

# Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub- Committee Agenda



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

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

A meeting of the **Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Tuesday, 13 July 2021 at 6.30 pm. This meeting will be held remotely via Microsoft Team.**

Jacqueline Harris Baker  
Council Solicitor & Monitoring Officer  
London Borough of Croydon  
Bernard Weatherill House  
8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

Stephanie Davis  
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www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings  
Monday, 5 July 2021

**PLEASE NOTE:** Members of the public are welcome to remotely attend this meeting via the following web link - <http://webcasting.croydon.gov.uk/meetings/12709>

The agenda papers for all Council meetings are available on the Council website [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)

If you require any assistance, please contact Stephanie Davis  
020 8726 6000 x84384 as detailed above.

## **AGENDA – PART A**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

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

**2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2021 as an accurate record (To Follow).

**3. Disclosure of Interests**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and the statutory provisions of the Localism Act, Members and co-opted Members of the Council are reminded that it is a requirement to register disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) and gifts and hospitality to the value of which exceeds £50 or multiple gifts and/or instances of hospitality with a cumulative value of £50 or more when received from a single donor within a rolling twelve month period. In addition, Members and co-opted Members are reminded that unless their disclosable pecuniary interest is registered on the register of interests or is the subject of a pending notification to the Monitoring Officer, they are required to disclose those disclosable pecuniary interests at the meeting. This should be done by completing the Disclosure of Interest form and handing it to the Democratic Services representative at the start of the meeting. The Chair will then invite Members to make their disclosure orally at the commencement of Agenda item 3. Completed disclosure forms will be provided to the Monitoring Officer for inclusion on the Register of Members' Interests.

**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. Housing Improvement Plan and Board (Pages 5 - 32)**

To receive the draft report, discuss and provide comment prior to its submission to Cabinet.

**6. Review of Temporary Accommodation (Pages 33 - 36)**

To receive a report and presentation which outlines the current situation with temporary accommodation in the Borough.

**7. Work Programme (Pages 37 - 40)**

To note the Work Programme for the 2021/2022 municipal year.

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

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

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

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<b>Key communications Implications (Informal Cabinet only)</b>	This report sets out the further progress made in improving housing conditions in council blocks at Regina Road and rebuilding the housing service and increasing resident engagement. It presents the Terms of Reference for a Housing Improvement Board and provides an update on the development of a Housing Improvement Plan.
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## For General Release

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>INFORMAL CABINET 12 JULY 2021</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Housing Improvement Plan and Board</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Alison Knight, Interim Executive Director of Housing</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice, Cabinet Member for Homes</b>
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>COUNCIL PRIORITIES 2020-2024</b>	
Implementation of the council's response to the independent investigation's recommendations through the Housing Improvement Plan, overseen by the Housing Improvement Board, is essential in order to ensure that the council provides the best quality core housing management service that it can afford and provides value for money for its tenants and leaseholders.	
<b>FINANCIAL IMPACT</b>	
The financial impact of each workstream will be calculated and brought back to a future meeting of Cabinet, once the Housing Improvement Plan has been finalised and recommended to Cabinet by the Housing Improvement Board.	
<b>FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.:</b>	

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

### 1. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to

- 1.1 Note the further progress in improving housing conditions at 1-87 Regina Road and further actions in response to the recommendations of the report by ARK, detailed at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Approve the Terms of Reference of the Housing Improvement Board, detailed at Appendix 2.

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|---|
| 1.3 Note the approach to development of the emerging improvement plan for the housing service to be put to the Housing Improvement Board. |
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## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following an investigation into the housing conditions at some council-owned flats at 1-87 Regina Road, ARK Consultancy published a report with recommendations for improvement. On 17 May 2021 Cabinet approved an initial action plan for the housing service and agreed to the establishment of an independently-chaired Housing Improvement Board. An interim Executive Director of Housing was appointed by the Interim Chief Executive for an initial period of six months to bring additional capacity to provide new leadership and direction for the housing service, conduct a review of the wider housing service, and lead the development and implementation of a longer-term Housing Improvement Plan for the service.
- 2.2 This report updates Cabinet on further progress to resolve problems at Regina Road and assist the residents affected, and actions taken to address the issues identified by ARK as requiring an immediate response. The report asks Cabinet to approve the terms of reference of the Housing Improvement Board that will oversee implementation of the Housing Improvement Plan and ensure that tenants and leaseholders have a say in shaping the future of the housing service. The report also asks Cabinet to note the approach to development of the emerging Croydon Housing Improvement Plan for the housing service, to be put to the Housing Improvement Board for further shaping and development. The Improvement Plan will address ARK's recommendations for improvement and ensure the Council delivers the best core housing service that it can afford, in line with its priorities, and demonstrates to the Regulator of Social Housing that it how it will remedy its breach of the Home Standard and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard. Once developed, the Plan will return to a future meeting of Cabinet for adoption.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The council commissioned ARK Consultancy (ARK) to conduct an urgent independent investigation to understand the circumstances that led to residents of three Croydon Council-owned flats at 1-87 Regina Road, South Norwood living in the conditions as publicised in the national news report on 22 March 2021. The council also referred itself to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Regulator of Social Housing.
- 3.2 The investigation identified no single reason as to why the situation at Regina Road occurred. ARK's report stated that these issues represented *'a failure to deliver even basic 'core' housing services effectively. They are potentially symptomatic of poor performance across the council's housing service and impact on its ability to drive for self-improvement'*. The five key findings about the housing service were:
- a lack of capacity and competence;

- a poor operating culture with a lack of care and respect for tenants;
- systemic problems in how the council communicates and deals with tenants' concerns and complaints;
- weak performance management, meaning senior managers do not appear to know what is going on; and
- poor use of data and 'intelligence' by the council and its contractors.

3.3 ARK's report recommended, as an immediate action, the realignment of resources to establish:

- a team focussed on policy and performance and control of service delivery.
- a team focussed on improving investment planning to ensure homes are sustainable over the longer-term.
- a strategic group with the power to oversee the development and implementation of a recovery plan and to direct the initial work of the investment planning and control teams.

3.4 ARK also made recommendations for improvement in seven areas, on governance and strategic leadership of the housing service; workforce planning and skills development; cultural and behavioural change both of council staff and contractor operatives; tenant involvement; business intelligence; performance management; and complaints handling.

3.5 The HSE decided not to pursue any action against the Council. However, the Regulator of Social Housing issued a regulatory notice on 20 May 2021, detailing its conclusion that the Council had breached the Home Standard and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard and that consequently there was actual and potential serious detriment to council tenants. The Home Standard requires registered providers to have a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service and to meet all applicable statutory health and safety requirements. The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard requires registered providers to treat tenants with fairness and respect and to have an approach that ensures complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly. The regulator stated that it would work with the Council as it sought to remedy this breach, including monitoring how it delivered its improvement programme and mitigated risks to tenants throughout. It also stated that it would keep under review whether further regulatory action was necessary.

3.6 The Council appointed an Interim Executive Director of Housing, who started on 24 May 2021, and Cabinet approved an Initial Action Plan on 17 May 2021.

