoring of the estates, for the cleanliness every quarter, they then look to what improvements we can put onto the estates, if we need new litter bins, or a change in dog bins, what they can do to improve the estate itself. Do we want more lighting? And they try to get CCTV out of their funding and then they look at what we can do within that. So, the caretakers will speak with them. If they say, Oh, you know, I need a litter bin here, because I keep getting bags dropped, we can pass that on to the enforcement team as well so they can monitor it. But the estate improvements is actually looking at the aesthetics of the building, pushing to get them redecorated, they need new flooring. And so anything that will improve the estate is within their remit.

*MD*

And did you say they do an inspection once a quarter?

*TM*

Yeah, once a quarter. They do it once a quarter. I'm saying, some of those site inspections our local MPs come along, I attend, and we check the buildings and anything that's found within that, they then write to the residents about that, leaving their bikes or the buggies outside, and even though we keep taking away, they take them back after a while. But that's part of their remit. And looking at if we can get some of the trees or the canopies cut back, you can't get the trees removed, just to improve what we can do on the estates.

*MD*

Okay. And so, you said that they take the enforcement, they are the one who talk two people who don't obey the rules. So but today is it the caretaker, report it and then they go to speak to those individuals?

*TM*

For fly tipping outside of a building, the caretaker send myself and the bulk team the pictures I then forward it onto our enforcement team and our CCTV team so then the CCTV team checks the cameras to see if any imagery is caught, and then once it's identified who's done it, we can then pass on to the enforcement team to go and issued a fixed penalty notice.

*MD*

Okay, Thank you. And oh, sorry, I've got loads of, am I OK to ask more questions?

*TM*

Or if you need to email me afterwards, that's not a problem.

*MD*

Okay.

*ND*

If you them in the chat, Marie, that would be great because then everybody gets the benefit of that as well. I really appreciate your questions, thank you so much. Kelly Lewis, over to you.

*KL*

I am Kelly from Citizen Housing in Coventry. I've just got a quick question for Tom. How do you manage kind of bulky waste removal and disposal for customers in high rise? Did you make provision for that as part of the metroSTOR?

*TM*

No, it's been going on and it's classed as fly-tipping. So within their rent they pay I think it is £5 a month of £5 a week and it's included to remove fly-tipping. I mean this is to remove flytipping, but they think it's a God given right for residents. Oh, that's what that charge is for, I can leave it outside. I'm working with some of the enforcement team to put up new posters on the entrances to the buildings on the inside, showing what goes into your refuse, what goes into your recycling, how to get rid of bulky waste so you don't get the thousand pound fine. I'm also going to try and add a bit on there about to how to increase our food waste recycling. So that when people are bringing it out they might look and see a big nice notice, and go, like, Oh, hang on, I can't just leave this outside.

*KL*

Okay, So just have you got a service where people need to get rid of bulk, you can pay for it and you can attend to that?

*TM*

That's run by Lampton Services, we don't actually do it ourselves. Yeah, so it's run by a company called Lampton 360 do it, it's called Tidy Town. So I think it's £50 for 5 items or £25 I can't remember the prices off the top of my head.

*KL*

Thank you Tom. Thanks.

*ND*

Yeah, that's very good. We're going to come back to bulky waste on another session because it's such a big challenge for everyone, because not only is it attracting extra flytipping, but it's also the fire risk aspect. So having some form of containment to manage that I think is certainly seems to be working for some some landlords. Stephen Gordon?

*SG*

Thanks, Nigel. My question isn't about waste, unfortunately mine's about costs. So from a service charge cost, has this had any impact from both a leasehold and a resident perspective because it's obviously an up-front cost? T

*TM*

So the cost of the Metro stores is coming out of a different budget altogether. So it's not part of, the estate improvements, it's not in their rents. So this is coming out of our fire safety budget and estate improvement. So depending on which building we're looking at, so with the projects we've got at the moment, one is being run out of a fire safety budget and then the others coming out of our estate improvement budgets.

*SG*

Right. Okay. Thank you for that.

*ND*

Good point though, bringing it back to cost. Harriet, do you have another question?

*HT*

Hi. I'm sorry. It's me again. I just had a couple of questions. What is your housing stock like? So how many estates do you have as opposed to street level?

