

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 **Tuesday, 16 April 2024 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
8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

Klaudia Petecka
klaudia.petecka@croydon.gov.uk
www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings
Date Not Specified

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AGENDA – PART A

1. Apologies for absence

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

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 22)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2024 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. Period 9 Financial Performance Report - Housing (Pages 23 - 32)

The Sub-Committee is provided with summarised information from the latest Financial Performance Monitoring report (Period 9), with a view to considering whether it is reassured about the delivery of the 2023-24 General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Capital Programme.

6. Culture Change in Housing Update (Pages 33 - 42)

The Homes Sub-Committee is asked to receive a presentation providing an update on Culture Change in the Housing department.

7. Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 (Pages 43 - 116)

The Homes Sub-Committee has asked to review the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029, with a view to considering whether there are any concerns that should be raised or recommendations that should be made, before the report is considered at Cabinet on 24 April 2024, followed by Full Council.

8. Work Programme 2023/24 (Pages 117 - 120)

The Sub-Committee is asked to:

1. Note the work programme for 2023-24, as set out in Appendix 1

of the report.

2. Consider what items Members would like to see included on the 2024-25 Work Programme.

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, 29 January 2024 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

- Present:** Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel (Chair);
Councillor Adele Benson (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Kola Agboola, Claire Bonham, Danielle Denton and
Ellily Ponnuthurai
- Also Present:** Councillor Lynne Hale and Chrisdni Reshekaron and Rowenna Davis (joined online)
- Apologies:** Councillor Sue Bennett (joined online)

PART A

28/24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2023 were agreed as an accurate record, considering the clarifications proposed by the Chair.

29/24 Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest made at the meeting.

30/24 Urgent Business (if any)

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

31/24 Update on the Housing Revenue Account and Housing General Fund Budgets 2024-25

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out on pages 17 to 33 of the agenda, which provided the Housing Revenue Account and Housing General Fund budgets for the years 2024-25.

The item was introduced by Cllr Lynne Hale, the Cabinet Member for Housing, and the officers. It was highlighted that the Cabinet would be requested to approve a 7.7% increase to social tenant rent and tenant service

charges. Reassurance was given that the proposed increase had been discussed at the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel, and while its members understood the rationale behind the request, they had stressed that they would like to see the improvements as soon as possible.

- Councillor Lynne Hale – Cabinet Member for Housing
- Susmita Sen – Corporate Director of Housing
- Sue Hanlon – Director of Assets
- Orlagh Guarnori – Finance Manager
- Sarah Attwood – Finance Manager

During the introduction, it was noted that: -

- It was highlighted that the forecasted overspend in the 2023-24 budget had been well managed and was necessary to address the repair backlog.
- The 2024-25 budget would be informed by the four priorities identified in the survey responses from November 2023.
- It was highlighted that the budget would be reviewed in July when there would be more information arising from the stock condition survey.
- The stock condition survey findings would also be used to inform Croydon's Asset Management Strategy that was due to go to Cabinet this summer.

Following the introduction the Sub-Committee proceeded to question the information provided in the report, initially focusing on the Period 7 update. The first question asked for further information on the number of voids existing in Croydon and the number of completions. The officer explained that the Council expected to complete 700 voids during this financial year, and by the end of December, had completed 641. It was also added that the high number of voids was caused by the considerable backlog.

The following question asked about the £3.4m overspending on disrepair, legal and settlement costs, and how the Council planned to mitigate these costs in the future. It was explained that this was an overspend against the budgeted figure. It was stressed that the focus going forward would be on prevention, including ensuring repairs were completed correctly which was closely connected with the cultural change workstreams. Regarding compensation and disrepair costs, it was explained that the data was being validated, but there were around 5550 disrepair cases, which had been taken account of in the budget setting process.

In response to a question about the timeframe for clearing the backlog of legacy repairs and voids, it was advised that the Council was committed to completing the legacy repairs and voids within 18 months.

The Sub-Committee asked a question about the savings included in last year's budget across the directorate, particularly what the savings targets were and what savings were achieved. It was explained by the officers that the HRA had not had savings targets for the last couple of years, due to the rent increases and general fund savings targets. It was added that the main savings achieved were from the service restructure and vacancy factor within the general fund budget. In addition to that, there were various savings aimed at reducing the number of households in expensive emergency accommodation through occupancy checks and eligibility checks. Progress had been made on this work, and it was anticipated that savings would be delivered by period 12.

A supplementary question was asked about the proportion of savings resulting from members of staff not being in post and the proportion achieved as a result of better and more efficient ways of working. The officers explained that the Housing directorate was close to being fully staffed, and many agency workers had been replaced by permanent staff. It was estimated by the officers that around one-third of the savings achieved were due to vacancies, and around two-thirds were due to efficiencies and better methods of working.

The Sub-Committee moved onto questions about the HRA budget, with the first question asking whether the officers felt the budget was correct in terms of meeting current need and future pressures arising from recent legislation relating to damp and mould. The officers explained that the next year's budget was based on the data from this year. It was added that the department would be provided with more damp and mould-related training. This should allow officers to have a more proactive approach towards the early detection of damp and mould.

The next question asked what the Council had been doing to prevent disrepair costs, legal fees, and settlements. The officers explained that as the damp and mould team played a considerable role in this area, it had been decided that the team would remain in Croydon on a permanent basis. It was highlighted again the importance of the damp and mould training.

Subsequently, the Sub-Committee asked for an update on the private sector housing team moving to the Housing directorate. The officers explained that before that happened, the Housing directorate had needed to fill some vacancies and increase the capacity. However, the team would be managed using a joined-up approach.

The Sub-Committee moved on to the budget challenge part of the report. The first question asked about using funds raised through the right to buy scheme to acquire twenty properties. The officers explained that this proposal was at an early stage of development, with other funding options also being explored, including grants. Reassurance was given that the Council would carefully consider how any new housing would meet residents' needs in the best way possible. It was also added that the Council was in a fortunate position as there were many homes, including former Council homes, available on the market. The officers also reassured the Sub-Committee that they could acquire at least 20 homes in the current financial year. The officers also added that there was a Greater London Authority (GLA) funding opportunity which would potentially allow the Council to acquire more properties.

The Sub-Committee questioned whether there was a clear link between the Housing Strategy and both General Fund and HRA budgets. The officers explained that there had been a much greater focus on using data to inform decision making, with putting the building blocks in place for this being a priority. This could be evidenced through the stock condition surveys, which would allow the Council to identify where it needed to invest in its stock, resulting in a more accurate budget. It was advised that once the HRA budget had been reprofiled, it would be shared with the Sub-Committee. It was also added by the officers that another driver in the budget development was regulatory changes and requirements. It was highlighted that when the budget had been developed, it had been informed by feedback from residents, and the budget was built according to the identified priorities. A supplementary question asked about the budget for tackling anti-social behaviour. The officers explained that the Council had increased the budget for estates and caretaking.

The next question asked whether the budget was sufficient to support work on tackling domestic violence and abuse. The officers explained that this budget was managed by the Violence Reduction Network through a service-level agreement. It was highlighted by the officers that they wanted to focus on increasing efficiency, and officers stressed that they had confidence in this budget.

Concern was raised by the Sub-Committee that many residents were reluctant to contact the housing officers and as a result a question was asked about the possibility of having community safety officers directly serving Council tenants. Officers advised that this was one of the priorities that residents had highlighted. It was explained that there were plans to review officers' remits to clearly define the role of housing officers in tackling domestic violence and anti-social behaviour. Currently, the community safety

team would only work on the most challenging and complex cases. Thus, it was essential to determine where accountability laid and what were the appropriate thresholds.

The next question asked when the Council was anticipating the level of housing repair costs would start to reduce. The officers explained that there had been a considerable spike in repair cases following the change to new contractors and bringing the contact centre in-house. Therefore, the budget was built based on the worst-case scenario. However, it would be very hard to determine at the present time when these costs would plateau.

Further information was requested on the architectural changes to Regina Road development and the associated costs, including any inflationary increases. The officers acknowledged that accounting for inflation had been challenging. However, the HRA budget had been stress tested with external support provided by Savills. The inflationary allowance for the forthcoming financial year had been increased with the worst-case scenario assumed for the current and the following years. It was highlighted by the officers that the budget for Regina Road had been increased accordingly. It was added by the officers that prudent assumptions had been made about potential funding for the project from the Greater London Authority, as they were awaiting the outcome of the bid. The officers explained that the procurement process for the project was ongoing and until it was completed, it would be challenging to provide an accurate timeline for the regeneration.

An explanation was request on the building safety work budgetary increase from £8.6 million in 2024-25 to £42 million in 2025-26. Officers explained that this increase was related to the anticipated completion of the stock survey data. The results of the survey could lead to very costly changes, for example the refurbishment or even complete rebuilding of large panel blocks. Thus, a significant budgetary increase was necessary to allow for that. The allocation was further challenged by the Sub-Committee with it explained that the budget had been based on the number of large panel blocks that had not been refurbished in recent years and the number of properties over a certain age. The officers stressed that these assumptions were high-level ones and could change significantly once the results from the stock condition surveys had been received.

Then the Sub-Committee moved on to the General Fund side of the Budget. The first question asked about the Housing Association Coordination role and transferring it to the Housing Directorate. The officers confirmed that the role was being transferred to housing, with discussions in progress. It was highlighted that the Housing Strategy committed the Council to improving its

work with housing associations, and officers had already held a first meeting with stakeholders.

As a follow-up, it was questioned where the Council was in terms of its work with housing associations and whether a truly collaborative approach could be implemented. The officers highlighted that the Council was in the early stages of developing a project involving several of the Council's largest social housing suppliers.

In response to a question about transformation, it was explained that the transformational items included in the capital budget were still being developed and only high-level information was available at this stage. The officers added that most of the transformation budget was spread over 2023-24 and 2024-25. Hence, the figures were reflected in both years.

The Sub-Committee challenged the pace of savings, to which officers explained that delivery was planned over several years. Therefore, there was still an expectation that savings would be realised. It was further explained by the officers that the current focuses were on demand management and supporting residents in temporary accommodation. For instance, there was a focus on working with residents at an earlier stage to try to avoid eviction, hence reducing the need for emergency and temporary accommodation. Although this work was starting to deliver improvement, officers acknowledged that some of the work had not been delivered at the expected pace. For instance, the Council had a target of seeing 90% of residents at high risk of homelessness within seven to 14 days, and at present this was not being achieved with the current waiting time being approximately one to two months.

The Council was in the process of acquiring a dynamic purchasing system for emergency and temporary accommodation that would hopefully deliver cost savings, with discussions underway with existing suppliers about moving to this system. It was explained by officers that the dynamic purchasing system provided two main functions: (i) the framework for procurement; and (ii) contract management.

It was highlighted by officers that the temporary accommodation transformation was not only about reducing the cost to the Council but also about improving engagement with residents. Hence, the Council had been scheduling surgeries in temporary accommodation where residents were placed. However, at the same time, the officers acknowledged that budgetary challenges arising from wider economic conditions nationally had increased costs considerably. Although it was likely the cost pressures would remain for the foreseeable future, there were some initial signs of improvement in the

economy and increased support from the central government following the Autumn Statement. For instance, increasing the local housing allowance to the 30th percentile was anticipated to increase the amount of affordable housing.

It was questioned whether there could be any confidence in the achievability of the saving of £653,000 for 2024-25, and whether the pressures would carry on into 2025-26. It was explained by officers that the saving was based on the assumption of reducing around 250 temporary accommodations, with assurance given that this was achievable. It was highlighted that 100 temporary accommodations had already been reduced. It was stressed by the officers that savings were very much aligned with the cultural transformation that needed to happen in the Housing Directorate and developing different ways of working.

It was questioned whether occupancy checks were being prioritised, including the possibility of bringing in external resources to complete this work. Officers explained that transformation funding had been allocated to provide for additional resource, with significant progress made leading to 60% of the occupancy checks being completed. It was confirmed that around 70% of the checks had verified the occupancy.

Further information was requested on the length of time people spent in temporary accommodation. The officers explained that the average temporary accommodation placement was predominantly driven by the supply and availability of affordable accommodation. The average stay varied from year to year; for example, for one bedroom accommodation, it could be from one year to seven years. It was further explained that the term temporary accommodation refers to statutory legislation and set criteria rather than the length of time. As a follow-up, it was questioned whether there was any guarantee that a person in temporary accommodation would eventually be moved to permanent accommodation. The officers explained that this was not guaranteed, and it was highlighted that the application process and criteria for temporary accommodation was separate to the process for social housing.

It was questioned what the occupancy check process included. Officers explained that occupancy checks included not only checking whether the property was occupied by the renters but also the housing conditions and any amendments made to the property. This information was then updated in the Council's housing system accordingly. The next step was to collect the data about the number of people placed in temporary accommodation where the living conditions were not suitable. This would then inform the development of a plan for how these residents could be moved to more suitable alternative

temporary accommodation. The officers explained that it was also a matter of sustainability and moving families out of commercial hotels.

A supplementary question asked by the Sub-Committee considered whether the budgeted amount would be sufficient to cover the cost of moving residents out of inappropriate conditions. Reassurance was given by officers that the budget has been based on an assumption of increased demand, which would be reviewed once the more detailed work had been completed.

It was questioned whether the Council had any plans to acquire new property to use for temporary accommodation. Officers explained that currently, the government had introduced a cap on the number of properties that could be bought using right-to-buy receipts, which was capped at 20. However, the Council had been looking into other opportunities, for instance, using GLA funding.

There was concern raised by the Sub-Committee about the use of hotel placements and particularly the problems residents experienced when the Council did not pay or extend the rental. It was questioned whether the Council could obtain a corporate account allowing to book stays longer than seven days. Officers advised that the Council had been trying to set-up a corporate account with Travelodge who was their largest supplier. Although the Council had initially been refused a corporate account based on the due diligence performed by the supplier, the conversation was ongoing about how the Council could meet the minimum criteria for an account. Officers also advised that they were looking to minimise the use of commercial hotels. There was a dedicated procurement team set up to work with landlords, but it was acknowledged that using purchase cards to pay for the accommodation could be problematic, as it would only allow for paying for short stays. However, the payment process had improved as the number of residents placed in the commercial hotels decreased.

As a follow-up, it was questioned why the Council had been refused a corporate account. Officers explained that it was not uncommon for local authorities to be refused a corporate account, but this option would continue to be explored. It was also stressed by the officers that using commercial hotels was not desired and would be minimised.

A question was asked about what proportion of the emergency accommodation budget was spent on commercial hotel costs and on different types of emergency accommodation. The officers explained that in the Council's portfolio, there were longer-term leases and spot purchase accommodations. The Council had agreements with about 50 to 60 local landlords who provided a spot purchase accommodation. It this type of

accommodation was not available then the Council usually looked at the commercial housing sector. The officers added that to avoid using the commercial housing accommodation, they had been working on introducing the previously mentioned dynamic purchasing system. This framework provided information on the availability of all agents and landlords that the Council worked with.

It was suggested by the Sub-Committee that there may be some residents who could afford private housing, but to do so they would require a guarantor and as such had the Council considered becoming a guarantor. Officers explained that councils tended to be guarantors for care leavers. Therefore, there had been discussions about expanding this role. However, taking on the role of guarantor for a large number of residents would become unaffordable very quickly. The officers explained that they actively continued to work with private landlords on potential options such as paying rent in advance and rent deposits.

The Sub-Committee challenged whether the Council acting as guarantor could be used for a specific group of residents, as supporting them to access private sector housing would generate considerable savings for the Council. Officers explained that this option could be considered, but it would be unlikely for the Council to sustain such a scheme.

It was asked whether the Council offered top-ups for residents who could almost meet a private landlord's criteria. The officers explained that the Council offered this kind of support, for instance, when lack of support would result in eviction residents could discuss these types of opportunities with the housing officers. It was acknowledged by officers that the communication around these opportunities required more work.

The final question asked whether capital investment could be used to ensure more effective use of properties, for instance, through building an extension. The officers explained that there was a Regeneration Board in the Council. The Board worked within the assigned regeneration budget, and one of its objectives was to maximise the efficiency of available properties. It was explained that this could involve building extensions and loft conversions.

At the conclusions of this item, the Chair thanked the officers for all their hard work in developing the budget and their engagement with the questions of the Sub-Committee.

Actions

Following the discussion of this item, the Sub-Committee agreed the following actions to follow-up after the meeting.

1. It was agreed that an updated staffing structure for the Housing service to be circulated to the Sub-Committee, as requested at the previous meeting.
2. It was agreed that confirmation of the 'go live' date for the dynamic purchasing system for emergency and temporary accommodation would be confirmed to the Sub-Committee once known.
3. The Sub-Committee requested a written update on the progress made with Sycamore House.
4. The Sub-Committee requested clarification of the number of families placed in commercial hotels and hostel for both emergency and temporary accommodation.
5. In relation to the service transformation agenda to move towards a more proactive, prevention-based service, further information about how the Housing Service promoted its 'open-door' policy for people in housing need, was requested.

Conclusions

Following its discussion of this item, the Sub-Committee reached the following conclusions on the information provided: -

1. The Sub-Committee recognised that a lot of different work streams were being managed simultaneously within the Housing service and that it was a credit to the team that noticeable improvement towards stabilising the service and building solid governance processes had been established.
2. The Sub-Committee was concerned that much of the data gathered had still to be analysed and concluded that this represented a key risk to the delivery of the budget, particularly the results from the stock condition surveys which could have a major impact on both the level of repairs needed and the longer-term capital investment required.
3. However, the Sub-Committee was reasonably reassured that the Housing service had worked as well as it could with the data already available, which had resulted in the budget for repairs and maintenance being rightsized.
4. The Sub-Committee concluded that Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme was well thought through based upon the information available at this stage, but the real test would come in the summer once further stock condition data was analysed leading to an updated HRA Business Plan, which the Sub-Committee looked forward to reviewing later in the year.
5. The Sub-Committee was also reassured that many of their concerns raised at the meeting were already known to the Housing service and work was underway to address these.
6. While it remained a work in progress, the Sub-Committee welcomed the savings delivered through transformation of the Homelessness

service in 2023-24 and was reassured that these were not solely reliant on staff vacancy savings. However, further evidence was required to demonstrate that this transformation work would result in a transformed service focussed on reducing homelessness through prevention and early intervention.

7. The Sub-Committee noted concern about the potential risks to the General Fund budget associated with the increased demand for the homelessness services and looked forward to reviewing the demand management transformation within the service later in the year.
8. Overall, the Sub-Committee was unable to provide total reassurance on the 2024-25 budget, given the data that would normally be expected to inform the setting of a budget was still being collated and validated. However, it did agree that the Housing Service had a good understanding of the pressures on the service and seemed to have the right priorities in place to drive forward improvement.

32/24 Responsive Repairs Contract Update

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out on pages 35 to 51 of the agenda, which provided an update on repairs performance and procurement process, damp and mould overview and asset management update.

- Councillor Lynne Hale – Cabinet Member for Housing
- Susmita Sen – Corporate Director of Housing
- Orlagh Guarnori – Finance Manager
- Sarah Attwood – Finance Manager
- Beatrice Cingtho-Taylor – Director of Housing, Homelessness Prevention & Accommodation
- Mark Billings – Housing Solutions Transformation Lead

The item was introduced by Cllr Lynne Hale, the Cabinet Member for Housing and the officers. During the introduction the following was noted: -

- Since August 2023, when the three new repair contracts went live, there had been a significant increase in the call volume – around 2000 calls per month, and in the additional repair orders – around 1500 per month.
- Although the procurement was based on the data shared by the previous contractor, there had been a notion that there might have been some repairs suppression.
- There had been issues in the contact centre, mainly in relation to a high level of sickness absence among the temporary staff.

- Although the service was not work as well as it would be desired, due to the significant increase in the number of calls and the contractor's capacity to deliver the higher than anticipated level of service, it was assured that the Council was aware of this and had plans to mitigate the impact. These included a refresh of the contact centre and a new training programme for staff.

Following the introduction, the Sub-Committee asked questions on the information provided. The first question asked for an explanation of the poor performance of the call centre in November 2023. Officers advised that the lower performance was caused predominantly by sicknesses amongst the temporary staff. It was also added that a similar situation occurred on the 2nd of January when a considerable number of staff were unwell. This had an impact on the overall performance for January. It was highlighted that over the next six to eight weeks, considerable changes would be implemented, which were expected to result in shorter wait times, with five minutes targeted by the end of March and four minutes by the end of May.