## **4 IMPROVEMENT UPDATE**

4.1 There has been progress in implementing the initial action plan developed in response to the ARK report and approved by Cabinet on 17 May 2021. The table at Appendix 1 details progress made in addressing each of the 12 Issues Requiring an Immediate Response identified by ARK. These are reported under the headings:

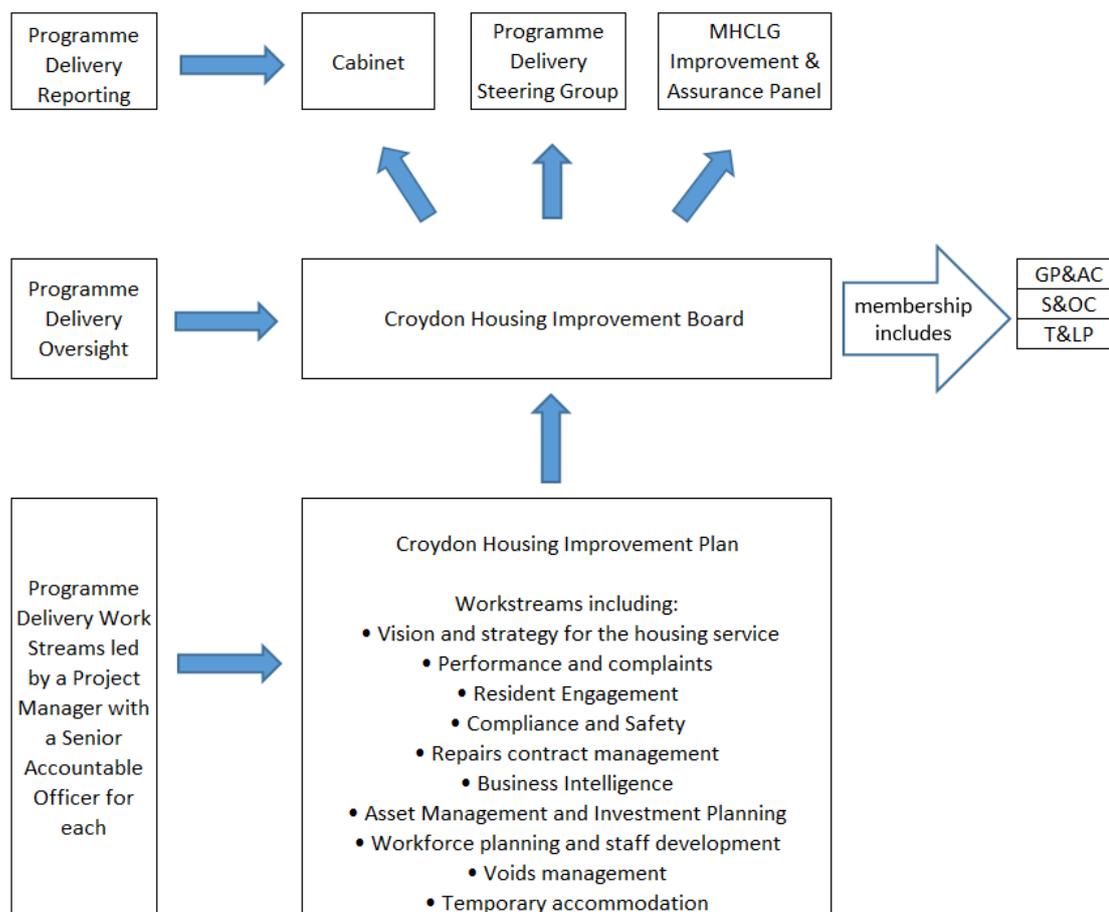
- Compliance and fire safety
  - Repair issues at Regina Road
  - Culture and behaviours
  - Resident engagement and accessibility of the housing service
  - Contract management
  - Asset management.
- 4.2 Development of the Council's Cultural Transformation Programme is underway and will also address the need to transform the culture of the housing service while enhancing skills and capability.
- 4.3 A number of operational and strategic meetings and workshops have been held with Axis to consider future development of the relationship between the Council and its main contractor. There is better use of data to identify properties requiring preventative work.
- 4.4 A cleaning regime has been established, with all high rise blocks receiving a deep clean. Tenants have expressed their appreciation to caretakers.
- 4.5 Officers are improving resident engagement to increase their visibility and accessibility and help to develop a resident-focussed housing service. Roadshows will take place around the borough between July and September. This initiative was piloted at Regina Road and welcomed by residents.
- 4.6 A full and comprehensive technical assessment of the Council's 26 tower blocks is underway, beginning with seven blocks in South Norwood, Waddon and New Addington North wards (including all three blocks in Regina Road). Once completed, the scope of works will be defined and specifications and technical drawings produced, before delivery of the programme of works commences.
- 4.7 Understaffing was identified by ARK as a contributory factor. The following posts are being recruited to in the housing service:
- Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance, started on 28 June
  - Compliance Manager, recruited and starting on 2 August
  - Senior Fire Safety Surveyor, at interview stage
  - Two principal asset management analysts (one a secondment), both at interview stage
  - Recruitment to fill caretaker vacancies is underway.

## **5 HOUSING IMPROVEMENT BOARD**

- 5.1 The Housing Improvement Board will be an independently chaired body reporting and making recommendations to Cabinet. It will influence development of and approve the Croydon Housing Improvement Plan (CHIP), and recommend it to Cabinet for adoption. It will hold the Council to account for its delivery. The Board's Terms of Reference are at Appendix 1 and its part in the governance arrangements for the CHIP are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

- 5.2 The Board will provide support, challenge, oversight and governance that ensures council officers deliver the outcomes of the CHIP, which reflect the aims of the Social Housing White Paper – “The Charter for Social Housing Residents” - with particular emphasis on 1- 6 below):
1. To be safe in your home.
  2. To know how your landlord is performing.
  3. To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly.
  4. To be treated with respect.
  5. To have your voice heard by your landlord.
  6. To have a good quality home to live in.
  7. To be supported to take your first steps to ownership.
- 5.4 It will ensure the Council is constantly seeking to learn from best practice elsewhere and builds a learning methodology into its improvement work. The Board will be able to invite external advice where relevant. In addition, it will monitor the Council to ensure that the Improvement Plan encompasses key provisions in the Building Safety Bill and Fire Safety Bill.
- 5.5 The Board will oversee the Council’s work with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) to ensure the Council resolves the current breach and regains the confidence of both the Regulator and council tenants.
- 5.6 It will agree and implement a communication plan to ensure that stakeholders including residents are both updated on progress and have the opportunity to challenge the delivery of the CHIP.
- 5.7 The Board’s membership will include resident representation and reflect the diversity of the borough, so that it has a strong, authentic resident voice. It is critical that the lived experience of residents is heard, understood and responded to. In addition to its independent chair, it will comprise:
- Two/three representatives of Croydon tenants and residents’ associations (including Regina Road)
  - Tenants & Leaseholder Panel (T&LP) member
  - Croydon Improvement and Assurance Panel representative
  - Local Government Association representative
  - Housing Association/London Council - housing representative
  - Representative(s) of the voluntary and community sector in the area(s) of family support &/or, housing experience &/or equality and diversity.
- 5.8 Elected members, including the Leader and Cabinet member for Housing, and officers, including the Chief Executive and Executive Director of Housing, will be in attendance in an advisory capacity. Others will be invited as required, including the Chairs of the General Purposes and Audit Committee (GPAC) and the Scrutiny and Overview Committee (S&OC).

