

For general release

REPORT TO:	Streets Environment and Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee 22 January 2019
SUBJECT:	Cabinet Member Question Time
LEAD OFFICERS:	Hazel Simmonds, Executive Director – Gateway, Strategy and Engagement Julia Pitt, Director - Gateway Services Yvonne Murray, Director – Housing Assessments and Solutions Kirsteen Roe, Director – Council Homes, Districts and Regeneration Steve Iles, Director - Public Realm
CABINET MEMBER:	Cabinet Member for Homes and Gateway Services, Councillor Alison Butler
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	Councillor Alison Butler

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	This item has been identified by the Sub-Committee as an area of scrutiny.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	The Sub-Committee is asked to consider the update on areas of the Cabinet Members portfolio and consider if it wishes to make any recommendations.

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report sets out a review of 2018/19 which focuses on current issues, and headlines, including any key decisions made in the last year. It also covers service budget issues, both for the immediate and longer term, plus any future strategies and policies that will be worked on over the coming 12 months.
- 1.2. Provides a progress update and response to the conclusions and recommendations made at meetings concerning the areas of this portfolio: Brick by Brick, Council Home Stock, Council Estates, Regeneration, Croydon Affordable Homes, Gateway Services & Access Croydon, Homelessness, Housing Needs & Assessments, The HRA, Landlords Licensing Scheme & HMO's, Social Lettings Agency, Temporary Accommodation and Tenancy & Caretaking Services.

2 REVIEW OF 2018

2.1. Homelessness

Croydon continues to face a significant need for temporary and emergency accommodation from homeless households, along with a declining but still concerning number sleeping rough in the borough. Over £1.3m of growth has been included in the 2018/20 budget to help tackle this growing demand. The council was successful in bidding for funding from the government's Homelessness Prevention Programme ('Trailblazers'), and was allocated £1m funding for homelessness prevention, early intervention and supporting people out of homelessness. The funding has been allocated for activity in the 24 months from January 2017 - £192,000 in 16/17, and £404,000 in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The council was also allocated £510,210 from the government's Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund to action to significantly reduce the number of people sleeping rough - £12,400 in 16/17, and £193,800 in 2017/18 and 2018/19

In Croydon, the number of decisions the council had to make in response to households applying as homeless in 2017/18 was 1,336, the fewest in 11 years, a strong indication of the impact Croydon's 'Gateway & Welfare' approach is having. In 2017/18, the council managed to prevent or relieve homelessness for 2,155 households, the highest number since 2010/11.

The number of people in temporary accommodation also fell from 2,449 in March 2017, to 2,005 in March 2018, the lowest level in 6 years. The number of households in Emergency Accommodation has fallen from 801 at the beginning of the financial year to 667 at the end of 2017/18. The number of households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation with shared cooking and washing facilities by the council at the end of March 2018 was 121, the fewest since 2009/10. However, these figures do not take into account how the council has shifted its focus and activity, through its Gateway and Welfare Service, to intervening early, and preventing homelessness before it reaches a crisis point wherever it can.

Homelessness Strategy

Local authorities are required to publish a homelessness strategy under the Homelessness Act 2002, and in developing the strategy should engage with other public bodies and local authorities, voluntary organisations and other people and organisations considered appropriate. Initial engagement work has already been undertaken to publish a draft review of homelessness (currently published for feedback and comments on the council's web site), and to engage with a wide range of organisations with an interest in homelessness and the different groups of residents potentially at risk of becoming homeless. The engagement has met a positive response, particularly around the work to tackle rough sleeping using Rough Sleepers Initiative Funding. A new council Homelessness Prevention Strategy Framework is expected to be published early in 2019, followed by further engagement and project development. Aside from the obvious concerns about lack of housing supply and the impact this has on affordability, other issues raised include:

Poverty - Croydon residents earn less, and are employed in less well paid occupations than other parts of London (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, NOMIS - Office for National Statistics, Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015). There is

also plenty of relevant recent research concerning poverty and destitution, and the association between Universal Credit and poverty (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Child Poverty Action Group, DWP Department for work and Pension). Young people are particularly disadvantaged by welfare reform and housing benefit provision.

The mismatch between housing supply and housing demand - Croydon's population is the largest in London and is growing. A growing population increases housing demand and need. There will be nearly 2,500 new households forming in the borough each year over the next 20 years. The draft London Plan expects Croydon to meet an annual housing target of more than 2,900 new homes per year. Housing supply will need to double to keep up with demand.

Market housing is unaffordable to working families and single households - On average, full-time workers could expect to pay around 7.8 times their annual earnings on purchasing a home in England and Wales in 2017 this is much higher in London. Housing affordability has worsened significantly in 69 local authorities in England and Wales over the last five years, with over three-quarters of these being in London and the South East. The freezing of the Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit) over a period of 4 years has had a huge impact on homelessness, pricing those on lower incomes and benefits out of the market. This has meant the council has had to intervene to prevent families becoming homeless either with costly discretionary housing payments or insourcing alternative accommodation. The introduction of Universal Credit have made it harder for people to afford private rented homes even with benefit help, the main reason for this is private landlords are unwilling to rent is the perceived risk of rent arrears. Young people are particularly disadvantaged.