It was questioned whether, once the recruitment was completed, the staffing levels for the contact centre would be right or whether performance issues caused by staff shortages would be a reoccurring issue. It was explained by the officer that staffing levels had been informed by intelligence gathered over the last six months, so the level of provision should be correct. However, it was stressed that they would target part-time staff to support the team during peak periods. In addition to that, it was mentioned that in most contact centres, there would be a relatively high staff turnover – around 20% to 25% a year. Therefore, it was crucial to account for such a level of turnover in the plans.

The next question asked by the Sub-Committee mentioned the heating repair contractor's performance, particularly its low performance in November 2023, the time limit for emergency and non-emergency repairs and how performance would be managed. It was explained by the officers that the performance data provided by the repairs contractors was going through a validation process to ensure it was inaccurate. It was also explained that the targets were as follows – four hours to attend and 24 hours to complete an emergency repair, and 14 days to complete the non-emergency repairs. The officers acknowledged that they experienced many problems during the first winter period of the new contract which were in part caused by higher levels of demanded repairs than was resourced for in the contract. It was stressed by the officers that additional resources had been employed to address this in the last eight weeks. In addition to that, the Council had been working with the provider to prioritise emergency repairs, rather than following up on other works.

It was further challenged by the Sub-Committee whether this issue was also caused by the lack of stock required for repairs, for instance, boilers. It was explained by the officers that the problem was twofold. Firstly, the issue was around data and what types of stock they had and what parts were required. Secondly, there was a large number of repairs coming through.

The next set of questions asked why the recruitment process for contact centre staff did not start earlier, whether the Council had plans to replace temporary staff members with permanent ones, and what would be the financial implications of doing so. It was explained by the officers that the mobilisation happened with additional temporary staff members, which was caused by the previous contractor providing a list for the contact centre staff late. Therefore, until early July, the officers did not know how many members of staff were going to be transferred to support delivering the contact centre service. Only five people transferred to the new in-house contact centre, when the actual number of staff required was around 22 or 23 full-time employees. The officers explained that the temporary resource came into Croydon towards the end of June. It was also highlighted that in August the new IT system was introduced. The new system and the increased number of calls had required further additional members of staff to be brought in, and new members of staff would join at the end of February and early March.

Subsequently, the Sub-Committee asked a question on additional operatives provided by the contractors. The officers explained that the commercial model set up for the contractors assumed that the Council did not need to pay for operatives. The Council currently had been discussing with contractors how many additional supervisors would be required to manage the additional operatives. It was estimated that around three supervisors would be required.

A supplementary question was asked about performance management and the proportion of permanent to temporary staff currently in place. The officers explained that currently seven out of 23 members of staff were permanent. It was stressed that even though the service was predominantly run by temporary staff, it did not mean that the quality of service provided was particularly low. It was further explained that the performance problems were predominantly caused by an increase in demand, which resulted in longer call handling times than anticipated. It was assured that the culture was not an area of concern for the officers.

The next question considered the residents contacting the Council with an emergency and whether the staff handling calls would have the required information, for instance, on the location of stopcocks. The officers explained that currently, on the NEC system, there was no information about the

location of stopcocks in each property. However, most of the stopcocks were usually located underneath a sink or in a cupboard in a shared area, and this would be included in the script for the staff.

A subsequent question related to the customer satisfaction improvement plan and the timescale for implementation. The officers explained that the improvement process had already started. For instance, the training and induction plan for the contract centre was ongoing, and further training would start at the end of February this year. The officers added that the current focus was on additional training for temporary staff to ensure accurate repair diagnostics. In addition, the Council would like to implement an IT tool repair finder around the beginning of April.

The next question asked about the monitoring of calls and whether there was a distinction between calls related to new issues and follow-up calls. The officers explained that they measured the number of calls coming in by the hour, and they monitored a 'call failure demand'. It was further challenged by the Sub-Committee whether the follow-up calls were added to the notes for existing repairs or whether they were raised as new issues. The officers explained that they recently addressed this issue during a training session and the contact centre advisors were reminded always to ask whether a resident had reported the same repair in the last six months. This checked firstly whether there was an open job and secondly whether the job was attended in the last six months as the recall could be raised with the supplier.

A supplementary question was asked about using IT systems to identify existing jobs more effectively. It was explained by the officers that the supplier was working on the data validation and identifying how many requests were raised multiple times. It was also added by the officers that one of the system's capabilities was 'heat mapping' against each property to see how many jobs had been logged. It was also mentioned that the script asked an officer to check the repair history.

A question was raised about staff welfare and the level of sickness related absence. The officers explained that there had only been a considerably higher level of absence in November and December, which was predominantly caused by higher levels of flu and COVID-19. It was assured by the officers that there was no evidence that these absences were caused by an inappropriate amount of work.

The next question asked whether there was any monitoring of properties with a lack of repairs reported by residents. The officers explained that the Council had been working on tenancy inspections to identify potential fraud and

subletting. It was also mentioned by the officers that heat mapping could be used to identify the lack of repairs and target these properties for inspection.

The next question asked about the key performance indicators (KPIs) set for the contractors and contractual penalties based on them. The officers explained that the validation process needed to be completed before the KPIs could be accurately assessed. Subsequently, the officers would work closely with the contractors to determine improvement areas and develop an appropriate plan. It was also highlighted by the officers that it was important to give the contractors very clear guidance regarding the minimum standards expected.

Subsequently, the Sub-Committee asked whether it would be possible for the residents to monitor the repair status in real-time. It was explained by the officers that this option was not currently available. However, the possibility of adding more information to the portal was being explored, including the ability to request appointments through the portal. This capability should be added between April and June this year, and before it was added it would be piloted on a selected group of residents.

The next question asked whether there was a log of informal complaints, as residents tended to be reluctant to make formal complaints, and if there was, whether there were any common themes. The officers explained that they referred to these informal complaints as issues, and tried to capture and record these either through the contact centre or through other officers who were in contact with residents.

Further information was requested on the timescale for turning legacy voids into good conditions. The officers explained that the target time was 12 days. However, at the end of December, performance averaged between 14 to 18 days. It was explained that there were some differences between how voids were measured in Croydon and other local authorities, especially around what is classified as a lettable void and major works void. It was also added that Croydon measured minor and major void similarly, which was an area officers would like to improve. A follow-up questioned the impact of Croylease on the void turnaround. The officers explained that the contractors undertook work on Croylease properties; however, it was not a focus for them over the last six months. It was also added that the main work in Croylease voids had been delivered by subcontractors.

The next set of questions related to the priority gas and heating service for vulnerable residents particularly whether vulnerable residents were prioritised in Croydon, how the effectiveness of the service was measured, how the Council planned to improve the gas service and whether other options would

be considered if the lower performance continued. Officers explained that the NEC system stored data around vulnerabilities if they were provided by the residents. It was also added that contact centre staff asked the residents whether they believed themselves to be vulnerable, which led to further questions around their level of need. It was highlighted that most heating-related repairs between October and April would be classified as emergency repairs. The officers assured the Sub-Committee that when there were issues around emergency repairs, the supplier brought in additional resources, including apprentices and subcontractors. It was also highlighted that the officers expected the service to improve within the next three months.

A supplementary question asked about the reasons why the contractor did not have sufficient resources. The officers explained that the mobilisation period was shorter for one of the suppliers because the original contractor who had been awarded the contract pulled out. In addition, around the same time the Council had to focus on the delivery of a significant number of the landlord's gas safety checks.

Further information was requested on the number of gas safety checks completed. Officers provided reassurance that performance had been improving, and the compliance level was around 99%. It was mentioned that last week, there were around 380 outstanding checks. However, around 30 checks a day were being performed, including force entry. It was also explained that the officers already had planned and scheduled checks that would be due in February and March. The officers provided assured that they were planning to be as close to 100% as possible by the end of the financial year (31st of March).

The next set of questions related to doable repairs including the considerable backlog in this area and whether the Council was trying to work with other contractors to take over some cases. The officers explained that the data indicating poor performance was being validated. Therefore, it could change materially. The officers suggested that currently, there was no need to bring in other contractors as KNT demonstrated a very clear resourcing and improvement plan. A supplementary question asked whether the other contractors would have sufficient resources to step in to support each other if needed. It was advised that this could not be confirm at this time and would only be explored if necessary.

The next question asked by the Sub-Committee considered the trends and progress on the stock survey. The officers explained that the trends could not be confirmed with certainty as the information was still being uploading into the APEC system. It was mentioned that by the end of December 33% of stock condition survey had been completed, and 40% completion was

targeted by the end of March. The officers also reassured the Sub-Committee that a significant amount of work was being undertaken by the contractor to improve the access. It was also mentioned that the forced entry necessary for gas checks allowed the Council to use the opportunity to undertake stock condition surveys.

At the conclusion of this item the Chair thanked the officer for their engagement with the questions of the Sub-Committee.

Actions

Following the discussion of this item, the Sub-Committee agreed the following actions to follow-up after the meeting.

1. In response to a query about updating Energy Performance Certificates, it was agreed that further information would be provided on the number of recently reviewed Energy Performance Certificates on Council owned housing.
2. It was agreed that areas such as call centre staff performance management, ensuring the collection of all relevant data relating to repairs and updating residents on the status of their repairs would be reviewed by the Sub-Committee when it looked at the cultural transformation work (including customer experience) within the Housing service at its next meeting on 16 April 2024.

Conclusions

Following its discussion of this item, the Sub-Committee reached the following conclusions on the information provided: -

9. The Sub-Committee commended the team for the significant amount of work that has been delivered in a short space of time since the mobilisation of the new responsive repairs and heating contracts, particularly in the context of a larger than anticipated backlog of historic repairs.
10. The Sub-Committee agreed that data would be a key driver in the delivery of service improvement. As the service was going through the process of validating the data it was collecting, the Sub-Committee agreed that there were areas, such as those related to contractor performance, that would need to be revisited once this process had been completed.
11. The Sub-Committee identified that capacity remained a key issue for the service and accepted that it would be an ongoing challenge to plan staffing resource for the contract centre and require a higher number of temporary staff to manage demand, until there was greater degree of certainty about the ongoing volume of repairs.
12. The Sub-Committee welcomed confirmation that the number of gas safety checks completed had significantly improved, although it

agreed to continue to monitor performance in this area while it remained below the key performance indicator target.

Recommendations

Following its discussion of this item the Sub-Committee agreed to submit the following recommendations for the consideration of the Executive Mayor -

1. The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that the Council’s reporting on void turnaround times is brought into line with other local authorities and rather than using one overall figure for all voids, these are split to differentiate between the turnaround time for lettable voids and major voids.
2. The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that as part of the work to heat map repairs, that any homes with no repairs recorded for a significant period are also reviewed to understand why this may be the case, to ensure there are no unreported repairs that may cause more serious property damage if left unaddressed.

33/24 Cabinet Response to Scrutiny Recommendations

The Sub-Committee noted the report.

34/24 Work Programme 2023/24

The Sub-Committee noted the report.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm

Signed:

Date:

.....
.....

Agenda Item 5

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	SCRUTINY HOMES SUB-COMMITTEE
DATE OF DECISION	16 April 2024
REPORT TITLE:	2023-24 Period 9 Financial Performance - Housing
CORPORATE DIRECTOR	Susmita Sen Corporate Director of Housing

1 SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides the Council's financial performance as at Period 9 (December 2023) for the Housing Directorate (General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Capital Programme).

2 BACKGROUND AND DETAILS

HOUSING GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET

Division	Net Budget (£m)	Actuals to Date (£m)	Forecast (£m)	Forecast Variance (£m)
Resident Engagement and Allocations	23.9	24.5	23.9	-
Housing Estates and Improvement	-	-	-	-
Total Housing	23.9	24.5	23.9	-

- 1.2 At period 9, the Housing directorate has a General Fund forecast breakeven position against the budget of £23.9m.
- 1.3 An allocation of £1.234m has been agreed from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant, with £1m supporting homelessness costs and £0.234m supporting the clearing of the homelessness casework backlog.
- 1.4 There is a crisis within the London housing market that is creating significant demand for services, has not levelled out within 2023-24 and is likely to continue to rise into 2024-25. The data available following the changeover of rent account systems to the new NEC IT system is now improving although further improvements to forecasting accuracy can be expected as data quality is addressed, reporting is developed further, and more data analysis is performed.
- 1.5 Current financial modelling of a worst-case scenario for emergency and temporary accommodation indicates that the 2023-24 overspend could be up to circa £4m and this will be monitored closely over the final months of the financial year to check whether levels of new temporary accommodation placements continue at the current

higher level or return to being in line with longer term historical trends. The pressures experienced by Croydon are also being experienced across London and nationally. Government have recognised this pressure with £92k of winter pressures funding to be allocated across the seven South-West London boroughs.

- 1.6** A top-up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) of £1.9m was announced by DLUHC to cover homelessness pressures relating to Ukrainian refugees. This funding may also be used to fund wider homelessness pressures and reporting requirements are in line with the existing HPG requirements. The grant top-up could also help offset any potential detriment to income collection resulting in the bad debt provision being increased at year end.

Emergency Accommodation (Nightly-paid accommodation)

- 1.7** There are a number of factors that impact expenditure against this budget. Firstly, there has been a demand rise in the number of households that have been placed into Emergency Accommodation (EA). The factors that have pushed up demand include:
- 1.8** A reduction in new private rented sector (PRS) lettings which is down 41% compared to the pre-COVID average (with tenants staying longer in properties and landlords exiting the market) and private rents are now more than 20% higher than pre-COVID levels. Therefore, new lettings affordable within Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels are increasingly rare. The LHA uprating from April 2024 will provide a significant boost to affordability but will not solve the problem.
- 1.9** Another factor is the number of asylum-seeking households which is adding a pressure on available affordable accommodation. From August 2023 the Home Office accelerated their decision making for asylum claims and give very short notice when people are to be evicted from their accommodation. This is an additional pressure as the Council does not receive any financial assistance for these households.
- 1.10** Family evictions are also increasing, potentially linked to the decrease in availability of affordable housing in the private rented sector (PRS) and the increase in evictions detailed above and subsequent short-term arrangements breaking down.
- 1.11** Additional to the increase in demand is the backlog of circa 2,000 cases identified as part of the Housing Needs restructure. More of those households are now being placed in emergency (nightly paid) accommodation.
- 1.12** There is a shortage of suitable EA to meet the increasing demand, so the Council is relying on expensive commercial hotels and families staying in accommodation with shared facilities for over 6 weeks.

Temporary Accommodation

- 1.13** The factors leading to demand for homelessness accommodation, particularly in London which is bearing 57% of the national homeless placement total, are also impacting the ability for Croydon to secure affordable accommodation to house those households unable to secure affordable accommodation in the private sector.

Risks

- 1.14** There is a Temporary Accommodation scheme, Croylease, which was active in signing on properties between 5 to 10 years ago based on cost effective rents and an agreement for the Council to return properties in a specified condition. Council repairs contractors conduct the void repair work at the point that the contract term finishes, and the landlord requests their property back. Across 2022-23 and 2023-24 landlords have been withdrawing from this scheme which resulted in significant repair costs of circa £660k in 2022-23 and we are expecting a higher level in 2023-24.
- 1.15** The suitability of housing offered to a person determined as being eligible for homeless assistance has been subject to a number of legal challenges within 2023-24. One such case has been heard in the Supreme Court with an outcome that was, in this particular case, adverse for Croydon but in the long term may have positive implications in reducing the overall level of challenge. A cost, or a provision for cost, will need to be recognised in the 2023-24 accounts at an estimated amount of £300k.
- 1.16** The implementation of the new NEC IT system experienced a delay in setting up the interfaces between NEC and the Oracle finance system. The income interface is now posting income from the NEC system into the Oracle finance system, however there are reconciliations still being carried out. There may be a requirement to increase the loss allowance (bad debt provision) at the end of 2023-24 depending on the level of income collection achieved by year end.
- 1.17** There has been a concerted effort to hold homelessness accommodation costs down across London through partnerships with organisations like Capital Letters and via the agreed Pan-London temporary accommodation rates. The rates can no longer be contained though as demand outweighs available affordable supply. At a Pan London meeting, all boroughs confirmed that they are no longer paying the agreed Pan London rates to ensure they meet their demand challenges. A combination of all these factors has led to an increase in both the average cost of emergency and temporary accommodation that Croydon can secure to meet demand, as well as an increase in the use of nightly paid emergency accommodation to compensate for the loss of some longer-term leased accommodation because of landlords leaving the market.
- 1.18** There is a potential financial risk from the fire at Sycamore House in Thornton Heath depending on the insurance claim settlement not yet finalised. This risk was provided for in the 2022-23 accounts however, if there is any difference from the estimated reimbursement of 70% of costs from the insurers, this would be an extra charge or benefit when settled.

- 1.19** There is a potential budget pressure, above the currently estimated £1.2m for 2023-24 which has been funded through the economic demand pressures budget transfer agreed in Period 3, in relation to housing benefit subsidies for the Guaranteed Rent Scheme for Care Experienced Young People.
- 1.20** There is a pressure within the housing budget due to temporary accommodation management fees of £40/week/unit which are no longer recoverable through Housing Benefit (HB) subsidy from DWP. From 1 April 2017, in line with the government announcement in the 2015 spending review, funding was devolved to Local Authorities through the Homelessness Prevention Grant with the aim of allowing Councils to better manage their temporary accommodation pressures, and this funding is instead of the HB subsidy.

Opportunities

- 1.21** Housing will continue to ensure the use of ringfenced Household Support Fund, Rough Sleeping initiative grants, and asylum seeker & refugee grant funding within the grant terms and to maximise the mitigating effect on general fund spend. This includes supporting households that are in rent arrears.
- 1.22** There are opportunities from accommodation that is coming on stream for placing homelessness clients, which will provide alternative accommodation and reduce the reliance on expensive nightly paid accommodation.
- 1.23** The restructure for Housing Needs has been implemented and is forming the bedrock for process and cultural change and a more cohesive journey for a homeless household. The financial benefits are expected to be realised in the longer term from better practice resulting in reduced spend on homelessness.

Savings

	2023-24					
	Savings target £'000	Slippage from previous year £'000	Revised Savings target £'000	Forecast savings achievable £'000	Savings slippage £'000	Not yet evidenced or (over delivery)
Directorate						
Adult Social Care & Health	12,243	-	12,243	13,190	-	(947)
Assistant Chief Executive	2,924	-	2,924	2,271	653	-
Children, Young People & Education	6,920	490	7,410	5,148	-	2,262
Housing	2,305	-	2,305	1,309	1,099	(103)
Resources	6,347	-	6,347	6,347	-	-
Sustainable Communities (SCRER)	1,859	2,490	4,349	4,124	225	-
Cross-Directorate / Corporate	500	-	500	-	500	-
Total	33,098	2,980	36,078	32,389	2,477	1,212

Savings achievement not yet evidenced

- 1.24** Housing: There is forecast savings slippage of £1.1m owing to:
- 1.24.1.** Temporary accommodation case review (discretionary cases) - £0.5m slippage - Posts to undertake the transformation work were filled during 2023-24 and therefore the full year effect of the £0.6m savings target will not be achieved until 2024-25.
 - 1.24.2.** Temporary accommodation occupancy checks - £0.3m slippage - Posts to undertake the transformation work were filled during 2023-24 and therefore the full year effect of the £0.4m savings target will not be achieved until 2024-25.
 - 1.24.3.** Data cleanse and rent accounts (income collection) - £0.3m slippage - Work commenced on this project as part of the implementation of the new NEC IT system. Reconciliation work and improvements to NEC reporting are still underway to evidence these £0.3m savings.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

- 1.25** At period 9, the HRA forecast remains at a revenue overspend of £12.0m owing to resolving a backlog of historic legacy repair work, reducing voids and resolving issues experienced nationally including damp and mould and fire safety. The HRA has a reserve of circa £50m as at the end of 2022-23 and this reserve will fund the 2023-24 overspend, however the HRA budget for 2024-25 will take account of ongoing pressures and priorities.
- 1.26** At Period 5 it was set out how the legacy of repairs, disrepair works and the commissioned works on damp and mould accounts for £8.6m of the pressure against the existing budget. This pressure is a direct result of the significant under-investment over decades in the housing stock which has resulted in the backlogs the teams are now tackling. The implementation of the three new repairs contracts and the commitment to ensuring the Council is meeting its requirements as a landlord are driving this ongoing pressure. Where underspends in other areas are insufficient to cover the pressures outlined above, it will require a draw down from the HRA reserves into the revenue budgets.
- 1.27** The 2024-25 budget will require significant work to ensure that it is capturing and managing ongoing pressure areas within the repairs service. Stock conditions surveys have been commissioned to identify the level of major repairs and maintenance to be programmed into the future years' budgets and these capital improvements should reduce the level of responsive repairs over the medium term.