**Figure 1: Governance Arrangements for delivery of the CHIP**



Key:

- GP&AC – General Purposes and Audit Committee
- S&OC – Scrutiny and Overview Committee
- T&LP – Tenants and Leaseholders Panel

## 6 HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PLAN

6.1 The Housing Improvement Plan will build on the recommendations of the ARK Report and the initial action plan adopted by Cabinet on 17 May 2021. It aims to deliver the best core housing service for residents that the Council can afford, in line with its priorities, and will demonstrate to the Regulator of Social Housing how it will remedy its breach of the Home Standard and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard. It will put in place strengthened governance and management controls, improved tenancy engagement and robust asset management plans, measured by key performance indicators, to ensure council housing across the borough is safe, warm and decent for our residents.

- 6.2 The key work streams of delivery include:
- Vision and strategy for the housing service
  - Performance and complaints
  - Resident Engagement
  - Compliance and Safety

- Management of the Repairs Contract
  - Business Intelligence
  - Asset Management and Investment Planning
  - Workforce Planning and Staff Development
  - Voids management
  - Temporary Accommodation.
- 6.3 The Housing Improvement Plan will incorporate the work required by the Regulator of Social Housing including the voluntary undertaking about improvements to the housing service that the Council will make to the Regulator.
- 6.4 The Council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion will be integral to each of the work streams listed above.
- 6.5 Development of the Plan will be overseen by the Housing Improvement Board, with input from Board members, including resident representatives. It will also be informed by resident feedback from a 'roadshow' door-knocking exercise between July and September 2021.
- 6.6 The Board will recommend the completed Housing Improvement Plan to a future meeting of Cabinet for consideration and adoption.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 As part of its independent investigation, ARK interviewed council staff, councillors and stakeholders as well as tenants from 1-87 Regina Road. Officers and elected members have held a number of meetings with tenants in the council owned blocks in Regina Road.
- 7.2 Officers are organising a 'roadshow' door-knocking exercise across the borough between July and September 2021 to create opportunities for residents to share their experiences of the council's housing services. The feedback residents provide will help to inform the housing improvement plan and deliver a truly resident-focussed housing service. A similar approach has been piloted over the past few weeks at Regina Road with a dedicated team comprising a tenancy sustainment officer, resident involvement officer, community development officer, repairs inspector and caretaker onsite.
- 7.3 Membership of the Housing Improvement Board will include resident representation and reflect the diversity of the borough, so that it has a strong, authentic resident voice. It is critical that the lived experience of residents is heard, understood and responded to. In this way the Council intends to develop the Housing Improvement Plan with tenants and leaseholders.
- 7.4 The Council is consulting with the Regulator of Social Housing and the MHCLG Improvement and Assurance Panel on the Housing Improvement Board Terms of Reference and the Housing Improvement Plan.

- 7.5 The Terms of Reference of the Housing Improvement Board and the Housing Improvement Plan will be informed by input from the Board and the Tenants and Leaseholders Panel.

## **8 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

- 8.1 This draft report is due to go to the Streets, Environment and Homes Scrutiny Subcommittee on 13 July 2021 for pre-decision debate. .

- 8.2 **INSERT relevant information on the outcome of the discussion.**

## **9 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

### **DRAFT**

- 9.1 The financial impact of implementing the Initial Action and Improvement plan will include an unquantified increase in responsive repairs costs; additional staffing costs to create the Policy and Performance and Investment Planning teams; an increase in training and development and other HR support costs and the cost of investment in digital systems and reporting tools (Business Intelligence). Detail of the plans for this increased spend will need to be approved via appropriate governance mechanisms. The financial impact of each workstream will be calculated and brought back to a future meeting of Cabinet, once the Housing Improvement Plan has been finalised and recommended to Cabinet by the Housing Improvement Board.
- 9.2 The Responsive Repairs budget is £14.18m for 2021-22 and the base budget for Planned Maintenance work is £26.771m. Both of these budgets will need to be reviewed for 2021-22 and future years to ensure that assets are appropriately maintained, tenants are provided with services that are fit for purpose and that the long term financial stability of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is secured.

### **2 The effect of the decision**

- 9.3 The challenge will be to ensure that robust controls and monitoring measures are in place around the implementation of improvement plans that must be set out in more detail at a later date.

### **3 Risks**

- 9.45 In developing its action plan the council recognises the importance of listening to its tenants and leaseholders in identifying and reducing risk to them and for the council. There is a long term financial risk in insufficiently investing in HRA assets that must be considered in reviewing and setting the budget.

### **4 Options**

- 10.6 The plan will include a review of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The options to best meet the needs of council tenants and to manage and maintain the HRA stock should be considered as plans are developed. This will include

looking at contracts and building maintenance and considering value for money and the quality of work.

## **5 Future savings/efficiencies**

- 10.7 No opportunities for savings or efficiencies are presented at this stage of the review process.

(Approved by: *A N. Other*, Department Head(s) of Finance/nominated deputy(ies))

## **10. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

**Comments for report to Cabinet on 17 May 2021**

- 10.1 The Head of Litigation and Corporate Law comments on behalf of the interim Director of Law and Governance that the Council is generally responsible for making sure the structure of rented property is kept in good condition (which includes the walls, ceiling, roof and windows); gas and electricity appliances work safely; and shared parts of a building or housing estate are kept in good condition.
- 10.2 The Council's Tenancy or Lease Agreements set out express terms in relation to both the rights and obligations of the Landlord and the Tenant regarding repair and maintenance responsibilities.
- 10.3 Whether a housing disrepair claim can be made against the Council, principally arises out of contract and statute law.
- 10.4 The basis of a claim can arise under s.11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (LTA 1985). In addition, repairing obligations are implied in certain circumstances pursuant to a range of other legislation such as the Defective Premises Act 1972. There are also some standard implied terms developed by the Courts that:
- 1) if a landlord carries out repairs, they must be done with reasonable skill and care using proper materials; and
  - 2) a landlord must not derogate from its grant. This means where a landlord has taken steps, or granted rights to another party, which render the premises unfit or unsuitable for the purpose for which they were let.
- 10.5 Failure to comply with these implied terms can result in a civil claim for damages and specific performance. A claim for compensation can also be made under the Housing Act 1985. Claims in common law nuisance or negligence can similarly arise. Allegations of statutory nuisance can also be pleaded in the Magistrates' Court under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 where this is evidence to support such a claim. A housing conditions claim may include a personal injury element.
- 10.6 Separately the Homes (Fit for Human Habitation) Act 2018 contains implied

covenants that residential rented accommodation is provided and maintained in a state of fitness for human habitation.

- 10.7 The Housing Ombudsman (THO) established under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) is responsible for investigating complaints about member landlords in accordance with a scheme approved by the Secretary of State. The role of THO is to seek to resolve disputes involving members of the Scheme, including making awards of compensation or other remedies when appropriate, and to support effective landlord-resident dispute resolution by others.
- 10.8 In addition, the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 established the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) an executive non-departmental public body of the MHCLG. The RSH sets regulatory standards, codes of practice and guidance for registered providers of social housing. The regulator will consider complaints and referrals to determine whether there is evidence of a breach of its regulatory standards. The Council has self-referred itself to the regulator.
- 10.9 The *Charter for Social Housing Residents – the Social Housing White Paper* published in November 2020 sets out actions the government propose to take to include a Charter for Social Housing Residents, plans for new regulation, a strengthened Housing Ombudsman to speed up complaints, and a set of tenant satisfaction measures that social landlords will have to report against.
- 10.10 The power to appoint staff under the Local Government Act 1972 section 112 is specifically designated as a non-executive function under the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 and sits with the Council’s Head of Paid Service and its Appointments Committee.
- 10.11 The Local Government Act 1999 imposes a requirement on all local authorities to deliver ‘best value’ which requires the Council to demonstrate that it is making arrangements that are economic, efficient and effective and the Council has had regard to the need to secure continuous improvement in how it carries out its work. The investigation and the proposed review of the Council’s housing function will be a significant contributor to meeting the Council’s legal duty of ‘best value’ and therefore this report complies with that legal duty.

