

Scrutiny Homes Sub-Committee Agenda



To: Councillors Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel (Chair), Councillor Adele Benson (Vice-Chair), Kola Agboola, Sue Bennett, Claire Bonham, Danielle Denton and Ellily Ponnuthurai

Reserve Members: Richard Chatterjee, Alisa Flemming, Clive Fraser, Brigitte Graham, Joseph Lee and Nikhil Sherine Thampi

A meeting of the **Scrutiny Homes Sub-Committee** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Monday, 23 October 2023 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX**

Katherine Kerswell
Chief Executive
London Borough of Croydon
Bernard Weatherill House
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13 October 2023

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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 - 20)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2023 as an accurate record.

3. Disclosures of Interest

Members are invited to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) and other registrable and non-registrable interests they may have in relation to any item(s) of business on today's agenda.

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. Draft Housing Strategy (Pages 21 - 40)

The Homes Sub-Committee is asked to:

1. Note the draft Housing Strategy 2023-2028.
2. Consider whether there are any comments it wishes to make on the Housing Strategy, which can be taken into account by the Executive during the preparation for submission to Council for adoption.

6. Croydon Housing Approach to the development of the Resident Engagement Structure (Pages 41 - 56)

The Homes Sub-Committee is asked to:

1. Note the work to date and development plans that will be used as a basis to create the Resident Engagement Structure.
2. Consider whether there are any comments it wishes to make on these development plans, which can be taken into account during

the preparation of the Resident Engagement Structure.

7. Report on principles for HRA Business Plan 2024-25 (Pages 57 - 60)

The Homes Sub-Committee is asked to:

1. Note the underlying principles and assumptions that will be used as a basis to develop the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.
2. Consider whether there are any comments it wishes to make on these underlying principles and assumptions, which can be taken into account during the preparation of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

8. Work Programme 2022/23 (Pages 61 - 66)

To consider any additions, amendments or changes to the agreed work programme for the Sub-Committee in 2023/24.

9. 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.”

PART B

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

Scrutiny Homes Sub-Committee

Meeting held on Monday, 24 July 2023 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel (Chair), Councillor Adele Benson (Vice-Chair), Kola Agboola, Claire Bonham, Danielle Denton, Ellily Ponnuthurai and Nikhil Sherine Thampi.

Also Present: Councillor Lynne Hale (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes)
Councillor Clive Fraser

Apologies: Councillor Sue Bennett

PART A

13/22 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Sue Bennett, for which Councillor Nikhil Sherine Thampi was in attendance as a substitute. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Kola Agboola.

14/22 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 27 February 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

15/22 Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest made at the meeting.

16/22 Urgent Business (if any)

There was no urgent business for the consideration of the Homes Sub-Committee at this meeting.

17/22 Housing Transformation Programme Update

The Sub-Committee considered a Cabinet report, set out in the agenda supplement, which provided an update on the delivery of the Housing

Transformation Programme. The report had been included on the agenda to enable the Sub-Committee to review the progress made in the delivery of the programme and to consider whether there are any areas that may benefit from a 'deep dive' to be scheduled on an agenda of the Homes Sub-Committee later in the year. The Cabinet Member for Homes introduced the item and summarised the report, followed by some additional information provided by the Senior Strategy Officer.

Members asked how the 67 projects under the eight workstreams would be prioritised and scheduled, and requested a full list of the projects. The Senior Strategy Officer explained that the full list could be provided, but noted that the list was subject to change as projects merged. The Sub-Committee heard that there was close work with a project management office (PMO) to prioritise projects, and that projects featured as standing items at the Housing Transformation Steering Board. The Chair welcomed the use of 'Red, Amber, Green' (RAG) ratings, and asked which of the 'Amber' actions were at the biggest risk of turning Red. The Senior Strategy Officer explained that these would be the five key risks of the directorate, which were mobilisation of the Responsive Repairs Contract; increased cases of Damp and Mould; risks around Large Panel System (LPS) Blocks; and General Needs Blocks failing to meet fire safety standards. It was explained that actions were defined as Red where it was out of the Council's control with no plan to bring the action back to Amber.

The Chair asked how interdependencies between projects were being managed, and what the key milestones at risk of slipping were as a result of these. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that risks, assumptions, issues, and dependencies (RAID) charts were used, and that PMO colleagues were keenly aware of interdependencies, which were mapped to allow them to be better managed; it was accepted that some interdependencies were beyond the control of the Council. For key risks, there were multiple redundant mitigations to try to alleviate interdependencies and to minimise risk. The Chair asked for reassurance that those who were named against risks were aware and would be accountable. The Senior Strategy Officer explained that there was close work with the Corporate Risk team, and that the CEO and Directorate Management Team reviewed and updated risks quarterly and were named against specific risks. There were quarterly meetings with the Corporate Risk Function to ensure that risks were being properly updated and mitigated using JCAD, which was the risk management software used by all departments to allow for a whole Council approach to risk. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that there were a number of bodies to hold the department to account, alongside regular meetings with tenants, but that it was important that work took place at pace, which could make communication difficult in some cases. The Chair acknowledged that there was a number of Panels and Board overseeing Housing Transformation, but noted that oversight for Members could be difficult, for example, the performance framework for Housing Transformation had not been provided some time after the Sub-Committee had initially requested it.

The Sub-Committee asked if there was sufficient capacity in the service to implement the Transformation programme, how many vacancies there were in the department, and how many roles were filled by agency staff. The Senior Strategy Officer acknowledged that the staffing numbers had been requested before the meeting, and would be provided at a later date. Members heard that capacity and resource needed to be kept under continuous review, but it was accepted that there needed to be additional capacity added in some areas and that this was being accounted for in the departments restructures. The Cabinet Member for Homes explained that the department was still on an improvement journey, and that this was not just about capacity, but also about ensuring staff had the right skill set to take the programme forward; the importance of getting the right directors in place and preparing for forthcoming legislation was also highlighted. Members asked about skills auditing in the department and the Interim Director of Tenancy Services explained that reviewing skills and knowledge needed to be an ongoing process. This had already begun with the provision of internal training and conversations with the Chartered Institute of Housing about qualifications to increase the professionalisation of the service, in line with government recommendations. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained a skills audit had been undertaken in the Housing Needs team and that gaps in hard skills had been identified, but that there were also soft skill gaps that needed to be addressed. Members asked about forthcoming legislation, whether it was likely that this might mean that staff with specialist skills would be needed to be hired, and how this would be managed in competition with other boroughs who would also need to recruit specialists. The Cabinet Member for Homes agreed that councils were looking at this across the country, and that if existing staff could be trained then this would be done, but also that people were often keen to work for Croydon and to be part of positive change to improve services for residents.

The Chair asked if the Council had considered hiring specialist organisations to help with projects in the Housing Transformation programme, and the Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that this was the case and had already been implemented for some projects. The Interim Head of Building Safety and Compliance explained that they had undertaken a gap analysis around building safety to understand what needed to be completed, and had worked with the procurement team to bring in external resource to support fire and building safety assessments. In response to questions on fire safety from the Vice-Chair, it was explained that there was an effort to understand individual buildings in more detail, as well as the residents who lived in each block and their needs through regular meetings as recommended in the Building Safety Act. Members asked that Ward Councillors be informed when blocks in their area were being visited so that they could attend and promote the visits. The Chair asked if the use of specialist companies on a framework contract was being considered, and the Interim Head of Building Safety and Compliance responded that both recruitment and consultancy would be used in a mix and highlighted the importance of good leadership in attracting and developing quality permanent staff.

Members asked for an update on the implementation of the NEC system, and which functionality had already been rolled out. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that the Council was working with a low quality dataset to begin with, but that the introduction of NEC had allowed all data to be stored in one place, which had not been the case previously. There would be a focus in the next two years on rolling out additional functionality to the NEC software to interface with other areas (such as finance, Oracle, repairs, etc.), but it would not solve all problems the department had. The Sub-Committee heard that there was a programme with a roadmap to rolling out this functionality by priority. The Senior Strategy Officer explained that systems were only as good as the data in them, but that NEC was useful in quality assurance as it could highlight data entry errors, duplications and anomalies. Members noted that they would like to meet with the NEC lead to understand the possible functionality of NEC and the plan to roll this out in Croydon.

The Sub-Committee asked about the Housing Needs and Homelessness service restructure, and whether the new structure would be resilient to expected increased demand. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that the current service was not performing well, but that the restructure would ensure that residents accessing the service would receive a face-to-face meeting on the same day; there would be two officers available each day to provide advice and assistance, and to schedule a further appointment within a week or two weeks dependent on their need. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments stated that the desire was to move the service a proactive footing that was able to enact early intervention and prevention by providing advice to households, with urgent action for those who needed it. Members heard that benchmarking had been undertaken with other Local Authorities and that best practise had been provided by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). It was highlighted that currently the service did not provide housing advice to residents in fulltime work, and that it was an aspiration that the service would be able to provide advice to these individuals, as well as working with residents in hospital discharge at a greater pace. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments stated that they were confident that the new service would be resilient to demand, and that a new backlog team would be starting imminently, running for around six months and funded by Transformation monies, to allow staff to focus on new cases and prevention work.

The Chair noted that there would be a reduction in staff as a result of the restructure, and asked how this reduced resource would be used to improve the quality of interventions. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that the new structure would allow for immediate interventions, which was not currently possible, which would increase homelessness prevention and reduce wait times for service users. A performance management framework had been developed with staff so that demand could be measured, and the Council was working with 'LIFT' and other partners to horizon scan on future demand for homelessness services. It was confirmed that the restructure of the Housing Needs and Homelessness service would be completed by the 18th September 2023.

Members asked about central government funding, and the Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that funding came from the General Fund and from the Homelessness Prevention Grant. Currently the Council received £7.1 million from the Grant, which was calculated by a formula measuring temporary accommodation placements, and the number of cases of homelessness prevented or relived. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments stated they felt was too low, and that this was a result of Croydon's high number of placements and poor performance on homelessness prevention. Members heard that until the number of people in temporary or emergency accommodation fell, and the departments' performance on homelessness prevention improved, Grant funding would not increase.