- 1.28** The remaining £3.4m pressure is attributed to disrepair and reflects the volume of historic legacy disrepair cases being cleared and the legal costs and settlements that have been the outcome.

Repairs

- 1.29** The Period 9 position of £12.0m overspend is made up of £8.6m responsive repairs costs pressure and £3.4m on disrepair costs, legal fees and settlements.
- 1.30** The overspend on responsive repairs is a result of the significant increase in repair requests received from tenants as a consequence of the historical under-investment in the stock including historic legacy issues identified since the implementation of the new contracts in August 2023.
- 1.31** In addition, there has been significant work done to tackle reports of damp and mould, treating the appearances of spores and carrying out works to address the issues.
- 1.32** The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 will enable a rigorous new regime that holds all landlords to account for the decency of their homes and the service they provide. This includes changes from 'Awaab's Law' which follows the death of 2 year old Awaab Ishak in 2020 due to damp and mould exposure in his Rochdale home following repair requests and complaints having been repeatedly ignored. Legislation includes provisions which will require the Council to investigate hazards and fix repairs including damp and mould in their properties within strict new time limits or rehouse residents where a home cannot be made safe. The new rules will form part of the tenancy agreement, so residents can hold landlords to account if they fail to provide a 'decent' home.
- 1.33** Tackling of legacy voids has had a significant financial impact due to the state of disrepair in these properties and the subsequent lack of asset renewal. The team expects to have cleared the backlog of legacy voids within this financial year and the associated cost pressures have been forecasted to reflect that commitment. Financial controls for all voids over £6,500 are in place and there is ongoing management of the work in progress (WIP) and the average weekly voids of 12 voids per week.
- 1.34** Legal disrepair volumes continue to be a challenge operationally and financially. Work is ongoing to tackle the circa 550 disrepair cases in our backlog. The service has proposed a plan to clear this backlog by 31 March 2025 and the details were set out in the separate Repairs Contract Update paper presented to Cabinet in February. This financial year works have been undertaken to circa 303 claims and we have works in progress for 67 cases, however, the number of claims we are receiving each month is increasing from an average of 30 to now 45 new claims being received per month.

1.35 The service has introduced controls to manage, monitor and provide assurance on ongoing responsive repairs costs:

- The NEC system allows management of the budget per individual line of activity with a budget set on NEC that cannot be exceeded and no payments can be made without any increase to the budget prior to any new orders being raised. Manager approval is required to increase a budget.
- A Review Panel has been established since September. Any quotes for works over a value of £5,000 must be presented to the panel and approval sought prior to the works order being raised.
- A review and approval from the Housing Directorate Management Team will be sought for works on an individual property in excess of £40,000 to allow consideration of value for money and to ensure that there is a link being made to regeneration projects and any other cross-Council projects.

Tenancy and Income

1.36 A breakeven forecast position at period 9 as work continues with the NEC implementation team to validate rental income and voids.

Staffing and other

1.37 A breakeven forecast position at period 9 reflects that additional budget was allocated in 2023-24 to meet known pressures while structural changes are being implemented.

Table showing the 2023-24 HRA forecast

Description	Net Budget (£m)	Actuals to Date (£m)	Forecast (£m)	Forecast Variance (£m)
Rental Income	(82.1)	(61.5)	(82.1)	-
Service Charge Income	(4.6)	(3.3)	(4.6)	-
Concorde, Sycamore & Windsor (rental income for Temporary Accommodation provision)	(3.4)	(1.9)	(3.4)	-
Other Income	(6.0)	(2.2)	(6.0)	-
Subtotal Income	(96.1)	(68.9)	(96.1)	-
Housing Capital Charges	40.9	-	40.9	-
Responsive Repairs & Safety	20.4	29.8	32.4	12.0
Centralised Directorate expenditure	11.3	1.2	11.3	-
Tenancy & Resident Engagement	10.3	4.6	10.3	-
Tenant Support Services	6.7	4.1	6.7	-
Concorde, Sycamore & Windsor expenditure	3.4	2.4	3.4	-
Asset Planning	1.6	1.1	1.6	-
Capital Delivery (Homes & Schools)	1.5	1.0	1.5	-
Subtotal Expenditure	96.1	44.0	108.1	12.0
Total HRA Net Expenditure	-	(24.9)*	12.0	12.0

* Note that no actuals for Housing Capital Charges have been posted as these journals are carried out at year end points.

1.38 The main risks within the HRA are:

- NEC system functionality delays:
 - Although the system went live in June 2023, the system is yet to be used to its full capacity including full reporting functionality. The repairs and income forecasting may yet be impacted once the full integration and functionality is available.
- Repairs and maintenance:
 - pressures from the exit of the Axis repairs contract that ended in August 2023.
 - extra expenditure to deal with the backlog of repairs and maintenance.
 - void and disrepair costs carried out by specialist contractors to reduce void losses and minimise future disrepair claims.
 - settlement of disrepair cases and related legal fees, including those relating to Regina Road.
- Tenancy and income:
 - the impact of cost of living pressures on rent collection (including a potential increase in bad debt cost).
 - loss of income owing to void (empty) residential properties.
 - loss of income owing to voids including void garages.
- Recharge review:
 - General Fund services are producing service level agreements (SLAs) to evidence recharges of costs to the HRA, which could result in increased charges to the HRA.

General Fund Capital Programme – Housing

General Fund Capital Scheme	2023-24 Revised Budget	2023-24 Actuals to Date	2023-24 Forecast	2023-24 Forecast Variance
	(£000's)	(£000's)	(£000's)	(£000's)
Disabled Facilities Grant	3,000	1,471	3,000	-
Empty Homes Grants	400	39	200	(200)
Total Housing	3,400	1,510	3,200	(200)

HRA Capital Programme

- 1.39** At period 9, the HRA capital programme has a forecast overspend of £1.8m (4.8%) against the revised budget of £37.2m. The 2023-24 HRA capital budget has been updated to reflect the changes agreed through the Capital Programme and Capital Strategy 2023-29 report at the Cabinet meeting on 14 February 2024. The HRA has a reserve of circa £50m as at the end of 2022-23 and this reserve will be the source of financing the 2023-24 capital overspend.
- 1.40** The HRA budget for 2024-25 and the HRA business plan has taken account of ongoing pressures and priorities. Stock conditions surveys have been commissioned to identify the level of historic legacy major repairs and maintenance to be programmed into the future years' budgets and these capital improvements should reduce the level of responsive repairs over the medium to long term.
- 1.41** There are pressures relating to damp and mould related repairs and historic legacy legal disrepair and void cases where significant updating to properties is occurring.
- 1.42** The Executive Mayor in Cabinet is requested through this report to approve within the multi-year HRA capital budget, the re-profiling of £2.071m budget from 2024-25 to 2023-24. This is to align the budget with the acquisition of the Belgrave and Grosvenor site and freehold of the previous Printworks site on Portland Place from Brick By Brick in March 2024.
- 1.43** The overall HRA capital programme budget remains the same as agreed by Full Council in March 2024 and the acquisition continues to be funded through HRA reserves. The acquisition was agreed by Cabinet on 26 July 2023 through the "Brick by Brick Croydon Ltd Update Report and land acquisition by HRA - July 2023" report (link: <https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=183&MId=3573>). The earlier acquisition from Brick By Brick in 2023-24 (instead of 2024-25) provides better value for money in terms of cashflow and debt implications for the Council.

Table showing 2023-24 HRA Capital Programme budget and forecast

HRA Capital Scheme	2023-24 Revised Budget (£000's)	2023-24 Actuals to Date (£000's)	2023-24 Forecast (£000's)	2023-24 Forecast Variance (£000's)
Major Repairs and Improvements Programme	21,355	10,865	37,180	15,825
NEC Housing System	1,772	-	1,772	-
Regina Road	1,500		-	(1,500)
Building Safety Works	3,735		-	(3,735)
Repairs Referrals	8,800		-	(8,800)
Total HRA Capital	37,162	10,865	38,952	1,790

Table showing 2023-24 HRA Capital Programme Financing

HRA Capital Financing	2023-24 Revised Budget	2023-24 Forecast	2023-24 Forecast Variance
	(£000's)	(£000's)	(£000's)
Major Repairs Reserve (MRR)	15,457	15,457	-
Revenue	13,900	13,900	-
Other Reserves	5,687	7,477	1,790
Right To Buy (RTB) Receipts	2,118	2,118	-
Total HRA Capital Financing	37,162	38,952	1,790



Culture Change in Housing Update April 2024



Key throughout

- Communication
- Feedback
- Regulatory updates
- TSMs & performance monitoring and sharing

Ways of working embedded

- ✓ Competency Model/Ways of working – layered to all staff levels
- ✓ Integrated into recruitment and future JDs
- Integrated into Appraisals/objective setting
- Integrated into Training Needs Analysis
- Integrated into training programmes
- Integrated into succession/recognition
- Recognition of good performance

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Supporting/ developing tools:

- Appraisal process changed to incorporate Competencies
- Team building activities
- Communication plan



Timescale

March 2023 to March 2025

Performance & Data Management

- ✓ Creating KPI dashboards to monitor service performance
- ✓ Cleansing data in systems so performance is reliable (ongoing)
 - ✓ Repairs data (ongoing)
 - ✓ Homelessness data
 - ✓ TA data
 - Property data
- Assets and data governance project (Jan 24– Sept 24)
- ✓ Voids Lettable standard devised
- ✓ Estates Cleaning standard devised
- ✓ Gathering of customer profiling data to enable better service delivery (ongoing for 3 years)
- ✓ Stock condition surveys to inform investment

Supporting/ developing tools:

- NEC implementation in June 2023 and ongoing development
- Dashboards linked to Regulatory standards
- New process maps

Timescale

August 2023 to March 2026

Technology to enable

- ✓ NEC phase 1 complete – providing a housing management system to replace outdated and/or manual processes. Requiring staff to input data into a central system allowing automated sharing of info and better customer service
- ❑ NEC phase 2 – enhancing modules which deliver more benefits, including a CRM, revised Voids mgmt., improved Choice Based Lettings and mobile working
- ❑ Verto – to more closely manage projects within the programme of transformation to deliver more accountability
- ✓ Housemark Photobook – to enable monitoring of estate cleanliness

Supporting/ developing tools:

- NEC training
- Vert training and ongoing support
- Resident engagement in setting standards

Timescale

August 2023 to March 2026

Team Building Activities:

- Team Identity sessions
 - Who we are and why we exist
 - Value and Impact we add
- Customer Identity sessions x2
 - Who they are and why they matter
 - How we interact and respond to feedback
- Collaboration mapping sessions x2
 - Who do we work with and our co-dependencies
- Empowerment and action Sessions x2
 - What we need to fix and what we need others to fix
 - taking responsibility and creating channels of influence
- Change and Adapt Sessions
 - Understanding the nature of change
 - What continuous change looks like in the workplace

Supporting/ developing tools:

- Competency Model linked to appraisals
- Customer Care Training Delivery
- MGI Embedding programme
- Professionalisation & TNA programme
- Revised Induction programme
 - our homes, our staff, our stakeholders
- The Croydon Leader programme for managers

Timescale

March 2024 to Dec 2024 – linked to restructuring of divisions

Training Needs Analysis and Professionalisation Agenda

- ✓ identification of training needs for each division
- ✓ Creating a generic training map across the directorate
- ✓ Customer Care training programme – “Be the Difference” procured and set for roll-out in May 2024
- Procurement and planning of training
- Finalisation of Competence Standard (expected in 2024)
- Training needs assessment utilising professional standards
- Programme of professionalisation across the directorate (2 years +)

Supporting/ developing tools:

- Bite size training
- Online embedding support tool for customer care programme
- Communication plan

Timescale

January 2024 to March 2025

Empowered & Competent Managers

- ✓ Competency Model – Manager layer
- Management & Leadership development – first tranche of development programme (Q1 2024)
- The Croydon Leader programme
 - Creates a vision for leaders/managers
 - Provides a toolkit for leadership in Croydon
 - Workshop and bitesize sessions to support leadership
- Managerial community – development of comms channel and learning package
 - Community forums and team building

Supporting/ developing tools:

- Croydon Housing Managers toolkit
- Corporate Leadership programme
- Be the Difference 4Ls embedding programme for customer care
- Management personas

Timescale

March 2023 to March 2025

Structures to deliver

- ✓ High Level Directorate restructure to provide capacity, direction and leadership
- ✓ Tenancy division restructure in early stages
- ✓ Estates and Improvement in early stages (new patch principles)
- ✓ New Damp and Mould, Disrepair specialist teams
- ✓ New Contact Centre
- ✓ New Regen division in development
- ✓ New Performance and Regulatory division in development
- ✓ New Resident Engagement Structure in final stages of development with TPAS

Supporting/ developing tools:

- New Job descriptions
- Link in with team building sessions
- NEC processes to support structures

Timescale

May 2023 to March 2025

Policies, Procedures and Processes to guide and govern

- ✓ Identification of policies, procedures and processes to support better, consistent service delivery
- ✓ Planned review of PPP
- ✓ Tier 1 completion underway and with resident group
- ✓ Tier 2 underway
- ✓ Tier 3 underway
- Delivery of training to support

Supporting/ developing tools:

- Bitesize training sessions
- Resident reading group

Timescale

March 2023 to March 2025

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	Homes Sub-Committee
DATE	16 April 2024
REPORT TITLE:	Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029
LEAD OFFICER:	Susmita Sen - Corporate Director for Housing
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	Susmita Sen - Corporate Director for Housing Beatrice Cingtho-Taylor - Director of Housing, Homelessness Prevention & Accommodation
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Lynne Hale Cabinet Member for Homes and Deputy Mayor
ORIGIN OF ITEM:	The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy forms a part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, and as such it is required that Scrutiny have not less than four weeks to respond to the initial proposals.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	The Homes Sub-Committee Scrutiny Sub-Committee has asked to review the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029, with a view to considering whether there are any concerns that should be raised or recommendations that should be made.
PUBLIC/EXEMPT:	Public

1 Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029

- 1.1. Attached at Appendix 1 is the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 Cabinet report; this forms a part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, and as such it is required that Scrutiny have not less than four weeks to respond to the initial proposals.
- 1.2. This report introduces the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024- 2029 to Cabinet for agreement and onward recommendation to full Council for approval. As well as setting out the statutory requirement to produce a 5-year plan, the report sets out the methodology used in its development as well as setting out a summary report of the process used to consult residents and partners and achieve a consensus for the key themes identified in the strategies priorities.
- 1.3. Under the Homelessness Act 2002 all local authorities are required to produce a Homelessness Strategy every five years. From 2018, the Government extended this and included a responsibility for Council's to consider Rough Sleeping as a part of

the overall strategic objectives. Croydon last produced a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy between 2019-22

- 1.4. The Homes Sub-Committee Scrutiny Sub-Committee is asked to review the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 with a view to considering whether there are any concerns that should be raised or recommendations that should be made ahead of it being reported to Cabinet and Council.

2 APPENDICES

- 2.1 **Appendix 1** - Cabinet Report & Appendices - Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029

3 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 None

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	CABINET	
DATE OF DECISION	24th April 2024	
REPORT TITLE:	Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024- 2029	
CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR:	Susmita Sen, Corporate Director for Housing	
LEAD OFFICER:	Beatrice Cingtho-Taylor Email: Beatrice.Cingtho-Taylor@croydon.gov.uk	
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Lynne Hale, Cabinet Member for Homes and Deputy Mayor	
KEY DECISION? [Insert Ref. Number if a Key Decision] <i>Guidance: A Key Decision reference number will be allocated upon submission of a forward plan entry to Democratic Services.</i>	Yes	<p style="text-align: right;">Number: 0324H</p> <p style="text-align: center;">REASON</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Key Decision – Decision significantly impacts on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards</p>
WARDS AFFECTED:	All	

1 SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report introduces the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024- 2029 to Cabinet for agreement and onward recommendation to full Council for approval. As well as setting out the statutory requirement to produce a 5-year plan, the report sets out the methodology used in its development as well as setting out a summary report of the process used to consult residents and partners and achieve a consensus for the key themes identified in the strategies priorities.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Having considered the evidence, the outcome of the consultation and the requirements of the Council’s Public Sector Equality Duty for the reasons set out in the report and appendices, the Executive Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider and Agree

- 2.1.1 the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024- 2029 as detailed in Appendix A;
- 2.1.2 the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan detailed in Appendix B; and
- 2.1.3 the Homelessness and Rough Strategy Summary Review detailed in Appendix C; and
- 2.1.4 the Summary Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Consultation Report detailed in Appendix D

2.2

Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Housing to make minor amendments to the Strategy in consultation with the Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes following agreement by the Executive Mayor but prior to its recommendation and adoption by full Council.

2.3 For the reasons set out above **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** the adoption of:

- 2.3.1 the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 as set out in Appendix A;
- 2.3.2 the supporting Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan in Appendix B;
- 2.3.3 the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Summary Review in Appendix C; and
- 2.3.4 the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Consultation Report in Appendix D.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002 all local authorities are required to produce a Homelessness Strategy every five years. From 2018, the Government extended this and included a responsibility for Council's to consider Rough Sleeping as a part of the overall strategic objectives. Croydon last produced a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy between 2019-22 (please see 4.8.3).
- 3.2 Together with the Housing Transformation programme agreed at Cabinet in December 2022, it sets out the pathway as to how the Council will improve its Homelessness and Rough Sleeping services and produce better outcomes for Croydon residents at risk of being made homeless or homeless.
- 3.3 With a number of other strategies such as Resident Engagement and Asset Management, the Homelessness Strategy 'sits under' Croydon's five-year Housing Strategy agreed at Full Council in December 2023.
- 3.4 The Mayors Business Plan sets the overall direction of the Council, and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will link into the following core objectives:

Outcome 4, Priority 3 of the Mayor's Plan

- Prevent homelessness by providing advice, guidance, and appropriate support.
 - Review procurement of nightly paid temporary accommodation for homeless people to obtain Value for Money
- 3.5 To achieve the above Mayoral target, a review of the Housing Needs and Homelessness service is being carried out and embedded to enable the Council to deliver better value for money and more responsive homelessness service.
- 3.6 The contraventions of the Regulator of Social Housing Standards as reported in the Ark Report has highlighted the importance of improving all housing-related services provided to Croydon residents. The Council has acknowledged that improvements are needed within the Housing Needs & Homelessness Service and the Strategy, and its accompanying delivery plan set out the objectives and actions needed to achieve this.
- 3.7 The Improvement and Assurance Panel has also identified housing as a key concern.

4 BACKGROUND AND DETAIL

Drivers for developing the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029.

- 4.1 As outlined above under the Homelessness Act 2002 (and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017), the Council has a statutory duty to produce a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy for the borough. In the short term, London Councils are experiencing a significant rise in homelessness with Croydon now having over 3,000 households in temporary accommodation. Combined with escalating numbers of those who are rough sleeping, the need for a joined-up approach with Voluntary and Statutory Sector partners to reduce these pressures is essential. In the longer term, in a Borough with one of the youngest populations of under 19-year-olds in London combined with a projected 58% rise in over 65's means a planned approach working with housing association partners is needed to prepare for the increased demand for general needs stock and elderly accommodation that this will entail.
- 4.2 The Executive Mayor's Business Plan (see 3.4) has identified the prevention of homelessness as a priority and the strategy sets out the Executive Mayor's intent to improve the Council's services to those in housing need.
- 4.3 The Council accepts concerns raised by residents about the quality of its housing services. The need for improvement has led to the re-organisation of the Housing Needs & Homelessness Service to create a structure which is better able to respond to and prevent the causes of homelessness such as private rental evictions, family & friend evictions, mental health issues, drugs and alcohol problems and incidents of domestic abuse. The production of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and its

accompanying delivery plan provides the focus for what the new service is trying to achieve over the next five years.