Approved by (name), Head of xxx (Job Title) on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance & Deputy Monitoring Officer

## **11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

- 11.1 The Cultural Transformation Programme is essential for successful implementation of the Housing Improvement Plan. The programme will establish and strengthen the behaviours required to transform the housing service, along with the rest of the Council, so that services are delivered in a financially disciplined and motivated way. It will include a programme of training for tenancy officers on setting new standards, bench marking our services and ensuring that outmoded attitudes are addressed. There will be training sessions around customer service, equality and diversity and unconscious bias. Staff will

have clarity on what they have to deliver and have the skills and tools to fulfil their roles effectively, while managers will consistently model the Council's values and behaviours, use systems and data to drive improvement and identify and manage poor performance early.

- 11.2 The senior management restructure and any future planned service changes, will be conducted in accordance with the council's organisational change policies and procedures and consultation with staff and trade unions.

(Approved by: *A. N. Other* on behalf of the Director of Human Resources)

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 12.1 The interim action plan will achieve an improvement in the quality, visibility, accessibility and responsiveness of the housing service to the needs of all tenants and leaseholders and improve housing conditions in council homes for all tenants. There are no negative impacts for people with protected characteristics.
- 12.2 The ARK report found no clear evidence of racial discrimination, but did find that there were wider issues, with all tenants being seen as less worthy of respect. Immediate measures are under way to improve the operating culture and attitude of staff toward tenants and a longer term cultural transformation programme is being planned to ensure council staff and contractor operatives consistently deliver a tenant-focussed service and have a culture of 'safety first', respect and empathy for tenants. The Council will ensure staff are aware of its Code of Conduct, Commitment to Equality and Equality in Employment Policy, and complete Equality and Diversity ELearning.
- 12.3 Given the high percentage of households from black and ethnic minority backgrounds in the Regina Road flats in particular, among homeless households and council homes generally, compared with the borough as a whole, the work to improve council homes will have a positive impact. This is also true of the planned wider ranging review of the housing service – including the quality and cost of temporary accommodation and the review of historic housing allocations (as the percentage of tenants of flats in Regina Road who are from BAME communities is disproportionately high, compared to the percentage of Croydon Council tenants generally and the population in the borough) and assessment of the housing need of those who need to move to larger accommodation, which will lay the basis for a longer term plan for further improvements to the housing service.
- 12.4 The Housing Improvement Plan will need to take account of the needs of vulnerable tenants, some with other protected characteristics, such as disabilities, to ensure that the housing service is responsive to their needs and works with other council services, such as children's services and adult social care, as well as services from external organisations.
- 12.5 As part of its investigation, ARK interviewed council staff, councillors and tenants from 1-87 Regina Road. Residents of the three blocks at Regina Road

have also met with the Leader, Cabinet Member and Ward Councillors. The wider review of the housing service will consider in particular how the council fully involves all its tenants and leaseholders, both in terms of responding to issues raised and in the co-design and co-delivery of services. Tenants and leaseholders will be included in the membership of the Housing Improvement Board that will oversee the review as well as the development and implementation of the more detailed Housing Improvement Plan. Tenants directly affected by the Regina Road situation have been invited to take part. The council will ensure that the resident participation is representative of the council tenants and leaseholders generally and the tenants who occupy the Regina Road flats in particular.

### **13. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

13.1 There is no environmental impact arising from this report.

### **14. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

14.1 There is no crime and disorder impact arising from this report.

### **15. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION**

15.1 This report informs Cabinet of the further progress made in improving housing conditions in council blocks at Regina Road and rebuilding the housing service and increasing resident engagement. It seeks approval for the Terms of Reference for a Housing Improvement Board to inform development of an improvement plan and oversee and challenge the Council's delivery of it. The report also asks Cabinet to note and endorse the approach taken to develop the emerging improvement plan for the housing service before it is put to the Housing Improvement Board for their input.

### **16. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

16.1 TBC

### **17. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

17.1 **WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?**

**YES**

17.2 **HAS A DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT (DPIA) BEEN COMPLETED?**

**NO**

The Interim Executive Director of Housing comments that the housing conditions experienced by tenants of 1-87 Regina Road and other council properties have been noted in order to arrange repair, and their housing needs have been recorded in order to arrange alternative accommodation where this is appropriate. Personal data held as part of housing IT systems within the council is managed carefully and shared with contractors and partners only as appropriate, in line with GDP regulations.

The management and use of personal data to inform the investigation, this report and the subsequent action plan will not vary from established systems and data management that are deemed compliant with GDP regulations.

*(Approved by: Alison Knight, Interim Executive Director of Housing)*

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**CONTACT OFFICER:** John Montes, Senior Strategy Officer, 020 8726 6000 ext 61613

**APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT**

**Appendix 1 Progress on Issues for Immediate Response identified by ARK**  
**Appendix 2 Housing Improvement Board Terms of Reference**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS - None**

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PROGRESS ON ISSUES FOR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE IDENTIFIED BY ARK

ARK Issue for Immediate Response	Progress reported to Cabinet on 17 May 2021	Further progress to report
<b><i>Compliance and Fire Safety</i></b>		
<p>i. Two unfilled posts in the Compliance function which oversees delivery of health and safety activities in the housing service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council is recruiting a Compliance Manager (interviews due on 17 May) and a Senior Fire Safety Surveyor (closing date for applications 19 May), in order to resource the compliance function fully.</li> <li>As at 4 May 2021, 98.68% of all council social housing homes had a valid gas safety certificate. The council is taking intervention and enforcement actions to ensure all homes have a valid safety certificate. At 4 May, 39 homes were subject to enforcement action to ensure gas appliances are serviced. The level of non-compliance has fallen from 276 homes on 9 April to 172 homes (1.32%) without a valid certificate on 4 May. The council is introducing longer term improvement measures to achieve 100% compliance on all gas safety matters.</li> <li>The council has instructed a specialist housing and repairs consultancy to undertake from 10 May 2021 a random dip test of homes that were subject to a high priority repair item to provide assurance, or to inform the need for further compliance audits in the months ahead. These tests will also cover gas compliance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compliance Manager has been recruited and starts on 2 August.</li> <li>Senior Fire Safety Surveyor – 1 post at interview stage</li> <li>Latest percentage compliance on all gas safety matters (currently 99.05% at 10 June, up from 98.68 on 4 May 2021)</li> </ul>
<p>iv. Disruptive work may have compromised fire safety measures – the door to one flat does not meet the required safety standard. ARK has asked for confirmation that works identified in a Fire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The door to a flat that is vacant, pending the repair of damage caused by the leak, will be replaced as specified by the fire risk assessment, as part of those repairs.</li> <li>The other recommendations in the fire risk assessment related to residents' items in communal areas. Most of the items to the rear of the block have been removed as well as some</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All outstanding items identified in the Fire Risk Assessment have been completed.</li> <li>The door to the flat has been replaced with a compliant temporary door, pending delivery of the permanent door.</li> <li>All items have been removed from inside and outside the block (although residents to continue to dump items on communal landings and outside blocks). A dedicated caretaker visits the</li> </ul>