Members asked about the quality of temporary accommodation, and the progress on improving this. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that the inherited stock of temporary and emergency accommodation was not fit for purpose, but that the introduction of the dynamic purchasing system would improve the quality of available accommodation while reducing the cost. The review of temporary accommodation and supported housing would also be used to improve the quality of available housing stock; a team would be deployed in the next 12 months to visit and review every temporary accommodation in the borough, and to assess who was living in each unit. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments highlighted a case in the Court of Appeals concerning a woman who had been living in temporary accommodation with a previous ruling deciding that, as they had been in temporary accommodation for longer than six weeks, then they were entitled to jump the housing waiting list and be offered a permanent home. It was the Council's opinion that this was not correct, and that should the ruling stand, then this would have severe repercussions for all Local Authorities, as well as on Croydon's Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy.

The Chair asked why there had not been a trial of the new Homelessness Service structure, until there was a ruling on the ongoing Court of Appeals case, to ensure that the restructure would be resilient and could utilise learning from the trial period. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that the restructure would be reviewed with staff and unions in six months, but that the Council needed to move at pace to make improvements. The Chair highlighted residents with complex needs and asked how it would be ensured they received good specialist service with the removal of the triage team. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that the front door would be 23 staff as opposed to the four in the current triage team. Members heard that there were specialist staff in the back office who residents would be signposted to, and who could work best with residents to meet their particular needs through face-to-face meetings.

The Vice-Chair asked what the Council would do to ensure that temporary and emergency accommodation in Croydon, where other boroughs were vulnerable placing people, were fit for purpose. The Head of Homelessness &

Assessments explained that the placing authority were responsible for these individuals if they were placed under homelessness legislation; if another authority placed an individual into Croydon, but had discharged their homelessness duty, then Croydon would be responsible for these residents after a period of two years. The Sub-Committee heard that the Executive Mayor had written to other boroughs to ask that they reduce placements into Croydon.

The Chair asked why external resources were not being used to conduct occupancy checks, which could free up properties for use. The Interim Director of Tenancy Services explained that there was ongoing work with an external company to look at the Council's data to see where individuals may have multiple addresses, and to then target these for occupancy checks; these checks would commence within the next three months to try to release accommodation and produce savings. A specialist would be brought in for Temporary Accommodation checks, and internal staff would be used for general needs stock. Members asked if property inspections would be conducted alongside the occupancy checks, and were informed that this would be the case, and that work would be done as part of the restructure to ensure staff had the needed skills.

The Chair asked how confident officers were that the new structure would reduce the Council's legal exposure. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that they were talking to the Council's legal partner about providing training for staff but that it was unlikely that legal exposure could be mitigated completely as there was not the skill set to deal with 'pre-action protocol letters'. Members were informed that there were ongoing conversations with the Director of Legal Services about increasing the resources for Housing legal services. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments stated that the pace of legal challenges could be slowed but, unless there was a change in the law, they would not stop.

Members asked what would be done for residents with no recourse to public funds. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that there was a 'no recourse to public funds' team, which was likely the biggest in London, which would be reduced by two staff. The Sub-Committee were assured that this would not affect the quality of the team's work, and heard that this was not a statutory service.

The Chair explained that the Sub-Committee had received a briefing on damp and mould, and were impressed with the progress so far in establishing the new Damp & Mould Response Team, but highlighted that support was needed in the form of recruiting additional surveyors to increase capacity and ensure that change continued to be positive. The Vice-Chair praised the work of the new Damp & Mould Response Team, and the huge improvement the team had made over the work of the previous contractor. Members asked about the total number of damp and mould visits, and the total number of cases. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained there was about 1200 cases of damp and mould, and that around 200 of these were 'Stage 2', with around five new cases being reported per week. It was

confirmed that damp and mould cases would always be addressed as a priority even if this meant that budget would need to be taken from other areas, but that the budget was built with demand modelling.

Members asked how the department was supporting private housing tenants with damp and mould, and how much budget was being allocated to this. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that their team primarily focussed on the Council's housing stock, but that they were working closely with the private sector housing team to provide support and guidance. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments stated that there was good partnership working with the private sector housing team, and that there were two extra private sector housing posts funded out of the General Fund to do work around damp and mould. The Damp and Mould Strategy did account for private sector tenants to ensure a uniform approach, and ensure that tenants dealing with damp and mould or other hazards could be placed into temporary accommodation when needed. The Cabinet Member for Homes explained that the Damp and Mould Action Team contained officers from both the Housing department and private sector housing team.

The Chair asked if the department was sufficiently resourced to do education the education piece for tenants around preventing damp and mould. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that there were eight officers in the Damp & Mould team to ensure there was sufficient resource, but that this would be kept under review to ensure it was rightsized. Members heard that communications went out across the department to ensure everyone was involved in identifying hazards.

The Chair highlighted the importance of culture change in the department and asked what was being done to ensure this was prioritised, given the number of projects being implemented. The Senior Strategy Officer explained that this would be delivered alongside other projects and ways of working, and was integral to ensuring that these succeeded. The Vice-Chair asked how resident feedback would be incorporated so that the change in culture was what residents wanted. The Interim Director of Tenancy Services explained that there needed to be good training for staff, but it was also recognised that robust challenge of behaviour would be needed in some cases; it was acknowledged that this would be an ongoing process.

The Chair asked for greater clarity on the customer journey for different areas of the service to better understand the experience for residents and how the 'resident's voice' would be incorporated into culture change and training. It was further asked if officers had looked to incorporate recommendations from the Chartered Institute for Housing campaign 'It's not okay', around stigma for residents living in social housing. The Interim Director of Tenancy Services explained that there were discreet projects, such as a website review, being undertaken with residents as well as projects around reducing stigma for social housing tenants; it was stated that reports on this could be provided for future meetings. The Sub-Committee heard that 'resident's voice' was captured through resident feedback surveys and talking directly to residents, and that officers tried to directly implement learning from these resources.

The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that the transformation of the Housing Needs service had been informed by direct engagement with residents and from looking at the feedback from customer complaints. The result of this engagement had been that the transformation focussed on reinstating face-to-face meetings to reinforce the dignity of customers who should be treated with kindness, respect and dignity. The Senior Strategy Officer explained that they were working with 'Tpas', who were tenancy engagement specialists, on the best ways to improve tenant involvement structures and develop a Resident Engagement Strategy, alongside the Housing Improvement Board and Tenants and Leaseholder Panel. The aim of this work was to improve how the voice of residents was fed back to the Directorate Management Team to inform decisions, and increase the number of residents who could be engaged, and the ways that they could be engaged. Members heard that the Social Housing Regulation Bill had introduced tenant satisfaction measures, and the department were now looking at tenant perception survey results on a quarterly basis which fed into a performance monitoring report that was reviewed and shared with residents; work was ongoing on an annual performance report that would be shared with residents.

The Chair asked how the diversity of Croydon's communities would be reflected in the teams engaging with residents, and commented that there were already a number of well organised tenants group in the borough, some of who were frustrated that their feedback had not been acted on by the Housing department. The Senior Strategy Officer explained that this would be addressed as part of the Resident Engagement Strategy, to ensure that recommendations were collected in an auditable way and responded to even where they were not accepted. Members heard that there would be work with existing groups and panels to ensure that their terms of references and governance structures were fit for purpose, and that there would be a broad range of ways for residents to engage.

Actions

The Sub-Committee requested that they were provided with the most up to date structure of the Housing department that included the roles and responsibilities of each team.

The Sub-Committee requested a briefing on the rollout of the NEC system by the NEC lead, including detail on the available additional functionality and which of these would be deployed in Croydon.

The Sub-Committee requested that an update be provided on the Housing Needs and Homelessness service once the planned review had been completed six months after the restructure, including information on legal challenges/exposure to the service and the outcome of the Imam court case.

The Sub-Committee requested that a briefing be provided to Members on the Resident Engagement Strategy before this was finalised at Cabinet in December 2023.

The Sub-Committee concluded that they would like to meet with the programme management team to better understand how the Housing Transformation Programme was structured and how interdependencies between projects were being managed.

Conclusions

The Sub-Committee welcomed the work being done by the new Damp & Mould Response Team, and encouraged officers to continue the work being done with the private sector on this.

Recommendation

The Sub-Committee recommended that, for future updates on the Housing Transformation Plan, a full list of all the projects under each workstream be provided as well as additional detail mapping out the customer journey.

18/22 Update on the Mobilisation of the Responsive Repairs Contract

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out in the supplementary agenda, which provided an update on the mobilisation of the new responsive repair contracts. The report had been included on the agenda to enable the Sub-Committee to review the information provided and consider whether there was sufficient reassurance that the mobilisation of the new responsive repairs contracts was on-track for delivery; whether there was sufficient mitigation in place to manage the risks to delivery; and whether there are any recommendations on the mobilisation of the responsive repairs contract to submit for the consideration of the Mayor. The Cabinet Member for Homes introduced the item and acknowledged the hard work officers. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance summarised the report.

Members asked whether there would be a full service from the start of the contracts, what the key risks to core slippage were, and what mitigations were in place. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance confirmed that a full service would begin from 1 August 2023; a key risk was that appointments would not be able to be raised through the NEC system, but jobs could be raised through the contractor's system as a redundancy should this not be resolved. The Sub-Committee heard that residents would be able to ring one number and receive service and were assured that any information entered into the contractor's system, should this need to be used, would be collated for later entry into the NEC system.

The Chair asked how contract management would be undertaken across the three contracts. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that

there was a Head of Service assigned to each contractor to manage the day-to-day operations, as well as a Strategic Client Team across all of the contracts to ensure governance and performance were monitored effectively. The Council would be in control of all repairs data, which had not been the case previously, which would allow for interventions where things were not working. The Chair asked if there was capacity to analyse this data to ensure that performance issues were caught early, and Members heard that this was the case, and that capacity would be increased as new contracts were signed.

The Vice-Chair asked where the data on the backlog of legacy repairs had been gathered from, and whether there was a risk of additional repairs the Council were not aware of where residents had given up reporting issues to the previous contractor. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that Wates and Mears had specific teams to deal with legacy repairs, to ensure that new responsive repairs could be deployed quickly. Members heard that residents with legacy repairs had been contacted to explain that a new contractor would soon be in contact to organise their repair. The Vice-Chair explained that they had seen some of these communications, and were concerned that there had not been triaging of the legacy repairs. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that the Council was reviewing the legacy backlog to triage it using complaints, and were already contacting residents to book in appointments with the new contractor. The Chair asked how double booking legacy repairs as new repairs would be dealt with, and the Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance stated that this would be checkable on the booking system but would hopefully not happen due to the additional capacity being built in to deal with the legacy backlog of repairs. The Vice-Chair highlighted that the Council was working with Axis data, and that this could be unreliable. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that they thought the current backlog amounted to a months work, and that the new contractors had been provided with three months to complete these jobs to account for this. The Chair queried how the backlog would be prioritised and whether there was a dedicated Council resource to work on the legacy repairs, and the Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance confirmed that there was a member of staff solely working on this as part of the mobilisation project.

