

# Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub- Committee Agenda



To: Councillors Leila Ben-Hassel (Chair), Jeet Bains (Vice-Chair), Kola Agboola, Jade Appleton, Louis Carserides, Luke Clancy and Caragh Skipper

Reserve Members: Jan Buttinger, Robert Canning, Pat Clouder, Clive Fraser, Karen Jewitt, Michael Neal and Oni Oviri

A meeting of the **Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Tuesday, 1 February 2022 at 6.30 pm. This meeting will be held remotely**

Katherine Kerswell  
Chief Executive  
London Borough of Croydon  
Bernard Weatherill House  
8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

Simon Trevaskis  
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www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings  
Monday, 24 January 2022

Members of the public are welcome to view the webcast both live and after the meeting has completed at <http://webcasting.croydon.gov.uk>

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If you require any assistance, please contact Simon Trevaskis as detailed above.

## AGENDA – PART A

### 1. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence from any members of the Committee.

### 2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting** (Pages 5 - 18)

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 13 July and 28 September 2021 as an accurate record.

### 3. **Disclosure of Interests**

Members and co-opted Members of the Council are reminded that, in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and the statutory provisions of the Localism Act, they are required to consider **in advance of each meeting** whether they have a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI), an other registrable interest (ORI) or a non-registrable interest (NRI) in relation to any matter on the agenda. If advice is needed, Members should contact the Monitoring Officer **in good time before the meeting**.

If any Member or co-opted Member of the Council identifies a DPI or ORI which they have not already registered on the Council's register of interests or which requires updating, they should complete the disclosure form which can be obtained from Democratic Services at any time, copies of which will be available at the meeting for return to the Monitoring Officer.

Members and co-opted Members are required to disclose any DPis and ORIs at the meeting.

- Where the matter relates to a DPI they may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not stay in the meeting unless granted a dispensation.
- Where the matter relates to an ORI they may not vote on the matter unless granted a dispensation.
- Where a Member or co-opted Member has an NRI which directly relates to their financial interest or wellbeing, or that of a relative or close associate, they must disclose the interest at the meeting, may not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not stay in the meeting unless granted a dispensation. Where a matter affects the NRI of a Member or co-opted Member, section 9 of Appendix B of the Code of Conduct sets out the test which must be applied by the Member to decide whether disclosure is required.

The Chair will invite Members to make their disclosure orally at the commencement of Agenda item 3, to be recorded in the minutes.

**4. Urgent Business (if any)**

To receive notice of any business not on the agenda which in the opinion of the Chair, by reason of special circumstances, be considered as a matter of urgency.

**5. Budget Scrutiny Challenge (Pages 19 - 30)**

The purpose of the Budget Challenge reports is to provide the Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee with sufficient information to reach a view on the following 2022/23 budget proposals:-

1. Independent Travel Service
2. Grounds Maintenance
3. Emergency & Temporary Accommodation (To follow)

**6. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Rent Setting and Draft Budget 2022/23 (Pages 31 - 32)**

The Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee is asked to consider the information, to be provided, with a view to, as part of the wider budget scrutiny process, forming conclusions on the deliverability and sustainability of the Housing Revenue Account budget, as well as ensuring there is an understanding of the key risks.

**7. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The following motion is to be moved and seconded where it is proposed to exclude the press and public from the remainder of a meeting:

“That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within those paragraphs indicated in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.”

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# Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

## Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee

Meeting held on Tuesday, 13 July 2021 at 6.30 pm. This meeting was held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel (Chair);  
Councillor Jeet Bains (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Kola Agboola, Jade Appleton, Louis Carserides and Luke Clancy

**Also Present:** Councillor Patricia Hay Justice, Cabinet Member for Homes  
Councillor Clive Fraser,  
Alison Knight, Interim Corporate Director of Housing  
Yvonne Murray, Director of Housing Assessment and Solutions  
Sarah Atwood, Finance Manager  
Saheed Ullah, Head of Asset Planning  
Sharon Murphy, Head of Tenancy and Resident Engagement  
Sharon Day, Project Development Manager  
Sarah Lawton, Interim head of Temporary Accommodation  
Yaw Boateng, Tenants and Leaseholders Panel  
Lesley Parry, Tenants and Leaseholders Panel

**Apologies:** Councillor Caragh Skipper

### PART A

#### 17/21 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18/05/2021 were deferred to the next meeting.

#### 18/21 Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

#### 19/21 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no items of urgent business.

#### 20/21 Housing Improvement Plan and Board

The Cabinet Members for Homes introduced the item and outlined details in a [Presentation](#)

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions

In response to queries raised by the Sub-Committee, the following was clarified:

- The Housing Improvement Board was an independently Chaired Board with its own Terms of Reference which had undergone a review with changes made to the TOR
- The Membership of the Board was being looked at to ensure appropriate reflection of representation of equality and diversity
- A number of other blocks had been identified as having damp problems, with two of them being classed a priority
- A number of meetings had taken place with residents to talk through issues
- Analysis of historic allocations, to look at how allocations had been managed and if the policy was fit for purpose was an action in the Improvement Plan