ARK Issue for Immediate Response	Progress reported to Cabinet on 17 May 2021	Further progress to report
<p>Risk Assessment undertaken in October 2020 have been completed in line with recommended timescales.</p>	<p>residents' items in communal areas. Arrangements have been made to remove two remaining items to the rear of the block and action continues for the removal of residents' items that remain in communal areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations in fire risk assessment reports are made into works orders for immediate attention in the small number of cases that are rated as high priority; otherwise they fed into the planned maintenance programme. The council has sought independent assurance by instructing a specialist housing and repairs consultancy to undertake from 10 May 2021 a random dip test of homes that were subject to a high priority repair item to provide assurance, or to inform the need for further compliance audits in the months ahead.</li> </ul>	<p>high rise blocks every day and removes items left on communal hallways and takes them to a holding area outside. Weekly bulk refuse collections are arranged where required.</p>
<p><b><i>Repair issues at Regina Road</i></b></p>		
<p>ii. Problems at Regina Road such as a leaking roof are still treated as 'one-off' repairs, yet disrepair claims against the council are increasing.</p>	<p>Repairs staff have contacted all other tenants in the block, visiting the flats to identify any other disrepair in the building and schedule appropriate action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five tenants from 1-87 Regina Road have now been moved to alternative accommodation. Three are awaiting moves, along with another three from another Regina Road block.</li> <li>• The repairs at Regina Road continue. In block 1-87, issues relating mostly to damage from leaks and damp have been reported in six flats since the last Cabinet report.</li> <li>• On 20 June the roof of 1-87 Regina Road leaked again, with flats on one corner of the building having varying degrees of water penetration. Tenancy staff met the plumber and electrician on site and, with the ward councillors, knocked on all doors to notify tenants of what had happened and the action being taken to resolve the problem, and check whether they were affected. Notes were left where there was no answer. The leak was stopped quickly. Dehumidifiers were not required, the safety of electrical wiring was not compromised and no residents needed to move.</li> <li>• A structural engineer and a roofing contractor made an initial assessment of the roof on 25 June. However, due to conditions</li> </ul>

ARK Issue for Immediate Response	Progress reported to Cabinet on 17 May 2021	Further progress to report
		<p>at the time and the presence of rooftop equipment (such as mobile phone masts and water tanks), further investigations are needed to provide the necessary analysis of the roof condition. These will require exposure of elements of the existing roofing and will take place by 16 July.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An asset condition survey of 1-87 Regina Road has been conducted. The draft report will be issued by 31 July due to ongoing assessment of the roof's condition. These surveys will inform an appraisal of options for the blocks at Regina Road.</li> </ul>
<b>Culture and behaviours</b>		
<p>iii. Tenants were often seen as demanding, difficult to deal with and less worthy of respect. Some council staff lack empathy with tenants. These attitudes appear to be going unchallenged.</p>	<p>Directors, heads of service and managers have been specifically directed to challenge all instances of outmoded attitudes, disrespect and lack of empathy for tenants. Further action is set out in the initial action plan and this will be a key component of the Interim Executive Director of Housing's work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two large meetings were held with all council staff and contractor operatives about expectations with regard to behaviours, with case studies of good practice shared. There will be training sessions around customer service, equality and diversity and unconscious bias.</li> <li>Development of the Council's Cultural Transformation Programme is underway and will also address the need to transform the culture of the housing service while enhancing skills and capability. It will include setting new standards, benchmarking services and ensuring that outmoded attitudes are addressed. There will be training sessions around customer service, equality and diversity, and unconscious bias, as well as other gaps identified through a skills audit.</li> </ul>
<b>Resident Engagement and Accessibility of the Housing Service</b>		
<p>v. ARK has some concerns about allocations, tenants' understanding of their tenancy status and overcrowding in the block that should be explored further.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All tenants at Regina Road now understand their tenancy status. Following the updating of records on household occupants, several tenants have been placed on the transfer list due to the level of overcrowding they are experiencing</li> <li>The allocations policy will not allow anyone needing only one more bedroom to join the housing transfer list, so these families have limited options, such as seeking a mutual exchange with another social housing tenant.</li> <li>Analysis of historic allocations is an action in the Improvement Plan</li> </ul>

ARK Issue for Immediate Response	Progress reported to Cabinet on 17 May 2021	Further progress to report
vi. The council lacks a simple, effective, clear and accessible route to get tenants' concerns and complaints resolved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council staff were present at Regina Road for two weeks to give residents an opportunity to identify any other issues that needed addressing.</li> <li>• A letter to all residents in the block on 29 March gave details of how to contact their tenancy officer. In addition, the council wrote to the residents of all 16 council-owned blocks of flats of similar design with details of how to contact the tenancy service.</li> <li>• The council is in the process of helping Regina Road residents to set up a residents group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers are organising a 'roadshow' door-knocking exercise across the borough between July and September 2021 to create opportunities for residents to share their experiences of the Council's housing services. This feedback will inform the housing improvement plan and help to deliver a truly resident-focused housing service. Blocks and estates where there is little resident representation have been prioritised. Ward councillors will receive the schedule of visits.</li> <li>• Two teams, each comprising an officer from the tenancy and the resident involvement teams, will invite residents to complete a survey which asks for feedback about their experience as a council tenant or leaseholder. Residents will also be encouraged to help the council monitor its housing services by getting involved in resident participation activities. Those not at home will be left a calling card so that they can provide feedback at a time that's suitable for them. An update with useful contacts in the housing service will be published in the next edition of <i>Open House</i>, a council publication sent to all council tenants and leaseholders. We will also ask residents about their preferred form of communication; this feedback will be shared across the service to improve how we engage, so that it's a more positive and satisfactory experience for residents</li> <li>• A similar approach has been piloted at Regina Road with a dedicated team comprising a tenancy sustainment officer, resident involvement officer, community development officer, repairs inspector and caretaker onsite. Residents welcomed the ability to speak to a council officer face to face regarding any issues or concerns and the direct access to a repairs inspector.</li> <li>• Residents at Regina Road have set up their own group. The Council is working to build a relationship with them, working closely with ward councillors and the Tenants and Leaseholders Panel.</li> </ul>
vii. Tenants do not know to whom they should report failures in the day-to-day repairs service or non-repair issues and often do	Council staff were present at Regina Road for two weeks to give residents an opportunity to identify any other issues that needed addressing. A letter to all residents in the block on 29 March gave details of how to contact their tenancy officer. In addition, the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roadshows (with Tenancy and Resident Involvement Officers) are planned for all tower blocks. Information on contacts for raising issues to be handed out. Information on contacts will be included in <i>Open House</i>. See vi above.</li> </ul>