Members highlighted the late signing of the gas contract, and asked whether the contractor would be prepared for high demand in the winter season, and if they would have sufficient stock of new/PAC tested heaters for residents with broken boilers. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that there was still some time before the highest demand months, but acknowledged that the contractor may need to bring in additional resource to complete boiler servicing at the commencement of the contract. The Sub-Committee asked how the contractor would be provided information on the expiry of gas safety certifications, and the Interim Head of Building Safety and Compliance stated that they had been collating, validating and reconciling data on this from Axis and sharing it with K&T Heating. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance stated that K&T Heating were using this data to prepare letter rollouts, and to predict what demand would be over the coming year. Members heard that there would be on boarding of new staff, and

Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) of some Axis staff, with the deployment of staff from K&T Heating's other areas to ensure the contract started smoothly.

Members asked who would be carrying out periodic testing of electrical safety, and the Interim Head of Building Safety and Compliance explained this was done through an existing contract, but that Mears and Wates would do electrical testing as part of voids work. The Sub-Committee asked if this contractor or Mears and Wates were responsible for electrical remedial works, and heard that Mears and Wates would deal with electrical works on a responsive repairs basis and had a duty to leave properties in a safe state. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that there was an effort to reduce silo working, and to ensure that information on repairs for a property, including periodic inspection data, were looked at cumulatively to help identify where there needed to be capital spend interventions on properties and to improve housing stock data overall.

The Vice-Chair raised concerns about the use of temporary repairs and sub-contractors, and asked what would be done to change the culture of the service, especially where former Axis staff would be subject to TUPE. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that the Council had the right to approve any sub-contractors, and made this decision by looking at their work history and health and safety records. Members heard that independent satisfaction surveys would be used to ensure that the contractors were providing a good service, alongside surveyors visiting sites and speaking to residents. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that not every job could be checked, but that good processes would be used to ensure things were working as they should be; if contractors did not have ID cards, residents would be advised to not admit them to their properties.

The Chair asked how contractors would be informed about vulnerable residents for priority service and whose system this information would be held on. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that this data would be held on the NEC system, but that there needed to be careful management to ensure GDPR compliance. Members heard that there had already been data cleansing during the transfer to the NEC system and officers were planning how to fill in the gaps in the information held; going forward the contact centre would be used to ensure data was kept up to date. Members asked if the contractors had dedicated teams to deploy to vulnerable residents, and whether assurances could be provided that sub-contractors would not be used for these jobs. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance stated that they would come back to Members on if contractors had a specialist provision for vulnerable residents.

Members heard that eight members of Axis staff would be transferred by TUPE to the Council contact centre, in addition to the 18 staff already in the team. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that of TUPE staff there would be around 20 going to Mears, 40 to Wates and 15 to K&T Heating; it was confirmed that the contractor teams to deal with the backlog

would not be TUPE staff from Axis. The Chair stated that they would request the total number of staff transferred by TUPE after the 1 August 2023. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that that induction, training, management and processes would be used to ensure that there was a change of culture over the conduct of the outgoing contractor.

The Chair asked if residents would have the ability to submit pictures when raising jobs, and the Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that this would be the case, and that contractors would need to send before and after photos to validate that jobs had been completed. As the contracts rolled out there would be additional functionality for operatives and residents including geotagging, and video and picture submissions. It was confirmed that residents would be required to sign off on completed jobs. The Sub-Committee asked if the submission of customer photos would be used to ensure that contractor operatives had the correct parts, and the Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that this would not be available initially, but would be rolled out in the future. The Chair asked how duplication of jobs submitted would be identified, and the Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that this would be identified through the use of the NEC system but was not automated. The Vice-Chair highlighted that there needed to be a system to identify duplicate calls as this would show where something was going wrong. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that this would be the responsibility of Council staff who would have access to the history of issues raised at a given property through the NEC system.

The Chair asked how out of hours calls would be handled, and the Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that initially this would be handled directly by Wates who could pass on jobs to Mears and K&T Heating by phone call or email. The Chair asked how this would be monitored, how jobs would be triaged and how priority repairs would be responded to. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that jobs would be raised and escalated in the usual way, with jobs handed on to out of hours teams.

The Sub-Committee asked about Social Value in the contract. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that the lead manager had met with all three contractors to agree baseline figures and Members could be updated on this at a later date.

The Chair asked if there had been any consideration of using the responsive repairs contractor to install kitchens and bathrooms, as they would have an interest in ensuring these were built to last, as they would be responsible for maintaining them. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance explained that there would be some installations of this type on a case-by-case basis, and a planned works contract covering these kind of installations would be up for procurement in 2024, which the contractor could bid on.

The Vice-Chair asked if there would be additional monitoring of the Gas contractor due to their late start and highlighted the number of boilers coming to end of life and the coming winter period. The Interim Head of Building

Safety and Compliance explained that data had been shared with the contractor and that they were meeting with them on a regular basis to discuss domestic repairs and servicing, as well as commercial boiler plants. The Council had reviewed letters sent out for annual gas servicing, and asked the contractor to come back with a report on what works are likely to be needed in the immediate future.

Actions

The Sub-Committee requested that the number of Axis staff transferred to the new contractors by TUPE be provided after the start of the new contracts on the 1st August 2023.

Conclusions

The Sub-Committee welcomed the establishment of the Strategic Client Team and dedicated senior Social Value officer post, as well as the Council's approach to dealing with the backlog of legacy repairs.

Recommendations

1. The Sub-Committee recommended that each of the Responsive Repair Contractors develop a dedicated team that specialised in helping vulnerable tenants with their repairs, and that sub-contractors were not used for these jobs.
2. The Sub-Committee recommended that there was additional qualitative monitoring of the contracts for the initial periods of commencement, to identify and address and cultural issues as early as possible.
3. The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council have some oversight of the training being provided to staff of each of the new contractors, and that the Council has the ability to monitor training attendance to ensure it is completed by all contractor staff.
4. The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council ensure that automation in the NEC system is used to identify where repeated calls are being logged for the same repair to ensure that the department is not reliant on individual officers proactively identifying issues.
5. The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council undertake a 'Mystery Shopping' exercise on the out-of-hours responsive repairs service to provide reassurance of service quality, and to identify and mitigate any issues.

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out on pages 15 to 28 of the agenda, which provided a presentation on the development of a Housing Strategy. The report had been included on the agenda to enable the Sub-Committee to review the information provided and consider whether there were any conclusions or recommendations it wished to make to be fed into the development of the new Housing Strategy. The Cabinet Member for Homes introduced the item.

The Chair asked what had informed the development of the key strategic objectives, and how these compared to other well-rated London authorities. The Senior Strategy Officer explained that the broad strategic themes were the same across London, and these had been taken to form the five key priorities with 14 objectives underneath in Croydon's Housing Strategy. Members heard that there had been 20 Vision & Mission sessions to understand what 'good looked like' with residents, tenants, leaseholders, and staff. Following this, Housing Strategy leads had been identified from across the Council directorates to feed in Council wide priorities to the Strategy. The Strategy had been developed with attention to the legislative context.

Members asked how the Housing Strategy had been developed to be complimentary to the Local Plan, and if there was a focus on improving the supply of social housing in the borough. The Senior Strategy Officer explained that the Council was looking at working with housing associations and registered social landlords in the borough to increase social housing stock, as it was not viable for the Council to build additional units. The Sub-Committee heard that one of the directorate leads was a Planning colleague who was working on the Local Plan. The Local Plan was developed using the Strategic Housing Market Assessment from 2019, and this would be reviewed over Summer 2023 to ascertain housing needs in Croydon and how this should be delivered. The Senior Strategy Officer explained that they had been involved in testing the priorities of the Local Plan with Planning colleagues. The Chair asked if officers were confident in finalising the Housing Strategy before the completion of the Local Plan, and it was explained that the Local Plan would be the mechanism for delivering the homes and that the Housing Strategy was developed so that it would be strategically broad enough to support the delivery of the Local Plan.

The Chair invited Councillor Fraser to ask a question on whether there would be a sufficient supply of affordable housing stock in the borough and engagement with housing associations. The Senior Strategy Officer explained that the Council was engaging with housing associations, and would be setting up a forum for this as it had been identified as a gap in the development of the Strategy.

The Sub-Committee asked for reassurance that these were the correct priorities for Croydon residents and asked how the Strategy would improve resident outcomes. The Cabinet Member for Homes explained that the priorities were being developed with residents at every step to ensure that they were correct, and that they were visiting residents to engage them on a one to one level and gather views their views to feed into the Strategy; it was

highlighted that the Council would continue to listen to residents and adapt the Strategy to changing needs. The Senior Strategy Officer added that this was an external document as much as it was internal, and needed to be visible to private landlords, the government and tenants so that they understood what the Council's priorities were to maximise outcomes for residents. The Chair asked about the development of the HRA Business Plan and Senior Strategy Officer that this, the Asset Management Strategy and the Housing Strategy were all feeding into each other through close partnership working across the Council.

The Chair asked how the Strategy accounted for residents fleeing domestic violence and how the Council planned to work closely with housing associations who operated the majority of social housing in the borough. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that the Homelessness Strategy was the primary document that dealt with partners such as housing associations. This was a statutory document, and the Council had statutory powers in these areas to work with registered social housing providers. The Homelessness Strategy also explained how domestic abuse was dealt with in a housing context. Members heard that the forthcoming Allocation Scheme would be developed with residents and registered social housing providers. The Chair asked if the Council needed to wait for these Strategies to be adopted before starting to deal with these issues and the Cabinet Member for Homes explained that they and the Mayor had been meeting with Housing Associations to engage on a number of issues. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that work was under way to setting up a Housing Association forum.