- 4.4 In a time of rising homelessness and rough sleeping, when admissions into temporary accommodation are proving particularly costly to London Boroughs, the strategy sets out the intention to work preventatively to stop homelessness from occurring and to reduce the reliance on temporary accommodation. In doing so, the Council will achieve better outcomes for residents as well as better value for money.
- 4.5 As part of this strategy, the Council has carried out a consultation with its key partners and residents of the Borough. The feedback from well over 300 residents and the majority of our key partners is that the Council is not responsive to residents seeking assistance from the Housing Needs & Homelessness Service. Additionally, many of the Voluntary and Statutory Sector were of the view that the Council had withdrawn from performing its co-ordinating and facilitating role in tackling homelessness in the Borough. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out a clear path for improving services for residents and re-instating partnership work in the borough.
- 4.6 The Improvement and Assurance Panel (IAP) was commissioned by the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to advise and assist on the Council's financial recovery strategy and report on the progress of service improvements. In the remit given to the Panel, housing was identified as one of the priority areas for improvement
- 4.7 The Exit Strategy (October 2023) devised by the Improvement and Assurance Panel and produced in conjunction with the Council sets out the progress required by 2025. Within the document, it sets out the necessity to produce a Housing Strategy to provide necessary direction for the service. As stated above, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy links into the Housing Strategy.
- 4.8 Methodology for developing the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024- 2029**
- 4.8.1 In order to develop this strategy, the Council firstly conducted a review of homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough from July to October 2023. This included the use of homelessness statistics collected for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), and the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN), the London Mayors KPI's for Rough Sleeping.
- 4.8.2 In addition, an examination of how Croydon's performance benchmarks with London Local Authorities was conducted using information obtained from DLUHC and CHAIN. The process identified gaps or learning and tried to project future trends for homelessness and rough sleeping in Croydon.
- 4.8.3. The outcomes of the previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2022 were also considered. This set the following targets.
- Build 2,000 homes for Croydon residents.
 - Extend the Landlord Licensing Scheme after the first 5 years.

- Buy 250 homes for families in need to be let at truly affordable rents.
- Develop a strategic partnership with Crisis to develop our 10-year strategy to end homelessness.
- Continue with our Housing First approach to get our most vulnerable rough sleepers off the streets.
- Build on our Social Lettings Agency pilot to both encourage good landlords and to sustain tenancies.

During this period, the Council's financial position and the confinement of the Covid period meant that these objectives were not delivered and from May 2022 the Executive Mayor undertook to carry out a review of this service and produce a revised strategy with a greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness as required by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

4.8.4 The preliminary findings from the review were used to seek comments and views on homelessness and rough sleeping in Croydon from stakeholders and whether the initial findings identified the right priorities for the next five years. This involved a consultation exercise which included a user survey, meetings with residents, voluntary groups, and statutory agencies.

4.8.5 A short Consultation report was then produced summarising the views that have been expressed and any recommendations made that would inform the final Strategy.

4.8.6 The six priorities are as follows.

Priority One - Listen to our residents and provide good and responsive services.

Priority Two - Act at the earliest possible stage to prevent homelessness from occurring.

Priority Three - Reduce the reliance on the use of temporary accommodation.

Priority Four - Reduce the numbers of people who are rough sleeping in Croydon.

Priority Five - Manage our stock and encourage new affordable, private rented and social housing.

Priority Six - Re-instate partnerships with the Voluntary and Statutory Sector and deliver a more integrated approach to tackling homelessness.

4.9 Delivering the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024- 2029

4.9.1 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024- 2029 will be underpinned by a Delivery Plan (see Appendix B) which will detail the key actions and milestones to be achieved by 2029 to ensure our strategic priorities and objectives are delivered.

4.9.2 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 key performance indicators and Standards.

4.9.3 The strategic priorities and objectives of our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 will also be reviewed against the following priorities.

- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the requirement for Local Authorities to prevent homelessness from occurring by early intervention.
- The Government's ambition to eliminate Rough Sleeping by 2027
- The Regulator of Social Housing has recently expanded the consumer standards to encompass the accessibility of services to prospective tenants as well as those with a secure and assured tenancy.

4.9.4 In a climate where the cost of homelessness is rising, a responsive and effective Housing Needs & Homelessness Service will require more integrated solutions in partnership with others. We understand that we need to do more for those people in greatest need and take a fresh look at how we can respond better to those groups that draw a disproportionate level of resources from the Council and other public service providers – such as families with multiple and complex needs. This will involve working much more closely with other voluntary and statutory partners in a spirit of partnership, sharing knowledge and expertise, and finding ways to better co-ordinate and integrate our approach.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 The following alternative options were considered ahead of developing the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024- 2029:

- Do not produce a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy.
- Delay the development of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy.

5.2 The alternative option of not producing a new homelessness strategy was rejected for the reasons listed in 3.1- 3.7. Additionally, the Strategy is a statutory requirement which was due for completion in 2023. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities agreed to delay the new Strategy on the basis that it was produced by Spring 2024. Asking for a further extension is unnecessary and might therefore damage the Council's credibility.

6 CONSULTATION.

6.1 We consulted on the key themes of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024- 2029 through an online survey questionnaire (See Appendix D). The survey asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the draft priorities. The online survey was live from 6th October to 15th December 2023 and received 188 responses and showed broad support for all original five draft priorities and underlying objectives. As a result of the feedback, a further objective on the delivery of a good and responsive service was added.

6.2 Survey responses regarding the draft priorities and objectives and a snapshot of the responses are listed below.

Priority One: Listen to our residents and provide good and responsive services. This has been included as an additional target as an outcome of the consultation where many respondents complained about the poor customer experience they had received.

Priority Two: Act at the earliest possible stage to prevent homelessness from occurring. Data provided to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities shows that Croydon Council currently prevents homelessness from occurring in 35% of occasions against the 45% average in other London Boroughs suggesting that more can be done to prevent homelessness.

Priority Three: Reduce the reliance on the use of temporary accommodation. Homelessness is on the rise nationally and particularly across London with some Councils experiencing 15% increases in those needing temporary accommodation. The cost of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast is high, and residents are often housed in such accommodation for extended periods of time. We will use every endeavour to reduce the reliance on the use of temporary accommodation to ensure residents are provided with stable homes. *94% agree or strongly agree with this priority.*

Priority Four: Reduce the numbers of people who are rough sleeping in Croydon. Approximately 15% of the rough sleepers assessed in the borough remain living on the streets, and it is key that we continue to provide them with support services. We will also work with partners such as Safer Streets to deter those who refuse an offer of accommodation and cause anti-social behaviour. *79% agree or strongly agree with this priority.*

Reasons for 15% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing:

- *Some respondents were of the view that support should be withdrawn or that people could not be helped.*
- *Others wanted stronger action against anti-social behaviour.*
- *Comments were also received about the impact that staying in temporary or hostel accommodation can have upon mental health.*

Priority Five: Manage our stock and encourage new affordable, private rented and social housing. We need to manage our own stock effectively to ensure properties are re-let swiftly, as well as intervene to maintain tenancies in the social and private sectors. In addition, we will work with our housing association partners to increase access to the supply of new affordable and social housing in the borough *87% agree or strongly agree with this priority.*

Reasons for 9% (23 people) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing:

- *'Better management and maintenance of existing homes was needed.'*
- *'More social than affordable housing was needed.'*
- *'Rehouse out of Croydon as it is over-crowded.'*

Priority Six: Re-instate partnerships with the Voluntary and Statutory Sector and deliver a more integrated approach to tackling homelessness. We know that often residents with additional vulnerabilities are at a higher risk of homelessness and we need to work effectively with partners to assist vulnerable residents so as to prevent homelessness. *87% agree or strongly disagree.*

Reasons for 11% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing:

- *'Need to invest more in Mental health prevention.'*
 - *'Council should be leading and not assigning responsibility to others.'*
- 6.2. 18% of those responding had experienced homelessness or a threat of homelessness.
- 6.3. Meetings were held with Croydon Communities Consortium in which 26 residents attended and the Private Landlords Forum where about 60 landlords attended over 2 sessions.
- 6.4. A further 160 comments were received in the Housing Strategy consultation that related to homelessness.
- 6.5. One to one meetings also took place with key partners including the Family Justice Centre, Evolve Housing, St Mungo's Housing Association, Croydon University Hospital, South London and Maudsley Hospital Trust, Thames Reach, Nightwatch, Crisis Skylight, South West London Law Centres and Southern Housing.
- 6.6. In summary, key concerns raised in the Consultation related to the lack of responsiveness from the Housing Needs and Homelessness Service. The voluntary and statutory partners were also concerned that the Council was no longer carrying out its co-ordinating and facilitating role in tackling homelessness in the Borough.
- 6.7 There have also been two All Member Briefing Sessions with one occurring at the beginning of the process and another to comment on the finalised Strategy (March 25th/28th)
- 6.8 A report summarising the Consultation outcome is attached to Appendix D of this report.

7 CONTRIBUTION TO EXECUTIVE MAYOR BUSINESS PLAN.

- 7.1 The development and implementation of the Housing Strategy 2023- 2028 and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 is key to ensuring the Council delivers against the following priorities within the Mayor's Business Plan 2022-2026:
- Get a grip on the finances and make the Council financially sustainable.
 - Become a council which listens to, respects, and works in partnership with Croydon's diverse communities.
 - Strengthen collaboration and joint working with partner organisations and the voluntary, community and faith sectors.
 - Develop our workforce to deliver in a manner that respects the diversity of our communities.
 - Ensure children and young people have opportunities to learn, develop and fulfil their potential.
 - Invest in council homes to drive up standards and develop a more responsive and effective housing service.

- Work with partners and the VCFS to promote independence, health and wellbeing and keep vulnerable adults safe.

IMPLICATIONS

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Homelessness Strategy sets out the priorities of the Housing Needs services across 2024-2029. Priority one may have some financial implication depending on the outcome of feasibility work around data management. Priorities 2,3,4 and 5 align with business-as-usual priorities and planned improvements to service delivery and will have no additional financial implications. Priority 6 will require an amount of resource in the form of staff time, but this will be managed effectively to ensure no additional specific resource is required. Implementation of the strategy as described should ensure that homelessness costs are minimised as fewer households need high-cost housing support relating to the demand for services.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Head of Litigation and Corporate Law comments on behalf of the Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer as follows.

9.2 Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 sets out the definition of homelessness, and the duties owed by local authorities to applicants who become homeless or are threatened with homelessness.

9.3 The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 requires local authorities to intervene at an earlier stage and take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness (to those threatened with homeless within 56 days) and/ or relieve homelessness (through sustaining or securing accommodation) for eligible applicants who become homeless or are threatened with homelessness.

9.4 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 amends Part 7 of Housing Act 1996 and now provides a new definition of domestic abuse. The Act extends priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse and requires local authorities to assess whether an applicant is homeless as a result of domestic abuse.

9.5 The legislation concerning homelessness reviews and strategies is set out in sections 1 to 3 of the Homelessness Act 2002 ("the 2002 Act").

9.6 Section 1 of the 2002 Act provides that a local housing authority may from time to time carry out a homelessness review for their district and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review. The authority must exercise that power so as to ensure that a new homelessness strategy for their district is published within 5 years of the date of publication of their last homelessness strategy.

9.7 Section 2 of the 2002 Act sets out the meaning and scope of a homelessness review.

- 9.8 Section 3 of the 2002 Act, defines a homelessness strategy as a strategy for preventing homelessness in the district, securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in their district who are or may become homeless, securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in the district who are or may become homeless, or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
- 9.9 In formulating or modifying a homelessness strategy, the authority must have regard to its current allocation scheme, its current tenancy strategy, the current London housing strategy, and the extent to which objectives can be achieved by other public bodies, voluntary organisations etc.
- 9.10 Before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy, the authority must consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations, or other persons as they consider appropriate. The consultation that has taken place is set out in section 6 of the report.
- 9.11 A homelessness strategy may include specific objectives to be pursued, and specific action planned to be taken in the course of the exercise of their housing and social services functions. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan in Appendix B sets out the proposed key priorities to be achieved over the course of the next 5 years in ensuring that the objectives of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy are achieved.
- 9.12 In carrying out a homelessness review, and in developing the revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, under Section 182(1) of the Housing Act 1996 the authority must have regard to the code of practice issued by the Secretary of State under Section 214A of the Housing Act 1996, namely the Homelessness code of guidance to local authorities 2018 as updated. Chapter 2 of the Code of Guidance relates to homelessness strategies and reviews.
- 9.13 The authority must keep their homelessness strategy under review, and may modify it from time to time, and the modifications or the strategy as modified must also be published.
- 9.14 A copy of the strategy must be available for inspection at the council's principal office, or a copy provided to member of public if asked for, and under the Code of Guidance the Council should publish the strategy and review documents on its website.
- 9.15 As a public authority, the Council must always take account of the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and not act in a way which is incompatible with a Convention right. Under Article 8, any interference with the right to respect for a person's private and family life and home must be proportionate and Article 14 requires that there must be no unjustified discrimination within the scope of human rights on any grounds, such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, or other status.
- 9.16 Approval of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 following consultation is a function reserved to Full Council by Article 4.2 of the Council's Constitution unless otherwise delegated in accordance with Article 4.1.

9.17 Under paragraph 4.55 of Part 3 of the Council’s Constitution, the Corporate Director for Housing is responsible for discharging the Council’s duties, powers and functions in relation to homelessness.

9.18 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy meets the overall requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Code of Guidance chapter 2, and there is no legal reason why Cabinet should not agree the recommendations in this report, and to make a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Strategy.

Approved by: Sandra Herbert Head of Litigation and Corporate Law on behalf of Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer (05/04/2024)

10 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010, decision makers must evidence consideration of any potential impacts of proposals on groups who share the protected characteristics, before decisions are taken. This includes any decisions relating to how authorities act as employers; how they develop, evaluate and review policies; how they design, deliver and evaluate services, and also how they commission and procure services from others.

- 10.1 Section 149 of the Act requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. ^(a)
 - Protected characteristics defined by law include race and ethnicity, disability, sex, gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and religion or belief.
 - Having due regard means there is a requirement to consciously address the three tenets of the Equality Duty within decision-making processes.
 - By law, assessments must be carried out throughout planning and delivery and contain sufficient information to enable the local authority to show it has paid ‘due regard’ to the equality’s duties; and identified methods for mitigating or avoiding adverse impact on people sharing protected characteristics.

1.a The Equalities impact Assessment outcome for protected groups is positive.

10.2 Comments Approved by Felisha Dussard Senior Communities Officer 06/03/2024.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

11 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Strategy alludes to the problem of anti-social behaviour caused by a minority of those who are rough sleeping and the need to co-ordinate work with safer streets to tackle this problem.

11.2 The Council also recognises the rising levels of homelessness attributable to Domestic Violence and will continue joint working with the Family Justice Centre to tackle this issue as well as liaising with the Police and the Council's Community Safety team.

12 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Housing has been identified as an area of key concern by the Government and the progress of the Transformation Programme is monitored by the Improvement and Assurance Panel appointed by the Secretary of State. Failure to progress the Homelessness and Rough Strategy and a successful re-organisation of the service may therefore impact on the ability of the Borough to achieve an exit from intervention in July 2025.

13 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no data protection implication with regards to this report

14 APPENDICES

A Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

B Delivery Plan

C Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review

D Consultation Summary Report

Homelessness Strategy 2024-2029

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5	Key Challenges	7
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preventing homelessness• Rises in the use of temporary housing and Bed and Breakfast• Increases in rough sleeping.• Housing Supply.• Private Sector.• Health and well-being.• Data collection	
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Foreword – Cllr Lynne Hale

I am pleased to introduce Croydon's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which sets out our plans for reducing the challenge of homelessness in our Borough over the next 5 years.

At a time when Homelessness and Rough Sleeping are rising across London and the UK, it is vitally important that we as a Council set out how we are going to tackle this growing problem in our Borough.

It is essential that we treat all those approaching us for help and support with empathy and respect and that we provide a timely and responsive service to those in need.

For this reason, during the first year of this Strategy we will be completing the re-organisation of the Housing Needs Structure with a view to working to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place. Timely homelessness prevention advice and support at the earliest opportunity will be critical and we need to make that advice easily accessible to anyone who needs it, as well as also being able to provide the accommodation that people need in an emergency.

To reduce our reliance on temporary accommodation, we must manage our housing stock more effectively; reducing the number of empty properties; cutting unauthorised occupation and encouraging those who no longer need larger properties to downsize.

Besides that, we will review our Allocation Scheme to ensure that those who are most in need receive priority for housing.

Such are the challenges with homelessness at present, that we cannot manage this on our own. We must seek to build upon relationships we have with the many local landlords and agencies who are committed to providing excellent and affordable housing.

We have some excellent landlords in Croydon who take their responsibilities to their tenants very seriously and we couldn't manage to meet the very high demand for housing without them. However, where poor practice occurs, we will need to take action.

Many of those who are struggling with homelessness are now facing long periods awaiting re-housing, often in circumstances which are far from ideal and it is important therefore that we do as much as possible to ensure they have decent living conditions

In the environment we face, it is important that the Council works more closely and more effectively with our many partners in the Voluntary Sector, many of whom show significant passion and commitment in assisting those who are homeless.

In addition, over the past few years the Council has not been as effective as it should be in carrying out its strategic and co-ordinating role in reducing homelessness. A key outcome of this report will therefore be to re-instate the Council's formal role in supporting and facilitating the work being carried out by our Partners.

In tackling Rough Sleeping effectively, we recognise the need to adopt a tailored and multi-agency approach that tackles the prevalent causes of homelessness in our Borough, such as poor mental health, alcohol and substance abuse and domestic violence. Ideally, rough sleeping should be rare, brief and non-recurring, but we recognise that much will need to be done in order to make progress with this ambition.

With over 7,000 people awaiting re-housing on the Housing Register, we recognise that we must also plan the future supply of housing in our Borough. Although I would stress that this will not provide a comprehensive solution, our Regeneration and New Homes Strategy due in the Autumn 2024, will set out how we will progress this important work.

Finally, I would thank all those who have supported the consultation work and given us feedback on the development of this strategy; and I can give every assurance particularly to those in the Voluntary Sector that we have listened and will act upon your views.

A refreshed approach to dealing with homelessness in our Borough

Susmita Sen (Corporate Director of Housing) and Beatrice Cingtho-Taylor (Director of Homeless Prevention and Accommodation)

The 2024-29 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been produced at a time of greatly increased demand for housing needs services across London and the UK. Figures produced by the London Councils show a 15% increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation across the Capital. Additionally, the number of families living in unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation has increased exponentially placing great strain on those living in these circumstances. At the same time rough sleeping has increased significantly whilst the availability of supported accommodation remains static with many living for many years awaiting suitable move-on accommodation.

With its growing population, Croydon has been greatly affected by this increase in housing need and declining housing supply and it is in this context that the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been produced.

In preparing this strategy, we have heard the views of over 300 residents as well as many of our statutory and voluntary sector partners. Some of the feedback we have received has been particularly critical about a perceived lack of responsiveness to residents' concerns on the part of our services. Additionally, many of our Voluntary

Sector partners have spoken of their belief that the Council is no longer playing a co-ordinating and leading role in facilitating joined up work in homelessness prevention.

We believe that to move forward we must react positively to this feedback and set in place a clear plan for resolving these concerns.

Firstly, we must ensure that those who are threatened by homelessness are given an approachable and humane response which recognises the stress that homeless people are under, and the support needs they may have. It is clear that over the past few years that too many residents have failed to receive such a service, often having to wait for long periods to see a Housing Need & Homelessness Officer.

The ongoing re-organisation of our Housing Needs & Homelessness Service will ensure that those who are homeless on the day are seen and provided with a service and that the specialism exists to tackle the complexity of needs of those who are presenting so that we are able in many cases to prevent homelessness from occurring.

Secondly, our structure will support the re-establishment of the links we need to support the excellent work of our Voluntary Sector partners as well as colleagues in the statutory sector.

Achieving these objectives will require significant cultural change within the organisation and it will take time to deliver the services that residents deserve but this strategy and the delivery plan sets out how the identified priorities will be delivered to achieve service outcomes that our residents deserve.

2 Factors that determine this Strategy.

This strategy sets out the Council's approach towards tackling homelessness and rough sleeping between 2024 and 2029. It fulfils a statutory requirement under the Housing Act 2002 and will be influenced by the factors set out below.

National Context

The strategy is produced at a time of rising homelessness and rough sleeping across London and the UK. The increased unavailability of low cost social and affordable housing combined with a withdrawal from the market of many private sector landlords has meant that many Councils are increasingly reliant on placing homeless residents in temporary accommodation some of which is unsuitable as well as often being placed far from where the applicant has been living. Since 2022, year on year increases in temporary accommodation have exceeded 15% and the challenge for Councils is to combine an approach that manages both the current pressures on its services and plans for the increased delivery of new housing that is so badly needed.