During the consideration of the recommendations, the Sub-Committee discussed the following:

- In assessing what went wrong, in particular with the issues at Regina road, it was acknowledged that there had been serious failings in the system. There were serious lessons that has been learnt and were taken forward as part of the redevelopment of the strategy. The new Housing Improvement Board would hold all aspects of the Council to account and it would be vital to ensure that all work streams worked well in tandem and identify interdependencies. Case work Management was an area of priority to be addressed as part of the improvement work
- To address the areas of concerns with the Axis contract as highlighted by the Ark report, several joint workshops with council and contractor staff at operational level had taken place with discussions on all aspects of the contract as well as how adapted ways of working as a result of the Covid pandemic. The ideas captured as the sessions would be developed into an action plan that would be fundamental to the Improvement Plan.
- The Action Plan would be finalised, project officers had been identified for wok streams and this would be discussed at the next meeting of the Tenants and Leaseholders Panel.
- There were issues with current levels of vacancies as a result of competitive market across London for experienced Council and Housing Association officers. Contractors had also experienced issues with recruitment as a result of Brexit which was having and impact of their ability to retain staff. They were however resourced at the level they should be based on the amount of work they were expecting following data that was presented to them by the Council that the beginning of the contract that they had submitted their tender on the basis of.

- There were block by block visits taking places across the whole borough with efforts initially concentrated on areas that were of similar concerns as Regina Road.
- A Roadshow had commenced that would run till September, starting at high rise blocks with lower levels of engagement in an attempt to create more line of visibility through a targeted knocking exercise to introduce/reintroduce officers to tenants.
- There was a lot of work to be done on communication to residents that the information that had been gathered from them was going into a planned process of work. Communication needed to be more explicit going forward with residents as well as with Ward Members.
- Further work was needed on the complaints process , including training for staff on the definition of a complaint and the management process
- Council officers had approached London Councils to identify which Boroughs were determined as exhibiting good practice in resident involvement. Officers had approached those LA's to gain knowledge.
- Through the Housing Strategy, officers had been exploring avenues to identify available resources to drive forward change. A number of Directors from London council, housing associations and several organisations had come forward to feed into the strategy
- The Housing Improvement Board would act as a representative tool for tenants and be a positive forum and would act as an advisory group to the Council .This Board would be a vessel for tenants to utilise to communicate their views and be listened to.

Requests for information to be sent to the Sub-Committee:

- How much funding is spent on repairs (responsive and programme repairs) on Wates blocks
- Schedule of roadshows and engagement
- Number of flats affected by damp related issues across the whole council housing stock
- Number of dispute cases against the council – this year and 2-3 previous years as well as some clarification as to how these link to monitoring of performance of the responsive repairs service
- Housing supply determination underpinning the development of the housing strategy (supply from council housing / housing associations / other)
- A plan of the interdependencies between workstreams

Further meetings:

Responsive repairs contract management and monitoring framework (incl. feedback from officer workshops) – planned for August with Tenants and Leaseholder Panel

Voids – planned for September with Tenants and Leaseholder Panel

Outcome of officer workshops to be provided at the July Tenants and Leaseholder Panel meeting

### **Sub-Committee's conclusions**

1. The Sub-Committee welcomed the update provided on the emerging housing improvement plan and was assured that the emerging plan was on the right track. It was noted that the pace of progress has been impeded by the transition of the new executive director and some restructuring within the service, but the Sub-Committee accepted that this work was essential to ensure the right lines of accountability were in place to underpin the improvement plan.
2. The Sub-Committee looked forward to the evaluation framework being developed, once the Housing Improvement Board was set up. In particular, the Sub-Committee was interested to find out how it would link back to the Council's wider improvement plan and the Corporate Risk Register.
3. The Sub-Committee concluded that the 10 work streams were well defined and appropriate to drive improvement (some recommendations are put forward on the work streams by the Sub-Committee below).
4. The Sub-Committee recognised the value of using the work of the Tenants and Leaseholder Panel to feed into the improvement agenda and would advocate this approach being embedded into the new ways of working developed by the housing service, incl. post-delivery of the housing improvement plan over the next couple of years.
5. The Sub-Committee welcomed the work of the panel on the development of a Tenants Charter which would be a great vehicle to improve tenants' understanding of the level of service they should expect as well as their rights and responsibilities. It was felt that this would lead to a greater level of direct accountability between tenants and the Council.
6. At a previous meeting of the Sub-Committee, there was agreement that the ARK report failed to establish how/why/what caused the inaction in response to case work put forward by local councillors and/or MPs. The Sub-Committee remained concerned that without a fit for purpose case management system, similar issues could reoccur. It was welcomed that work had started on identifying a new Case Work Management system and there was a clear process for housing related case management in the meantime.
7. One of the main areas of concern identified by the Sub-Committee was around communication and engagement. Although initiatives had started to be developed and implemented, it was felt that more work was need to ensure both residents and their elected representatives were suitable notice of any events.
8. The Sub-Committee warmly received the new housing structure as it placed resident engagement at a senior management level thereby



creating greater and clearer direct accountability lines on these matters.