ARK Issue for Immediate Response	Progress reported to Cabinet on 17 May 2021	Further progress to report
not know their tenancy officer.	council wrote to the tenants of all 16 council-owned blocks of flats of similar design with details of how to contact the tenancy service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38 residents of the Regina Road blocks who have not yet had a direct conversation with housing officers will receive a letter offering a conversation or a meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>Contract Management</b>		
viii. Relations between the council and its main contractor appear to focus on monitoring performance rather than actively managing it.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of operational and strategic meetings and workshops have been held with Axis to consider the future development of the relationship between the Council and its main contractor.</li> <li>• Weekly meetings look at cases involving high levels of spending and properties with a high volume of repairs jobs, those relating to disrepair and complex cases.</li> <li>• There is better use of data to identify properties that may need preventative work.</li> <li>• The new Interim Head of repairs and maintenance started on 28 June 2021</li> </ul>
<b>Asset Management</b>		
ix. Intelligence and data exist in 'silos' and do not appear to be drawn together to give a holistic view of asset performance or inform strategic decision making or budget setting.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A data gap analysis will need to be carried out to establish HRA asset intelligence. This analysis may be procured via the existing housing partnering advisor to coordinate as it will need input from multiple services and capacity is limited currently.</li> <li>• The gap analysis also applies to compliance data which is held in different data sets with different services and is not always consistent.</li> <li>• The current APEX asset management system is due to be replaced by December 2021 with a Northgate system. Significant data cleansing will need to take place before then. The new system is expected to improve asset data intelligence sharing and retrieval.</li> <li>• A corporate HRA investment strategy will need to be developed and agreed. This strategy will in part be informed by the stock condition surveys. Discussions are already underway as to how best to share and configure repairs data to inform planned investment decisions.</li> </ul>

ARK Issue for Immediate Response	Progress reported to Cabinet on 17 May 2021	Further progress to report
<p>x. Surveys of half the flats at 1-87 Regina Road identified damp, mould and condensation. The council planned to investigate the installation of a mechanical ventilation system before Covid struck, but the roof was considered 'fit for purpose'. However, leaks into the top floor flats are now common, with patch repairs having limited effect.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset condition survey of 1-87 Regina Road has been conducted. The draft report will be issued by 31 July due to ongoing assessment of the roof's condition (see ii above).</li> </ul>
<p>xi. The high level of responsive repairs demanded suggests the need to proactively invest in homes. The council should assure themselves that key data on stock condition and health and safety responsibilities is accurate.</p>	<p>The council has authorised recruitment of two principal asset management analysts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of two principal asset management analysts (one a secondment) is at interview stage</li> <li>• Asset condition survey of all tower blocks underway, starting with first seven blocks (including those in Regina Road). This will produce accurate and up to date data.</li> <li>• Significant data cleansing will be needed prior to the introduction of a new Northgate asset management system, which is expected to improve asset data intelligence sharing and retrieval (see ix above).</li> </ul>
<p>xii. The council should proactively survey other blocks of similar age to Regina Road and develop clear plans for their future.</p>	<p>Precautionary checks will be conducted at all 26 council-owned high-rise blocks, starting in May 2021.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A full and comprehensive technical assessment of the Council's 26 tower blocks is underway, beginning with seven blocks in South Norwood, New Addington North and Waddon wards (including all three blocks in Regina Road). The surveys are led by independent building surveyors and examine the following aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Structural integrity of the building</li> <li>○ General condition of stock and key components (against the Decent Homes Standard)</li> <li>○ Fire safety requirements</li> <li>○ General compliance, health and safety (against the Housing Health and Safety Rating System)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

ARK Issue for Immediate Response	Progress reported to Cabinet on 17 May 2021	Further progress to report
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Collation of available statutory certification and documentation.</li> <li>● Having understood the type, urgency, volume and cost of works that need to be undertaken across the tower blocks, the scope of works will be defined and specifications and technical drawings produced, before delivery of the programme of works commences. External expertise will be commissioned to inspect and sign-off all works. In addition, reactive and planned works will be coordinated in future and new condition surveys undertaken across the estate on a five-year cycle.</li> </ul>

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**DRAFT CROYDON HOUSING IMPROVEMENT BOARD  
TERMS OF REFERENCE & MEMBERSHIP**

<b>NAME</b>	Croydon Housing Improvement Board
<b>DATE</b>	June 2021 (Board to commence September 2021, due to Cabinet timetable and Board recruitment requirements)
<b>CHAIR</b>	TBC – Independent Chair
<b>FREQUENCY</b>	Every other month - public meetings
<b>MEMBERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent Chair</li> <li>• Two/three representatives of Croydon Tenants &amp; Residents' Associations (including Regina Road)</li> <li>• Member of Tenants &amp; Leaseholder Panel</li> <li>• Croydon Improvement Panel Representative</li> <li>• Local Government Association Representative</li> <li>• Housing Association/London Council - Housing Representative</li> <li>• Representative(s) of voluntary &amp; community sector in the area(s) of family support &amp;/or, housing experience &amp;/or equality and diversity</li> </ul> <p>Membership should reflect the diverse demography of the Borough, and should have a strong, authentic resident voice across the types of tenancy available in the Borough. It is critical that the lived experience of residents is heard, understood and responded to.</p>
<b>IN ATTENDANCE (ADVISORY)</b>	<p>Leader of the Council Cabinet Member for Housing Opposition Cabinet Member for Housing Chief Executive Executive Director, Housing Director of Public Health Director of Finance, Investment and Risk (S151) Executive Director Health, Well Being and Adults (DASS) Executive Director Children, Families and Education (DCS) Equalities Manager Communications Officer</p> <p>Other invitees as required, including Chair of GPAC and Chair of Scrutiny, again representing the diverse demography of the Borough.</p>

<p><b>PURPOSE</b></p>	<p>The Croydon Housing Improvement Board will be an independently chaired body reporting and making recommendations to Cabinet. It will influence the development of and approve the Croydon Housing Improvement Plan (CHIP), and recommend it to Cabinet for adoption. It will hold the Council to account for the delivery of the CHIP through the review of performance improvement data against a plan of action approved by both the cabinet, and also the Board themselves.</p> <p>Through their regular meetings the Board will support and challenge the implementation of the CHIP which aims to deliver an improved housing service for local residents, with strengthened governance and management controls, improved tenancy engagement and robust asset management plans, measured by key performance indicators, to ensure council housing across the borough is safe, warm and decent for our residents.</p> <p>The Board will provide challenge, oversight and governance that ensures council officers deliver the outcomes of the CHIP, which reflect the aims of the Social Housing White Paper – “The Charter for Social Housing Residents” with particular emphasis on 1- 6 below):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To be safe in your home.</li> <li>2. To know how your landlord is performing.</li> <li>3. To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly.</li> <li>4. To be treated with respect.</li> <li>5. To have your voice heard by your landlord.</li> <li>6. To have a good quality home to live in.</li> <li>7. To be supported to take your first steps to ownership.</li> </ol> <p>In addition the Board will monitor the council to ensure that the Improvement Plan encompasses key provisions in the Building Safety Bill and Fire Safety Bill.</p> <p>The Board will monitor the council to ensure compliance with the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) to ensure the current breach is dealt with and confidence is restored with the Regulator.</p> <p>The Board will review the impact of the Croydon Housing Improvement Plan through the use of data, showing progress against clear, measurable objectives within the plan. Each objective will have a baseline measure(s) to show a starting point, a target for improvement, and interim milestones. The Board will receive reports as to</p>
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	progress, including escalations around blockers, and risks, as well as areas of expedited achievement &/or over/early delivery.
<b>Constituent parts of the Plan</b>	<p>The CHIP builds on the recommendations of the Ark Report May 2021 and Cabinet Report with an initial action plan.</p> <p>The key work streams of delivery include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational improvement</li> <li>• Strategy and Policy Improvement</li> <li>• Resident Experience</li> <li>• Cultural Improvement</li> </ul> <p>The council's commitment to equalities, diversity and inclusion will be integral to each of the work streams listed above.</p>
<b>ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR</b>	The Board will nominate and agree a vice-chair from its membership who can deputise in the absence of the chair.
<b>ROLE OF BOARD</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Influencing and approval of the Croydon Housing Improvement Plan (CHIP).</li> <li>2. The Board will hold LBC elected Members and Chief Officers to account for the delivery of the CHIP to ensure sustainable improvement is achieved within the agreed timescales and cost.</li> <li>3. Provide challenge and opportunities to ensure that actions taken meet the improvement outcomes that are required of the Council.</li> <li>4. Ensure that the Council hears, understands, and responds to lived experience of residents housed within the borough.</li> <li>5. Ensure the Council is constantly seeking to learn from best practice elsewhere and builds a learning methodology into its improvement work. The Board to invite external advice where relevant.</li> <li>6. Refer to Scrutiny &amp; Overview and/or GPAC as appropriate to develop items of work for further enquiry, and receive reports and referrals from both bodies where relevant.</li> <li>7. Agree a suite of performance measures, aligned to the Council's Corporate Performance Framework, to assure the delivery of the Improvement Plan.</li> </ol>