In the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2018, the Government set out its strategy for eliminating rough sleeping by 2027 and halving it by the end of the Parliament (then thought to be 2021/22). In 2022, the strategy was refreshed with the Government committing a further £500m nationally to the Rough Sleeping Initiative of which

Croydon received over £4m to cover a three-year period to 2025. This sum included the cost of 'somewhere safe to stay' accommodation for rough sleepers', delivery of housing first services to support those moving into accommodation as well as a Rough Sleeping team and specialist support workers. As numbers of those sleeping rough rise, the Strategy will outline that although Croydon has a good performance in terms of preventing a "second night out", more needs to be done in tackling the often-linked issues of mental health, well-being and poor behaviour often associated with this problem.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA Act 2017) represented the most significant change in Homelessness legislation for a generation. Most importantly, it included requirements for Local Authorities to assess all eligible applicants and take steps to prevent and relieve homelessness. It also extended the period that a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days giving an emphasis to preventing homelessness at the earliest stage rather than waiting for an applicant having an immediate relief need. The need to fully respond to the requirements of this legislation is central to this Strategy.

Local Factors

Councils Financial Position- - In October 2020 the Council's auditor external auditors published a highly critical 'Report in the Public Interest' (RIPI) setting out serious failings in the council's financial management, decision-making and governance. The scale of the financial and governance challenges highlighted in the RIPI led to the council issuing multiple Section 114 notices and making significant cost savings across the organisation. Since the Executive Mayor's election in 2022, he has worked with the new Corporate Management Team to introduce a council-wide transformation and improvement programme, led by the priorities in his Executive Mayor's Business Plan, to reshape services, reduce costs and put residents first.

Unlike many councils which have issued Section 114 Notices, the government has not instructed commissioners, nor removed any decision-making powers from Croydon. Instead, the council works closely with a statutory Improvement and Assurance Panel (IAP) which provides updates and assurance to the Secretary of State on the council's progress, including on the council's financial sustainability. The council continues to face significant financial pressure, most notably from the costs of servicing its £1.6bn of legacy debt. Similarly to other councils, the council also faces significant increases in those needing homelessness relief which has placed additional strain on council budgets. This strategy will address the costly use and reliance on temporary accommodation which is now affecting many boroughs.

Intervention of the Regulator of Social Housing – following events at Regina Road where residents were living in unacceptable conditions, the Council were found to be in contravention of the Home Standard and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard by the Regulator. Though this does not directly impact upon a strategy for homelessness, the Council is committed to the pursuit of better

services for residents who are temporarily housed or awaiting rehousing and recognises that the service offered to many has been unsatisfactory.

Transforming the Council

Since May 2022, the Executive Mayor has set out a programme of service improvement to correct historic poor performance in parts of the Council.

These priorities are shaped by the Executive Mayor’s Business Plan 2022 and the Local Plan 2019-40.

Outcome 4, Priority 3 of the Executive Mayor’s Plan states that the Council will

Prevent homelessness by providing advice, guidance, and appropriate support.

Review procurement of nightly paid temporary accommodation for homeless people to obtain Value for Money.

An overall theme of the Executive Mayor’s Plan is to treat residents with respect and ensure their issues and complaints are responded to promptly and effectively and this clearly also applies to those who are Homeless or Rough Sleeping.

The Strategy also considers other priorities in the Executive Mayor’s Plan relating to health recognising that homelessness is a significant factor in poor mental and physical well-being.

Housing Strategy

Sitting with other key strategies under the Housing Strategy 2023, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy also complements strategies developed in other Council’s departments such as Community Safety and Joint Children’s Services Protocol.

3 Demographics

Croydon is London’s most populated Borough, with approximately 390,800 residents (Census 2021) with a projected growth of 3.6% between 2021 and 2025 and 10% up until 2031 (GLA 2020 based housing led projections).

Age	Croydon		London	England
	Population	% of population	% of population	% of population
Under 16	80,089	20.5%	19.2%	18.5%
16 – 64	257,001	65.8%	68.8%	63.0%
65 +	53,416	13.7%	11.9%	18.5%
All Ages	390,506	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

- The 9% increase in 0-14 age group is tied to the 11% rise in the 30-44 age group (the largest age group at 23%) and the under 19 population in Croydon is now the highest in London leading to projections of increased demand for general needs housing up until 2040
- From 2011 to 2023 there was a rise of 23% in the over 65 population with projected increase of 58% between now and 2040

PROJECTION The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2023 points to a ‘clear and acute need for rented affordable accommodation for lower income households’

Disability

28% of Croydon households contain one person with a disability against the London average of 26.6%.

Projections made about disability in Croydon (Iceni SHMA) predict the following;

Disability	Age Range	2021	2040	% Change
Dementia	65+	3,553	5,969	68.0%
Mobility problems	65+	9,413	15,342	63.0%
Autistic Spectrum Disorders	18-64	1,986	2,147	8.1%
	65+	473	763	61.2%
Learning Disabilities	15-64	5,356	5,748	7.3%
	65+	1,073	1,688	57.3%
Impaired mobility	16-64	10,940	11,938	9.1%

PROJECTION: Identified need for more supported and extra-care units needed between 2021 and 2040 for disabled and elderly people (see Key Challenges) General needs units to be “accessible and adaptable homes”

Ethnicity

The table below demonstrates disproportionate over representation of the Black community in terms of homelessness applications which are well above the London average.

%	London	Croydon	Rest of England
White	31%	26%	75%
Black	29%	45%	6%
Asian	12%	12%	5%

Far higher numbers of Black and Ethnic Minority communities are recorded as living in the more deprived areas of North Croydon associated with social and private rented accommodation (included House's in Multiple Occupation) such as West Croydon, Selhurst and Thornton Heath.

4 Key Challenges for our service

The production of our new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29 comes at a time of significant challenge for Local Authorities particularly those across London.

As a part of this process, we are required to carry out an assessment of homelessness in the Borough which is featured in supporting documents to the strategy. Identified below are the most significant findings which involved analysis of Homelessness statistics provided to DLUC, the Mayor of London and London Councils and a benchmarking process with other providers.

Homelessness Prevention benchmarking.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a requirement on Councils adopting a preventative approach to Homelessness. When comparing London Council's, it appears from figures provided in June 2023 that those who have adopted this model are achieving better results in terms of homeless prevention although the numbers owed a relief duty have increased London wide.

2022/23	Prevention duty owed	Of which Owed relief duty	% owed relief duty
London-Wide	57,159	31,620	55%
Barking	1,299	550	42%
Ealing	2,958	1,242	41%
Greenwich	2,589	1,490	57%
Hackney	2,320	1,416	61%

An analysis of performance in Croydon in the calendar year 2022 showed the following;

- That of 2,272 cases owed a prevention duty, 1,500 cases or 66% were offered a relief duty suggesting a need to prioritise a more preventative approach to homelessness in Croydon as demonstrated in the above table.

OUR CHALLENGE The Council has completed and must now implement the review of its Housing Needs Service with a view to having the flexibility to respond earlier to the many causes of homelessness and to better engage with our partners.

Rise in the use of temporary accommodation

Whilst many Councils are still seeking to embed the principles of preventing homelessness set out in the **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**, there have been significant increases in demand-for temporary accommodation brought about by the economic downturn. Rising housing costs and a diminishing supply of affordable housing both in the Social and Private Sector has meant that currently in Croydon, over 3,000 families are housed in Temporary Accommodation or in unsuitable Bed and Breakfast facilities and Commercial Hotels.

OUR CHALLENGE We will aim to set out an approach for more effectively managing and reducing Croydon's reliance on temporary accommodation.

Increases in Rough Sleeping

Like many Boroughs, Croydon is experiencing rises in those who are Rough Sleeping, and the services are increasingly stretched in delivering the London Mayoral target that nobody sleeping rough should spend a '2nd Night Out'. The complexity of needs of those presenting as homeless or sleeping rough often require a tailored response that may involve intervention from mental health or drugs and alcohol services to prevent applicants becoming stuck in a cycle of homelessness.

Despite a challenging environment, Croydon has continued to perform strongly in delivering the "No Second Night Out" and despite having amongst the highest number of rough sleepers amongst outer London Boroughs, over 80% are identified and prevented from sleeping on the streets.

DLUHC have written to Local Authorities identifying three key areas to act upon in 2024/5-the need for early action in preventing new rough sleepers, targeting long term rough sleepers as well as working with those who are returning to rough sleepers.

The procurement of the Rough Sleeping provider contracts offers the chance for the Council to revise the service it requires so that it more comprehensively covers all the issues faced from the need to provide everyday support to resolving issues of those who do not engage with the service or persist in causing anti-social behaviour.

OUR CHALLENGE With the likelihood that the increases in rough sleeping will continue, the Council will aim to deliver the Governments objectives, re-procure a responsive outreach service and tackle those who cause anti-social behaviour.

Supply of Social and Affordable Housing

Croydon has the highest number of households in London with nearly 153,000 homes according to the 2021 Census. 56% of homes are owned or pay a mortgage, 26% rent on the Private Rented Sector and only 18% pay a social housing rent.

With up to 7,000 residents awaiting rehousing on the Housing register, the recent Strategic Housing Assessment (SHMA) has identified the need for over 1,200

additional 'low cost' rental homes per annum above current supply between now and 2040. It recommends the following mix of dwellings to meet future need within this category.

Bedroom size	%
1	15%
2	30%
3	35%
4	20%

With a projected 58% increase in the over 65 population between 2023 and 2040, it is anticipated that in addition to the need for genuinely affordable accommodation 3,800 sheltered and extra-care accommodation will be needed.

The identified need to maintain and increase the current supply of housing is also paramount by achieving a quicker turnaround of empty properties, tackling unauthorised occupation, encouraging under occupiers to move to smaller homes and supporting tenancy sustainment.

OUR CHALLENGE To set out how the Council will manage its stock and work in partnership to deliver new homes

Private Sector

Private Sector Landlords provide a significant contribution to housing within Croydon. Even with recently readjusted Housing Allowance rates much of this accommodation is not affordable to many although nearly 1,000 houses are in Multiple Occupation. Increases in Mortgage costs for those who buy to let, tax changes and a perception of increased governance (such as the Renter's Bill) have all contributed to a minimum of 10% of Landlords withdrawing from the Market over the last year with projections that this will continue. This and increased competition from Inner London Boroughs seeking to procure Croydon properties will continue to affect the supply of housing from this sector.

In addition, following recent stock condition surveys, nearly 24% of private sector properties have been identified as having at least one serious 'Category A hazard'. This strongly suggests that we have a significant number of poor Landlords, and the Council will need to consider using its powers, including landlord licensing to act upon this to maintain standards and prevent further homelessness occurring

OUR CHALLENGE. Support and maintain landlords who provide good housing whilst using our powers to tackle poor practice.

Health and Well-Being.

Considerable numbers of those rough sleeping or households requiring homelessness assistance experience health or social care challenges such as mental or physical ill-health, social care issues, learning difficulties and harmful

drugs or substance use. With over 40% of Croydon residents classified as being within the CORE 20 (20% of most deprived communities) health inequality statistics show that up to one sixth of people in this category (many of whom face homelessness or are placed in interim accommodation) are living with a mental health condition and up to 10% have long term depression. Growing numbers of people are presenting with drug, or alcohol problems with surveys carried out in Croydon in 2020 showing that 80% of the known 5,300 dependent opiates and drugs and alcohol abusers have received no treatment. In addition, analysis shows that disproportionately high numbers of applications are from younger residents.

The Council recognises the need to liaise closely with adult social services and statutory health authorities to respond to these increasing challenges

Additionally, University College of London research carried out in 2021 also pointed to the damaging impact that living in temporary accommodation has to children particularly those under 5 with many vulnerable to childhood illnesses and missing key milestones.

Finally, threefold increases in domestic violence incidents as recorded by the Family Justice Centre since 2017 have placed further strain on homelessness services.

OUR CHALLENGE Working in liaison with other providers, the Council needs to adopt a tailored approach that tackles the issues that cause homelessness
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Partnership work

The preventative approach to homelessness requires a reactive and holistic response and agile joint working is necessary both within the Council and through partnership working – including the Voluntary Sector - to achieve the best outcomes. The evidence of the review is that much of this partnership work needs to be re-developed following a reduction in co-working and that there is a need to facilitate new ways of working. The recent development of the Joint Protocol with Children’s Services defines how such an approach can work in the Council and this approach is now being extended to Adult Services. The linking up with Voluntary Sector providers will involve discussions with our partners to establish their preferred way of working and determine how the Council will fully re-engage in the delivery of the services.

OUR CHALLENGE The Council cannot resolve every issue on its own and will reinstate and prioritise partnership work in the borough.

Data collection

The review has confirmed areas of weakness in the collection of information regarding our homelessness service particularly with regards to issues of vulnerability. As well as putting the Council’s credibility at risk, providing inaccurate information about our services increases the risk of losing vital funding that would be used to provide prevention and relief services to our residents.

5 Our consultation with Residents and Key Partners

As a part of the Council's legal obligation to produce a Homelessness Strategy, we have carried out a consultation to ensure that the findings of our review are consistent with the views of residents and key partners. We have considered returns from over 188 people who responded to our homelessness survey of whom 20% had an experience of homelessness as well as over 160 comments received about the subject during the Housing Strategy.

Survey response.

Residents were asked to agree or disagree the main themes outlined below and to comment if they wished.

Theme	Agree %	Dis-Agree %	Comments
Preventing homelessness	94	2	<i>'Current system too complex and confusing'</i> <i>'Service Unresponsive/Not accessible'</i> <i>'Gap in dealing residents with complex needs.'</i> <i>'Acting as a 'gatekeeper'</i>
Reduce reliance on the use of temporary accommodation.	94	3	<i>'Build hostels or complexes of temporary accommodation'.</i> <i>'Homeless not part of the community/Impact on Mental health.'</i>
Provide services to rough sleepers	79	15	<i>'Nobody should prefer to be on the street.'</i> <i>'Review support offer after refusal of service.'</i>
Manage our stock effectively and providing new and affordable social homes.	87	9	<i>'More social as opposed to affordable housing.'</i> <i>'Poor maintenance of existing affordable homes'</i>
Increase partnership working	87	11	<i>'Multi-agency approach needed.'</i> <i>'Invest more in mental health.'</i>

* Remainder Neither

Comments from those who had experienced homelessness include the following:

‘When you are homeless, there are normally a range of other psychological issues you are facing. Mental Health, Other Psychotic Issues, Alcohol dependency. Drug Dependency, Personality disorders. someone should be there to support/ help you’.

‘Council support was not as helpful as needed. Offered rehousing in entirely different area of England at critical points of childhood. House was not fit for purpose. Temporary stay accommodation in terrible condition which worsened the experience for children.’

‘I didn't feel supported, staff were very abrupt. Not what you need when you're in a vulnerable position. Passed from team to team with not much information. Told one thing by one team and a different thing by the next team. No support with finding private renting as the eligibility criteria is hard. ‘

Charities should not be the first point of contact and help. Homelessness and vulnerable people (within reason and understandably different if there are drink/drug issues) should be able to approach the Council 24/7 and receive help when it is truly needed.’

Meetings with Partners

The following meetings also took place;

- Croydon Communities Consortium –Online meeting with 26 residents in attendance
- Private Landlords forum- 2 public events with 60 people in attendance
- Direct meetings with voluntary organisations including Family Justice Centre, Evolve Housing Association, St Mungo’s Housing Association, Crisis Skylight, Nightwatch and South London and Maudsley Trust.
- Council departmental meetings with Adult and Childrens Services

Summary of feedback from Voluntary Sector Partners

Health	Engagement	Single Homeless
<i>Difficulty in contacting homelessness services for cases in need.</i>	<i>Need to re-instate partners and Single Homeless Forum</i>	<i>Need to re-instate Single Homeless Forum</i>
<i>Need for the Council to engage with partners.</i>	<i>Council not adhering to commitments</i>	<i>Difficulty in getting referrals to the Council.</i>
<i>Housing not involved in strategic partnerships.</i>	<i>Give consideration of co-location/working of Council staff to ensure a more co-ordinated response.</i>	<i>Not sufficiently linked in with Council contacts in terms of referring cases or for SWEP cases</i>

<i>Need for preventative approach to homeless to curtail expensive hospital stays –costing 1.2m a year</i>	<i>Need for regular liaison- No Joint working with Council</i>	<i>Difficulty in contacting homelessness services for cases in need.</i>
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As a part of this consultation,3 briefings were also held with Councillors.

Summary

This strategy accepts the feedback it has had from those contributing to the review that it needs to reinstate the facilitating and co-ordinating role it should be taking in preventing homelessness and work effectively with its partner agencies.

Many representations from residents and partners were received with regards to a lack of customer care and responsiveness in the Housing Needs & Homelessness service. Given the commitment to Service Excellence in the Executive Mayor’s Business Plan and the Housing Strategy, a specific action with regards to embedding these principles will be contained in the final agreed objectives.

OUR KEY PRIORITIES

PRIORITY ONE
<i>Listen to our residents and provide good and responsive services</i>
<i>We will extend the principles of the Residents Charter into the Housing Needs & Homelessness service.</i>
<p><i>This includes...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develop and agree customer standards for service users. ◆ Complete and embed the Housing Needs Service structure including appointment to key posts. ◆ Develop and deliver a comprehensive training programme to cover customer service, legal, technical, personal effectiveness, interpersonal and systems. ◆ Review the quality and consistency of the advice offer-improve access to information and services for those threatened with homelessness in Croydon.

- ◆ Develop and implement key performance indicators and a performance management culture.
- ◆ Ensure those in temporary accommodation are regularly updated with regards to their housing situation.

Why is this important?

- ◆ *Our feedback during this consultation has been that the service is unresponsive to customers.*
- ◆ *We need to set clear standards with regards to the services residents can expect to receive.*
- ◆ *We will ensure that we embed a service culture in our re-organised service.*

PRIORITY TWO.

Act at the earliest possible stage to prevent homelessness from occurring.

Data provided to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities shows that Croydon Council currently do not prevent homelessness from occurring enough compared to many other London Boroughs resulting in proportionately more residents being accommodated.

This includes...

- ◆ Consider how the advice offer in relation to the top three causes of homelessness (Private Sector evictions, Family and Friend evictions, Domestic abuse) can be strengthened and to enable greater resilience against homelessness. To include rights and signposting available help.
- ◆ Deliver Joint Housing/Social Care protocol for Care Leavers and review the local transitions offer.
- ◆ Review pathways and consider specialist support for homeless people with dual diagnosis of substance misuse and poor mental health.
- ◆ Develop protocol with hospital and review referral arrangements between Housing and South London and Maudsley Hospital Trust.
- ◆ Review the online customer form to improve accessibility.

- ◆ Review pathways and consider specialist support for homeless people with dual diagnosis of substance misuse and poor mental health.

Why is this important?

- ◆ *Even in circumstances where homelessness is rising, Croydon is accepting proportionally more applicants into temporary accommodation than other Boroughs.*
- ◆ *Effective advice needs to be available in community buildings for residents facing homelessness.*
- ◆ *We need to act as early as possible to prevent homelessness occurring.*

PRIORITY THREE

Reduce the reliance on the use of temporary accommodation

Homelessness is on the rise across London with some Councils experiencing 15% increases in those needing accommodation. The cost of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast is high, and residents are often housed here for extended periods of time. We will use every endeavour to reduce the numbers of those housed in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast to ensure residents are provided with stable homes.

This includes...

- ◆ Challenge the acquisition of accommodation in Croydon used as temporary or settled accommodation by other boroughs.
- ◆ Develop clear standards and expectations in terms of move on from supported accommodation.
- ◆ Develop and agree a Temporary Accommodation Placements Policy which sets out the Council's approach in placing homeless households in various locations
- ◆ Deliver the benefits of the dynamic purchasing system for procuring nightly paid temporary housing
- ◆ Complete review of supported housing accommodation as part of the re-commissioning process.

Why is this important?

- ◆ *In a climate of rising homelessness, we need to obtain the best possible value for money when procuring temporary accommodation.*
- ◆ *We need to work with other Councils to prevent the procurement of temporary accommodation by other London Boroughs*
- ◆ *We need to be clear to applicants as to where they are likely to be situated when agreed for temporary housing*

PRIORITY FOUR

Reduce the numbers of people who are Rough Sleeping in Croydon.