Local Authorities funding reduction and the government's austerity policies have had an impact on public services generally, and in particular on the community service that help prevent homelessness. In particular this has affected housing support, hostels, specialist provision including mental health and drug and alcohol services, floating support

Increasing incidence of multiple/complex needs presented by vulnerable people accessing housing support. Most support providers tell us that they are catering to people with more complex and multiple needs than previously.

The complex rules affecting non UK nationals that are homeless or sleeping rough, and the limits to how public services can assist. Over 60% of the increase in rough sleeping in London is from non UK nationals. Since 2014 this group have limited access to benefits and housing.

¹ See Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, NOMIS data and the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015.

¹ 'Destitution in the UK 2018' – Joseph Rowntree Foundation - <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2018>; DWP Poverty statistics

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691917/households-below-average-income-1994-1995-2016-2017.pdf#page=14 ;

CPAg Rough Justice 2018 <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/rough-justice-problems-monthly-assessment-pay-and-circumstances-universal-credit-and-what-ca>

2.2. Rough Sleeping

Rough sleeping had been increasing in Croydon from 2010 to 2016 – from 4 in 2010 to 68 in 2016. However, in 2017 the number of rough sleepers in Croydon fell to 31. Up to 2016 we used the estimate methodology - an intelligence-based assessment leading to a single figure that represents the number of people thought to be sleeping rough in the local authority area on a ‘typical night’ – a single date chosen by the local authority between 1 October and 30 November. In 2017, however, we carried out a street count, where we recorded rough sleepers who were seen bedded down – a snapshot of the number of rough sleepers in the local authority area on a single night between 1 October and 30 November. Rough sleeping in Croydon has responded to improved partnership working with CR0 2020 and the Rough Sleepers Alliance, increased frequency of outreach, providing discretionary accommodation to prevent/end rough sleeping, and the beginning of our Housing First Pilot which has already placed 3 rough sleepers in accommodation.

The Council has a track record in working closely with the voluntary and faith sector to tackle rough sleeping and for several years has provided training free of charge for volunteers within services such as Night-watch and the Croydon Churches floating shelter. The Council supports the floating shelter by ensuring that individuals accessing the shelter have a positive route out and by funding an “on-call” service provided through Croydon Reach, the commissioned outreach service.

We adopted this multi-agency approach to applying for funding from the MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative fund in May 2018, inviting partners to give evidence on gaps in services to Rough Sleeping advisers. £510,210 was secured for the financial year 2018/19 with provision funding of £468,504 for 2019/20. The funding for 2018/19 has enabled Gateway to bring a number of initiatives forward:

1. Commissioning a **Housing First** service. Housing First is an internationally evidence-based approach, which uses independent, stable housing as a platform to enable individuals with multiple and complex needs to begin recovery and move away from homelessness. Evidence has shown that, through the provision of intensive, flexible and person-centred support, 70-90% of Housing First residents are able to remain housed. Having a place to call home also leads to improvements in health and wellbeing, and reduces ineffective contact with costly public services.

Croydon’s Housing First scheme was launched on 1st October, to address the needs of some of the most chronically homeless Croydon residents, who had experienced repeated or extended periods of rough sleeping, combined with other support needs such as mental ill health or substance use. Housing First will provide 20 of the most chronic residents with stable accommodation within the community by March 2020. Thamesreach Charity have been commissioned to support individuals from the street into their new accommodation and to sustain it thereafter and by 10th December had been successful in engaging four individuals to access accommodation. The Housing First support team will work alongside them to establish themselves within their accommodation, and within their new communities, with the intention that this leads to long term tenancy sustainment.

2. Funding the SLaM START team to provide a service in Croydon. The SLaM START team has been delivering assertive mental health outreach to rough sleepers in Southwark and Lewisham for over 20 years. The inability of rough sleepers with complex needs to access mental health services was identified

as a key barrier to engaging rough sleepers from the streets. The START team opened on 1st October 2018, and by the end of the month had received 26 referrals, and accepted 20. The service is best explained through a case study: an individual who would not engage with services, had twice been referred to mental health services but not seen, was not in receipt of benefit and had not seen a GP for 20 years. The service carried out a mental health assessment at their sleep-site at 5am. They are now in hospital receiving antipsychotic medication, engaging with their care coordinator, eating with other patients and washing themselves. They have shared information and have told the service that they were last in accommodation 20 years ago. The service combination of mental health specialist, knowledge of homelessness and understanding of the sector enables this service to engage actively and imaginatively with rough sleepers.