*TM*

Estates? I have six major ones. So I've got six. I've got Brentford Towers and Haverfield. That's six times 22 for the tower blocks plus about 40 low rises, then Heston Farm I've got another two tower blocks over there plus six low rises, double storey of maisonettes, I've got Ivybridge which is up by Twickenham rugby ground and that's another four low rises in total which is about 400 properties in the whole estate. So again, yeah, we've got that and then we've got the odd scattered estates that we look after, then we've also got the private houses on like roads where the council built houses many, many years ago and would have sold off, which they don't pay a service charge and we don't look after, but they are part of our housing stock.

*HT*

Because in Hackney I know it's like a 50:50 split basically between the estates and low rise, so we've got a really high amount of estates in our stock. Do you think it's a similar split?

*TM*

Similar split, Yeah.

*HT*

Okay, cool. And then the other question I had was around the assisted collections and kind of how this criteria was managed. Did you how did you get residents on that service and how was it kind of offered at the point, was it fixed?

*TM*

No, so there again, on our system, all our housing officers know who like the vulnerable residents are, for assisted collections. So it was only a few we had to write to, not the whole building because everyone would

go yeah, I need that assisted collection. So that was the assessment criteria, if they were on our vulnerable residents list already, we tried that one. So again, it's a case of fire safety, we need to understand which of our residents won't be able to get out at the time, we'll stay put for those so the fire brigade can then address which ones they need to go to. So that's where all information came from for that.

*HT*

Okay. Because we have a similar list, but we've also got residents who are like, I think I would meet the criteria kind of thing, so trying to like manage that side of things because obviously, is it a service you can publish? I assume not.

*TM*

No. not really. Again, we've got some residents, we check their buildings on a weekly basis or fortnightly collection. We get their bin out for them and they get confused some weeks and they phone up saying my bin was missed last week when it's due this week. So we've got a list of where to go to. But some of the others have their carers that will bring the bags down or they've got family members that pop in once a week, can they bring the bags down for them? So again, any of our assisted collections we say, okay, you leave your bag out on this day, we'll collect it. And again my caretakers, if they go there in the morning and the bag's not out, they take a picture so they know we've been on site, but they walk the buildings every day so if they see the bag another time and think they got confused and they'll bring it down for that one.

*HT*

Thanks, Tom.

*ND*

That's good. I don't know if there's anybody on from Wolverhampton Homes, but they had an estate where they applied this across 500 homes and they only got four or five, they offered it to everyone, to every flat and they only got... Ah Richard, Richard, good day, Sir! You can cover that.

*RC*

I am here yes, unfortunately I'm in my scruffs today, I've been doing some structural savings this morning. So I'm in my scruffs and I'm not actually at home, I'm at my daughters, but anyway...

*ND*

Assisted collections.

*RC*

Yes. So, we we've got an estate with a thousand properties on, there's eight high rise, which are 18 to 21 floors, and then we've only really done the metro stores on the medium rise which are actually a deck access blocks, they're not high rise, so there's deck access and we took the chutes out to use as has risers for the water and the electric mains for those blocks. So the assisted collections was offered and actually we had five or six, but it's gone down to one or two now, and that is it. It's really tied down to they have to phone up and be at a particular, so open their front door at 10:00 in the morning, and it sort of unsettles their lives really. So they end up doing it themselves, instead of us actually doing it. So I don't think we do any at all amount. But there is two still on the list. The last time I heard we actually haven't done any assisted collections, they're doing it themselves.

A couple of the points that people have mentioned and just touch on where the recycling bins and where Tom said the recycling bins are closer to the building. We actually did the opposite effects and we put the recycling bins further away, or should be further away from the building, because they were being contaminated when they were closer, because the lazy ones would throw them in the first bin that was



there, so that was the general waste. And on Heath town as well, we had no recycling to speak of. We had about ten bins, recycling bins, that were dotted around the estate. So they were, you know, on a footpath somewhere in a bit of grass somewhere. But not really used and normally contaminated. And we've obviously got recycling there, so the whole estate and has recycling, we've gone from three collections a week to two collections a week so that that cost of the bin stores, the bin lorries has just come down slightly, and the bulky waste, so if they're going to throw out a settee you're not going to get that in a metroSTOR. But if they are dismantling, it might be a wardrobe or something, actually they might get that in one of the metroSTORs, in one of our 1100 litre bins, that sort of keeps some of the fly-tipping down, so to speak. I know you don't really want it in there, but it does help with the situation to some extent, and especially around Christmas time and things like that, when there's a bit more wrapping paper and things like that.