9. The Sub-Committee felt that the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Housing Improvement Board lacked important details and welcomed confirmation that the ToR would no longer be approved at Cabinet, allowing additional time for these to be refined (see recommendations on this topic below).
10. The Sub-Committee noted the challenges within Responsive Repairs Service, particularly in regard to recruitment which had been impeded by covid and Brexit along with having to compete with residential and commercial sectors to attract staff. In light of this, the Sub-Committee commended the prioritisation of gas safety works and the rapid progress achieved in such a short period.
11. The Sub-Committee noted there would be an informal meeting in August to undertake a deep dive on the responsible repairs contract, which will be undertaken jointly with officers and the Tenants and Leaseholder Panel.

### **Sub-Committee's recommendations:**

#### **Communication and residents' engagement**

1. A communications and engagement plan was needed to map out all the one-off engagement exercises as well as new communication practices to be embedded in new improved ways of working. That plan should be informed by involving the Tenants and Leaseholder panel, incl. in the development of the new Tenant Handbook.
2. Further consultation with residents was needed during roadshow exercises, engagement with Residents Associations and Tenants forums as well as through the Tenants and Leaseholder panel to identify what they would like to see be made publicly available to further enhance transparency on the progress of the delivery of the housing improvement plan
3. Work was needed to improve communication with tenants on planned works / planned surveys. Should work be delayed or the original stated deadline missed (often due to reasons beyond officers' control), tenants should be kept informed, so they do not feel that it is a case of just nothing happening.
4. There needed to be better communication of the responsive repairs contract's social value, including apprenticeships (opportunities and about the types of roles they can lead to)
5. There needed to be better corporate definition of complaint and improving understanding of it and streamlining the complaints process and promoting it amongst council tenants and leaseholders
6. It was recommended that support be given to the initiative of the Tenants and Leaseholders Panel in the development of a Tenants Charter
7. It was recommended that a diagram is produced to map out the communication routes of case work / enquiry / complaints /escalation

process to clarify to councillors and MPs ways of escalating urgent housing casework as current guidance provides a 10 day turnaround which was not adequate for urgent housing case work.

8. Further consideration was needed on the recommendation in Government's Housing White Paper on the use of technology and how it could be incorporated into one of the workstreams of the housing improvement plan. This should include:-
  - o The exploration of best practice and existing software packages on tenancy management, repairs and other housing issues and any that are used for general housing communications.
  - o Consultation with the Tenants and Leaseholder Panel meeting on use of technology to inform this work.

### **Housing Improvement Plan Workstreams**

1. It is recommended that a plan for the strategy development in Workstream 1, including indicative timescales, be developed and shared with the Sub-Committee once available.
2. Workstream 7 should be expanded to include in its scope the issue of buildings nearing the end of their life, with further consideration given to how these options are to be assessed including in relation to the future of some Brick by Brick sites in the vicinity of some of these buildings
3. Workstream 8 needs to address the issue of resourcing / workload allocation & management within the service. Staff can be given the right skills and cultural/behaviour training but if their workloads are still unmanageable as highlighted in the Ark report, they will be set-up to fail. This workstream should also include within its scope long-term workforce planning and apprenticeships.

### **Board Terms of Reference**

1. Further work should be undertaken to consider best practice on the set up of such Housing Improvement Board, particularly regarding membership and review/consider the following before finalising the ToR, including:
  - Number of tenant representatives
  - Ensure that tenant representatives are not only from formal Residents Associations and Tenants Forums as many areas where the council has housing stock where there is no RA (no RA criteria necessary?)
  - Backbencher representation and/or mechanism for backbenchers' input
  - Meeting observers
  - Webcasting of meetings
  - Holding meetings in a hybrid manner to enhance inclusivity so that people with disabilities and / or caring responsibilities can put themselves forward as board member/observer
  - Term of the chair (elected/number of mandates/criteria/skills, experience and behaviours required)

2. It is requested that the revised ToR are circulated to the Sub-Committee before approval and ensure ToR included as appendix marked as draft in the cabinet report.

The Housing Improvement Board once set up should be given a role to inform the budget setting process (MTSF as well as HRA) and the upcoming HRA review (if timings of review allow).

## **21/21 Review of Temporary Accommodation**

The Director of Housing Assessment and Solutions introduced the item and outlined details in a [Presentation](#)

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions

During the consideration of the recommendations, the Sub-Committee discussed the following:

- There were five schemes available and a breakdown of each scheme would be sent following the meeting
- Fire inspections and fire drills took place on each scheme to ensure that fire safety standards were met, with the quality team tasked with carrying out inspections
- It was important to note that when a Borough placed a resident in accommodation in Croydon, they retained responsibility for that resident.
- There were approximately 2096 families in temporary accommodation and this figure was similar to neighbouring boroughs.
- There was a threat that with the end of Furlough, there could be a rise in people presenting as requiring Council assistance due to not being able to pay their rents and mortgages
- The cost of temporary accommodation increased by 10% in 2021/21
- There was more work that needed to be done on improvements to engagement and communication with residents as well as ensuring a robust complaints systems

### Request for Information

- Data on placements, both in and out of the Borough

In reaching its recommendations, the Sub-Committee came to the following Conclusions:

1. The business case document had yet to be reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team which prevented it being presented to the sub-committee. It would be beneficial for Members to review the processes of officer appraisals
2. It was reassuring to hear about the continuous work on challenging issues which impact the General Fund.
3. It was important that continuous learning and best practice from peers take place.