3. Delivering a pilot employment and accommodation service in partnership with Crisis Skylight, addressing rough sleeping amongst EEA migrants: EEA migrants who are rough sleeping have two options – to reconnect to their home country or to find work. Rough sleeping is a significant barrier to sustaining work. The pilot provides 12 weeks rent free accommodation coupled with intensive support from Crisis Skylight to access sustainable employment and private rented accommodation. The numbers supported through the scheme are small – a target of five individuals by 31/3/19. To date four individuals have been supported and two have accessed accommodation. Learning from the scheme is that it is unlikely that it could be scaled up, as many rough sleeping EEA migrants are too far from the workplace to access sustainable employment and accommodation within 12 weeks, but for those it can support it is life-changing.
4. Funding a dedicated rough sleeping caseworker to assess the council's duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act and to work closely with external agencies to deliver personal housing plans.
5. Since November, Funding an intensive support worker to help rough sleepers with complex needs to sustain temporary accommodation whilst a longer term solution is sourced. With a small caseload of 12 weeks the worker is able to engage with these individuals, have regular contact and be there in times of crisis to bring in other services where at other times the individual would lose their accommodation.

2.3. Temporary Accommodation

Croydon has done well in recent years reducing temporary accommodation number 3000, to almost 2,000. Croydon like many London Boroughs has been experiencing a steady increase in homelessness for a number of years. In response to the demand for increased temporary accommodation the Council has set up a number of schemes which have historically been used to accommodate households where the Council has accepted statutory duties under homeless legislation.

In the context of wider supply issues it needs to be borne in mind that whilst social housing supply is declining the Private Rented Sector (PRS) supply is rapidly growing and as such it is increasingly becoming the only tenure available.

Croydon needs to procure temporary accommodation to meet the demand, there is a clear need to continue to increase supply from the PRS Private Rented Sector, and the issue for the Council is that rising costs are increasing budget pressures.

Actions to Mitigate Risks, a number of actions are already being undertaken to mitigate the risks and reduce budget pressures. These include:

- A bid to the Government under the Private Sector Access fund for £750k which includes an amount for incentives to landlords
- A commitment to join Capital Letters which is a pan London initiative to reduce procurement costs funded by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government
- Engagement with a range of developers who are offering large economies of scale and reduced costs by accessing a range of funds
- A property acquisition programme to purchase properties to reduce pressures on temporary accommodation.
- On-going discussions with existing suppliers to drive down costs of new units

2.4. Gateway Services

Croydon's Gateway Approach

Gateway ensures residents are given a personalised action plan to address debts, budgeting, benefit maximisation, employment and address any housing issues they may have. With our approach and areas of work we also focus on UC principles, public health, health and well-being. In the last 18 months, Gateway have supported:

- 12,590 residents increase their benefits by £19.952m.
- £6.942m of UC claimed for our move vulnerable residents.
- 10,835 residents obtain blue badges/taxi cards or freedom passes.
- 10,540 with their financial assessments.
- 472 Appointees/deputyships with their finances.
- Circa 1,200 benefit caps residents.
- 5,105 households with discretionary payments made to secure tenancies, help moving to suitable and affordable accommodation and for emergency goods and furniture.
- 664 residents into employment and/or placements.
- 7,543 households with children to have free school meals.
- 6,466 residents with personal budgeting support and/or assisted digital who have moved onto Universal Credit.
- 2,544 preventions that have saved residents from having to present as homeless.
- 1,314 residents have been moved out of emergency and temporary accommodation into permanent accommodation.

Croydon's support for residents on Universal Credit (UC)

Croydon was one of the original pilot sites for Universal Credit (UC) roll out and have played a vital role in UC improvements during the test and learn phase and many of the developments made to UC; has been driven by Croydon and our colleagues in other LAs lobbying and working closely with DWP; withdrawal of 7 day waiting period and moving back emergency accommodation to Housing Benefit control to name two

important policy changes.

DWPs current figures highlights we have circa 25,000 on Universal Credit in Croydon, of which Purley Job Centre have 6,536, Thornton heath Job Centre have 7,382 and Croydon Job Centre have 11,024.

Croydon's approach has always been to support the main principles of Universal Credit delivery and message, but to offer local support, with more intensive support for our more vulnerable residents. When we started to pilot UC, we seconded a member of staff to work with DWP for two years to help the housing design on UC.

A challenge for 2019 is that the DWP has withdrawn funding from the council and passed a reduced amount to CAB to deliver. We are liaising with CAB to ensure we have a workable solution which does not detrimentally impact on our residents.

Discretionary Support for UC residents

Croydon have maximised discretionary funds to support residents. Croydon each year provides £500k Housing Revenue Account budget to top up our Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) fund to support Council tenants in rent arrears. Croydon have also committed £455k each year to continue the Croydon Discretionary Scheme (CDS), after Central Government removed the funding. In the last 18 months, £1.3m has been spent of DHP money for residents on Universal Credit (£4.061m in total on DHP) and this amount equates to helping 1,069 residents during this time on UC and in arrears and or are looking to move to affordable accommodation. In the last 18 months, the Discretionary Team have supported 4,593 residents in total, this ranges to helping with arrears, moving home, food, utility payments and white goods.