	<p>8. Report quarterly to Cabinet on the progress that the Council is making on its improvement journey. These reports to be public.</p> <p>9. Agree and implement a communication plan with the Council to ensure that stakeholders are both updated on progress and have the opportunity to challenge the delivery of the CHIP.</p> <p>10. Ensure that the appropriate officers keep residents, council staff and all members are informed on a timely basis of the progress on implementing the CHIP.</p>
<b>ACCOUNTABILITY &amp; REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER BODIES</b>	<p>The Board will report to Cabinet, led by The Leader, Cllr Hamida Ali, and provide updates to both the Renewing Croydon Programme Steering Group, led by the Chief Executive, Katherine Kerswell, and also the MHCLG Improvement &amp; Assurance Panel led by Tony McArdle.</p> <p>The membership of the Board are able to invite members of all/any other relevant body or board to support the agenda.</p> <p>The Board will provide an external layer of governance and accountability for the Council. It does not preclude or prevent Scrutiny &amp; Overview or GPAC from fulfilling the duties as described in the Council Constitution. The Chairs of both committees will be invited to attend the Board.</p>
<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>	<p>The Board will maintain its own risk register in regard to the delivery of the CHIP which will be incorporated within the Council's risk register and will receive a report on risk at each meeting.</p>
<b>REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</b>	<p>The Board will be able to receive representations from members of the public and have a question and answer session mirroring the principles used in the Council's constitution for this.</p>
<b>MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD</b>	<p>Recommendations for changes to membership of the Board can come from the Board or the council and will be proposed to Cabinet for decision.</p>
<b>BOARD MEETINGS</b>	<p>Meetings of the Board will be held every other month and the agenda and papers will be circulated one week in advance.</p> <p>Meetings will be held in public and will be up to two hours in duration.</p>

<b>STANDARD AGENDA ITEMS</b>	<p>Agenda to be set by the Chair as they see fit, standard items may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review minutes, actions and matters arising</li> <li>• Feedback from Representatives of Croydon Tenants &amp; Residents' Associations, and Tenants &amp; Leaseholder Panel.</li> <li>• Any public representation or questions.</li> <li>• Review and challenge to the progress relating to the CHIP.</li> <li>• Review of risks relating to improvement activities.</li> </ul>
<b>SUPPORT TO BOARD</b>	<p>The Board will be supported by the Executive Support Officer to the Executive Director of Housing.</p>
<b>REVIEW</b>	<p>At its initial meeting, the Board will review and agree its Terms of Reference. There will be a review of the Terms of Reference every six months as a minimum, and any changes will be recommended to Cabinet for decision.</p>
<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	<p>The Council's Member Code of Conduct requires Members to declare disclosable pecuniary interests and any other interest that they may have within the published register of interests and also any items for consideration by the Board.</p> <p>These will be recorded in the minutes and a separate register will be maintained for Board members.</p> <p>All members of the Board will be expected to abide by the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)</p>
<b>BOARD REVIEW</b>	<p>The Board will conduct a mid-year review of its progress to ensure it is meeting its aims and adding value to the improvement work of the housing directorate.</p> <p>At the end of the year the Board will conduct a full review of its progress and a public report will be produced for Cabinet, RSH and MHCLG.</p>

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**For general release**

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Streets Environment and Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee</b> <b>13 July 2021</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Review of Temporary Accommodation</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Alison Knight, Executive Director of Housing</b> <b>Yvonne Murray , Director of Housing Assessment and Solutions</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice, Cabinet Member for Homes</b>
<b>PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:</b>	<b>Zulfiqar Mulak, MBE Operations Manager Housing Solutions</b>

**CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:**

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

[Corporate Plan for Croydon 2018-2022](#)

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	<b>This item was identified as an item for Scrutiny.</b>
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	<b>To receive an update on the current situation with temporary accommodation in Croydon.</b>

## 1. Executive Summary

This report sets out an outline of the current temporary accommodation situation in Croydon, the report will set out an overview of temporary accommodation including current accommodation costs, related costs and the current budget pressures. The report sets out an overview of temporary accommodation, the current risks and issues and present ideas for future actions

## 2. Review of Temporary Accommodation

### ***Overview of Temporary Accommodation***

2.1 Croydon like many London Boroughs has been experiencing a steady increase in homelessness for a number of years. In response to the demand for

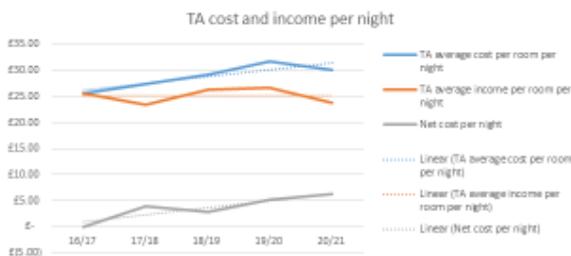
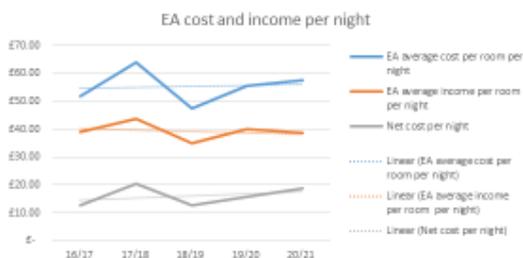
increased temporary accommodation the Council has set up a number of schemes which have historically been used to accommodate households where the Council has accepted statutory duties under homeless legislation.

2.2 Demand for both temporary and permanent housing in Croydon outweighs supply. The Covid 19 pandemic has increased demand, and the recent end to evictions will further increase demand. Croydon like many London Borough's has high numbers in temporary accommodation. Over recent years several initiatives have been put in place aimed at increasing supply of TA (temporary accommodation) and reducing numbers in EA (emergency accommodation). Whilst these initiatives have resulted in some increases in supply/short-term cost reductions and reductions in EA numbers (from over 850 families in EA in periods of 2016/17 to under 600 for periods during 2020/21) the structure of the Council's schemes and their costs, the impact of external factors (such as the increases in LHA – local housing allowance - in April and May 2020) together with the Council's use of Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) has meant that the deficit in the budget has been increasing, growth has not been agreed, and budget provision is therefore disconnected from anticipated activity making it hard to interpret variances between actuals and budget.