The Chair asked about training of staff to ensure that they were able to engage with residents to find out all relevant information to identify where domestic violence was an issue. The Vice-Chair highlighted issues of mental abuse and the role shame played in underreporting. The Head of Homelessness confirmed that a training plan was being developed, and that work to better integrate with the Family Justice Centre on domestic violence work was ongoing to ensure there was a single point of contact. It was highlighted that better data capture in this area was needed to ensure the Council could access all available DLUHC funding.

The Chair asked what plans were in place to address anti-social behaviour and ensure residents were not afraid of reprisals when reporting this. The Senior Strategy Officer explained that this was picked up under tenant satisfaction measures and a Service Level Agreement had been developed with the Anti-Social Behaviour team. Members heard that reports of anti-social behaviour, and the perception of anti-social behaviour, would be mapped and reviewed quarterly. The Interim Director of Tenancy Services explained that when the Council would immediately send satisfaction surveys to residents once anti-social behaviour cases were closed.

Action

The Sub-Committee requested that more information be provided to Members on the new approach the Council is taking to address anti-social behaviour on housing estates.

Conclusions

The Sub-Committee welcomed the work done so far in developing the Housing Strategy and were supportive of the engagement work undertaken through the Vision & Mission sessions with residents, tenants, leaseholders, and staff.

The Sub-Committee were reassured that work on establishing a Housing Association Forum had already begun and asked that an update be provided to Members once this was completed.

Recommendations

1. The Sub-Committee recommended that the Housing department deliver training on Domestic Violence to all frontline staff.
3. The Sub-Committee recommended that the final Housing Strategy address the Council's relationship with the Housing association and Registered Social Landlord sector in Croydon.

20/22 Work Programme 2023/24

The Sub-Committee noted the report.

The meeting ended at 9.55 pm

Signed:

Date:

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LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	Homes Sub-Committee Scrutiny
DATE OF DECISION	23 October 2023
REPORT TITLE:	Draft Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028
CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR:	Susmita Sen, Corporate Director of Housing
LEAD OFFICER:	Susmita Sen, Corporate Director of Housing
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Lynne Hale, Cabinet Member for Homes
CONTAINS EXEMPT INFORMATION?	No
WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. **Draft Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028**

- 1.1. The Homes Sub-Committee is provided with a draft version of the update Housing Strategy which will cover the period 2023 – 2028. As the Housing Strategy is included in the Council's Budget & Policy Framework, as set out in the Council's Constitution, there is a requirement for Scrutiny to be consulted on the initial proposals.
- 1.2. The constitutional process for consultation with scrutiny on Budget and Policy Framework documents is set out as follows in Part 4C of the Constitution: -
 - b. In respect of the adoption of plans and strategies comprising the Budget and Policy Framework the Scrutiny and Overview Committee shall have not less than four weeks to respond to the initial proposals referred to it unless the Mayor considers that there are special factors that make this timescale inappropriate.
 - c. The Mayor shall publish in advance a timescale for the Budget. The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also be notified. The timescale will be subject to variation dependent on the timing of the Local Government Finance Settlement and the information available. This will be advised upon by the Chief Finance Officer.
 - d. It is open to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee to comment on the policy proposals and the Executive will take any response from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee into account in drawing up proposals for submission to the Council. The Executive's report to the Full Council will reflect how they have taken

into account the recommendations of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and/or their reasons for not doing so.

- 1.3. Although the Constitution refers to consideration by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, in this instance the responsibility for housing related matters is delegated to the Homes Sub-Committee.

2. Recommendations for the Homes Sub-Committee

- 2.1. The Homes Sub-Committee is asked to: -
 1. Note the draft Housing Strategy 2023-2028.
 2. Consider whether there are any comments it wishes to make on the Housing Strategy, which can be taken into account by the Executive during the preparation for submission to Council for adoption.

3. Appendices

- 3.1. Appendix A - Draft Housing Strategy 2023-2028

Housing Strategy 2023- 2028 v.3

[05/10/23]

- Front cover
- Accessibility statement
- Contents page

1 Foreword (Councillor Hale)

Croydon is London's largest borough, and our ambition is to provide good housing services and that residents should be able to live in safe, secure, warm and dry homes.

Croydon Council's five-year Housing Strategy 2023-2028 sets out how we intend to respond to the challenges we face in ensuring that existing housing stock in both the private and social housing sector is well-managed and safe and that those facing genuine housing need are supported by the Council and the Voluntary agencies it works with. In addition, it presents a pathway as to how we can begin to address the issues of housing supply in an environment where demand for housing is ever increasing.

As a Council, we recognise the need to improve our performance in delivering better outcomes in the management and condition of our own stock and through the development of the Resident Charter we will work closely with residents to achieve this. We are also conscious of our role in driving up the quality of housing in the private sector by working with Landlords and where necessary using the powers we have to make sure this happens. I also recognise the importance that Disabled Facilities Grants have in allowing many of our elderly or disabled residents to stay in their own homes.

The context in which the Council delivers housing services has changed a great deal in recent years as the financial position left by the last administration in May 2022 along with a challenging economic environment has meant that the pressures on our housing services have reached unprecedented levels.

New legislation introduced by the Government following the Grenfell Tower fire has given more responsibility to councils to improve building and fire safety for both social and private rented tenants. The Government has also introduced legislation which requires local authorities to improve conditions in social or private rented homes, particularly regarding damp and mould following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak. The increased cost-of-living and private sector rents means the Council is also seeing growing numbers of residents needing support and emergency housing. The demand for housing and homelessness services has reached unprecedented levels and the Council must focus our available resources to protect the borough's most vulnerable people and deliver core services well. Achieving this will require us to continue the wholesale transformation of our housing services and our Strategy will create housing services which listens to and empowers residents to do more for themselves. Preventing homelessness at the earliest opportunity will be an important and key ambition.

The Council has spent too long disregarding the priorities of residents and our Housing Strategy 2023- 2028 will build on our work to really listen to residents' needs and transform our housing services. We have co-designed our Residents' Charter to make sure our tenants and leaseholders are treated with respect and our services are designed with residents' needs at their heart.

Our Housing Strategy 2023- 2028 sets out our ambition to re-build and strengthen our relationship with partners, including the voluntary sector and housing associations, and bring more resources to the borough.

Access to safe, warm, and dry homes is key to ensuring our residents live healthier lives for longer. Our Housing Strategy 2023- 2028 puts our residents at the heart of our housing services and sets out the Council's strategic priorities which will both bring alive and go beyond this vision. My thanks to everyone who responded to the recent Housing Strategy

consultation; your thoughts and views are invaluable to us and have been carefully built into this Strategy.

With a reputation for ignoring residents and a legacy failure to invest in homes, Croydon housing is in a poor state, and I do not underestimate the scale of the challenge. This Strategy demonstrates our commitment to creating sustainable services which support residents and provide the decent housing which our residents deserve.

2 Introduction (Susmita Sen)-National Context

In recent years, Croydon has fallen short in delivering the excellent housing services that our residents deserve. This strategy sets out the Council's commitment to rebuild trust within our community by listening and responding to views about our services and providing or facilitating safe, warm and dry homes to our residents as well as providing solutions to those in housing need. Additionally, we will work to foster stronger relationships amongst housing providers including private sector landlords and housing associations as well as develop stronger partnerships in the Voluntary and Statutory sectors.

As a Council, we are faced with multiple challenges both locally and nationally. The cost-of-living challenge as well as the increasing unaffordability of the private rented sector has heightened the demand for our housing and homelessness services. We have re-organised our services to ensure a much greater emphasis on the early intervention and prevention of homelessness as required by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 but like all London Councils are faced with rising applications of those in housing need. The aftermath of the Grenfell tragedy and wider concerns regarding the condition of social housing has led to the Government introducing new legislation which places new demands on Councils and Social Housing Landlords. The Fire Safety Act 2021, the Building Safety Act 2022 and Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (including Awaab's Law) places new requirements on Landlords to improve living conditions and building and fire safety standards for social tenants and homes.

In addition, the Renters (Reform) Bill will extend the Decent Homes Standards to the private rented sector therefore aiming to improve conditions for the 26% of households in Croydon that rent their homes from private sector landlords or agents. The Bill will also end Section 21 'no-fault' evictions where a tenant is evicted from their private rented sector home at no fault of their own. In 2021/2022, almost one in ten of households which the Council accepted a re-housing duty from were at risk of homelessness due to the issuing of a Section 21 'no-fault' eviction.

Increased interest rates and subsequent increases to mortgage repayments have increased rent prices for private rented sector tenants making properties in Croydon unaffordable to low-income households. The subsequent pressures on our homelessness services have led to increases in the number of residents placed in emergency and temporary accommodation with many likely to remain in this form of housing for years. This also heightens our responsibility as a Council to manage our stock more effectively and maximise any opportunities for new housing. Despite difficult economic circumstances, it is beholden upon us, and our housing association partners to be creative in facilitating new build opportunities and to set a longer-term plan for delivering new housing that follows on from our commitment to provide excellent new housing for the residents of Regina Road.

Finally, I am absolutely determined that the commitments we have made to Croydon tenants and leaseholders in the Residents Charter (see page 9) also apply to all those who seek

housing advice and support and that we as a Council demonstrate our respect by engaging with residents of all tenures as well as partner agencies to-deliver services that truly serve the needs of our community.

By fulfilling the priorities set out in our Housing Strategy 2023- 2028 over the next 5 years and beyond, we aim to place residents at the centre of our services, truly listening to them and ensuring access to appropriate housing. Through collaboration, respect, and empowerment, we hope to build a stronger, more inclusive community for all.

3 Local Context-

The priorities and objectives within our Housing Strategy 2023- 2028 are shaped by the Mayors Business Plan 2022 and revised Local Plan 2019- 2039.



Our Housing Strategy provides the foundation for the development of forthcoming strategies including the Asset Management Strategy, Resident Engagement Strategy and Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeping Strategy enabling the Council to take a forward-thinking, planned and proactive approach to shaping the future of our housing service.

The Housing Strategy 2023- 2028 also provides the strategic framework for the **Housing Transformation Programme**, a programme of individual projects which aim to improve and transform our housing services and deliver commitments in the Mayoral Business Plan to establish *good governance, achieve financial sustainability and drive-up standards in developing a more responsive and effective housing service*. The Housing Transformation Programme has identified specific areas of our housing services, such as housing needs, voids management and repairs service, which require immediate improvement, whilst the Housing Strategy sets out our longer-term ambitions.

The Mayor's Business Plan 2022- 2026, it's linking strategies and the Housing Transformation Programme have been developed in response to the challenging context in which the Council delivers housing services.