Gateway have been working with Policy in Practice and using their business analytics tool to highlight residents affected by welfare reforms and/or in debt. This tool categories cases into coping, struggling, at risk and in crisis; which means we can use resources the tackle the households most in need first. It also allows we can sort into properties with children and/or disabilities, which again means we can tackle these families first. This approach is reducing homelessness and ensuring children are not put at risk, which could increase workload and finances of our colleagues in Social Services. We have also used this tool around providing local events and targeting that specific local needs.

Social Lettings Agency

In April 2018, Gateway created and implemented a Social Lettings Agency (SLA) to trial a different way of securing properties and working with landlords, to offer greater wrap around support to vulnerable residents and to give assurances to landlords on affordability and sustainability of tenancies. The cohort of residents the SLA is primarily working with is those pre-statutory homelessness – very early interventions to secure long-term, safe, affordable homes for people in danger of losing their home.

Gateway are now working with over 70 landlords and securing properties at Local Housing Allowance through negotiating with landlords and are on average placing between 15 to 20 residents a month. The SLA offer tenancy ready training for the residents they are working with and direct contact to the team for landlords. We are also trialing a household budgeting app from January 2019; which will give landlords, residents and SLA staff sight of household's bills, ensuring they are paid and to act

as an early indicator if a bill is missed. This means SLA staff can address and tackle any issues, a day after any bill is not paid.

The key challenge is the rent differential between market rates and LHA rates for rent. With our holistic wrap around support and offer of tenancy sustainment work for both landlord and tenant, we can successfully negotiate landlords down to LHA rates. As an example, a landlord originally approached offering a property at £1,600 per month. However, after we sold the SLA service and they met the family in need of a new home, the landlord agreed to reduce the rent to £1,250 p.m. in line with the LHA. This meant we could quickly move this family in, and saved them £4,200 in rent each year.

Gateway in the Community

Our Gateway approach in the community is to focus on prevention and early intervention, provide a holistic response to whole family needs looking beyond the presenting issue, and prevent households from experiencing crisis and helping shape a positive future for Croydon residents. Main principles are:

- An innovative way of working way of working across the Council, with our partners and our residents in order to prevent residents from experiencing crisis and homelessness
- First Response Gateway Community Locality model run by the community for the community delivering services that are responsive to the specific needs of residents
- Ensures residents are financially stable, able to better manage their money and maximise their income through personal budgeting support, debt management, landlord liaison and by gaining employment
- Community Connect support includes: benefits advice, personal budgeting support, housing options advice, income maximisation and employability support (e.g. job club, training and volunteering opportunities)
- Works as an Alliance (36 partners) of organisations with shared objectives
- Was piloted in our two most deprived wards – Fieldway and New Addington

60% of residents seen at the locality are on Universal Credit. To date the locality in Fieldway and New Addington have achieved the following:

- Preventing homelessness by sustaining 47 tenancies
- 25 long-term unemployed residents into work and 22 into education/training
- Addressing poverty – the Food Stop reached its target number of members (100) within just weeks of its launch (160 members currently)
- The Food Stop has helped families save a combined £27,140 on their food shopping bills
- We've been closely tracking progress of the first 100 residents signed up to Food Stop when it launched and who are receiving support via Community Connect.

We've seen some fantastic results in the first year, including:

- 22% had rent arrears, and now none of them do.

- 45% were at financial risk, and we have reduced this to 21%, who we continue to work with.
- Only 14% were in work and this has increased to 32%

A second locality is due to open at the Parchmore Centre in Thornton Heath in January 2019, to build upon the already established local support in place, with early intervention and prevention targeted support to residents in need.

Successful bids - Flexible support Community Fund bid was successful in obtaining £97k to place two officers in the Parchmore Community Centre from January 2019, where the full wrap around Gateway support will be delivered in the Parchmore Centre to support our residents in the North of the Borough. As part of the successful bid, a £15k discretionary fund is to be used directly to support residents into work, this can be for work equipment, training and or travel.

DWP Proof of Concept Fund bid was successful through a joint application with Gateway Enablement Team, Mind and Status, which guaranteed £4,150 a month for 18 months and then £7,150 for every successful resident into work.

Through our work with Universal Support, Gateway have secured £157k in funding for this year, which i.e. being directed to fully support our residents on Universal Credit.

Gateway Link

Gateway Link assists practitioners across services with high cost, high profile cases or cases that are “stuck” in the corporate system. The team co-ordinate a multi-service/disciplinary approach building on existing pathways and challenge ineffective hand-offs between services. This approach encourages increased collective organisation responsibility for families/adults which in turn produces cost savings and avoidance for the council, whilst achieving better outcomes for residents by reducing less reliance on council services and greater independence. Last year the team generates (outside of panel work, see below) £1.7m financial benefits. We ensure we closely link in with Troubled Families to ensure Croydon maximises its claim, providing essential funds to support the delivery of Early Help initiatives.