4. The Sub-Committee was not reassured on the private housing teams processes in managing quality and standards

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The Sub-Committee recommended that:

1. A briefing to be provided to the sub- committee giving an overview of the business case
2. Future reports be comprehensive to avoid instances where the sub-committee has to repeatedly request further information.
3. Data be provided on empty units in the Borough, both private and council

**22/21 Work Programme**

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the work programme for the remainder of the 2021 municipal year.

**23/21 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 10.54 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:** .....

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## Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee

Meeting held on Tuesday, 28 September 2021 at 6.30 pm in This meeting was held remotely via Microsoft Teams

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel (Chair);  
Councillor Jeet Bains (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Kola Agboola and Jade Appleton

**Also Present:** Councillor Muhammad Ali, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Croydon  
Councillor Michael Neal  
Councillor Robert Canning  
Councillor Clive Fraser  
Sarah Hayward, Interim Executive Director of Place  
Stephen Tate, Director of Housing, Estates and Improvement  
Heather Chesbrough, Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration  
Steve Iles, Director of Public Realm  
Jamie Perkins, Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhood  
Scott Edgell, General Manager, Veolia  
Andrea Lowe, Resilience Contract Manager, Veolia

**Apologies:** Councillors Luke Clancy, Louis Carserrides and Caragh Skipper

### PART A

#### **24/21 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

#### **25/21 Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

#### **26/21 Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

#### **27/21 Place Department Update**

The Interim Executive Director of Place introduced the item and details were outlined by relevant Directors in a [Presentation](#)

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions

During the consideration of the recommendations, the Committee discussed the following:

- Growth on income had been built into the budget in relation to ANPR cameras, camera enforcement was an efficient way to ensure people were abiding by the law. Income for enforcement would be a significant increase on previous years. Parking income was used to offset concessionary travel such as the freedom pass scheme which contribution for is laid to London Councils
- Once motorists start to comply with restrictions, there may be a reduction in projected revenue from penalty charges in areas where ANPR 's operated. This had been built into the model as income projection was based on a compliance process which had been over and under estimated at different periods.
- After the deduction of the cost of running the service, all surplus funds goes into the freedom pass scheme, once the surplus exceeds the cost of the freedom pass, the Council is required to put the funds into other road schemes.
- The Council has shifted from a reactive service on maintenance of highways. The budget to deal with reactive maintenance such as effects of potholes as a result of adverse weather was amended to allow for growth in the budget to allow for the repairs to be made.
- The majority of money for Croydon works initially came from the growth fund
- The end of furlough and reversal of uplift to universal credit was concerning and there were a number of strategies that had been out in place by the Council to mitigate the knock on effect such as additional funding which had been secured from DWP to keep Croydon Works running. Working with adult learning, Croydon College and John Ruskin colleges to ensure delivering what needed for residents in terms of training. Working with DWP and other providers such as SWLP to blend different approaches from different providers.
- The development of the community safety strategy would address and target resources in the right way in the antisocial behaviour teams. In being very clear about roles and responsibilities, work had been undertaken to ensure that queries were being routed to the right departments to make sure queries were dealt with more quickly and efficiently. All information on had been made clear on the Councils website.

#### Request for information

1. Briefing from Public Realm on projected income from ANPR
2. Briefing on fee income and total expenditure on the Planning Service

The Sub-Committee concluded that

1. The Place department always achieved savings as required. There was however a concern about the impact this was having on the

department such as the increase in complaints in some of its service areas. Consideration to be given to the possibility of a deep dive to be undertaken by the Sub-Committee on plans to address issues arising from cuts to the budget to be undertaken.

2. There was a concern about the impact of non-compliance with planning conditions as well as issues with the planning enforcement team resource.
3. That's a report on Landlord Licensing be brought before the Sub-Committee prior to being presented at Cabinet in November 2020
4. The proactive partnership of all agencies was reassuring

## **28/21 South London Waste Partnership Contract**

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Croydon introduced the item by providing context and advised that the contract was entered into in 2018 for waste collection as well as street cleaning. Veolia collect 1.8million household waste collections per month, and 2703 miles of streets were cleansed monthly. Recycling rates had improved significantly over the years, this was attributed to implementing different ways to encourage residents to take ownership and recycle more. A service improvement plan had been put into place following the Pandemic to address issues and improve on service delivery. This plan had been impacted by the National HGV shortage issue. Growth increase due increased households and increased waste remained a challenge.