In 2022, Croydon Council issued its third section 114 notice due to the severe ongoing financial challenges facing the authority, and the Council's inability to balance its budget for 2023/2024 financial year. The notice meant that all new non-essential spending was stopped, and a savings plan was further developed across the Council, including housing services. In response to the financial challenge, Croydon Council is reliant on a Capitalisation Direction from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Local Government and discussion with the Government regarding a long-term solution to the Council's debt.

In 2021, following the commission of an independent report into conditions at Regina Road, a high-rise Council owned block, the Regulator of Social Housing found the previous administration to be in breach of the Regulator's two consumer standards: the Home Standard and the Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard. In May 2021, the Council committed to improving its social housing and landlord services and therefore provide a better service to tenants and leaseholders through developing the Housing Improvement Programme. In December 2021, Croydon's independent Housing Improvement Board was established to provide evidenced, fair and honest feedback to the leadership of the previous administration on the Council's progress in delivering the Housing Improvement Programme (HIB). Since the election of the Mayor and the new Cabinet in 2022, this advisory body has continued to play a role in monitoring the delivery of the new administrations intent to improve services as outlined in the Transformation programme.

Demographic context-For infographics

Croydon is the most populous borough in London (census 2021) with approximately 390,800 residents across 152,900 households.

In terms of the national deprivation indices, Croydon is the 18th poorest out of 33 London boroughs (DCLG and Ordnance Survey (Crown Copyright)), and the 97th most deprived local authority of 317 lower tier authority districts in England.

The most deprived areas in Croydon under the domain of health deprivation and disability are around the wards of Waddon, West Thornton, Selhurst, Thornton Heath, Addiscombe West, New Addington North

Croydon is also the 24th most deprived out of 33 London boroughs for indoor living environment (the proportion of houses without central heating 2011) and the proportion of houses that are in a poor condition 2015 (DCLG and Ordnance Survey)

Against this backdrop, average house prices were 11.88 times average earnings (Census 2021) suggesting barriers for those wishing to pursue home ownership. Further, the number of house sales in Croydon has been decreasing every year from 2014 to 2020 (GLA Housing Sales, based on Land Registry data, October 2022) meaning the availability of homes is also problematic for those who can afford it.

According to the DCLG and Ordnance Survey (Crown Copyright), the wider barriers to housing and services also include household overcrowding, homelessness and housing affordability.

In a borough which has one of the youngest populations amongst all London Councils the demand resultant from the difficulties in accessing both affordable social housing and home ownership opportunities is partially met by the Private Sector (see below). Nearly a quarter of Croydon's population are aged 17 years and under, with Croydon having the highest number of 0–19-year-olds in London pointing to the challenges we face in terms of future housing supply.

Croydon also has an ageing population: since 2011 the borough has seen a 19.6% growth in the number of residents aged 65 years and over and this is now the second highest in London. The most-recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment suggests that the growing older population will lead to an increase in requirements for specialist housing solutions such as housing with support and care and care-bed spaces.

The Census 2021 data also shows that 15.8% of residents in Croydon identify themselves as disabled under the Equality Act 2010). However, the Croydon Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) states that only 55.1% of adults with learning disabilities and 32% of adults in contact with mental health services live in stable and appropriate accommodation, in comparison to the London averages of 77.5% and 61.0%.

The Council's role in Housing

This strategy sets out the direction for housing related responsibilities and services within the Council and includes the following services.

Strategic housing authority with responsibility for homelessness, rough sleeping and housing need.

Housing allocations

As of January 2023, there are approximately 6,979 households on Croydon Council's Housing Register which represents an increase of 5.9% since January 2022.

The average wait time for a permanent offer of housing between 2016 and 2021 was five years and 11 months with one and two bedrooms subject to the most demand. Over the next few years, it is anticipated that demand for housing will continue to increase raising challenges for the Council in terms of supplying the affordable housing that is needed

Homelessness

Between April 2021 and March 2022, 2,526 households received a homelessness assessment from Croydon Council. Over the last five years the numbers of residents housed in temporary accommodation has seldom fallen below 2,000 and it is anticipated, by London Councils that these numbers are likely to rise further. When benchmarked against other London Boroughs, a proportionately higher number of those assessed required rehousing in temporary accommodation. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 placed new requirements on Councils in terms of working to prevent homelessness occurring extending the duty to provide advice to all those threatened with losing their home within 56 days. Over the course of this Housing Strategy the Council will fully implement this new legislation beginning with a re-organisation of the housing needs services to ensure it is fit for purpose. The prevention of homelessness will be a priority for the new service, and we will seek to bring down the percentage of those requiring a rehousing duty to London norms during the period of this strategy.

Tackling the causes of homelessness

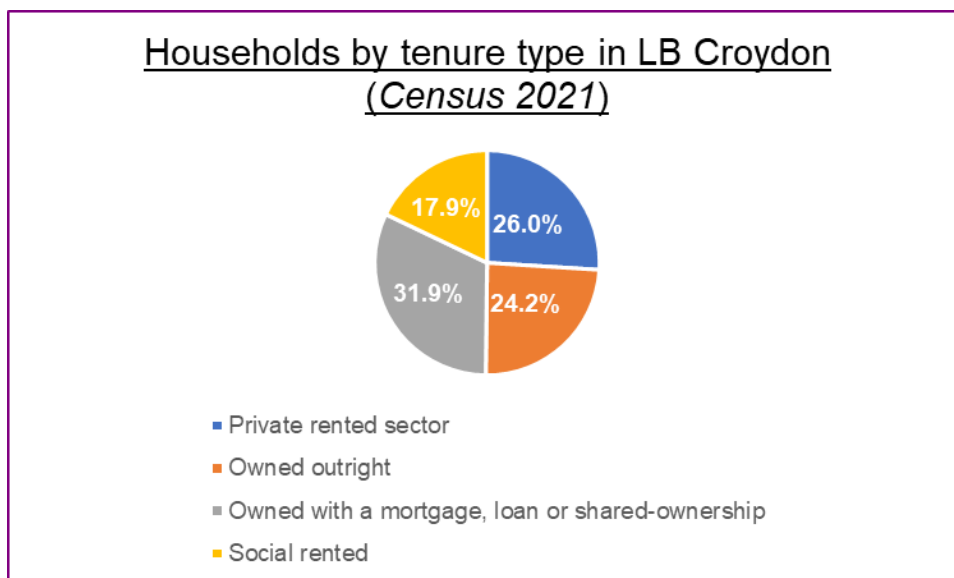
These changes will adapt the service we provide to work more effectively in tackling and preventing the causes of homelessness such as domestic violence, drug and alcohol problems and mental health. To achieve this will require a greater emphasis on working with both the statutory and voluntary sector as well as working effectively with both Childrens' and Adults Services. The development of the Joint Protocol for Care Experienced Young People and the approach towards the Joint Assessment of 16- to 17-year-olds facing homelessness are examples of this partnership approach and are targeted at ensuring that young people are accommodated. In doing so this approach reduces the negative impact on mental health and well-being associated with leaving care and provides a smoother transition into adulthood for these Care experienced young people

Rough Sleeping

In Croydon, a total of 373 people were seen rough sleeping between April 2022 and March 2023 which is higher than any other outer London borough. The number of people who were recorded rough sleeping represents an increase of 22% in comparison to April 2019 to March 2020. Again, projections made by London Councils point to probable rises in rough sleeping over the next few years. Although Croydon has a good performance in ensuring that many rough sleepers do not face a 'Second night out' it is also accepted there are some people who do not want to change their lifestyle and who are regularly causing anti-social behaviour on our streets. Where this persists, our Rough Sleeping team will work with the Safer Streets Partnership and be pro-active in preventing recurrence. Rough sleeping should only be rare, brief and non-recurrent.

Tenure in Croydon

The table below shows the proportion of households by tenure type in Croydon.



Census 2021 data shows us that most households in LB Croydon are one-person or two-person households (57.7% of households). Approximately 18.2% of households in the borough are 3-person households, and 24.1% of households are 4+ person

Home Ownership

Nearly 58% of residents either own their homes outright or are paying a mortgage.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019 shows that people who are elderly or who have a long-term health problem or disability are more likely to own their homes outright than the general population. It is important that these homes are adapted to meet the needs of those with long-term health problems or disabilities to prevent admission into supported housing, hospital, or residential care.

Croydon's 'Staying Put Service' helps people to remain living independently in their own home, through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) for adaptations, and Home Investment Loans for essential repairs. It also provides a Hospital Discharge Service to facilitate safe discharges, as well as a Handyperson Service for minor work. In 2022/23, the Council distributed over £3m of DFG funding to the former and nearly £100,000 in loans for home improvements.

Our Social Housing Partners

Over 27,000 homes (17.9% of homes) are provided by the Council and its Social Housing partners. The amount of affordable housing provided has not increased as a proportion of overall households over the last 10 years. Nearly 14,000 properties are provided by Housing Associations with the largest being London and Quadrant, Hyde Housing, Clarion, Southern Housing and over 70 others, who make use of the Council's home choice register. The Council recognises that it needs to work with our social housing partners to maximise the supply of good quality affordable housing in the Borough and to ensure a consistent level of service across social housing tenures. To improve joint working and communication, the Council will set up a social housing forum which will cover all aspects of its relationship with housing associations.

Additionally, the Council will make sure the Nomination agreements it holds with Housing Associations are maintained.

Landlord to Council homes tenants and leaseholders

Croydon's has 13,342 properties, which makes it the largest social housing provider in the Borough. The majority of Council owned homes are concentrated in the north and east and it is relatively small in size when compared with many other London councils. Of these properties, 52% are flats, 36% are houses, 10% are maisonettes and 2% are bungalows

As stated in section 3, the Housing Transformation Programme sets out the Council's approach for tackling identified weaknesses in Service delivery in its Council homes.

Creating responsive housing services

Tenants who responded to our 2022/23 satisfaction survey stated the following.

- 59% said that landlord services treated them fairly and with respect
- 44% were of the view that the landlord services were easy to deal with.
- 49% were satisfied that communal areas were clean and well-maintained.
- Only 44% of residents surveyed were satisfied with the Council's approach to anti-social behaviour.