In 2018 we have also placed a Gateway Link Interventions Officer within Children’s front door – SPOC, Single Point of Contact – which has been gratefully received and quickly evidenced the benefit of this colocation. The Interventions Officers have been able to prevent cases being picked up by children’s, either via bringing the case into Gateway or giving advice on who has the duty to the family (particularly in housing cases, where other authorised have on-going duties they need to fulfil). This intervention has enabled us to keep the family together in their current home, as we know from past experience when a family ends up homeless this has a detrimental effect on children’s health, well-being and school attainment and attendance.

By having this collaborative approach we can ensure that the resources of the council are maximised to provide the best outcomes for our residents – we ensure the skills within Gateway are implemented, enabling social workers and other practitioners to concentrate their time and effort where their expertise lies.

Gateway Link panels have been set up to review the most expensive families in terms of combined cost to the Council across a range of services-adult social care, children's social care including children with disabilities and special educational needs, housing and welfare and Council debt. The aim is to identify opportunities for both immediate action and longer-term systemic change and service redesign to reduce costs and improve outcomes for these families.

The panels are sponsored by the Cabinet members for Finance, Children and Families and Adult Social Care. High cost and complex cases are presented at each panel. Traditionally cases known to social care services have been person focused, the Gateway Link Panels in contrast look in depth at the whole household and the impact that the individuals needs have on the family, this enables more creative outcome focused solutions to be developed for each household which in turn reduces costs to the Council. Services suggest cohorts for consideration and this has resulted in buy in from all areas of the council and at all levels as well as resulting in financial benefits of over £2 million pounds.

2.5. Council Homes Planned Maintenance Programme

Capital investment into Council owned homes over the last year has focused upon ensuring that all homes remain compliant and continue to meet the Decent Homes Standard. Overall, the programme is expected to deliver over £28m of maintenance and improvements to Council owned homes this year.

The impact of the tragic events at Grenfell Tower has brought fire safety to the fore. In total approximately £10m of fire safety works including sprinkler installations have been delivered to 26 blocks and 1,252 dwellings. By the end of the financial year every block over 10 storeys and above will have an active sprinkler system installed, providing reassurance to the residents of high rise accommodation.

Major works have started on a number of schemes. At College Green sheltered block works have begun on the replacement of the roof, windows and boilers, as well as the installation of rain screen cladding. There have been some delays due to issues with the existing structure and the project is expected to be completed in October/November 2019. External refurbishment works to Davidson Lodge commenced in September 2018 and are progressing well on site with expected completion in December 2019. Two major refurbishment projects that are due to commence in late spring/early summer are Dartmouth House and Chertsey Crescent with completion scheduled for autumn 2020. Finally, works to Longheath Gardens external refurbishment have progressed to all 17 blocks and are expected to be complete in October this year.

The Croydon Housing Asset Management Plan has been developed to provide housing services with agreed objectives that align with the Corporate Plan 2018-22. The four overarching objectives are:

- Compliant, decent and energy efficient homes
- Homes in places where people want to live, work and socialise
- Residents of all ages and backgrounds involved in shaping services
- Affordable and cost effective homes

Over the next year key policies and procedures will be implemented to ensure that robust, auditable processes are in place across Asses & Involvement, Capital

Delivery for Homes and Schools, and Repairs and Maintenance.

Several innovative projects are in the pipeline for commencement in 2019/20. The Community Energy Scheme will provide our social housing tenants with the option of 100% renewable energy, at a guaranteed discount to market prices for 25 years. This will help reduce fuel poverty and increase the health and wellbeing of our residents. The other scheme is Digital Connectivity for Social Housing, which will offer full fibre broadband across the borough to provide our social housing tenants with access to digital services and improve digital inclusion. Both project will also provide job and training opportunities to our residents.

2.6. Responsive Repairs

In December 2013 following a European Commission compliant competitive dialogue procurement process, the Council appointed Axis in April 2014 as the Service Provider to deliver a Repairs, Voids and Gas Contract consisting of the following work streams:

- Repairs Price per Property (PPP) and SORs
- Voids Price per Void (PPV) and SORs
- Gas 3* servicing and maintenance

The potential contract term is 15 years broken down 7+4+4 we are now coming to the end of year 4 of this contract.

The contract is generally performing well across the board with performance in almost all KPI's consistently on target. There are some concerns with performance for orders issued and overdue which has never been within target and more recently P15 gas & heating repairs. The KPI relating to orders issued and overdue has been reported as underperforming since the start of this contract, however this is not completely representative of the actual performance in this area. The official KPI is reported based on data received each month but there is a manual admin 'lag' between the job physically being completed and the system being updated to record this, if we were to re-run the reports from previous months (with time allowed for the system to be updated) then the figures shown would be significantly different.