The General Manager and the Resilience Contract Manager from Veolia outlined details in a [Presentation](#)

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions

During the consideration of the recommendations, the Committee discussed the following:

- Officers stated that prior to the National issues with HGV drivers, there has been improvements in collections performance in the last year despite challenges and the service had performed well.
- Reporting of missed collections were usually completed online but the small number of residents that are unable to complete reporting online they are able to report by calling the contact centres to report.
- Useful breakdown on street cleansing per borough, similar information on bin collection per borough and missed per ward would be useful
- Concerning reports regarding behaviour of crew by some residents and officers were clear that any behavioural issues that were reported were dealt with. There were cameras on vehicles to capture any issues. Members welcomed the information of on board cameras and felt this should be publicised. Officers were exploring ways to update the cameras to enable direct feed to the office or live feedback as this was currently not possible. There were factors to be considered such as

costs, data protection and resources which would be part of upgrading of the systems.

- Officers clarified that there were many reasons that fed into the shortage of HGV drivers, in 2019 road haulage association published that there were approximately 60K shortage, this had now risen to approximately 100k. This was desperate and challenging times as agency providers did not have the staff available to provide in this current climate from a backdrop of an already struggling industry .Veolia had been exploring several ways to address the issues such as overhauling recruitment process, upskilling current staff through a bespoke programme to assist them in obtaining the appropriate licensing. A retention bonus had been provided and increase in recruitment package. Prices had to be increased for commercial partners to be able to fund the additional money that was going into recruitment and retention of staff.
- Croydon internal staff as well as some DWP staff were currently being trained in Croydon. This commenced as of June 2021 as were not able to train any staff in 2019. Prior to 2019 there had been an apprentice training scheme in place but not on the current scale. There were current extensive packages for staff such as overtime, bonuses, pension package and training package.
- At the time the fleet was Purchased in 2018, there wasn't and electrical dustcart available. There are more reliable and environmentally friendly fleets coming onto the market but they are extremely expensive. The current fleet was Euro 6 compliant which was encouraging. Technology was changing quickly but there was a substantial capital outlay to change the entire fleet and it could only be changed every 8 years.
- Out of the four authorities on the SLWP, two were not currently showing as experiencing issues but there had been issues in all the Local Authorities at different stages.

#### Request for Information

1. Request for comparative data on collection rates with other boroughs
2. Request for comparative data on collection rates by wards

#### The Sub-Committee Concluded that:

1. Workforce planning should be an area of focus
2. Improvement needed on online communication
3. Clear labelling of bins in HMO's and properties with communal areas

#### The Sub-Committee Recommended that:

4. Veolia and the Council to work together on improvement to technology and interface connections
5. Veolia to conduct a survey of bin locations in the Borough
6. The Chair to write to the government to lobby for a similar approach to Iceland on use of CCT for flytips and environmental enforcement



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**29/21 Work Programme 2021/2022**

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the work programme for the remainder municipal year.

**30/21 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The meeting ended at 10.52 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:** .....

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# Agenda Item 5

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2022
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Housing and Sustainable Communities, Regeneration & Economic Recovery Budget Scrutiny Challenge – Independent Travel Service – Growth Bid
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Steve Iles</b> <b>Director of Sustainable Communities</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Councillor Alisa Flemming</b> <b>Cabinet Member Children, Young People and Learning</b>
<b>PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:</b>	<i>Daniel Shepherd; Head of Independent Travel</i>
<b>PUBLIC/EXEMPT:</b>	Public

## COUNCIL PRIORITIES 2020-2024

*Include here a brief statement on how the recommendations address one or more of the Council's priorities:*

- *We will live within our means, balance the books and provide value for money for our residents.*
- *We will focus on tackling ingrained inequality and poverty in the borough. We will follow the evidence to tackle the underlying causes of inequality and hardship, like structural racism, environmental injustice and economic injustice.*
- *We will focus on providing the best quality core service we can afford. First and foremost, providing social care services that keep our most vulnerable residents safe and healthy. And to keep our streets clean and safe. To ensure we get full benefit from every pound we spend, other services in these areas will only be provided where they can be shown to have a direct benefit in keeping people safe and reducing demand.*

[Council's priorities](#)

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	As part of its assurance process on the 2022-23 Council Budget, the Scrutiny & Overview Committee has asked its three Sub-Committee to identify and scrutinise specific budget proposals to deliverable, sustainable and do not create undue risk.
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	The purpose of this Budget Challenge report is to provide the Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee with sufficient information to reach a view on the 2022/23 budget proposals outlined below and to understand how this growth bid will be used to deliver improvement within the Independent Travel service.

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report provides the committee and the wider council with further detail on the 2022/23 growth bid for Independent Travel Services with sufficient information to understand the pressures in the service, the upward trajectory of the student numbers which are driving expenditure, and how the growth bid will address the current pressures if approved.

## **2 HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES, REGENERATION & ECONOMIC RECOVERY BUDGET SCRUTINY CHALLENGE – INDEPENDENT TRAVEL GROWTH BID.**

### **Background**

- 2.1 Under the Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006), local authorities have a duty in certain circumstances to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary in order to secure that suitable home to school travel arrangements are made for the purpose of facilitating a child's attendance at relevant educational establishments for children aged 5-16. In addition, local authorities also have a duty to facilitate access to full-time education for young people aged 16-19 and this may include assistance with travel in certain circumstances.
- 2.2 Travel Assistance can take many forms, and is based on individual needs and circumstances with regard to the efficient use of resources.
- 2.3 Such assistance in London is generally limited to those students who have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), since access to mainstream schooling is undertaken through Transport for London's Concessionary Travel facility (Zip card).