Approximately 15% of the rough sleepers assessed in the borough remain living on the streets after intervention, and it is key that we continue to provide them with support services. We will also work with partners such as Safer Streets to deter the minority of rough sleepers who cause anti-social behaviour.

This will include

- ◆ Produce annual 'Ending Rough Sleeping Plan' targeting:
 - New Rough Sleepers
 - Long standing Rough Sleepers
 - Returners to rough sleeping.
- ◆ Maintain performance on 'No second night out' – currently at 80%
- ◆ Re-tender service contracts funded through the Rough Sleeping Initiative Grant
- ◆ Work with Safer Street Partnership in reducing anti-social behaviour among some Rough Sleepers
- ◆ Agree protocols for how and when enforcement action regarding rough sleeping may be used
- ◆ Develop joint funding bids and initiatives to improve services to people sleeping rough

Why is this important?

- ◆ *Croydon has the highest number of rough sleepers amongst outer London Boroughs.*
- ◆ *We are committed to tackling the rise in rough sleeping within the timescale of the strategy.*
- ◆ *We need to deter the minority of rough sleepers who are causing anti-social behaviour.*

PRIORITY FIVE

Managing stock and facilitating affordable, private rented and social housing.

We need to manage our own stock effectively to ensure properties are re-let swiftly as well as intervene to maintain tenancies in the social and private sectors. In addition, we will work with our housing association partners to increase the supply of new affordable and social housing in the borough.

This will include

- ◆ *Achieve London Mayoral targets 2019 to 2028 - 2,079 per year /20,790 over 10 years and maximise affordable homes.*
- ◆ *We will develop a Regeneration & New Homes Policy which will set the strategic vision for borough-wide regeneration.*
- ◆ *Review and agree a revised Housing Allocations Scheme*
- ◆ *Carry out annual tenancy audits of Social and Temporary Housing and increase recovery action against fraud – 10% of council and 100% of temporary tenancies.*
- ◆ *Complete the regeneration of Regina Road.*
- ◆ *Drive up property and management standards in the private rented sector*

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.*

- ◆ *We will work to ensure that the Borough's housing stock of all tenure is safe, fit-for-purpose and managed effectively.*
- ◆ *The younger age profile of our population means that we need a long-term strategy for delivering more homes.*

PRIORITY SIX

Re-instate partnerships with the Voluntary and Statutory Sector and deliver a more integrated approach to reducing homelessness.

We need to work more effectively with partners to assist vulnerable residents so as to prevent homelessness.

This will include...

- ◆ Restore Borough wide liaison/communication with the Voluntary Sector.
- ◆ Increase joint working between partners including co- location between Council and Voluntary Sector staff.
- ◆ To develop the Housing Association Group liaison group
- ◆ Establishing a Private Renters' Forum and development of a Charter for Private Renters.
- ◆ Compile and keep up to date information regarding the organisations and services relating to homelessness in Croydon, including contact details and referral routes

Why is this important?

- ◆ *Feedback from the voluntary sector, residents and staff is that the Council has disengaged from its co-ordinating role in tackling homelessness.*
- ◆ *In a time of reducing resources, we need to maximise the potential of a partnership approach.*
- ◆ *We need to improve upon the responsiveness of our services to residents and our Voluntary Sector partners.*

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY DELIVERY PLAN 2024-2029

KEY THEMES

<i>PRIORITY 1</i>	LISTEN TO OUR RESIDENTS AND PROVIDE GOOD AND RESPONSIVE SERVICES
<i>PRIORITY 2</i>	ACT AT THE EARLIEST STAGE TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS FROM OCCURRING
<i>PRIORITY 3</i>	REDUCE THE RELIANCE ON THE USE OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION
<i>PRIORITY 4</i>	REDUCE THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE ROUGH SLEEPING IN CROYDON
<i>PRIORITY 5</i>	MANAGE STOCK AND FACILITATE AFFORDABLE, PRIVATE RENTED AND SOCIAL HOUSING
<i>PRIORITY 6</i>	REINSTATE PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE VOLUNTARY AND STATUTORY SECTOR AND DELIVER A MORE INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TACKLING HOMELESSNESS

Action	Detail	Lead(s)	Timeframe	Comments /Status	RAG
PRIORITY 1: LISTEN TO OUR RESIDENTS AND PROVIDE GOOD AND RESPONSIVE SERVICES					
1.1 Housing Need Service Structure	Complete and embed the Housing Needs Service structure including appointment to key posts	Director of Homelessness prevention & Accommodation	Dec 2024		
1.2 Service standards	Develop and agree customer standards for service users	Housing Solutions Transformation Lead	Mar 2026		
	Ensure people living in temporary accommodation are regularly updated with regards to their housing situation	Head of Temporary Accommodation & Support	Mar 2026		
	Review the quality and consistency of the advice offer – improve access to information and services for those threatened with homelessness in Croydon	Heads of Service – Housing Needs	Sept 2026		
	Provide service information to Community hubs and key partners	Head of Communications	Dec 2026		
1.3 Data quality and performance management	Complete data cleansing and submit timely and accurate homelessness, rough sleeping & temporary accommodation government returns	Heads of Service – Housing Needs	Sept 2024		

	Full adoption and use of the NEC I.T system to ensure accurate data and performance reporting	Director of Homelessness prevention & Accommodation	Sept 2024		
	Develop and implement key performance indicators and a performance management culture	Director of Homelessness prevention & Accommodation	Sept 2024		
	Provide benchmark information to assess effectiveness of service delivery	Heads of Service – Housing Needs	Mar 2026		
1.4 Staff training	Develop and deliver a comprehensive training programme to cover customer service, legal, technical, personal effectiveness, interpersonal and systems.	Housing Solutions Transformation Lead	Mar 2025		
1.5 Ensure equitable service provision	Carry out regular equality impact assessment to identify areas of service improvement	Change Manager	Mar 2026		
1.6 Extend the principles of the Residents Charter to all service users irrespective of tenure	Develop a pilot engagement forum with residents in temporary accommodation (Concord and Windsor Hostel and Gilroy Court)	Head of Service – Temporary Accommodation & Support	Dec 2024		
	Extend and implement an engagement forum to all residents living in other forms of temporary accommodation	Change Manager	June 2026		
PRIORITY 2: ACT AT THE EARLIEST STAGE TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS FROM OCCURRING					

2.1 Streamline internal processes to resolve potential homelessness as early as possible	Review the online customer form to improve accessibility Expedite allocation and action of cases	Homeless Intervention & Prevention Manager	Sept 2024		
2.2. Move prevention upstream	Explore the use of data analytics to understand which cohorts of people are most at risk of homelessness including sofa surfing and potential street homelessness	Housing Solutions Transformation Lead	Mar 2025		
2.3 Develop plans for focused activity to address three most prevalent causes of homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sector evictions • Family and friend evictions • Domestic abuse 	Consider how the advice offer in relation to the top three causes of homelessness can be strengthened and to enable greater resilience against homelessness. To include rights and signposting available help.	Head of Homelessness & Allocations	Dec 2025		
	Fully utilise new case level data to understand patterns of homelessness and potential for interventions in relation to these three groups.	Head of Homelessness & Allocations	Dec 2025		
2.4 Review and enhance working arrangements concerned with preventing homelessness	Deliver Joint Housing/Social Care protocol for Care Leavers and review the local transitions offer	Head of Homelessness & Allocations	Dec 2024		
	Review implementation of the 16-17 year old protocol to ensure	Head of Homelessness & Allocations	Mar 2025		

amongst vulnerable groups	they receive a joint assessment with Children Services				
	Review referral arrangements between Housing and Family Justice Centre	Head of Homelessness & Allocations	Mar 2025		
	Develop protocol with hospital and review referral arrangements between Housing and South London and Maudsley Hospital Trust.	Head of Homelessness & Allocations	Apr 2025		
	Review pathways and consider specialist support for homeless people with dual diagnosis of substance misuse and poor mental health	Head of Homelessness & Allocations	Dec 2025		
PRIORITY 3: REDUCE THE RELIANCE ON THE USE OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION					
3.1 Good quality temporary accommodation	Deliver the benefits of the dynamic purchasing system for procuring nightly paid temporary housing	Head of Temporary Accommodation & Support	Dec 2025		
3.2 Temporary Accommodation Placements Policy	Develop and agree a Temporary Accommodation Placements Policy which sets out the Council's approach in placing homeless households in various locations	Change Manager and Head of Temporary Accommodation & Support	Mar 2026		
3.3 Ensure supported housing provides a basis for an individual to recover from	Complete review of supported housing accommodation as part of the re-commissioning process.	Housing Solutions Transformation Lead	Dec 2025		

homelessness, with the pathways to move into independent accommodation where appropriate					
	Develop clear standards and expectations in terms of move on from supported accommodation.	Homeless Support Manager & Housing Benefit Manager	Apr 2026		
3.4 Use influence as far as possible to reduce competition for private rented housing from other organisations	Challenge the acquisition of accommodation in Croydon used as temporary or settled accommodation by other boroughs.	Head of Temporary Accommodation & Support	Ongoing		
PRIORITY 4: REDUCE THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE ROUGH SLEEPING IN CROYDON.					
4.1 Provide support to assist rough sleepers	Regular meetings with the organisations delivering contracts/services funded through Rough Sleeping Initiative Grant to improve performance.	Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator	Quarterly		
	Re-tender service contracts funded through Rough Sleeping Initiative Grant	Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator	April 2025		
	Maintain performance on 'No second night out' – currently at 80%	Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator	Ongoing		

	Produce annual 'Ending Rough Sleeping Plan' from 24/25 targeting DLUHC priorities a) New Rough Sleepers b) Long standing Rough Sleepers c) Returners to rough sleeping.	Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator	Ongoing 2024/5 due 30/4/24		
	Identify and provide warm space of emergency shelter provision during cold weather	Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator	Oct 2024		
	Carry out annual rough sleeping count	Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator	Annually		
4.2 Assist rough sleepers or those at risk of sleeping rough to access the private rental market	Develop more comprehensive move-on routes for rough sleepers into longer term accommodation – making full use of private rented accommodation	Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator	Mar 2026		
4.3 Develop strategies to prevent a cycle of homelessness amongst the 15% of Rough Sleepers who refuse accommodation	Explore options to provide mental health support to rough sleepers	Public Health & Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator	Mar 2025		
	Work with Safer Street Partnership in reducing anti-social behaviour among some rough sleepers	Community Safety & Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator	Ongoing		
	Agree protocols for how and when enforcement action regarding rough sleeping may be used	Community Safety & Homeless Support Manager	Dec 2025		

4.4 Enhance subregional partnership services	Develop joint funding bids and initiatives to improve services to people sleeping rough.	Homeless Support Manager	Ongoing		
PRIORITY 5: MANAGE STOCK AND FACILITATE AFFORDABLE, PRIVATE RENTED AND SOCIAL HOUSING					
5.1 Supplying new homes	Achieve London Mayoral targets 2019 to 2028 - 2,079 per year /20,790 over 10 years	Planning	2019		
	Maximise affordable homes above 16%- 22/23 figures.	Housing /Planning	2019		
5.2 Supply new affordable and social housing for Croydon residents	Regeneration of Regina Road.	Housing Regeneration Lead	First completions in March 2027		
	Develop a Regeneration and New Homes Policy	Housing Regeneration Lead	Mar 2025		
	Prepare a New Build programme post Regina Road.	Housing Regeneration Lead	Oct 2026		
	RTB buyback scheme	Housing Regeneration Lead	To be agreed		
	Review/Option Appraisal of Sheltered Accommodation	Change Manager and Housing Regeneration Lead	October 2025		
5.3 Make best use of existing social rented housing	Review and agree a revised Housing Allocations Scheme	Change Manager and Head of Homelessness & Allocations	December 2026		

	Carry out tenancy audits of Social and Temporary Housing and increase recovery action against fraud – 10% of council and 100% of temporary tenancies	Head of Tenancy Management & Head of Temporary Accommodation & Support	Annually		
	Promote incentives to encourage the release of under-occupied social housing stock	Housing Register & Allocations Manager	April 2025		
	Continue to reduce the number of vacant properties in Council Housing Stock	Director of Housing	Ongoing		
5.4 Drive up property and management standards in the private rented sector	Use landlord forum and other communications to promote good practice	Private Sector Housing Manager	3 times a year		
	Carry out stock inspection of 1,000 PSL properties	Private Sector Housing Manager	Sept 2024		
	Consider options for selective licensing of PSL	Private Sector Housing Manager	To be agreed		
	Provide advice to private rented sector residents in unsafe accommodation	Private Sector Housing Manager	Ongoing		
PRIORITY 6: REINSTATE PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE VOLUNTARY AND STATUTORY SECTOR AND DELIVER A MORE INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TACKLING HOMELESSNESS.					

6.1 Statutory and voluntary partnership	Restore borough wide liaison/communication with the Voluntary Sector	Housing Solutions Transformation Lead	To be agreed with Partners Oct/Dec 2024		
	Increase joint working between partners including consideration of co- location between Council and Voluntary Sector staff	Housing Solutions Transformation Lead	To be agreed with Partners - 2025/26		
6.2 Produce and update partnership resources	Compile and keep up to date information regarding the organisations and services relating to homelessness in Croydon, including contact details and referral routes	Homelessness Forum Group	July 2025		
6.3 Partnership with Housing Association	Set up a Housing Association Group liaison group	Change Manager and Housing Regeneration Lead	April 2024		
6.4 Private Sector	Establish a Private Renters' Forum and development of a Charter for Private Renters.	Head of Private Sector Team	April 2025		

Homelessness Review 2018/23

Summary of findings

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2

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Executive Summary - Key themes identified in the review.

Develop a more efficient and responsive approach to homelessness in Croydon.

Ensuring that an approach is adopted that seeks to assist those facing homelessness at the earliest opportunity is a priority for the Council. Our benchmarking suggests that Croydon has a proportionately higher level of those who have been assessed as being owed a relief duty than other London Boroughs who are preventing homelessness by earlier intervention. The re-organisation of our Housing Needs Service will enable us to better tailor our responses to the needs of residents as well as achieve an intervention within the 56 days recommended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2016.

Reduce the reliance on temporary accommodation.

Although the Council faces a difficult local and national operating environment in terms of finding/procuring properties for homeless applicants, it does recognise that the use of temporary and bed and breakfast accommodation can be a negative experience and affect the well-being of many applicants especially those with families. It is also an expensive service for the Council and in an environment where Councils are struggling to provide locally based housing for residents is likely to remain a challenge for the Croydon.

Maximising the supply of affordable housing

Over the past five years, the demand for affordable housing provision has risen significantly in the London area. Councils have struggled to provide enough new housing both directly and through Registered Social providers and this is particularly the case in Croydon because of its unfavourable financial situation. Extending housing supply by supporting house building initiatives through partnership work with registered social providers as well as developing links with landlords to procure locally available private sector accommodation will continue to be a priority for the Council.

At the same time, work in managing the supply of housing will continue in the ways set out in Chapter 4 and may involve using our statutory powers to improve housing conditions in the Private Sector.

Continue our rough sleeping initiatives.

According to statistics collected by CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network) through the London Mayor, Croydon work with the highest number of rough sleepers of all outer London Boroughs.

Despite a recent rise in street homelessness, Croydon's work in combating rough sleeping has proved effective in comparison with other South-West London Boroughs as shown by the performance in avoiding no "second night out." Yet it is recognised that nuisance from Rough Sleepers is endemic and on occasions more

effective enforcement action may be needed against those who cause anti-social behaviour.

The service provided by Croydon Reach is subject to a retendering process in 2023/24 and the task will be to continue improving the level of performance in terms of “No Second Night out” in the face of London –wide increases in rough sleeping. Additionally, successfully tackling concerns that are expressed by Residents about the consistent presence of anti-social behaviour amongst a minority of this cohort group will be a priority for the Council.

Restoring local Partnership work

A consultation with residents and key stakeholders will take place to inform the homelessness strategy. This presents an opportunity to begin building more effective partnerships with voluntary and statutory agencies.

This is not only effective in enhancing our day- to-day delivery of services but in developing a strategic approach to homelessness and rough sleeping and housing supply in which shared objectives are agreed amongst partners.

Tailored Services for our residents

National statistics show that many of those facing homelessness are faced with episodes of poor mental health, drug, or alcohol problems as well as domestic violence. In addition, analysis shows that disproportionately high numbers of applications are from younger residents.

To reduce the pressure on temporary accommodation, targeted preventative work needs to be further extended in liaison with our Voluntary and Statutory partners.

Conversely, census information highlights the rise in the number of elderly people signalling a likely rise in demand for supported housing and care.

Accurate data collection

The review has confirmed areas of weakness in the collection of information regarding our homelessness service particularly with regards to issues of vulnerability. As well as putting the Council’s credibility at risk, providing inaccurate information about our services increases the risk of losing vital funding that would be used to provide prevention and relief services to our residents.

Purpose of this document

1.1 The purpose of this review is to shape Croydon's 2024-29 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy by examining:

- Current and future trends of homelessness and rough sleeping in Croydon using statistics collected by our housing needs services.
- Identifying any gaps or learning from the way we have provided services since our last review in 2018.
- Examine how our performance in homelessness and rough sleeping benchmarks against London Boroughs.

A summary of the review will be presented in the Strategy and a full version included as an appendix.

1.2 Based on the research, the Review will reach preliminary findings with a view to informing the completed strategy. We will then ask stakeholders for their comments and views on homelessness and rough sleeping in Croydon and whether the initial conclusions set out in the review are the right priorities for the next five years. This will involve the results of a consultation exercise which included a user survey, meetings with residents, voluntary groups, and statutory agencies.

A short Consultation report will then be produced summarising the views that have been expressed and any recommendations made.

1.3 Following this, the Final Strategy will be produced and agreed by Cabinet in April 2024.

1.4 Contact details for feedback/comments

If you are interested in contributing to this review, feedback can be provided in writing, by telephone or via the surveys and forms on our web site.

1.5 To provide feedback or comments please write to: Simon James, Change Manager, Transformation Programme, Croydon Council, Bernard Weatherill House, 8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA, or email simon.james@croydon.gov.uk

2 Background

2.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities are required to publish a homelessness strategy every five years to set out how it plans to deliver Homelessness and Sleeping services. This should contain an assessment of the extent of homelessness in the area and a consultation with public and local authorities, voluntary organisations as well as residents. Following this, a finalised Strategy will need to be agreed by Council Cabinet.

- 2.2 The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 represented the most significant change in Homelessness legislation for a generation. Most importantly, it included requirements for Local Authorities to assess all eligible applicants and take steps to prevent and relieve homelessness. It also extended the period that a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days giving an emphasis to preventing homelessness at the earliest stage rather than waiting for an applicant having an immediate relief need. The need to fully respond to the requirements of this act is central to this Review.
- 2.3 In the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2018, the Government set out its strategy for eliminating rough sleeping by 2027 and halving it by the end of the Parliament (then thought to be 2021/22). In 2022, the strategy was refreshed with the Government committing to further investment that included £24.6 of the £37m commitment to tackling rough sleeping. Croydon's funding of £4.1m between 2022 and 2025 is critical to the delivery of the Council's programme to prevent rough sleeping.
- 2.4 The Mayors Business Plan sets the overall direction of the Council, and the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy will link into its core objectives.

Outcome 4, Priority 3 of the Mayor's Plan

Prevent homelessness by providing advice, guidance, and appropriate support.

Review procurement of temporary accommodation for homeless people to obtain Value for Money.

- 2.5 The outcomes of the previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2022 were also considered. This set the following targets.
- Build 2,000 homes for Croydon residents.
 - Extend the Landlord Licensing Scheme after the first 5 years.
 - Buy 250 homes for families in need to be let at truly affordable rents.
 - Develop a strategic partnership with Crisis to develop our 10-year strategy to end homelessness.
 - Continue with our Housing First approach to get our most vulnerable rough sleepers off the streets.
 - Build on our Social Lettings Agency pilot in order to both encourage good landlords and to sustain tenancies.

During this period, the Council's financial position and the confinement of the Covid period meant that these objectives were not delivered and from May 2022 the Executive Mayor undertook to carry out a review of this service and produce a revised strategy with a greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness as required by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

3 Demographic Context

Croydon is London’s most populated Borough, with approximately 390,800 residents (Census 2021). With a projected growth from 2022-2041 of 7.9% (GLA 2020 based housing led projections) Croydon’s age profile is therefore expected to become younger.