And so we've got some quite big bin stores, we haven't got them on the high rise, and the biggest issue we have with these is the bigger area you need, you know, you need lots of room to put them. And so we're just about to put sprinklers in our high rise blocks, so we need a tank room. And if you've got sprinklers in your high-rise you'll realise how big these tank rooms are, and so we're already taking some of the greenspace away and pump houses for the water. So to actually have even more space for the Metro stores is a bit of an issue for us. But we've done it successfully on the medium-rise and they're seven storeys so they're virtually a high rise. But they're deck access, not a tower block so these worked really well on the estates we've done, and we've done some low-rise blocks as well. We probably put too many in. We tried to get down to a fortnightly collection not a weekly collection and there's probably too many there for that size block if the truth be known. So we should have just put the one in, instead of putting two in for each of the properties.

But once again, the recycling was very limited. The contamination every week, you know, you just wouldn't get any bins picked up. So because you've got the same as us where you've got one bin that goes round one week and picks up the general waste and then there's another one that goes the second week and picks up the recycling, and they would just go in every week because they weren't too sure which ones are contaminated and which ones weren't, and since metro stores have gone in that has virtually stopped, you know, you might get it once a year, and that's how good it's been, just by having the bins slightly different and making the recycling one slightly further away. So if you want to recycle you'll walk those extra steps, that's what we felt. And if that works, might have worked better than it has for Tom, but it seems to be a lot better having the recycle one slightly further away than the general waste.

*ND*

Thanks, Richard, that's really helpful. Are there any points to add to that, Tom?

*TM*

No, again, it's just looking at what you need, especially with the collections and working with your waste and recycling team is paramount as well, because there's no point putting extra bins in, if they don't have the capacity to collect the bins and again, if they are finding contamination, they need to let us know, they might get your bin here and there, but then their contract is that crew then goes and empties that bin, then they come back, tip off, empty, then go out with the refuse truck to load the contamination on so it's ready to go for the following week. But again, the contamination we've had lately is builder's rubble being put anywhere and everywhere to the point where we can't even lift the bins. So that's where people have actually got the bins out and dumped it in there, it's not contamination, it's deliberate dumping into the bins.

*RC*

Just while I'm on still Nigel, one of the mentions was about fire risk, how close you can put them to the buildings. So we worked with metroSTOR to put some fire lining inside the bins already, so it costs a bit more

to do it but obviously you can get the bins a lot closer to the building and our fire officer is happy with that, and you know, it's where you situate them I suppose, on the exits and on the way to the car park, maybe at the rear doors rather than the front doors because that's where the car parks are. So that was a good thing that we looked at, but they're fine lining them with, I can't remember what it looks like, Nigel will know and he'll be able to share that if you ever need something a bit closer than the 30 metres or I think ours are about seven or eight metres away.

*TM*

Yeah, that's where we're very lucky because they were working well with Roy now, I'm saying we had some teething problems before, but now Roy looks after anything that comes through Hounslow, because we get architects saying, I want to put this in, and they would put it in without speaking to anyone from the caretaker services or the waste team, and it doesn't fit with what we put in. So I was taking them out, but again, with Roy, Nigel and the team, you know, they've come back working with us, and now going forward we visit sites a couple of times before it even goes ahead with anything.

*ND*

No, coordination and getting all the stakeholders involved is so important. Really great. Just some clarity on distances, the 30 metres is like a maximum travel distance that people should have to go from their flat. The safety distance from the fire point of view, is generally taken as being six metres, or providing an additional level of fire resistance, which is something that we can do with our units, and we've got test data to support that, which I'm sure we'll come back to on future events, looking at, well, we are planning a store, what things should you be, you know, taking into consideration? One more question from Stacey Thwaites. Stacey, how are you?

*ST*

Hi, thank you, very well. I hope you all are, too. Thank you. It's been really interesting to hear how well have been received in the Towers. My question was around the planning stages and putting them in. Did you do any consultation with your residents to ask if they wanted them before you put them in, or was it a, this is what we're doing and we'll consult with you on locations, etc.?