This is not good enough and we are determined to improve the quality of our services. We also recognise the need to significantly improve our response to resident complaints. Between April 2021 and March 2022, the Council's housing services received 770 complaints which is equivalent to approximately 15 complaints a week. The majority of complaints related to the housing register, homelessness assessments and repairs.

Tackling such issues are essential if the Council is to comply with the Social Housing Regulator's Customer Care and Home standards.

Stock condition

Croydon Council must address its ageing social housing stock. A substantial number of the Council's social homes were built in the 1930s and are often poorly insulated and unsuitable for tenants with accessibility needs. The Council also owns 46 high-rise (seven storeys or more) residential buildings many of which were built in the 1970s and require improvements and repairs as well as implementing safety standards set out in the Fire Safety Act.

Our performance indicators report that in March 23, 42% of tenants were satisfied with the quality of the repairs service, some way behind the 58% average reported in the National Resident Survey for the Social Housing Quality report carried out in 2020 by the Government.

As of March 2022, 0.13% of the Council's social homes do not meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. Although this figure is significantly below the London average of 9%, our stock condition survey data would suggest that the number of Council social homes not likely to meet the Decent Homes Standard is higher. In addition, Office for National Statistics data indicates that the average energy efficiency of Croydon's social homes is Energy Performance Certificate Band C. (A being the most efficient, G the least).

The Asset Management Strategy 2023/8 will set out our long-term approach to managing and regenerating our housing stock effectively and safely. This will include an assessment of 13 LPN (Large Panel System) blocks where there are concerns about the long-term viability of this housing.

Residents Charter.

Following the findings of the independent report at Regina Road (see Section 3), tenants and leaseholders developed the "Residents Charter" which outlined the principles by which the Council should deliver housing services to residents, tenants, and leaseholders. The Charter was not developed by the previous administration but was agreed by the Executive Mayor in June 2022. The charter's principles which emphasis respect, transparency and responsiveness are fully set out in the Resident Engagement Strategy and are fundamental not only to improvements in Landlord services but across our housing services.

Regulation of the Private Sector

Our strategy recognises that a healthy private rented sector plays a vital role in providing good homes and we will seek to work and support the many responsible landlords within our community.

Recent legislation including the Renters Reform Bill demonstrates the Government's intention to give Councils a pivotal role in maintaining standards in the private sector. Nationally, the number of rental properties has doubled since 2004 and in Croydon now account for up to 31% of all tenure types. Census 2021 data also shows that 26% of Croydon households live in the private rented sector and in the previous licencing scheme over 38,000 homes were registered.

The Private rented sector is unaffordable to many Croydon residents, and this is increasing the demand for social homes and the pressure on the homelessness services. Rents in the sector are increasing with Croydon's average annual increase standing at 9.7% compared with the London average of 12% making it a target for other Boroughs seeking to procure temporary accommodation.

In 2019, the Council had amongst the highest number of evictions from the Private Sector. The forthcoming ending of no-fault evictions and reforming of Landlord possession

processes should have an impact on the number of residents made homeless by the serving of Section 21 notices (in 2022, 284 evictions took place in Croydon).

In September 2019, Croydon Council commissioned a stock condition survey of the borough's private rental properties. The private housing stock condition and stressors report supported the assumption that poor housing conditions are prevalent in this sector, which the report estimated to consist of 58,000 households.

The report estimated that 23.7% of properties in the private sector had at least one serious hazard and in addition 27% have an E, F or G rating, the three lowest ratings within the Energy Performance Certificate system. Moreover, the report suggests that the private rented sector also faces issues with anti-social behaviour; between 2015 and 2019, 7,277 properties reported at least one ASB incident resulting in 15,746 council investigations having been conducted. The report estimated the wider resource required by the council to successfully intervene in the sector. In the same period the Council made 12,172 interventions in the Private Rental Sector with 1,307 housing and public health statutory notices being served on non-compliant Landlords.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) house some of the more vulnerable Croydon residents as this is amongst the most affordable accommodation available. The borough has over 800 HMOs that have been issued a mandatory licence. Further modelling estimates that there are in excess of 3,000 unlicensed HMOs in each of the two categories; (section 254 – with one or more shared facilities and section 257 – certain self-contained flats)

This strategy will re-iterate the Council's intention to tackle the behaviour of irresponsible Landlords and with it the high level of deprivation, disrepair and anti-social behaviour that is sometimes associated with this form of tenure. Going forward, the Council will review what is the best use of its powers to improve the Borough's Private Rental Stock including the option of consulting upon the introduction of a discretionary (including selective and additional houses in multiple occupation) licensing scheme(s).

Facilitating the supply of new housing and managing our stock effectively

At this time the Council's financial position inherited from the previous administration as well as the difficult national environment places restrictions on its role in providing the new affordable housing that the Borough needs. However, it will play a full part in setting a strategic direction which encourages local housing providers to engage in opportunities to increase their stock. Additionally, it will not miss opportunities to plan for future development in the area if this is financially prudent and with our partners will set out a long-term vision for providing the homes that our residents need. We will develop a Regeneration and New Homes Strategy that will set out our approach to housing supply. This will not only shape the vision to boost newbuild supply by partners and Council delivery but will also set out a rationale that embraces building safety, fire safety and the ongoing investment in existing housing.

This is shown in the commitment to the regeneration of Regina Road underlying the long-term plan of the Council to improve the conditions our social housing residents are living in.

Ensuring the effective supply of existing housing stock is a priority for the Housing Service. Effective policies for recovering and reservicing empty properties, and sustaining tenancies are essential for making the best use of our existing housing stock. As stated above ensuring that nomination agreements with local housing associations are being maintained is also a factor in maintaining supply as well as introducing effective procurement processes for leasing private sector properties. The Council will seek to collate more accurate

information about the housing tenures in the borough across both private and affordable to better understand the impact that each tenure has on meeting need and supporting economic growth in the borough. This information can be translated into supporting planning evidence that shapes future supply.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019 (SHMA) has determined the type of housing needed in the borough until 2029, including affordable rented homes, affordable ownership housing, and market (private) housing. The SHMA 2019 indicates that of the affordable rented housing built, the majority should be two-bed and three-bed properties (50% and 20% respectively), whilst of the affordable home ownership housing built, the majority should be one-bed and two-bed properties (30% and 40% respectively) (21). The SHMA 2019 determines that of the market housing built, the majority should be two-bed and three-bed properties (45% and 20% respectively).

In 2022/2023, 563 Affordable Homes were started in the Borough and 553 Affordable Homes were completed which includes Affordable Rent, London Living Rent and Shared Ownership homes.

Working with our residents and our partners to establish the Councils Vision

Working with Residents

Croydon Council's housing services are undergoing significant transformation to allow us to improve the experience of residents, tenants, and leaseholders.

It was important that residents, tenants, and leaseholders were able to determine the vision (what the service should look like) and mission (what we need to do to get there) of the services that they receive, and so 20 engagement sessions across 20 localities were held with residents across the borough including the following groups

- Council tenants and leaseholders
- Council tenants in temporary accommodation and hostel accommodation
- Children and young people
- Voluntary and community sector partners
- Council staff
- Croydon councillors and the Executive Mayor
- Croydon's independent Housing Improvement Board

The sessions determined the following vision and mission, as well as key actions to delivering these goals:

Vision: Creating great homes, places, and communities to enhance life opportunities

Mission: Working with residents, partners, and businesses to provide safe and warm homes in thriving, sustainable and inclusive communities.

Our Vision and Mission will be at the heart of all that we do, and we expect both our staff and our partners to work towards these goals.

Working with Partner organisations'

Croydon has a large and diverse voluntary sector with the second highest number of voluntary, community and faith sector organisations (VCFS) of all outer London boroughs (23). The 657 VCFS organisations in the Borough had a total income of £162.39m between April 2019 and March 2020.

The VCFS has an excellent track record of identifying local issues and reaching out to the most vulnerable in our communities. The VCFS deliver services across the six Local Community Partnerships (North-East, North-West, Central East, Central West, South-East and South-West).

The Council extend partnership working in the Borough and will involve voluntary organisations in strategic decisions affecting the direction of the housing service.

PTO

Our Five Priorities

PRIORITY ONE

LISTEN TO OUR RESIDENTS AND PROVIDE GOOD HOUSING SERVICES

This will include

- Working with residents across tenures to transform their housing service and develop easy to access, modern housing services that prioritise residents.
- Transforming our Housing Needs service to ensure a responsive and tailored approach to tackling homelessness.
- Embedding the commitments made to Croydon Tenants and Leaseholders in the Residents Charter and extending these principles to all those who receive a housing service from the Council.
- We need to continuously improve upon the responsive support we provide to residents living in poor quality Private Sector accommodation using our statutory powers where necessary.
- Delivering major improvements in customer care for Council Tenants and Leaseholders so as to meet the Regulator of Housing's four consumer standards.
- Maintaining our commitments to consult with residents in the forthcoming regeneration of Regina Road.

Why is this important?

- Residents should be able to access, modern housing services which have our residents at the heart of service delivery.
- We aim to provide a variety of ways to hear resident voices and encourage involvement in service development.
- We are committed to creating inclusive communities and neighbourhoods which are safe and attractive places to live.
- We need to tackle poor conditions within the Private Sector caused by bad Landlords.
- We need to transform the quality of service provided to Croydon's tenants and leaseholders.

PRIORITY TWO

WORK WITH OUR PARTNERS, RESIDENTS AND LANDLORDS TO ENSURE THAT HOMES IN THE BOROUGH ARE SAFE, SECURE AND ENERGY EFFICIENT

This will include;

- Our Asset Management strategy will set out how we plan to maintain the condition of Croydon Councils housing stock including our LPS blocks.
- We will produce an investment plan for the longer term that enables us to meet the Regulator of Social Housing's Decent Homes Standard.
- We will ensure robust contract management of our newly established repairs, heating, and voids contracts.
- We will prioritise resident safety by continuously reviewing the compliance of our social and privately rented homes with the Fire Safety Act 2021 and Building Safety Act 2022.
- Where possible we will reduce the reliance on the use of temporary accommodation and carry out a boroughwide audit of these properties to assess their safety and suitability.
- We will support landlords and property agents to ensure private rented sector homes are safe, energy efficient, and meet wider regulatory standards.
- Where necessary, we will enforce policies to tackle the cumulative impact of poor Landlord management of houses in multiple occupation.
- We will continue to be committed to the Councils Sustainability objectives as well as committing to Croydon's climate action plan.
- We will adopt a "joined-up approach" for our services and work with other Council services such as waste collection, grass cutting, anti-social behaviour and street lighting to ensure seamless service provision.