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of Croydon’s residents according to age.

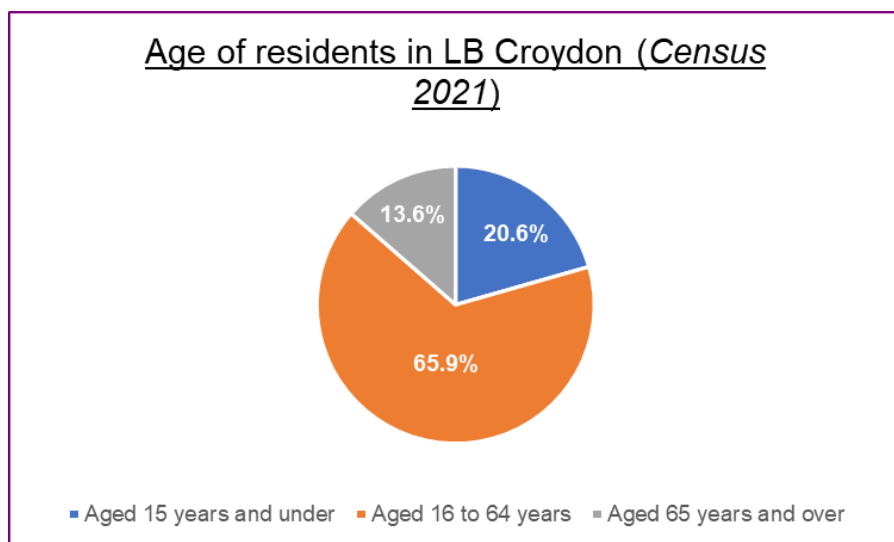


Figure 1

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 and the second highest 65+ year olds in London. Since 2011, Croydon has also

seen an ageing population, with a 19.6% growth in 65+ year olds (Census 2021)

Ethnicity

Government statistics in terms of the racial profile of those who were owed a Prevention or relief duty in the final quarter of 2022 showed the following.

%	London	Croydon	Rest of England
White	31%	26%	75%
Black	29%	45%	6%
Asian	12%	12%	5%

This demonstrates a disproportionate over representation of the Black community in terms of homelessness applications which are well above the London average.

Disability

In terms of disability in Croydon the 2021 census showed the following.

- That in Croydon 15.8% of residents were classified as disabled under the Equalities Act against a London average of 13.3%.
- When those with long term physical or mental health needs are added, this amounts to 19.6% of Croydon’s as compared with 18.5% of London’s population.

Elderly

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 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.

Deprivation

In terms of the deprivation index, Croydon is the 18th poorest out of 33 London boroughs (DCLG and Ordnance Survey (Crown Copyright)). and Croydon is 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, and New Addington South.

4 Housing Supply

4.1 Context

Falling supply

Croydon has the highest number of households in London, 152,900 (Census 2021). The ONS Census 2-21 data shows that the number of households in Croydon has increased by 5.4% in the last 10 years (145,010 to 152,900) with Council tax data suggesting this number is probably in excess of 160,000. Increases in overall stock are accounted for by growth in the private sector which has raised the amount of availability in the to let sector. Of the 152,900 households in Croydon, approximately, 9.7% rent their homes from Croydon Council with similar stock numbers held by Housing Associations and its proportion against all households has stayed the same (17.9%) over the last 10 years and is mainly concentrated in the northern parts and eastern edge of the borough. 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 and place properties for advertising for rehousing and would then pay fees for this service.

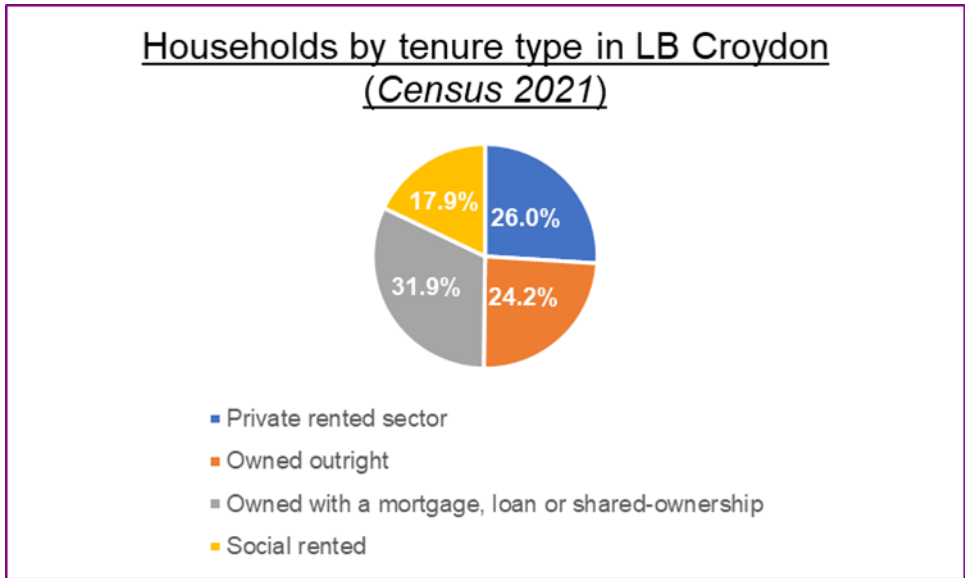


Figure 5

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+ persons.

With up to 7,000 residents awaiting rehousing on the Housing register, the recent Strategic Housing Assessment 2023 (SHMA) has identified the need for over 1,200 additional ‘low cost’ rental homes per annum above current supply between now and 2040. It recommends the following mix of dwellings to meet future need within this category.

Bedroom size	%
1	15%
2	30%
3	35%
4	20%

In addition, with a projected 58% increase in the over 65 population, it is anticipated that up to the need for genuinely affordable accommodation 3,800 sheltered and extra-care accommodation will be needed between now and 2040.

Rising Need.

There are nearly 7,000 households on Croydon Council’s Housing Register which represents an increase of 5.9% since January 2022.

The average wait time for a Croydon Council property between 2016 and 2021 was five years and 11 months. Most households on the housing register are waiting for one-bedroom and two-bedroom properties.

Maximising the supply

The Council's financial position 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.

This is shown in the commitment to the regeneration of Regina Road underlying the long-term determination of the Council to improve the conditions our social housing residents are living in. Consequently, the Council will produce a Regeneration and New Homes Policy which sets out the ambition to improve existing stock as well as deliver the new homes that we need.

Managing the existing supply

Ensuring the effective supply of existing housing stock is a priority for the Housing Service. Effective policies for recovering and reservicing empty properties combined with policies that sustain tenancies are essential for maintaining supply and minimising evictions. Additionally, 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.

Private Sector housing

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

Nationally, the role of private rental as a provider of housing has doubled since 2004 and in Croydon now account for 26% of Croydon households. Studies have shown however that increases in mortgage costs for those who buy to let, tax changes and a perception of increased governance (such as the Renter's bill) have all contributed to a minimum of 10% of Landlords withdrawing from the Market across London over the last year with projections that this will continue.

However, the Private rented sector is unaffordable to many Croydon residents 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 cheaper temporary accommodation in the area.

In September 2019, Croydon Council commissioned a stock condition survey of the 54,000 private rental properties and data collected estimated that nearly a quarter of properties in the private sector had at least one serious hazard. Moreover, the report suggests that the private rented sector also faces issues with anti-social behaviour; between 2015 and 2019, 15,746 investigations have been conducted regarding nuisance in private rented sector properties.

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. In the Housing Strategy 2023-28, the Council set out its intention to tackle the behaviour of irresponsible Private Landlords and the problems of poor housing conditions, high levels of deprivations, crime and anti-social behaviour that is sometimes associated with this form of tenure. This stated that if necessary, the Council will use the powers it has to improve the Borough's Private Rental Stock including consulting upon the introduction of a discretionary (including selective and additional houses in multiple occupation) licensing scheme(s).

Keeping people in their homes.

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

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2023 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.

Making new housing available

Between 2019 and 2023, 524 units across 13 developments were provided through the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund with rents set at London Affordable levels since 2021.

Most of these units were flats (215) and there were also 36 Maisonettes and 25 Houses. 204 of these properties were occupied from 2021/22.

Additionally, six other acquisitions were made as set out below

PROP SIZE	NUMBER OF UNITS – HRA/GENERAL FUND	OTHER GENERAL FUND/HRA ACQUISITIONS
1 bed	116	
2 beds	238	3
3 beds	162	2
4/5 bed	8	1 x 7 bed.

The Council also accepts the need to maintain the supply of existing stock through amongst other things, effective work in sustaining tenancies in the Private Sector.

Future Projections

- *On average, available council accommodation annually is around 400 dwellings a year - 50% one bed, 35% two bed and the remainder three or four bedroom.*
- *In the short term, an estimated 125 properties will be needed to decant Regina Road over the next 2 years.*
- *Between now and then supply of Croydon Council properties for homeless applicants is likely to fall by 15% over the next two years.*
- *Projected housing association voids per year are around 280 to 350 the majority being one or two beds.*
- *Increased demand for adapted and supported accommodation for elderly and disabled residents.*

Therefore, like many London Boroughs the provision of new housing is unlikely to keep up with demand over the period of the next Housing Strategy

PRIORITY ONE OBJECTIVES

Increasing Housing Supply.

1) Where possible promoting the increase of available housing

- Deliver the Regina Road programme by 2027 and maximise the opportunities offered by the disposal of land
- Explore future opportunities for housing in Croydon
- Work with Housing Associations to facilitate opportunities for development.
- Work to keep people in their Private Sector homes by improving conditions using selective or multiple licensing if necessary.

2) Managing the supply of properties.

- Sustaining tenancies by earlier intervention in preventing evictions in the social housing sector caused by rent arrears and anti-social behaviour.
- Ensuring effective reservicing of void properties in all tenures including Council and Housing Association properties.
- Enhancing nomination agreements with locally registered housing partners to ensure available stock is targeted towards those in temporary housing.
- More effective preventative work to limit the ending of tenancies by Private Sector Landlords as well as consideration of Landlord Licencing schemes.

5 Preventing Homelessness

The introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act placed emphasis on the avoidance of homelessness by extending the prevention duty to 56 days to encompass all those applying. Setting up a structure to deliver the objectives of the Act is a priority for the Council.

The table below compares the numbers being accepted for a relief duty in Croydon against other in London Boroughs in April 2022 to March 2023.

The HRA 2017 places a requirement on Councils adopting a preventative approach to Homelessness. When compared with other London Councils it appears from figures provided that those who have adopted this model are achieving better results in terms of homeless prevention although the numbers owed a relief duty have increased London wide.

2022/23	Prevention duty owed	Of which Owed relief duty	% owed relief duty
London-Wide	57,159	31,620	55%
Barking	1,299	550	42%
Ealing	2,958	1,242	41%
Greenwich	2,589	1,490	57%
Hackney	2,320	1,416	61%

An analysis of performance in Croydon in the calendar year 2022 showed the following;

- That of 2,272 cases owed a prevention duty, 1,500 cases or 66% were offered a relief duty suggesting a need to prioritise a more preventative approach to homelessness in Croydon.

In explaining this, many Boroughs have made changes to their structure to tailor their approach towards intervention. Although this comes at a time where homelessness is again on the rise it does appear that the greater concentration on homelessness prevention has had some effect.

Croydon Council has accepted that its service is not fit for purpose in terms of managing the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and has now implemented a new service structure. The restructure has recognised the need to equip staff with the mindset to act at the earliest stage to prevent homelessness occurring.

Analysis of 2022 data show the reasons for homelessness as follows;

- 28% owed a relief duty were asked to leave by family or friends against 36% London wide
- 13% of cases were Section 21 (ending of an AST tenancy) against 7% London wide. In March 2020, Croydon's figure stood at 12%.
- 5% of those presenting with a relief duty came from Social Housing which is the London average.

The finalised Strategy will set out the objective of tailoring our service to tackle the high level of Single Adults who are owed a relief.

Future projections

Figures available from London Councils show a 15- 20% overall rise in homelessness applications in London between March 2022 and March 2023. Soundings from other Local Authorities are that those figures have continued to increase at the same rate since then.

Preparing for this type of increase appears prudent especially as Croydon is at the upper end of homelessness applications amongst London Boroughs.

PRIORITY TWO OBJECTIVES

Preventing Homelessness

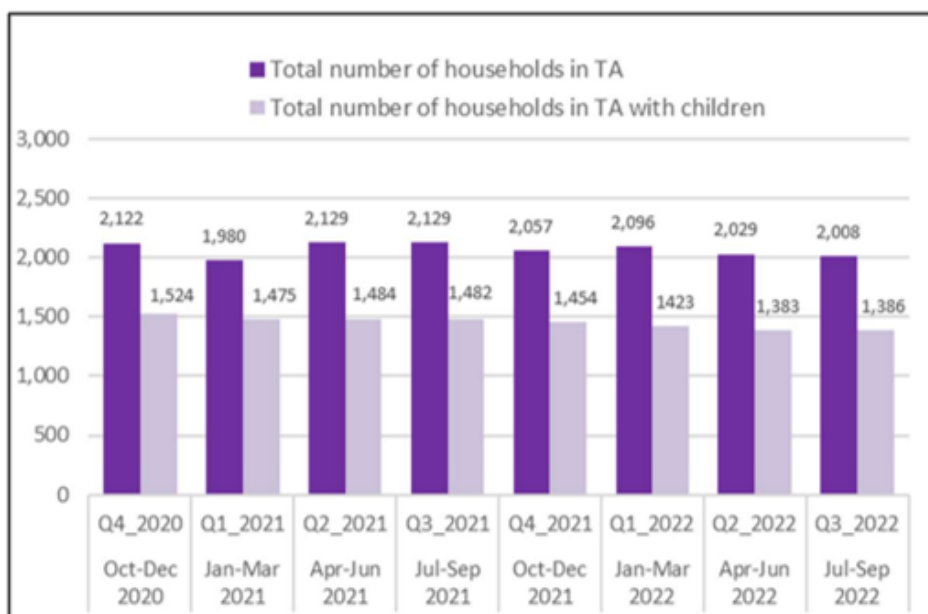
- To complete the re-organisation of the housing need's structure
- To fully implement the objectives of the Homelessness Reduction Act
- To reduce numbers of those found to be owed a relief duty to London norms.
- To prioritise prevention by tailoring our services towards tackling the causes of homelessness (see Objective 5)

6 Managing temporary housing and bed and breakfast more effectively.

This review comments upon information available from Croydon until December 2022 after which data was unavailable.

Over the past five years (2018-23) Croydon has had around 2,000 families consistently housed in temporary accommodation.

Figure 8 shows the last 8 quarterly snapshots of the total number of Croydon households that were accepted as homeless.



Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Table TA1, released Feb. 2023

Figure 8

In Croydon, as of December 31st, 2022, there were 1935 households in temporary accommodation. Of these households, 1359 had children living with them, with a total of 2589 children in temporary accommodation.

There were 144 households in bed and breakfast hotels, 406 were in nightly paid, privately managed, self-contained accommodation. 6 households were in hostels, 169 were in private sector accommodation leased by the Council, 409 were in Council housing stock and 801 were in another type of temporary accommodation.

Figure 10 shows the number of households in temporary accommodation by household composition (31st December 2022).

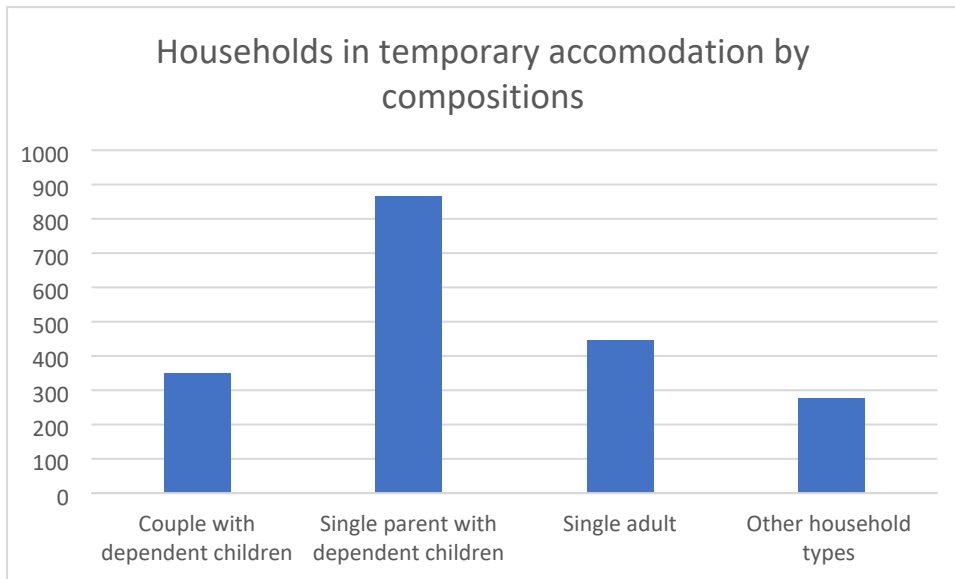


Figure 9

Reliance on Bed and Breakfast

A benchmark exercise comparing borough to borough usage of temporary housing between September and December 2022 amongst London Councils shows the following.

- Croydon has one of the highest number of residents in Bed and Breakfast amongst those benchmarked (though significantly no information was available from Lambeth, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Kensington and Chelsea).
- In Croydon, of 144 applicants in Bed and Breakfast, 43 had children and 22 had been there for longer than 6 weeks.
- Croydon had higher numbers in Bed and Breakfast than Lewisham, Camden, Islington, Haringey, Kingston and Hammersmith
- In comparison, Southwark had the highest number of cases in temporary accommodation at over 3,490 but 129 were in Bed and Breakfast ,24 with children and 9 over 6 weeks.

Accommodation outside the Borough

Most inner London Councils have increasingly had to seek temporary housing outside of their Borough because of the cost of procuring property and rising levels of demand in the private sector. By December 2022, of 57,490 residents in temporary accommodation, 23,890 (42%) were rehoused outside of the responsible Local Authority. The impact has been felt in Croydon, where many inner London Councils have now procured properties with the consequence of more locally based residents having to be displaced from their area.

The strategy towards resolving this problem lies in adopting a pan London approach towards agreeing a pricing framework for private sector accommodation which reduces the need for Boroughs to compete against each-other and the ability of Landlords and their agents to raise prices in a competitive environment.

16

16Click here to enter text.

Equally, the Council will need to develop effective and lasting local relationships with Private Sector Landlords to ensure a ready supply of properties. Through this mechanism the Council will seek to tackle the issue of poor quality of some temporary accommodation stock.

Temporary Housing not recorded in Government homelessness.

Figures presented in this report are generated from “H-Clic data” submitted to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by all Councils. They represent the numbers of people who approach Croydon requesting a homelessness assessment accommodation.

However, Croydon has significantly higher numbers living in temporary accommodation including up to 500 care leavers and hundreds of residents rehoused from permanent for reasons such as over-crowding or disrepair. These residents have not completed a homelessness application and the Council is now putting this process in place which will increase number in temporary accommodation to around 3,000.

An audit of temporary stock use is currently taking place with a view to developing an exit strategy which will discharge the Councils duty to these residents.

Future projections

Nationally, numbers in Temporary Accommodation have continued to rise in the period of the review. In Quarter 1 2019/20 85,040 were in temporary accommodation but by Quarter 1 2023/24 this had risen to 104,510 up by 10,000 since Q1 2022/23. Further, as stated above, London Councils are reporting increases in the use of temporary accommodation.

In uncertain economic conditions and restrictions to housing supply this figure could again rise by 15 to 20% over the next 5 years.

PRIORTY THREE OBJECTIVES

Managing temporary housing and Bed and Breakfast more effectively.

- Set up a dynamic purchasing procurement arrangement with local Landlords to ensure good quality of temporary accommodation in the Private Sector.
- Work with boroughs through “London Councils” to develop a united approach to the procurement of temporary accommodation.
- To tackle the backlog of those housed in temporary housing who made no homeless application.

7 Rough Sleeping

“Croydon reach” a service procured through “Thames Reach” has been delivering a street homeless outreach service for rough sleepers in Croydon since January 2017. Prior to this, Croydon did not have a dedicated outreach service for rough sleepers, and it was estimated from average street counts that at this time around 72 people were rough sleeping.