Options provided of types of Travel Assistance are:

- Independent Travel Training
  - Travel Pass
  - Personal Travel Budget
  - Vehicular (Traditional Home to school transport)
- 2.4 With Covid affecting the ability for schools to open over the financial year 20/21, there was a significant underspend on the budget (£3million) due to non-attendance/school closures in line with Government guidance. However this was an anomaly in the increasing budgetary pressures in SEND Transport which has seen an upward curve of demand which mirrors those seen in other Childrens' services.

2.5 Fundamentally the Growth Bid is to try and take into account the pressures being put into the traditional home to school transport. These can roughly be divided into 2 main drivers:

- Inflationary Pressures being encountered by the contracted Transport market
- Demand Increase

### **3. INFLATIONARY PRESSURES**

3.1 As well as increase in fuel prices, Brexit, Covid and other influences have seen a rise in the costs for Transport providers. This has been added to by the dearth of PCV drivers and other constraints in the Taxi sector in London.

3.2 The Council contracts for Transport in 2 main ways:

3.3 Buses – The service are procured over a number of years, and the inflationary risks are borne in the current contract, by the Contractor. The current contract ends this year, and is due to be retendered. It is anticipated that the cost of this can be reduced by increasing the term of the new contract (as the current contract was let for a short-term period) and this has been accounted for in the MTFs contract savings of £120,000 for 22/23

3.4 Taxis are contracted through the Council's Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) which currently has 33 taxi contractors who each bid for individual routes, offering the best financial value to the Council. There is competition for work within this DPS which has the effect of reducing expenditure to the Council. As noted above, the overhead costs for providing these services, and the dearth of taxi drivers has affected the prices paid for these services across London.

3.5 Additionally, a short-term cost has also been the inability for the Independent Travel Training to have been conducted for approximately 1½ years due to Covid (April 2020-September 2021) and therefore there are students who are currently travelling on transport who could otherwise have been transitioned to travelling independently, and also a backlog of students waiting to be Travel Trained.

### **4. DEMAND INCREASES**

4.1 The biggest driver of cost in SEND transport has been in the increased demand over the last few years:

SEND Transport Croydon	Number of children 2018/19	Number of children 2019/20	Number of children 2020/21	Number of children 21/22
Overall SEN Transport	1366	1515	1583	1606
In-house transport service	93	225	453	487
External transport services	1151	1169	1006	992
Travel training/travel buddies	26	12	0	3
Personal transport budgets/Mileage allowance	96	109	124	124

- 4.2 In January 2021, a total of 3,394 children and young people living in Croydon had an EHC plan, 99% more than in 2010.
- 4.3 In line with national trends, the increasing growth of the population with an EHC plan has been most pronounced since 2015, coinciding with the SEND reforms of 2014 when EHC plans were introduced. EHC plans have a lower threshold than the previous statements of SEN and an extended age range up to the age of 25.
- 4.4 Since 2015, the proportion of CYP with an EHC Plan has increased by 1 percentage points (an average of 0.17 percentage points per year). Using Model 2 from the SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Data Profile, if the proportion were to continue to increase at this rate then the number with an EHC Plan by 2026 is projected to be 4,628.
- 4.5 In addition to the above, Croydon is currently planning to increase its SEND in-Borough Educational placements for the Academic Year 22/23, with a proposal to increase Addington Valley Academy (AVA) places by 40, and planning for 20 additional places at St Nicholas SEND school.

## 5. FINANCE

Increased in-Borough school placement costs to transport £360,000

Increased EHCP modelling cost £890,000

Overall inflationary-related costs 5% (applied to both)

£1.313m growth bid

## 6. Key Risks

6.1 The risks to the service are below:

1. The demand is directly linked to the increase in the issuance of EHCP (by all Local Authorities) and the risk is that this continues to rise.

2. The significant inflationary pressures which are being felt by the Transport industry currently as a result of a combination of staff availability, fuel costs, and other inflationary pressures.
3. The Council is increasing the number of in-Borough SEND placements, however there continues to be a significant number of students educated where due to need, there is only one student attending a provision, and therefore there are no sharing or optimisation options (56 schools where there is only 1 student receiving transport thereto).
4. High costs routes – The Service is seeing an increased number of high-cost routes due to the individual needs of students.

## **7. Assurance**

- 7.1 To account for the risks, the financial modelling has used the higher of the EHCP projection models as detailed in Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Croydon A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Data Profile (August 2021).
- 7.2 Additionally, the Independent Travel Service has allowed for some variance within its calculations of the impact of increased demand on both the increasing numbers of EHCP issuance and also the increased number of school placements.
- 7.3 Options for optimisation and route sharing are undertaken regularly within the Service, and this will continue to try and reduce expenditure as much as possible.
- 7.4 There is appropriate challenge within the Travel Application process, and the Service has reduced the % of students receiving Travel Support from 46.64% 20/21, to 43.89 and continues to ensure strict adherence to Policy.
- 7.5 To return to a position (post-Covid) where there is a high number of students who are successfully Travel Trained, and whose ability to travel independently is realised.
- 7.6 Continue to offer opportunities through the Taxi DPS to new contractors to increase competition for Council taxi contracts and derive the best value to the Council.