Why is this important?

- We need to strive to ensure that homes in both the Private and Social Housing sector are warm safe and dry across all tenures.
- Improve the quality of our council housing stock and lower our maintenance costs.
- Manage properties which meet the revised decent homes standards, are safe, warm and sustainable.
- High quality and responsive repairs and planned maintenance services which provide value for money and 'get it right first time'.

PRIORITY THREE

ENABLE PEOPLE TO LEAD HEALTHY AND INDEPENDENT LIVES IN THEIR HOMES AND COMMUNITIES.

This will include;

- Enabling residents to remain in their own homes by effectively distributing Disabled Facilities Grant and Home Improvement Loans to assist elderly and disabled people.
- To tailor our housing needs service towards preventing the causes of homelessness such as domestic violence, drugs and alcohol abuse and mental health issues.
- As a landlord, we will take a pro-active approach towards tenancy sustainment and work closely with Social Services to identify those who are vulnerable in our community.
- We will work closely in providing housing options for those leaving care and deliver the commitments made in the Joint Working protocols with Children's Services.
- As a Council we will tackle those who cause anti-social behaviour in our community whether they are in private sector or social housing and provide support to the victims of such behaviour.
- Supporting those who are rough sleeping and delivering on the commitment that nobody should have to spend a "second night out"
- Seek secure housing options for vulnerable residents, including older people, and residents with additional needs and disabilities, which support their independence

Why is this important?

- We need more housing for older people including housing with care and support
- We need to assist elderly or disabled people to stay in their homes.
- We need to tackle the causes of homelessness at the earliest stage to prevent it occurring.
- Support care experienced young people and families assessed as vulnerable into appropriate housing.
- Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping occurring in our community.

PRIORITY FOUR

MAINTAIN THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOMES THAT MEET THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS IN CROYDON

This will include

- We will develop a Regeneration & New Home Programme which will set the strategic vision for borough-wide regeneration.
- Make the best use of housing assets, including vacant properties, to secure housing options that are affordable to our residents.
- Developing the skills and resources within the Council to maintain the supply of affordable homes.
- Strengthen relationships with our affordable housing providers including housing associations, developers, and investors.
- Enabling the development and delivery of the Local Plan 2019- 2039 to ensure homes built in the borough meet residents' needs.
- Effectively managing our supply of properties to minimise wait times and improve the customer experience.
- Delivering high quality housing for residents at Regina Road.

Why is this important?

- Our projections show that there are insufficient affordable homes to house those on the housing register and that the supply of housing needs to increase
- Our Regeneration and New Home programme will ensure that our housing stock including our high-rise blocks, are safe, fit-for-purpose and meet our net-zero targets which are detailed in the Council's Carbon Neutral Action Plan.
- We need to work with our partners in the housing association sector to facilitate the supply of new housing.
- The younger age profile of our population means that we need a long-term strategy for delivering more homes.

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PRIORITY FIVE

WORK WITH OUR PARTNERS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF RESOURCES AND MANAGE THE DEMAND FOR HOUSING RELATED SERVICES

This will include

- Strengthen collaboration with statutory, community, and voluntary sector partners to improve resident access to housing services.
- Improving links with representative groups who 'speak' for the community we serve.
- Consulting widely on our services to obtain cross community feedback and establish new links in the Community.
- Encouraging the development of Tenant and Resident organisations in Croydon Council stock.
- Leading on the running of the Landlords Forum with a view to improving conditions in the Private Sectors.
- Liaise with Partners with a view to establishing a forum to discuss homelessness
- Ensuring that Croydon's commissioned partners deliver social value and provide opportunities for Croydon residents.
- Supporting voluntary, community and faith sector in bids to bring more funding and resources into the Borough.

Why is this important?

- A better knowledge of our community will enable us to target our resources more successfully.
- A joined-up approach between the Council and the Voluntary Sector provides better value for money and increases the chances of bringing more resources into the Borough.
- Effective Liaison is necessary to restore confidence in the Community.

Delivering the strategy

Our Housing Strategy 2023- 2028 will be underpinned by a Delivery Plan which will detail the key actions and milestones to be achieved by 2028 to ensure our strategic priorities and objectives are delivered.

The key milestones will be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and reviewed as part of our Housing Transformation Programme. The key milestones will align with the Council's existing key performance indicators, including the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and our performance against the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards.

The strategic priorities and objectives of our Housing Strategy will be reviewed against imminent changes to legislation including the introduction of revised Consumer Standards by the Regulator of Social Housing and the revised Decent Homes Standards.

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	Homes Sub-Committee Scrutiny
DATE OF DECISION	23 October 2023
REPORT TITLE:	Croydon Housing Approach to the development of the Resident Engagement Structure
CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR:	Susmita Sen, Corporate Director of Housing
LEAD OFFICER:	Mary Larbie, Interim Director of Tenancy Services
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Lynne Hale, Cabinet Member for Homes
CONTAINS EXEMPT INFORMATION?	No
WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. Croydon Housing Approach to the development of the Resident Engagement Structure

1.1. The update presented to the Sub-Committee covers the following areas: (1) Tpas (leading engagement expert); (2) the current status of work; (3) methodology; (4) discovery sessions; (5) leadership; (6) communication standards; (7) trust and accountability; (8) structure and process; (9) design sessions; (10) outcomes.

2. Recommendations for the Homes Sub-Committee

2.1. The Homes Sub-Committee is asked to: -

1. Note the work to date and development plans that will be used as a basis to create the Resident Engagement Structure.
2. Consider whether there are any comments it wishes to make on these development plans, which can be taken into account during the preparation of the Resident Engagement Structure.

3. Appendices

3.1. Appendix A - Croydon Housing Approach to the development of the Resident Engagement Structure - presentation

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Croydon Housing – Approach to Resident Engagement Strategy

Mary Larbie

Tpas (leading engagement expert)

- Engaged in reviewing the existing engagement arrangements with a view to refreshing and updating the current engagement structures to ensure that they are in line with:
 - Consumer Standards
 - White Paper
 - Croydon Housing Services Resident Charter

Where we are

No Resident Engagement Strategy

Development allows Croydon to:

- Develop a strategic framework and action plan for resident engagement, enabling Croydon to build on and increase our capacity for effective engagement
- Tpas attended Tenant and Leasehold Panel to explain their role & answer questions
- Tpas attended and facilitated sessions with the Housing Improvement Board

Methodology

Discovery Sessions

Research held with key stakeholders to understand the detail of what is already working well

Four sessions held:

- One Discovery Session with involved residents
- One Discovery Session with uninvolved residents
- Two Discovery Sessions with staff

Discovery Sessions focus

- The Discovery Sessions focused on why resident influence is important from the participants' different perspectives, and what good resident influence looks like, exploring the key elements required in order for this to happen.
- The Discovery Sessions identified the key ingredients to ensuring residents influence Croydon as:
 - Leadership
 - Communication
 - Trust and Accountability
 - Structure and Process

Leadership

Leaders need to create and embed the right culture and conditions to ensure that there is meaningful engagement with residents; and that the culture and conditions result in residents tangibly influencing services.

Put in place a stable leadership team to support the development and embedding of a culture of hearing and acting upon residents' voices.

Appropriate resources are available to develop, embed and support a new resident engagement framework. As well as actual cash, resources also include training, equipment and time.

Enable, empower and require all managers and staff to be responsible and accountable for hearing and acting upon residents' voices. This starts with building it into service, policy and procedure development and reviews as well as holding staff to account in 1-1s and annual

Ensure that recommendations from the project are used to develop a delivery plan for a new resident engagement framework

Work with the Design Team from this project to:
Co create a plan to deliver the recommendations from the project as well as developing formal influencing structures and creating a toolbox of informal influencing routes. h
hold Croydon to account by monitoring the implementation of the delivery plan.

Communication Standards

- Clearly communicate service standards across the range of housing and maintenance services that Croydon provides so residents know what levels of service to expect and what they should do if the standards are not met.
- Once developed, promote the range of engagement and influencing opportunities so that residents know how they can get involved.
- Ensure that residents have evidence (feedback) that their voice has been heard – including when Croydon is unable to provide what is being asked for.
- Review and develop the ways in which Croydon communicates with residents. For example, resident newsletters and community noticeboards

Trust and Accountability

- For Croydon to get maximum benefit from its future engagement activities, residents need evidence that their voice makes a difference. Having that evidence, leads to residents being able to trust Croydon and to see value in that relationship.
- An embedded culture of accountability at Croydon will help to set the tone and expectations for how staff treat and respond to residents. This directly affects the residents' experiences of interacting with their landlord. This leads to evidence that their voices make a difference.
- Linked to the “Communication” recommendations, ensure that the “communication loop” is closed. If residents get no response when they give feedback, they are likely to conclude that they have been ignored. Timely and honest feedback – including when things can't be done – is key in developing a relationship built on trust.

Trust and Accountability

- Ensure that staff are held accountable for their areas of responsibility by setting SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timed) targets that include targets around resident engagement and influence. This should apply to a wide range of staff, not just those traditionally seen as “responsible” for resident engagement
- For Croydon to get maximum benefit from its future engagement activities, residents need evidence that their voice makes a difference. Having that evidence, leads to residents being able to trust Croydon and to see value in that relationship.
- An embedded culture of accountability at Croydon will help to set the tone and expectations for how staff treat and respond to residents. This directly affects the residents’ experiences of interacting with their landlord. This leads to evidence that their voices make a difference.
- Leaders need to ensure that positive working practices embed a culture of trust, accountability and respect between different teams and departments. The culture at Croydon will naturally influence the “resident-landlord” relationship.

Structure and process

- Use the findings and recommendations along with Resources and Information identified to develop and roll out a robust and comprehensive resident engagement and influencing structure at Croydon.
- Agree clear objectives for resident engagement and influencing work at Croydon.
- It is important that all parties are clear about what is meant by resident influence, how this is achieved and what their responsibilities are. This builds trust and understanding and at the same time supports Croydon in harnessing resident voices in shaping and improving services:
 - There is a clear journey map for how residents can scrutinise and influence services as well as holding Croydon to account.
 - Everyone will know how they can contribute (residents, staff and leaders).