The service is commissioned to deliver on two key areas;

- Shifts – patrolling the streets throughout the day but more predominantly throughout the night and making contact and offering help to people rough sleeping.
- Casework- leading on the process of a caseload of 60-70 rough sleepers on their ‘Route Away from The Street’ (RAFTS) into settled accommodation. Much of the casework work undertaken incorporates various aspects of statutory work the council would otherwise have to pick up via our statutory singles team (SHS) if this service was not operational.
- Of the 60 to 70 people, between 40 to 60 are worked with from the Street whilst the remainder include people being supported with in Emergency Accommodation.
- This aspect of the Rough Sleeping service costs £259,000 a year and is funded through Housing. It is due to be reprocured through an Open tender with the 3 years of funding being covered by Housing and Public Health.

7.1 Performance information for the service is collected through London Mayors Office and is known as CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network) and shows Croydon recording the highest numbers for Rough Sleeping amongst outer London Boroughs. The biggest KPI for these outreach services measure how many nights a rough sleeper slept out – Achieving ‘no second night out’ being the goal. The table below shows a breakdown in Q4 22-23 of the 83 new rough sleepers achieving no second night out in the Southwest London region. Of the 83 recorded, 50 of those resettled by the second night were from Croydon showing the Council is placing more rough sleepers after one night than the rest of entire subregion combined.

7.2 The table below sets out performance amongst south-west boroughs with regards to Rough Sleeping between January and March 2023.

South West London Boroughs: Distribution

BOROUGH	New RS with no second night out	New RS with a second night out but not living on the streets	New RS joining living on the streets population	LOS - Known	LOS - RS205+	Intermittent rough sleeper	TOTAL
Croydon	50	12	0	4	0	23	89
Kingston upon Thames	5	2	0	11	0	17	35
Merton	11	0	0	0	0	1	12
Richmond	3	4	1	1	0	10	19
Sutton	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Wandsworth	13	1	0	8	0	24	46
UNIQUE TOTAL	83	19	1	24	0	75	202

7.3 Figures demonstrate the split of service users of rough sleeping services according to age. The largest proportion of service users are aged between 26-45.

Age Group	% split of total Service users
18 - 25	9%
26 - 35	28%
36 - 45	28%
46 - 55	24%
55+	10%

Figure 13 (Chain 2022/23 Data)

- Of the rough sleepers assessed in the borough between 2022/23 ,73% (273 out of 373) were new to rough sleeping whilst 15% (57 of 373) remained living on the streets.
- Of those whose gender was known, 299 were male and 68 were female.
- Where a case history was taken, Croydon saw 81 out of 252 rough sleepers as having formerly been in either the armed forces, care or prison.
- Of 373 rough sleepers assessed, 94 were black, 99 were white British, 84 were white other and 28 were Asian.
- 77% (191 out of 246) had additional support needs such as substance misuse or mental health issues. This figure excludes people for whom none of the three support needs were known or assessed.

7.4 A further analysis carried out of figures produced in Q3 2023/24 pointed to an increase of 90 rough sleepers in South-West London boroughs from 202 in Q4 2022/23 to 292. Of these 143 identified were from Croydon and 149 in the five boroughs listed in the table above.

- In Croydon, of 143, 94 were newly identified as rough sleepers and 78 had no 2nd night out.
- In terms of the 149 identified in the five South-West Boroughs, 76 were new rough sleepers of which 56 spent no 2nd night out.

In terms of achieving the 2nd night out target despite having amongst the highest number of rough sleepers amongst outer London Boroughs, Croydon's performance in this area remains strong with over 80% of identified rough sleepers achieving this target.

7.5 Figures suggest that despite the offer of support in moving away from homelessness there is a section of rough sleepers (up to 15%) who remain in a cycle of homelessness. Much of this could be attributed to problems such as drugs and alcohol or mental health. It is recognised that amongst this group, there are people causing anti-social behaviour and engaging in drugs and alcohol abuse which is regularly causing disturbance. To tackle this, the Rough Sleeping services will liaise with the Safer Streets group to prioritise interventions with rough sleepers in the borough who may be involved in aggressive begging, street drinking and taking drugs in public.

7.6 **Future Projections**

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Rough Sleeping is on the rise across London and in Croydon. Despite the relative success of the No 2nd Night Out programme, it is prudent to plan for a 10% to 15% increase in rough sleeping over the course of the Housing Strategy.

The lack of short stay/supported accommodation combined with reduced move on opportunities will increase the difficulties in placing rough sleepers.

PRIORITY FOUR OBJECTIVES

Rough Sleeping

- Re-procure the street outreach services and bed in the new service.
- Maintain performance on the "No Second Night Out" objective.
- Where necessary take enforcement action in liaison with anti-social behaviour services against rough sleepers who refuse offers of assistance and engage in anti-social activities.
- Explore more move on opportunities for rough sleepers.
- Access more suitable accommodation.

8 Targeted services and working with Partners

As set out in this review, the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 means that a range of interventions are needed to prevent homelessness. This will mean increasing our work in tackling some of the causes of homelessness such as drugs and alcohol abuse, mental health issues and domestic abuse.

This will entail extending upon our partnership work in the Voluntary and Statutory sector and to continue working with voluntary agencies;

Examples of this have included

- Elite Housing and Support who provide semi-independent accommodation and housing related support to young people aged 16-21 and, in some circumstances, up to 25 with the aim of developing resilience and confidence in young people
- Evolve Housing provide a supported housing service for those who are under 25 in Croydon and other Boroughs,
- Crisis in Croydon support those who have been or are homeless and provide individually tailored advice and coaching sessions.
- Family Justice Centre or FJC provide a multi-disciplinary approach for victims of abuse and sexual violence and assess those who have made a homelessness application on the grounds of domestic abuse (see below)
- The Housing Needs Service works with the Public Health and Alcohol team particularly with Rough Sleepers when tackling issues of drugs and alcohol.
- An Officer is now employed to deal with homelessness applications coming from those in hospital. The Review accepts the importance of this issue for Adult Services and Health Services who are reporting that the Housing Service is not responsive.

Care Experienced Young people.

Figures reported in June 2023 reported that there are 458 care leavers housed in temporary private sector accommodation by the Council. These were not linked to a homelessness application and therefore not included in quarterly returns submitted to Government. This has now been rectified with these numbers contributing to a rise in homelessness cases to around 3,000. Further, Local Housing Allowance was linked to 90% of the 2011 rate meaning the Council were required to heavily subsidise the cost. The uncertainty and unsuitability of some of this accommodation meant many Care-Experienced Young People experienced poor mental health and well-being, often felt unsafe with many facing economic challenges.

Housing and Childrens Social Services have now committed to a Joint Protocol which is intended to deliver upon the Government's expectation that a stronger safety net is provided for Care leavers threatened with homelessness.

This will involve a tailored pathway plan with identified support being prepared for every Care leaver and the choice of the following housing options.

- Supported Living
- Supported Housing Accommodation
- Private Rented Accommodation
- Social Housing

The routine use of Emergency Accommodation would be phased out in all, but the most urgent cases and the process would be used to identify suitable pathways for those carers who were in Emergency Accommodation.

In summary, the Council accepts that it now needs to reset its relationships within the local Statutory and Voluntary Sector and is intent on taking a leadership role by setting up a Homelessness Forum which will take place quarterly and involve key partners in discussing the Borough's strategy in reducing homelessness.

Family Justice Centre

The Family Justice Centre has continued to provide a responsive service despite threefold rises in reports of domestic abuse since 2017. Increased joint working including co-location of staff will be a recommendation of the strategy.

Future Projections

When considering the need for targeted support for the causes of homelessness the following national figures are considerations

- 1. The rise in those presenting for reasons of Mental Health - Up from 56,980 in 2018/19 to 72,960 in 2021/22*
- 2. The rise in domestic abuse claimants from 23,920 in 2018/19 to 32,600 in 2021/22*
- 3. Increases in drug and alcohol dependency from 25,260 in 2018/19 to 30,540 in 2021/22.*

These upward figures may well have been affected by the Covid period but further increases of 10%-15% could be likely over the period of the next housing strategy.

PRIORITY FIVE OBJECTIVES

Targeted Services and Working with Partners

- Deliver the Joint Protocol for Care Experienced Young people.
- Development a local partnership through the Statutory and Voluntary Sector with the aim of engaging with an already existing forum or setting up a Boroughwide Homelessness Forum
- Review the collation of information relating to homelessness and care needs to ensure accurate reporting.
- Extend local preventative work in combating homelessness by developing upon established relationships.
- Set up clear communication and pathways to housing for our partner health services at South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (SLAM) and Croydon Hospital.

Consultation and Engagement Report

Homelessness Strategy 2024-2029 Consultation Summary

February 2024

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 Consultation and Engagement Report

The Homelessness Strategy 2024 - 2029 has involved an extensive consultation and engagement process which has consisted of online meetings with residents and partners, an online survey as well as a programme of outreach meetings with our key partners. In addition, we considered 160 comments made in the recent Housing Strategy consultation around issues relating to homelessness and housing supply.

In total, we have canvassed the views of over 400 people during this consultation. It is stressed that the dialogue with our partners is an ongoing one that is key to improving joint working and delivery of services over the next 5 years.

Prior to producing the strategy, we are required to conduct a Homelessness Review which examines the Council's performance over the past 5 years and compares outcomes with other providers. Having identified key themes for improvement from this research, we then tested these findings by seeking the views of residents and partner voluntary organisations.

The finalised Strategy was influenced by feedback we received from our residents and stakeholders.

1. Feedback from partners

Meetings with Partners

One to one meetings with the following organisations: Family Justice Centre/ Evolve Housing/ St Mungo's Housing Association/ Croydon University Hospital/ South London and Maudsley Housing Trust/ Thamesreach/ Nightwatch/ Crisis Skylight/ South London Law Centre/ Southern Housing/South Norwood Community Kitchen.

Online meetings with Croydon Communities Consortium (26 respondents) and the Private Sector Landlord Forum (approximately 60 respondents).

<u>Comments</u>
<i>Closer partnership work needed/ Need to re-instate partners and Single Homeless Forum/ Need for the Council to engage with partners/. No Joint working with Council.</i>
<i>Greater presence of Homelessness staff during application process/re-instate floating Shelter/Street link not responding</i>
<i>Council not adhering to commitments.</i>
<i>Difficulty in contacting homelessness services for cases in need/. Difficulty in getting referrals to the Council/GP concern re response</i>
<i>Housing not involved in strategic partnerships. /Need for preventative approach to homeless to curtail hospital stays</i>
<i>Lack of responsiveness by the Council-it is estimated 90% of patients require housing. /Cost of failing to discharge amounting to 1.2 million a year for NHS/Develop</i>

<i>mental health/single homeless pathways into housing. /Impact of Afghan refugee situation</i>
<i>Single homeless cases not being accepted/responded to by the Council</i>
<i>Not sufficiently linked in with Council contacts in terms of referring cases or for SWEP cases</i>
<i>Work with the Council to improve housing supply/Improve empty properties</i>
<i>Issues in terms of service provision for those housed in temporary accommodation</i>

2. Survey Consultation Report - 188 respondents

In the tables below comments are either paraphrased or direct comments quoted (i.e. with speech marks.)

Priority One: Deliver good and responsive service to all those who require it.
This was not included in the survey but inserted as an outcome following feedback that was received.

See Section 3 – Change No 4

Priority Two: Prevent homelessness and provide relief efficiently where it occurs.

To what extent do you agree with this priority?

- Strongly agree or agree: 94%
- Strongly disagree or disagree: 2%
- Neither agree nor disagree or don't know: 4%

Comments received on this objective.

Area of concern.	No. of text responses	Comments
<i>Street homelessness</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>75% registering concern and 25% calling for stronger action against ASB</i>
<i>Council response</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>Too complex/confusing/unresponsive /Not accessible/Gap in dealing with residents with complex needs/Acting as a 'gatekeeper'</i>
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>No strategy or joined up working</i>
<i>Housing Supply/Insufficient resources</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>More affordable homes/Use Vacant office space /' Stop Taking on other Boroughs homeless.</i>
<i>Prevention of homelessness</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Not working/Impact on children</i>

Priority Three: Reduce reliance on the use of temporary accommodation.

To what extent do you agree with this priority?

- Strongly agree or agree: 94 %
- Strongly disagree or disagree 3%
- Neither agree nor disagree or don't know: 3%

Comments received.

Area of Concern.	No of text responses	Comments
<i>'Need for stable homes as well as temporary'/'More social homes needed'</i>	11	<i>Need to focus on both/ Build complexes of temporary accommodation/Buy hostels</i>
<i>'Provide less service'</i>	2	<i>The problem will persist whatever the investment</i>
<i>'Homeless not part of the community'/'Mental health impact'</i>	1	<i>Lack of long-term housing affects mental health</i>
<i>'Speed of investigation'</i>	1	<i>Poor case management</i>
<i>'Better use of existing stock'</i>	1	<i>Use of Brick-by-Brick properties</i>

Priority Four: Providing services to rough sleepers.

To what extent do you agree with this priority?

- Strongly agree or agree: 79%
- Strongly disagree or disagree-15%
- Neither agree nor disagree or don't know: 6%

Area of concern	No. of text responses	Comments
<i>Withdrawing support</i>	12	<i>'Review support offer after refusal'/ Stop begging/Deal with ASB. 'Force them into accommodation'/ 'Leave them on the street'. '15% a high number-withdraw support but provide right accommodation' /'Nobody should prefer to be on the Street'/'Impact on businesses.'</i>
<i>Reasons Rough sleepers refuse accommodation</i>	15	<i>Linking rough sleeping with ASB-not always the case/Complex reasons/People not feeling safe in hostels/Mental health</i>

		<i>support needs/Lack of outreach/More Tailored services/Decent housing solutions needed.</i>
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Priority Five: Managing our stock and encouraging new affordable and social housing.

To what extent do you agree with this priority?

- Strongly agree or agree: 87%
- Strongly disagree or disagree: 9%
- Neither agree nor disagree or don't know: 4%

Comments received.

Area of Concern	No of text responses	Comments
<i>Temporary accommodation</i>	6	<i>'Too many hostels and HMOs in Croydon'/ 'Closer monitoring of HMO's'/'New blocks appear empty-should be powers to occupy after 6 months'/'Protect people from dodgy private renters.'</i>
<i>Maintaining housing supply</i>	6	<i>'Investigate those who do not look after properties' /maintenance of affordable homes/'Properties should be let more swiftly'</i>
<i>Provide new homes</i>	6	<i>Need to build affordable housing/ More social as opposed to affordable housing. 'Avoid ill thought-out infrastructure'.</i>
<i>Opposing new homes in Croydon</i>	5	<i>'Everyone should provide for themselves'/ Rehouse out of London-Croydon is overcrowded/Plan reduction of people in Croydon</i>

Priority Six: Partnership working.

To what extent do you agree with this priority?

- Strongly agree or agree: 87%
- Strongly disagree or disagree: 11%
- Neither agree nor disagree or don't know: 2%

Area of Concern	No of text responses	Comments
<i>Partnership working</i>	9	<i>'Disabled people No 1 Priority'/ 'Invest more in mental health and social care'/ Multi-agency approach</i>
<i>Against approach</i>	2	<i>'Council should not transfer their responsibilities to the Private Sector'</i>

Other Issues/ Further Issues raised in Housing Strategy consultation.

The Survey offered the chance for responders to provide any further comments they wish to comment on. There was a total of 86 messages left many of which touched upon the priorities listed above. Listed below are comments not fully covered under the previous questions as well as issues raised in the Housing Strategy consultation.

Subject	Comments
<i>Respect for residents/Relationship building</i>	<i>Improve relationship with Key providers/ 'No suitcases here'- signposting disrespectful/ Staff -training on treating people with dignity/ Improve relationship with the newly homeless/ 'Involve residents in key issues'/ Lack of response from service/'Can never get through'/ 'People cannot get on waiting list'</i>
<i>Support</i>	<i>Tackle health inequalities/More support needed. Rise in Mental Health/Physical health/Drugs issues/ Improve social care initiatives/collaboration with health services/Increase in young homeless</i>
<i>Private Sector residents</i>	<i>'Stop No fault evictions'/ 'Prevent Families going through the Court process'. Early intervention to avoid eviction. /'Tackle rogue Private Landlords'/Impose Rent control in the Private Sector/ 'Do not jeopardise supply of homes by imposing Landlord Licencing'/ No follow up after Council Private Sector Team Inspection</i>
<i>Housing Supply</i>	<i>More homes for Single homeless/ 'Enforce downsizing for those under-occupying'/ 'Means test provision of social housing'/ 'Refurbish existing property'/ 'Need to increase not maintain stock.' /Stop RTB/'Use prefab housing'/ 'Too many empty properties'/ Buyback Council properties/More development needed/'Not enough social housing'/Need for more family size homes/'Use old garage sites'/New homes not affordable/Use prefab housing.</i>

Responses from those who have experienced homelessness.

When asked of the 188 respondents.

- 18% (34 respondents) had experienced homelessness, rough sleeping or have been at risk of homelessness with 82% having no such experience.

A sample of the comments received.

'When you are homeless, there are normally a range of other psychological issues you are facing. Mental Health, Other Psychotic Issues, Alcohol dependency. Drug Dependency, Personality disorders. someone should be there to support/ help you'.

'Council support was not as helpful as needed. Offered rehousing in entirely different area of England at critical points of childhood. House was not fit for purpose. Temporary stay accommodation condition was in West Croydon and in terrible condition which worsened the experience for children'.

'I didn't feel supported, staff were very abrupt. Not what you need when you're in a vulnerable position. Passed from team to team with not much information. Told one thing by one team and a different thing by the next team. No support with finding private renting as the eligibility criteria is hard'.

3. Changes to the draft priorities and objectives following engagement and consultation with residents and voluntary Organisations.

CHANGE NO 1

Priority Three: _Reduce the reliance on the use of temporary accommodation

With the levels of homelessness rising in London by 14% over the last year, these changes apply caution to the aspiration to lower the numbers of people living in temporary accommodation.

CHANGE NO 2

Priority Four: Providing services to rough sleepers.

This involved changes to wording around tackling anti-social behaviour. Representations received stated that there were many reasons that people remained 'in a revolving door' of homelessness and this does not necessarily infer anti-social behaviour. Additionally, it should not always be assumed that the anti-social behaviour is from rough sleepers. However, there was also requests from respondents that the Council should act on persistent anti-social behaviour from rough sleepers.

CHANGE NO 3

Priority Four: Managing our stock and encouraging new affordable and social housing.

This change was influenced by responses received during the Housing Strategy consultation around providing more affordable accommodation. This was also reflected in the final objectives of the Housing Strategy

CHANGES NO 4

Many representations from residents were received with regards to a lack of customer care and responsiveness in the Housing Needs and Homelessness service. Given the commitment to Service Excellence in the Mayor's Business Plan and the Housing Strategy a specific priority with regards to embedding these principles will be contained in the final objectives.

CHANGE NO 5

Removed "partnership working" and replaced with "*Re-instate partnerships with the Voluntary and Statutory Sector and deliver a more integrated approach to reducing homelessness*"

Comments received about need for proactive action to reducing homelessness.

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	Homes Sub-Committee
DATE	16 April 2024
REPORT TITLE:	Work Programme 2023-24
LEAD OFFICER:	Klaudia Petecka, Democratic Service and Governance Officer klaudia.petecka@croydon.gov.uk
ORIGIN OF ITEM:	The Work Programme is scheduled for consideration at every ordinary meeting of the Homes People Scrutiny Sub-Committee.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	To note the work programme for the Committee in 2023/24 and consider what items Members would like to see included on the 2024-25 Work Programme.
PUBLIC/EXEMPT:	Public

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This agenda item details the Sub-Committee's draft work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.
- 1.2 The Sub-Committee has the opportunity to discuss any amendments or additions that it wishes to make to the work programme.
- 1.3 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

The Sub-Committee is asked to:

- 2.1 Note the draft work programme for 2023-24, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
- 2.2 Consider what items Members would like to see included on the 2024-25 Work Programme.

3 WORK PROGRAMME

3.1 The work programme

The proposed work programme is attached at **Appendix 1**.

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.

3.2 Additional Scrutiny Topics

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 Sub-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.

3.3 Participation in Scrutiny

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.

4 APPENDICES

4.1 Appendix 1: Work Programme 2023/24 for the Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

5 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

5.1 None

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
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 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.
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