2.3 Current data available shows the Council currently has 3,731 households in temporary accommodation of which 686 are in emergency accommodation. The current average net costs of emergency and temporary accommodation are set out below.

## Accommodation costs

- Net cost of EA is on average the cost of TA – almost any move from EA to TA will be cost effective
- Costs have been rising with inflation whilst income has remained steady due to frozen LHA/Housing Benefit Regulations which restrict rent charges in Private Leased Accommodation
- EA currently costs on average £6,891 per annum and TA costs £2,274 per annum



2.4 In looking at the current financial position it is important to note that the demand for temporary accommodation remains high as the number of households applying as homeless (i.e. homeless applications requiring a decision) will likely continue to rise. This will be exacerbated by the lifting of the ban on evictions that was temporarily placed during the Covid19 pandemic.

### **3. Gateway Impact**

At present the Gateway team in housing provide a dedicated early intervention support service to households who approach the Council threatened with homelessness. An element of this service is focused on income maximisation and employment support to resolve issues and using discretionary housing benefit payments where possible to prevent households becoming statutorily homeless and requiring temporary accommodation. The service provides a holistic wrap around support aimed at resettling households in alternative accommodation by offering support with a range of issues which include employment, tenancy sustainment and family welfare.

### **4. Issues and Future Risks**

There are a number of critical issues and future risks that impact temporary accommodation in Croydon. This list is extensive but the critical issues are:

- The lack of new supply. At present the Council is finding it difficult to procure new supply to meet demand because the current offer to landlords and agents is not competitive in the local PRS market.
- The gap in funding between the January 2011 LHA rates (which limit the maximum charge to occupiers in private sector leased accommodation) and current LHA rates (paid to landlords/providers) which means the Council makes a financial loss.
- The use of 600 Council owned units as TA limits allocations of permanent housing.
- The lack of social housing supply which is limiting move on from temporary accommodation as the Council on average only lets around 600 units of social housing per annum. This situation is exacerbated by the shortage of larger units, particularly 3 and 4 bedroom units.
- The need for adapted accommodation for households in TA which leads to extended stay and legal challenges.
- The need to increase prevention activity.
- Meeting specific needs for social care clients which includes safeguarding and other critical social care cases such as hospital discharge.

### **5. Ideas for Future Action**

In view of the issues set out above there is a need to plan and implement robust options for the future of emergency and temporary accommodation supply.

The critical issues that need to be looked at include:

- Developing a 'Croydon offer' that is consistent across the Council.
- Review rent guarantee for private sector landlords as this appears to be a deciding factor in increasing supply.
- Ensuring future procurement takes place at or below LHA rates to enable affordability.
- Convert top ups to one off incentives to bridge the gap between LHA rates and landlord aspirations for rents.
- Explore future options for delivery of long-term TA via private sector leasing.
- Ensuring income for current and future portfolio is maximised.
- Maximising opportunities through Capital Letters.

- Reviewing incentives, using insurance schemes and pro-active intervention with current TA residents.
- Develop self-help schemes.
- Maximise use of DHP.
- Increasing prevention.
- Increasing and enforcing discharge of duty to PRS.
- Exploring out of London options such as Home Finder.
- Establish a resettlement team for residents in temporary accommodation, particularly larger households who have been in TA for an extensive period and have limited prospects of successfully bidding for social housing.

## 6. Conclusion & Recommendations

It is clear that urgent action is needed to address the budget deficit, lack of supply /move-on from temporary accommodation as well as the need to establish a robust TA Strategy going forward. In the wake of revised recent focus on resident engagement it is also necessary to take forward pro-active engagement with residents in temporary accommodation which includes those in nightly paid accommodation.

At the meeting, there will be a presentation which will go through the following issues for Scrutiny to consider:

1. Agree to the two pilots recently submitted in the business case for the Temporary Accommodation Strategy as on a 'spend to save' basis these will increase prevention outcomes (reducing demand), deliver increased supply and generate some in-year savings.
2. To boost supply and prevention that the increased incentives are agreed immediately.
3. That funding is considered and approved for project leads to develop and implement a long term and sustainable TA Strategy.
4. A review of the current structure/delivery of TA service is undertaken with a view to streamlining all aspects of the service in one team which will include a focused move on and resettlement team.
5. That work is commissioned to review the Current TA framework with suppliers with a view to implementing a revised framework that address's current supply and budget issues.
6. A one Croydon offer is implemented for acquisitions from private landlords and agents that is used across the Council including social care.
7. A focused review is undertaken of single homelessness and rough sleeping activity as this cohort represent a high proportion of approaches.
8. Agreement to an incentive package to assist with Croylease conversions onto the new lease, reducing R&M cost and creating a more portable scheme

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**CONTACT OFFICER:** Zulfiqar Mulak, MBE, Operations Manager Housing Solutions

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:** None

**APPENDICES:** None

# Agenda Item 7

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>SCRUTINY STREETS ENVIRONMENT AND HOMES SUB- COMMITTEE</b> <b>13 JULY 2021</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Simon Trevaskis, Senior Democratic Service and Governance Officer- Scrutiny</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	The Work Programme is scheduled for consideration at every ordinary meeting of the Streets Environment and Homes Scrutiny Sub - Committee.
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	To consider any additions, amendments or changes to the agreed work programme for the Committee in 2021/22.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This agenda item details the Committee's work programme for the 2021/22 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.

## 2. WORK PROGRAMME

### 2.1 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.

### 2.2 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 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.

### 2.3 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.

### **3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Sub-Committee is recommended to agree the Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22 with any agreed amendments.
- 3.2 The Sub-Committee is recommended to agree that topic reports be produced for relevant substantive agenda items in the future.

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**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:** None

#### **APPENDIX 1**

Work Programme 2021/22 for the Scrutiny Streets Environment and Homes Sub-Committee.

**Streets, Environment & Homes Committee****Chair:** Leila Ben-Hassel**Committee Members:** Jeet Bains (Vice-Chair), Jade Appleton, Luke Clancy, Stuart Collins, Paul Scott, Caragh Skipper

Workstream Priority

W 5: Supporting local people and keeping them safe. To focus on sustainable economic recovery post-pandemic (especially the Growth Zone) and on the expansion in social housing stock.

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Agenda Items</b>	<b>Report Lead</b>
<b>13 July 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Improvement Plan and Board</li> <li>• Review of Temporary Accommodation</li> </ul>	<b>Alison Knight</b> <b>John Montes</b>
<b>28 September 2020</b>	It is anticipated that this meeting will focus on the priority areas in workstream 5, however the agenda will be confirmed as soon as possible before the date to ensure that there is capacity for the Committee to consider any other emerging urgent issues.	
<b>16 November 2021</b>	It is anticipated that this meeting will focus on the priority areas in workstream 5, however the agenda will be confirmed as soon as possible before the date to ensure that there is capacity for the Committee to consider any other emerging urgent issues.	
<b>1 February 2022</b>	It is anticipated that this meeting will focus on the priority areas in workstream 5, however the agenda will be confirmed as soon as possible before the date to ensure that there is capacity for the Committee to consider any other emerging urgent issues.	
<b>15 March 2022</b>	It is anticipated that this meeting will focus on the priority areas in workstream 5, however the agenda will be confirmed as soon as	

	possible before the date to ensure that there is capacity for the Committee to consider any other emerging urgent issues.	
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