Structure and process

- An engagement framework will have a range of ways in which residents can engage and be heard. For example, reporting a repair, making a suggestion or a complaint, right through to completing a targeted survey or sitting on a formal body.
- Both vocalised and non-vocalised influence is tracked and acted upon. The full range of insight is drawn upon, including behavioural insights, performance data and the results of proactive engagement activity.

Two Design Sessions

- **Held with** volunteers from the Discovery groups (eight staff and 12 residents). Built on what had been discovered in the discovery sessions to design the way that Croydon Council will make sure that residents are influencing decision making and services.
- Co-creation sessions, which will leverage in Tpas' knowledge of what excellence looks like from our expertise.
- Sessions focused on how Croydon will know that resident influence is happening effectively and what is needed to make this happen drawing out recommendations and measures for success.
- Proposed engagement framework shared with the Design Group for comments and sign off before presented back to Croydon as a full report consisting of findings and recommendations for the newly designed approach.

Outcomes

- Strategy
- Resident Engagement Framework
- Co-created Action Plan

Any Questions/ Anymore

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	Homes Sub-Committee
DATE OF DECISION	23 October 2023
REPORT TITLE:	Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Principles
CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR:	Susmita Sen, Corporate Director of Housing
LEAD OFFICER:	Susmita Sen, Corporate Director of Housing
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Lynne Hale, Cabinet Member for Homes
CONTAINS EXEMPT INFORMATION?	No
WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. SUMMARY OF BUSINESS PLAN PRINCIPLES

- 1.1. Section 76 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires Local Authorities with a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to set a budget for the account that avoids a deficit, using robust and valid assumptions.
- 1.2. There is a statutory requirement for the Council to prepare a 30-year Business Plan on an annual basis to set out the long-term financial position of this ring-fenced general fund account.
- 1.3. The business plan is a cashflow projection for the income and expenditure on HRA assets and sets out how we are going to deliver the services required to those assets.
- 1.4. It covers all the income and expenditure relating to the delivery of the Council's landlord duties. What can be charged against the income to the HRA is set out by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 specifically the ring-fencing of the HRA from the Council's General Fund. The Council has carried out a significant piece of work over the past year to ensure that the integrity of the HRA ringfence is not compromised and carried out training so as to embed this governance.
- 1.5. Stock condition surveys are required to ensure that that the assets are kept to operational and are meeting the regulatory requirements.
- 1.6. Any debt attached to the HRA asset can be financed from the income but should satisfy the Golden Rules to ensure that the plan is viable and is a Going Concern for the 30-year period.

2. BUSINESS PLAN ASSUMPTIONS FOR CROYDON

- 2.1. The business plan will be based on a proposed HRA budget for 2024-25 dependent on a rent uplift being applied. September CPI will inform the % uplift but an assumption of 7% has been made currently. The Social Rent policy only runs to April 2024 therefore a prudent CPI only future years rent increase is assumed.
- 2.2. An inflationary cost increase of 7% has been assumed as a comparable rate with that applied to the rent uplift. The inflation rate used for the years beyond 2024-25 in the business plan are in line with the rates used for future rent increases CPI until such time as more accurate indications of inflation can be determined.
- 2.3. An increase in repairs expenditure will be included in the future budget recognising the significant work done to tackle our response to reports of damp and mould, treating the appearances of spores, and carrying out works to address the dealing issues. This financial year 1,605 treatments have been carried out and 219 stage 2 works have been undertaken.
- 2.4. The future repairs budget will also need to reflect the significant increase in volumes of repairs that have been received from tenants since the implementation of the new contracts in August 2023.
- 2.5. Legal Disrepair demand has also driven the pressures on the repairs budget. Currently there are approximately 550 disrepair cases in our backlog. This financial year the team have progressed through approximately 130 cases to completion. In addition, there are typically 7 new cases per week logged.
- 2.6. Major repairs have seen a significant increase in the demand as estate inspections have identified the requirement to carry out extensive repairs including roof replacement. The outcome of the extensive stock condition surveys is awaited and will inform the Asset Management strategy which will require funding.
- 2.7. Meeting the requirements set out in the Building Safety Act and ensuring the replacements and upgrades identified through Fire Risk assessments will also have a significant impact on the budgets required.
- 2.8. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards implementation is required. While the RSH acknowledges competing challenges within local authorities, the core mission– that tenants should live in safe and decent homes will be enforced through the expanded consumer regulations from April 2024.
- 2.9. In addition, there is an expectation of increased demand as a result of the government's £2m advertising campaign directed at residents to encourage them to report issues and make complaints as part of its efforts to improve social housing conditions.
- 2.10. The use of retained Right to Buy (RTB) receipts is included within the business plan to fund acquisitions. For the period 2022- 2024 Councils can retain 100% of the receipts. The plan assumes an estimated at 50 sales through RTB per annum and generates a capital receipts stream across the full 30-years of the plan.

- 2.11. The cost of borrowing even utilising the preferential rates for the HRA Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) remains in the region of 5%. The plan assumes the cost of borrowing as per the current year's levels and thereafter decreases by 0.25% per annum with the expectation of a rate of 3.5% by 2027-28
- 2.12. Financial viability is assessed through two factors and used to constrain the borrowing within the plan and held as the golden rules:
- A minimum balance of £9.5m within reserves (annually inflated)
 - A minimum interest rate cover ratio of 1.25 should be maintained.

3. Recommendations for the Homes Sub-Committee

- 3.1. The Homes Sub-Committee is asked to: -
1. Note the underlying principles and assumptions that will be used as a basis to develop the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.
 2. Consider whether there are any comments it wishes to make on these underlying principles and assumptions, which can be taken into account during the preparation of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

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LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	HOMES SUB-COMMITTEE	
DATE OF DECISION	23 October 2023	
REPORT TITLE:	WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24	
CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR:	Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, Director of Legal Services	
LEAD OFFICER:	Klaudia Petecka, Democratic Services & Governance Officer Email: simon.trevaskis@croydon.gov.uk Telephone: Extn:27207	
LEAD MEMBER:	Cllr Leila Ben-Hassel, Chair of Homes Sub-Committee	
AUTHORITY TO TAKE DECISION:	The Health & Social Care Sub-Committee is able to review and suggest updates to its work programme.	
KEY DECISION?	No	REASON: Not applicable
CONTAINS EXEMPT INFORMATION?	No	Grounds for the exemption: Not Applicable
WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL	

1 SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This agenda item sets out the current iteration of the Sub-Committee's work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.
- 1.2 The Sub-Committee has the opportunity to discuss the presented programme, but should ensure that any new items are reflective of the underlying work programming principles agreed by the Scrutiny & Overview Committee. These principles are:-
1. **The Public's Money.** Scrutiny wants reassurance that taxpayers' money is put to best use. At a time when the Council is making cuts to balance the books, it has no money to waste. In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, every pound of public money should be valued. Scrutiny will aim to look at the impact of any financial decisions on the public and the Council's finances, including knock-on effects. We will aim to research best practice and to provide suggestions as well as criticism.
 2. **The Public's Services.** Scrutiny wants reassurance that services are improving. This is about leadership, culture and organisation as much as it is about budgets. We will seek reassurance that even in difficult financial circumstances, we are

still meeting our duty of care to the most vulnerable. Scrutiny will listen and learn from the public's experiences of service performance to guide its work on Croydon's transformation.

3. **The Public's Voice.** Scrutiny wants to make sure that the Council is transparent, open and engaging with the people it exists to serve. Scrutiny will monitor the planned improvements in governance for Croydon's local democracy, as well as inviting public voices into the Scrutiny process itself. The Mayor was elected on a mandate to "listen to Croydon" and Scrutiny will hold the executive to account for this pledge.

1.3 Although, the Sub-Committee is able to propose changes to its work programme, but in line with Constitution, the final decision on any changes to any of the Committee/Sub-Committee work programmes rests with the Chairs & Vice-Chairs Group, following consultation with officers.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Homes Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- 1 Note the Work Programme, as presented in the report.
- 2 Consider whether there are any other items that should be provisionally added to the work programme as a result of the discussions held during the meeting.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Regularly reviewing its work programme provides an opportunity for the Sub-Committee to ensure it is focussed on high priority issues affecting the services provided to residents.

4. WORK PROGRAMME

4.1 The proposed work programme is attached at Appendix 1.

4.2 Members are asked to note that the lines of enquiry for some items have yet to be confirmed and that there are opportunities to add further items to the work programme.

Additional Scrutiny Topics

2.3 Members of the Sub-Committee are invited to suggest any other items that they consider appropriate for the Work Programme. However, due to the time limitations at Committee meetings, it is suggested that no proposed agenda contain more than two items of substantive business in order to allow effective scrutiny of items already listed.

Participation in Scrutiny

2.4 Members of the Sub-Committee are also requested to give consideration to any persons that it wishes to attend future meetings to assist in the consideration of agenda items. This may include Cabinet Members, Council or other public agency officers or representatives of relevant communities.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Work Programme 2023/24 for the Homes Sub-Committee.

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Homes Sub-Committee

The below table sets out the working version of the Health & Social Care Sub-Committee work programme. The items have been scheduled following discussion with officers and may be subject to change depending on any new emerging priorities taking precedent.

Meeting Date	Item	Scope	Directorate & Lead Officer
23 October 2023	Update on the Development of the HRA Business Plan	To provide the Sub-Committee with the opportunity to comment on the principles underlying the development of the forthcoming Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. This will include an update on the Asset Management Strategy and rent increases	
	Residents Engagement Strategy	To provide the Sub-Committee with the opportunity to feed into the develop of the Residents Engagement Strategy.	
	Housing Strategy	To review the proposed Housing Strategy ahead of its consideration by Cabinet and Full Council.	
29 January 2024	HRA Business Plan & Budget 2023-24		
	Temporary/Emergency Accommodation Budget Deep Dive		
	Housing Finance Update	To receive regular financial update on the latest position of the Housing General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets.	
16 April 2024	Consumer Regulation		
	Review of the Culture Change	To review the culture change workstreams within the Housing Transformation Programme.	
	Housing Finance Update	To receive regular financial update on the latest position of the Housing General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets.	

Areas to schedule

The following items haven't been scheduled into the work programme but have been previously identified as areas of scrutiny to be scheduled during the year ahead.

Unallocated Items	Notes
Regina Road	
Update on the implementation of NEC system	Potential briefing
Update on savings delivery	Standard item on each agenda.