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**CONTACT OFFICER:** *Daniel Shepherd; Head of Independent Travel;*  
[daniel.shepherd@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.shepherd@croydon.gov.uk)

## **APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT**

*None*

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

*Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Croydon A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Data Profile August 2021* <https://www.croydonobservatory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/SEND-Profile-August-2021.pdf>



<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2022
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Housing and Sustainable Communities, Regeneration & Economic Recovery Budget Scrutiny Challenge – Grounds Maintenance Growth Bid
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Steve Iles</b> <b>Director of Sustainable Communities</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Councillor Muhammad Ali</b> <b>Cabinet Member Sustainable Croydon</b>
<b>PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:</b>	<i>James Perkins; Head of Environment Services and Sustainable Neighbourhoods</i> <i>Owen Giddings; Grounds Maintenance Manager</i>
<b>PUBLIC/EXEMPT:</b>	Public

#### **COUNCIL PRIORITIES 2020-2024**

*Include here a brief statement on how the recommendations address one or more of the Council's priorities:*

- We will live within our means, balance the books and provide value for money for our residents.*
- We will focus on tackling ingrained inequality and poverty in the borough. We will follow the evidence to tackle the underlying causes of inequality and hardship, like structural racism, environmental injustice and economic injustice.*
- We will focus on providing the best quality core service we can afford. First and foremost, providing social care services that keep our most vulnerable residents safe and healthy. And to keep our streets clean and safe. To ensure we get full benefit from every pound we spend, other services in these areas will only be provided where they can be shown to have a direct benefit in keeping people safe and reducing demand.*

[Council's priorities](#)

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	As part of its assurance process on the 2022-23 Council Budget, the Scrutiny & Overview Committee has asked its three Sub-Committee to identify and scrutinise specific budget proposals to deliverable, sustainable and do not create undue risk.
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	The purpose of this Budget Challenge report is to provide the Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee with sufficient information to reach a view on the 2022/23 budget proposals outlined below and to understand how this growth bid will be used to deliver improvement within the Grounds Maintenance service.

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report provides the committee and the wider council with further detail on the 2022/23 growth bid for grounds maintenance services with sufficient information to understand how this growth bid for the reinstatement of additional resources on a seasonal basis will be used to deliver improvement within the Grounds Maintenance (GM) service. The report covers a background to the service; issues arising from reductions in budget for 21/22 and the maintenance frequencies from 4-6 weeks to a 8 – 10 weeks; use of growth bid budget (if approved); impact onto other council departments and services; the risks associated with approving/not approving this growth bid and how the efficiencies and improvements associated with the growth bid shall be delivered, managed and measured.

## **2. BACKGROUND.**

- 2.1 Previously a 'contracted out' service the Grounds Maintenance (GM) service was taken back 'in-house' in February 2019 with a view and aspiration to find budget savings over the next few years, determine the future services cost and to identify opportunities for improved service delivery. Service areas included;
- Parks and open spaces
  - Shrub and flower bed maintenance (arboriculture service is out of scope)
  - Sport pitch maintenance including fine turf (cricket and bowls)
  - Highway verges
  - Play areas
  - Housing (HRA) estates and land via a Service Level Agreement (SLA)
  - Closed churchyard maintenance only
- 2.2 In addition to the above, in November 2019 Cemetery GM team of 6 was also insourced from external contractors with all resources placed within GM remit to deliver a Grounds maintenance SLA for 3 cemetery sites. This fully insourced service operated with an establishment of 69 members of staff, the use of 30 seasonal operational staff to support the service during the growing and cutting periods of Spring and Summer each year and allowed for a grass cutting frequency of 4 – 6 week for all grassed areas across all service areas.
- 2.3 As part of the MTFs savings identified in 2020/21, a sum in the region of £1m was identified and taken from the Grounds Maintenance 2021/22 budget. This sum comprised of savings generated from service efficiencies, a reduction in the level of services provided, a reduction in establishment headcount and the removal of the use of all seasonal workers usually engaged in Spring and Summer each year. The reduction in resource and operations led the service

to carry out many of its actions on a wholly reactive basis based on priority with Health & Safety issues taking precedence and reduced the total service budget from £3.5m in 2020/21 to £2.55m in 2021/22

- 2.4 Service reductions also led to high levels of public, media, corporate and political dissatisfaction and significant reputational damage to the council and this proposal asks that a proportion of this saving to be reinstated for 2022/23.

### 3. RECOVERY OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 In Autumn 2021, the Grounds Maintenance service managers were asked to propose options to ensure that GM services could return grass cutting to a 4 – 6 week frequency, to enhance other GM services, to mitigate and minimise some of the risks and issues stated above and to consider what resources would be required to achieve these improvements going forward.