Complaints and customer satisfactions whilst in the main at target do indicate ongoing issues with lack of feedback and follow up and jobs not completed first time, these specific areas are monitored by the Members & Resident Services manager as part of the joint service improvement plan and discussed regularly at monthly performance meetings.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Community Benefit are both integral to the contract with dedicated contract meetings to ensure that activities against these areas are delivered. As well as corporate sponsorship of the recent customer service awards and the Mayors Civic awards, the partnership have organised and sponsored numerous community events, most recently the provision and delivery of 47 'Christmas dinners in a bag' to families identified as in need in north Croydon, a bedding donation appeal for residents of The Wellington hotel along with a bag for every resident containing essential toiletry items

With the first break point of the contract at year 7, a joint contract review has started with echelon to consider whether the contract should be extended for another four years. This is a significant piece of work, of which there will be several stages, initially there will be a review of the contract documentation to determine what needs to be

done in relation to the extension/termination, but also take into account the internal Council processes which need to be followed to ensure we meet the timescales.

The contract review will be split into the following parts:

- a. A review of the service being delivered by Axis across the following areas:
 1. Cost
 2. Performance
 3. Relationship
 4. A comparison to the contract deliverables
- b. In depth options appraisal. This will be a report which describes the various delivery models available (wholly owned subsidiary, joint venture, managed service, DLO - Direct Labour Organisation), the various pros and cons of each and comparison against the current model. It may be that a SWOT analysis of these model types may rule them out as options, but in some cases it may be appropriate to include site visits so that we can see how these might work in practice for us. The final report will not make any recommendations but will set out in detail how each of the models works.
- c. Benchmarking against other contracts using a similar model, if we can identify the critical success factors on other similar contracts we will be much better placed to comment upon whether we need to re-procure or simply adapt working practices and behaviour.
- d. Factor in the cost of re-procurement and mobilisation/bedding in

2.7. Resident Involvement

A review of resident involvement activities across housing is underway and has already led to improvements to the way that we engage with residents about their housing services and neighbourhoods. This has resulted in 8 new members as well as 12 previous members being reselected for the panel of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel (TLP) representing a wider range of our residents across the borough. A new associate membership option is also now available enabling residents to participate virtually in the panel's activities without attending meetings. This provides an option for those individuals who are unable or do not wish to attend evening meetings to still be fully active in influencing the strategic decisions the council takes about how we manage our homes. In addition the council is establishing a new virtual safety panel to ensure that residents' views are heard loud and clear when it comes to the safety of their homes.

2.7. Fire safety

The current spend for 18/19 on fire safety works is £272,667, this includes both capital and HRA spend. This excludes project works.

Work continues to ensure fire safety within residential blocks owned or leased by the London Borough of Council is compliant and meets current standards in order to provide safe homes for our residents. Work is ongoing to identify where we need to replace/upgrade flat front entrance doors, where installation/ upgrade of emergency lighting and fire alarm systems is required and blocks with spandrel panels which may need to be replaced. This information will then be used to create programmes of

works.

The relationship between LBC and the London Fire Brigade continues to be a positive one and we are working with LFB to provide training for staff regarding person centred risk assessments and Personal Emergency Evacuation plans. We continue to meet formally with LFB on a monthly basis and carry out joint audit visits to blocks.

Following the release from Government, on Tuesday 18th December, of their statement and plan in response to the Hackitt Review, the council is working with the London Council's Directors Fire Safety Group to share best practice on how to address the recommendations from the Hackitt Review and the Government's plan to implement all of the recommendations.

Post Grenfell Croydon council increase the level of fire safety across all council owned blocks this included undertaking a higher specifications than required for our fire risk assessments, from type 1 (Non-destructive assessment of the common parts of a building) to type 4 (Destructive inspection of the common parts of a building and the flats)

Remedial works following level 4 FRA's 50% of the reports have been received from Oakleaf the councils Fire Risk Assessors. Whilst we are assured all the fire risk assessments have been completed, there have been delays with Oakleaf and their quality checking process. It has been made clear to Oakleaf what our expectations are and there performance is being closely monitored.

In 2017 the council commissioned Echelon our partnering advisors were engaged to carry out a fire safety process and systems audit to provide recommendations for areas of improvement on process, compliance and the contracts managed by the council on the general needs housing stock. The recommendation from the audit was that the council established a Compliance team that has responsibility for overseeing and monitoring all compliance activities across the various teams.

- The Compliance team are currently working with the re-procurement team to finalise the FRA re-procurement report.
- The remedial works being identified are included in the ongoing procurement process as referred to above.
- Work is ongoing between the Asset team and Compliance team with regards to using the compliance model in Apex the new model - Compliance with legislative, local and aspirational Quality Standards to drive plans and programmes

2.8. Tenancy and Caretaking Services

In April 2018 the Tenancy & Caretaking service started working within their new structure with 7 managers managing across the borough.

On 8th October 2018 the council announced the reintroduction lifetime social tenancies in our own housing stock. We said we were removing fixed-term social tenancies that are reviewed every five years, which had been introduced before the current administration came to power in 2014. From that day, anyone who signs a

new contract with the council will have an open-ended assured contract without a time limit as long as they meet the usual tenancy conditions. To ensure that the council homes continue to meet tenants' needs, Croydon will continue to offer incentive schemes so residents who no longer need larger homes can downsize elsewhere and free the property up for others. By reintroducing lifetime social tenancies for local people, Croydon Council is underlining its commitment to protecting renters.