*TM*

Literally, we were doing because of fire safety, so that was the main reason for it, and closing off chutes. Because I don't know if you've ever cleared a chute, but there's no right or wrong way of doing it, I've sliced my fingers two or three times, and hands, you're trying to get in there, and you're trying to try to get people to close the chutes above you.

*ST*

Yeah, we got some pretty impressive things in ours over the years, I'll tell you that.

*TM*

I was taking sofa out the other day, someone chopped it up and put it down there. No, I'm saying, we consulted in what we were doing, saying to them, you know, this is the plan going forward. And again, it shows you, the take up is really good. You know, residents engage with us, saying, I'd like it here, we've had one or two people say, Oh, I don't want it outside my door, it's going to smell, is going to attract rats. But when we say, the maintenance is done weekly, there isn't any issues. You've got some people saying, I've never seen a rat.

Well, good luck with that, because I keep seeing them every day. And they're not just, anywhere and everywhere.

*ST*

I suppose I'm coming from it from a Building Safety Act point of view, and obviously that we now need to consult with tenants around major investment works in the buildings, etc., and the closure of the chutes, I suppose this is something we're going to have to consider going forward.

*TM*

Yes, I'm saying Roy can probably give you a copy of what Coryn's been working with us on now, so we've changed how we're doing it, so the EIOs wrote to each building and now we're working together in partnership to send out a consultation, so Roy and the team will come down and we discuss where we're looking to put it. We put out a consultation, we've had a few where they're just going, Oh, can we change this, can we change that? Which we've gone back, reviewed it, changed the plans of how many bins and units we putting in and looking at those sort of things. But then the letter's there, it goes out to consultation, because you've got the time of the 8 to 10 weeks before we're going to get them on site, get them delivered, but then you can look at what you need as well, if you want the skirts on them, which keeps any waste contained in there, which was always going to blow everywhere, and for recycling, yes. So I think Roy is coming back down to us in a few weeks' time, we're going to go back over some of the work that was done, so the units were from metroSTOR but installed by a third party, but we're going to get the skirts put on there because of the overspill.

*ST*

No, that would be really useful if you could share that, would be really great.

*TM*

Yeah, Roy and Coryn have got letters we use, you're welcome to share those.

*ST*

Thank you notes.

*ND*

They're very good points. Stacey, and they raise two points I was going to come to. One is that I'd like to start a sort of resource library where people can share documents and things, templates, documents that they've used that, if you're happy to share them on the chat here or through whatever means in future events, really appreciate any, you know, resources that people are happy to share on that. The other is, as you mentioned, the Building Safety Act and the sort of legal duty on landlords in terms of resident consultation, and clearly that's not something that we're an authority or entitled to advise on, but I was thinking we could pull in somebody like Devonshires on a future event to or at least get their input in terms of you know, what is the legal position on that, if you think that would be helpful.

We're nearly up there with time, so I was just going to say in terms of future events, as contained on some of the communications, we're planning a live event at Hounslow next, so that anybody that is up for travelling to Hounslow, we'd love to show you around the estate and how it's working and there'll be lunch in the community hall, etc. It's probably going to be April because the cold weather is coming, that's what we're thinking at the moment. So we'll circulate that and to get general idea on numbers, that would be the next thing we've got up.

But really, I mean, it's just amazing to see so many people keen to find out more about this. But, as important as anything, is to actually share knowledge, share experience, because there's not many forums available for us in our sector to do that. So, we're very happy to be able to facilitate that. And then yeah, it might be followed you know, three months later by another online event for those that find it difficult to

travel, and they might be able to do something a bit further north like Wolverhampton, if Richard is happy to show us round there, or others such as Sheffield, where they've been doing something similar.

So yes keep in touch, I really appreciate everybody's attendance and the fantastic engagement. We haven't been able to go through all the things on the chat, but I'll pick them up following this. Again, thank you everybody that's contributed and attended. There will be recording, will be a transcript, will be slides, will be a summary. Thank you so much Tom, for the time you've given us.

*TM*

No, thanks for inviting us along.

*ND*

And Andrea, I'll forward everybody's thanks on. We can put contact details, again contact details in the chat if you want to ask questions directly.

*TM*

Yeah.

*ND*

Yeah. Please keep the conversation going. That's actually fantastic. Thank you so much, everybody.

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