**Option A** – To reinstate the use of additional seasonal Grounds maintenance operatives for a 26 week period throughout Spring and Summer each year and achieve a 4-6 week cut cycle.

**Option B** – To rebase and redraw the service level agreements in place with the HRA and Bereavement Services to ensure that service expectations can be better known and managed and that value for money for these service areas can be evidenced. Once determined, any increase in the costs of these services would be borne by the respective departments. The HRA and Bereavement Services currently contribute to receive GM services. The GM team are currently working closely with these service areas to agree service levels and associated recharges in readiness for 2022/23

**Option C** – To continue with operations similar to 2021 and move the service to a wholly reactive one deploying the whole resource onto parks, cemeteries, HRA and highways operations on a rotation basis.

**Option D** – Use of 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractors to carry out certain aspects of the service, allowing the remaining GM resource to concentrate on 1 or 2 aspects of the service and its delivery. (grass cutting only; HRA services only etc).

- 3.2 These options were considered during the budget challenge process and it was agreed to put forward both Options A and B should be taken forward together as the preferred options to deliver the service improvements required whilst providing value for money and surety of service to HRA and Bereavement Services. With Option C not delivering the service improvements required and Option D being cost prohibitive, after consideration and discussion with the relevant departments it was decided that

- 3.3 Work was undertaken to cost the reinstatement of up to 24 seasonal workers for a 26 week period and the current SLA's that exist between GM and HRA; and GM and Bereavement Services are currently being redrawn to meet the current funding available from these 2 service areas.

- 3.4 It should be noted that Options A and B are co-dependant and Option B cannot be delivered without the approval of Option A.
- 3.5 As a result of the above and to bring services back to an acceptable and safe level for borough residents and users, a growth bid was prepared to cover the additional staffing and equipment costs requesting that **£360,000** be reinstated to this budget area to allow the service to;
- Increase grass cutting frequencies from the current 8-10 week cycle to an acceptable 4-6 week cutting cycle across all service areas of Parks and Open Spaces, Cemeteries, HRA estates and sites and Highways during the cutting season (typically between March and August each year depending on weather conditions).
  - Reinstatement of seasonal workers (x25) for the Spring and Summer period (March - August) in 2022.
  - Reinstatement of other horticultural services (hedge cutting, wilding and meadowing project maintenance on a scheduled and proactive basis).

#### **4. Measuring Increases In Service Performance And Value For Money**

- 4.1 The growth bid associated with the reinstatement of the use of seasonal grounds maintenance operatives in order to increase the frequency of grass cutting to 4 – 6 weeks and other GM services is for **£360,000** it is intended that the service improvements shall be measured by
- The creation and reinstatement of a known and agreed grass cutting schedule for all service areas in the borough with a reporting mechanism to ensure adherence to this schedule.
  - The creation and reinstatement of a known and agreed horticultural works schedule for all service areas in the borough with a reporting mechanism to ensure adherence to this schedule.
  - Review and updating of the councils website to provide maintenance arrangements
  - A measureable increase in public and resident satisfaction in the scope and scale of services being delivered.
  - A measureable decrease in the level and number of complaints about service levels and quality.
  - A mechanism to feedback these indicators to corporate and political leaders at agreed periods throughout the year.
-

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**APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT**

*None*

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

*None*

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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Streets, Environment &amp; Homes Sub-Committee</b> <b>1 February 2022</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Housing Revenue Account Rent Setting &amp; Draft Budget 2022-23</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>David Padfield</b> <b>Interim Corporate Director for Housing</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice Cabinet Member for Homes
<b>PUBLIC/EXEMPT:</b>	Public

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	This report has been included on the agenda for the Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee to inform the budget scrutiny process
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	The Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee is asked to consider the information to be provided with a view to, as part of the wider budget scrutiny process, forming conclusions on the deliverability and sustainability of the Housing Revenue Account budget, as well as ensuring there is an understanding of the key risks.

**1. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT RENT SETTING & DRAFT BUDGET 2022-23**

- 1.1. The Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee will be provided with an update on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2022-23. This will include the Housing Revenue Account Rent Setting & Draft Budget 2022-23 report scheduled to be published as part of the agenda for the Cabinet meeting on 7 February 2022, when it is published on 28 January. This report will be published in an agenda supplement to this cover report for the consideration of the Committee once available.
- 1.2. The purpose of this update is to inform the wider budget scrutiny process, from which the Sub-Committee will be looking to reach a view on the deliverability and sustainability of the 2022-23 HRA Budget. The Sub-Committee will also be looking to ensure that there is an understanding of the key risks and ownership of the proposals by the Council's political leadership.
- 1.3. The outcomes from the discussion of this item will be fed into the Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting on 15 February 2022. The meeting on 15 February will bring together the findings from the budget scrutiny process over the past couple of months, with the outcome due to be reported to the Council during its consideration of the budget.

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**REPORT AUTHOR:** Simon Trevaskis – Senior Democratic Services & Governance Officer

**APPENDICES:** To follow.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:** None