BxB continue to work on the estates and there is an element of disruption with parking and bin collections. Over the year Tenancy have worked closely with residents and with BxB to ensure that this disruption is reduced by sending back bin crews or removing nuisance vehicles.

All work coming to the Tenancy and caretaking service is filtered through the CRM database to allow managers to have an in depth view of workflow and an up to date record of the amount of work being received by the team. Since 1 April 2018 the service has received 1240 referrals through CRM, with 70.4% coming directly from our residents.

The introduction of the South London Waste Partnership bin collections has been sporadic in some areas to begin with, however a strategy meeting was set-up with the service which has resulted in improvement in the service being delivered.

With an aging residential population and the increase of vulnerable residents the Tenancy service are using Tenancy Sustainment officers (TSO) to support residents in need to maintain their tenancies and reduce social isolation.

Tenancy are working with Repairs, Homes and improvement team, Transport and BxB to install Electrical Vehicle Charging posts for electric cars.

in order to improve and maintain a more efficient service new mobile devices are being rolled out to all staff to allow them to access the internet which will enable them to upload all outstanding repairs, record on the 'Don't mess with Croydon' App allowing for more immediate recording of service failures and faster rectification.

The CRM workflow database is being reviewed with ICT to carry out further phase improvements on issues that have arisen to allow for simpler KPI recording and case management.

2.9. Empty Properties

On 31st December 2018 our records indicate that 3,603 dwellings had been declared as vacant to the council. This figure is for all empty residential dwellings and includes short term voids and properties that are vacant between tenancies.

Our records indicate that 1,854 of those properties had been empty for more than six months and can be classed as Long-Term Empty Properties

The Council's Empty Property Service is actively involved in 783 long-term empty dwellings and is either working with the owners of these properties, regularly monitoring them or taking enforcement action to bring them back into use.

Empty Properties are regularly reported online, by telephone or via the Don't Mess with Croydon app. There are two full time Empty Property Officers employed by the council who are constantly seeking to locate the owners of these long-term empty properties and find ways to bring them back into use as suitable housing.

2.10. Private Sector Housing

Our borough-wide selective licensing scheme for privately rented properties has now been in place for three years. At the start of the scheme it was estimated that there were approximately 32,500 privately rented properties in Croydon, however we now know that there are more than this having received almost 34,000 licence applications and continue to receive around 250 each month. During the life of the scheme to date approximately 10,000 properties have been inspected, most of these proactively, but we continue to receive approximately 750 complaints about poor housing conditions from tenants each year.

The proactive inspections have shown that, as the council suspected, tenants are not contacting the council for assistance when there is disrepair in their homes for a variety of reasons. The licensing scheme has enabled the proactive inspections to take place and housing conditions to be improved in cases which, without the scheme, we would not have been aware of. Since the scheme started officers have taken enforcement action in approximately 1,000 cases, including prohibiting the use for habitation of 33 properties.

The licence conditions are enabling the council ensure that landlords deal with anti-social behaviour by their tenants, from disposing of rubbish and recycling properly to curbing noise nuisance, ensuring gardens are maintained and preventing issues such as drug smoking in flats (which can affect the occupants of adjacent flats).

The use of financial penalty notices to deal with breaches of the licensing scheme is increasing, with action taken or in the process of being taken against 22 landlords to date.

The scheme expires on 30 September 2020 and the council is currently focusing on gathering evidence to use in our submission to the secretary of state to renew the scheme on 1 October 2020. Prior to that there will be a full public consultation which will include progress to date with the current scheme in more detail.

Post-Grenfell, the private housing team have carried out programmed inspections on privately owned blocks of flats with colleagues from the London Fire Brigade. To date it has not been necessary to take formal enforcement action relating to issues with cladding, although progress on replacing cladding on the two taller blocks, Citiscape and Centrillion, is being closely monitored by various services. Smaller blocks of flats brought into use by Permitted Development are also being proactively inspected.

HMOs

From 1st October 2018, landlords renting out smaller houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) for the first time need a mandatory HMO licence. Under the new law, these licences have extra conditions including national minimum room sizes.

Croydon Council is using its discretionary powers to continue to require at least 10 square metres per bedroom for one person and 15m² for a couple, compared with the new national minimum size of 6.5m² and 10.2m².

Croydon's other minimum size requirements that are not changing range from 12.5 m² for an en-suite single bedsit to 18.5m² for a double room with a kitchenette. The council has decided to keep its existing room sizes because most HMOs in the borough are bedsits with no communal living room.

These changes only apply to landlords applying for new HMO licences or renewals; not those that currently already have a mandatory HMO licence nor ones that currently have a Croydon selective licence. Before the law change, the mandatory requirement to license HMOs had been limited to properties consisting of three or more storeys and five or more people in at least two households sharing facilities. This storey element has now been removed nationwide.

