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Ms Charlotte Dale
Head of Overview, Scrutiny and Policy
LB of Lewisham

17 July 2023

Dear Charlotte,

Thank you for your email on 27 February 2023, setting out the recommendations following the London Borough of Lewisham's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. I would like to offer my sincere apologies for the delay in sending this letter and would like to thank you for your support and patience.

Set out below, we will respond to each of the Committee's recommendations:

1. Develops a SMART¹ improvement plan to address poor performance in Lewisham, including attendance times in relation to emergency events and the length of time excavations are open in relation to both planned and unplanned events.

Our Repair and Maintenance Team has actively engaged with our contractors to address the concerns raised about reinstatement. We have taken a proactive approach by challenging them to enhance their lead time for reinstatements, particularly on TFL roads, and strive for same-day reinstatement whenever feasible. We are pleased to report that the contractors, SQS, have embraced this initiative and are committed to implementing these improvements going forward. We believe these changes will lead to more efficient and timely reinstatement processes, benefiting both our operations and the community. We will be monitoring the changes and will be happy to report back in 6 months on the progress we've made.

2. Ensures that the improvement plan includes allocating sufficient resource to deal with emergencies, as when emergency events occur concurrently there are regularly significant delays in attendance.

We are dedicated to improving response times by reducing the cycle time for key leakage work. This will enhance the efficiency of handling leakage issues and overall cycle times for visible work. We are developing a new approach to tackling this issue which will shortly be trialled. Though specific timelines are pending, we are resolute in our purposeful progression.

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Notably, our emergency resources align with in-day resources. As a result, we will always prioritise emergencies above all other jobs. Therefore, the trial aims to enhance emergency response alongside our primary focus on reducing cycle times.

Our wider strategy is to get 10 Network Service Technicians working nights and onboard by year-end, who will be able to ensure more capacity is available out of hours to continue improving the service we offer.

Additionally, we have now made changes to our vetting process to ensure that there is improved proactive management of our emergency digs backlog so that we are able to respond swiftly to all genuine emergencies. This has already seen reductions in historic high levels of emergency digs in 2022 down to 6 times lower than last year. We resultantly expect the reduction in the E-digs we raise to improve response times on genuine emergency digs as of immediate effect.

3. Ensures that all planned and unplanned activity is clearly communicated to businesses and residents.

The nature of unplanned work means it is not always possible to communicate in a timely fashion, but we are aware that this is an area of the business which needs to improve. To address this, we are building this into our 2023 London Water strategy. Currently, timelines haven't been agreed as it will require multi-department alignment and agreement. We are working on it and will be able to provide a further update once we have more concrete decisions.

The current protocol is that Network Support Technicians (NST) should be doing a call on route to the job and also after completing the job, as standard. To improve performance, the NST's are now being audited and failure to follow the protocol basics will be addressed with performance management. This will be effective for one property incidents or issues, as for wider large supply interruption incidents we are working with our communications team to introduce new ways of communicating as part of the London Water strategy

4. Ensures that the compensation policy for businesses and residents affected by water leaks is clear and accessible.

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5. Ensures that the compensation policy for businesses and residents affected by water leaks is clear and accessible.

Our business and residents' compensation policy is clearly presented on our website and I have attached a link below for reference:

- [Business loss of profits policy | Wholesale | Thames Water](#),
- [Claiming compensation | About us | Thames Water](#)

6. Commits to working with the Council to:

- **deliver required improvements to its emergency response**

We have already addressed this in our response to point 2.

produce and deliver costed, joint investment plans for managing surface water, based on detailed local risk maps and modelling going forwards - in line with National Infrastructure Commission recommendations for 2025 and the need for locally agreed targets

Surface water management is the responsibility of the Local Flood Authority, which in this case is Lewisham Council. However, we do know that we'll both need to work collaboratively in order to tackle this growing problem.

There are a series of government-led initiatives that encourage collaboration between different organisations to synergise plans for flood risk reduction. Some of these have statutory requirements and others do not. The NIC report is a recommendation to government. The water industry will get a new statutory requirement to lead the co-delivery of Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans under the Environment Act. We have completed a first round of non-statutory DWMP's that were published on 31 May 2023. This has included extensive stakeholder engagement from late 2021 until just before publication in summer 2023. Within this period there was a public consultation over summer 2022.

In addition, due to the flooding that occurred across London in July and August 2021 we are represented on a London Wide Surface Water Strategic Group. This group is currently procuring services to develop a London-wide strategy for flood risk reduction as all parties recognise that surface water flooding needs collaboration. We would expect updates to be made available via LoDEG.

Yours sincerely,

Natacha Israel
Local Engagement Manager- East London