2.11. Croydon Affordable Homes (CAH)

In order to make renting in Croydon more affordable, the Council have set up a charitable partnership to deliver affordable properties to rent in the borough. Croydon Affordable Homes (CAH) was set up in July 2017 with the goal of renting out at least 340 local homes costing a maximum 65% of the usual private rent to borough residents by 2020.

The first phase was to transfer 96 one, two and three bedroom properties council-owned temporary housing to becoming part of CAH. This gives the tenants longer tenancies, turning temporary accommodation into assured shorthold tenancies lasting between one and three years.

The 96 properties are a mix of one, two and three-bedroom houses and flats in areas including New Addington, Selhurst and Sanderstead. Rents have not gone up as a result of the deal, and a couple on housing benefit can afford the rent through the Local Housing Allowance.

The second phase is for the council to purchase an additional 250 one, two and three-bedroom houses and flats which will be transferred to CAH in April 2019

The current position on the purchasing of these properties:

- 176 properties purchased
- 61 Purchase approved
- 13 Properties under consideration (in process)

Phase three which consists of 244 homes will be delivered between 2018 and 2020 that will be part-funded by £30 million worth of Right To Buy house sales.

These homes will be built by Brick by Brick, the development company set up by Croydon Council, and Hub, the company leading the regeneration of the former Taberner House site in Croydon town centre.

2.12. Brick by Brick

The BXB structure has a number of characteristics that help it to satisfy the desire for the delivery of new homes whilst also maximising the direct benefits to local communities in Croydon (financial and otherwise). For example:

- BXB activity creates development profit, all of which is returned to the local authority (as sole shareholder) in the form of an annual dividend, to be reinvested in the borough;
- BXB delivers further financial benefit in the form of interest paid on loan facilities arranged between the Council and the company, as well as the purchase value of land that is transferred to the company (with any future uplift in land value driven by the property market wholly secured for the Council in the original land deal), all of which can be used to support frontline services in a time of heavily pressurised local government budgets;
- BXB creates much needed new homes of a variety of tenures, with priority given to local residents for an 8-week period through the sales and/or letting process for both private and shared ownership homes. Affordable rent homes are allocated via the council's housing list.

The BXB model of delivering a number of sites simultaneously allows for commercial efficiencies which have the effect of increasing the overall quantum of affordable housing in the programme well beyond that ordinarily provided by developers – for example, BXB often deliver 50% affordable housing within their smaller residential sites programme, far greater than the amount usually achieved on such sites (where there is no requirement on private developers to do so).

BXB has been actively trading for two years now and has established itself as a key economic actor in the borough. In preparation for meeting the company's strategic target of 500 completed homes per annum, a substantial amount of work was undertaken at the outset by the BXB in house design team to identify local authority owned land with development potential. A detailed review of the Council's asset register and GIS mapping was conducted in order to create a pipeline list of c250 sites with capacity for over 4,000 residential units. Based on feasibility assessments, this pipeline list was subsequently broken up into tranches of sites to be taken forward to early stage design and ultimately, subject to viability, submission to planning.

To date the company has achieved 40 planning consents which will enable it to deliver more than 1,300 units of housing. There are also a further 5 schemes currently being prepared for planning or already being considered by the planning department. All of this work has created the foundation for the company to start meeting its target of 500 completed homes from 2019 onwards.

Of the schemes that already have planning consent, 22 are in contract and/or on-site, and a further 17 are currently out to tender. Several of the schemes that are on site have practical completion dates scheduled for the first half of 2019, starting from Jan/Feb 2019.

2.13. Taberner House and Queens Gardens

The Taberner House redevelopment comprised the erection of four buildings ranging

in height from 13 to 35 storeys comprising 514 residential units and commercial space at ground floor level. The 2017 planning permission secured a minimum 35% of units as affordable accommodation, with 50.2% of the provision proposed as affordable rent. This included a block of 90 affordable rent units to go to families on the councils housing waiting list.

Since the time of the permission we have been in dialogue with L&Q who are looking to take on blocks 3 and 4 which will take the number of affordable homes to over 50%.

Queens Gardens

A re-landscaped Queens Gardens was also provided as part of these proposals, the details of which were secured by planning condition and the Local Planning Authority (LPA) are in the process of negotiating these details with the developers, HUB.

The new landscaping seeks to preserve the historic character of the space, enhance the character and appearance of the gardens and improve lighting / security throughout the area. The Queens Gardens will be made more space available for the public and the proposed buildings orientation will assist in providing light and additional surveillance into the gardens. The proposals currently provide a new public square, new seating throughout with some being integrated, a new lighting strategy, a water feature, play space, raised planters, replacement trees/landscaping and additional CCTV enhancing security. Natural stone and granite paving is to be provided on the central and southern sections with resin bound gravel within the sunken garden.

These proposals will be a significant improvement to that existing and the LPA are in negotiations with the developer to ensure that these enhancements are delivered. In terms of the current status of the planning condition approval, the LPA is awaiting further specifications from the developer and further discussion is required around long term maintenance for the areas to be maintained by the Council.

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Background Documents: None

Appendices: None