

# Scrutiny & Overview Committee Agenda



To: Councillors Rowenna Davis (Chair), Richard Chatterjee (Vice-Chair), Leila Ben-Hassel (Deputy-Chair), Jade Appleton, Sean Fitzsimons and Simon Fox

Reserve Members: Sue Bennett, Sherwan Chowdhury, Amy Foster, Gayle Gander, Mohammed Islam and Joseph Lee

A meeting of the **Scrutiny & Overview Committee** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Thursday, 16 February 2023** at **6.30 pm** in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX**.

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

Simon Trevaskis  
Senior Democratic Services & Governance  
Officer - Scrutiny  
simon.trevaskis@croydon.gov.uk  
www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings  
Wednesday, 8 February 2023

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

If you would like to record the meeting, we ask that you read the guidance on the recording of public meetings [here](#) before attending.

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 Simon Trevaskis as detailed above.

## **AGENDA – PART A**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

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

**2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 34)**

To approve the Part A and Part B minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023 and the minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2023 as an accurate record.

**3. Disclosure of Interests**

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

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

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

**5. Budget Scrutiny 2023-24 (Pages 35 - 38)**

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee is asked to:-

1. Note the Cabinet report presenting the Administration's proposed Budget for 2023-24.
2. Consider the conclusions of the Committee on 2023-24 budget, to be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 22 February 2023, including:-
  - a) Are the savings deliverable, sustainable and not an unacceptable risk?
  - b) Is the impact on service users and the wider community understood?
  - c) Have all reasonable alternative options been explored and do no better options exist?
  - d) Consider whether there are any further conclusions on the 2023-24 budget the Committee would like to bring to the attention of Cabinet.

**Note:** The Cabinet report is to follow.

**6. Scrutiny Recommendations (Pages 39 - 54)**

The Scrutiny & Overview Committee is asked to

1. Approve the recommendations made by its Sub-Committee's for submission to the Executive Mayor for his consideration.
2. Review the response provided by Mayor to recommendations made by the Scrutiny & Overview Committee.

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

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

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

**PART B**

**8. Part B Minutes of a Previous Meeting (Pages 55 - 56)**

The Part B minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2023 are attached for the approval of the Committee as an accurate record.

This page is intentionally left blank

# Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

## Scrutiny & Overview Committee

Meeting held on Monday, 23 January 2023 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors Rowenna Davis (Chair), Richard Chatterjee (Vice Chair), Leila Ben Hassel (Deputy-Chair), Sean Fitzsimons and Simon Fox.

**Also Present** Councillors Jeet Bains (Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration), Jason Cummings (Cabinet Member for Finance)

**Apologies** Councillor Jade Appleton

### PART A

#### 1/23 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

#### 2/23 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest made at the meeting.

#### 3/23 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There was no urgent business for discussion by the Scrutiny & Overview Committee at this meeting.

#### 4/23 **Pre-Decision Scrutiny: Whitgift Indemnity and Land Transfer Agreement (ILTA) Remedy**

The Committee considered a report set out on pages 17 to 32 of the agenda and an accompanying confidential report on pages 37 to 44 of the same agenda concerning the Whitgift indemnity and Land Transfer Agreement (ILTA) Remedy. The report was due to be considered by the Mayor at the Cabinet meeting on 25 January 2023 and the report had been included on the agenda to give the Committee the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations.

The Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration, Councillor Jeet Bains, the Corporate Director for Sustainable Communities, Regeneration & Economic Recovery, Nick Hibberd, Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration, Heather Cheesbrough and Head of Commercial & Property Law, Kiri Bailey, attended the meeting for this item.

During the introduction to the report the following was noted: -

- The ILTA provided for a remedy under the contract with the Croydon Limited Partnership (CLP) for works to the value of £4m indexed and was not a cash sum.
- The Council was seeking the remedy because CLP had not redeveloped the Whitgift within the time frame specified in the contract.
- The deadline to issue the remedy was 23 Feb 2023. If it was not issued by that date, then CLP would be released from any of its obligations specified in the contract.
- The remedy required CLP to carry out improvements to the North End area of the town centre to the value of £4m indexed. These improvements included work to activate the Alders site, improvements to the Whitgift Mall, the provision of a consultation space to inform the development of a Town Centre Masterplan and connectivity improvements to the town from Wellesley Road.

Following the introduction, the Committee was afforded the opportunity to ask questions on the information provided. The first question asked whether there was a timeline by which the works identified through the remedy had to be delivered. It was advised that although the remedy notice needed to be served by 23 February 2023, conversations continued with CLP about the timeframe for delivery although the contract specified that work should be delivered promptly.

In response to a follow-up question about whether there was any guarantee the remedy work would proceed, it was highlighted that CLP had worked hard to redevelop the Whitgift Centre over the previous nine years, resulting in two planning applications. However, if the original plans had progressed the town would have had an old fashioned town centre, based predominately around retail provision, which was no longer fit for purpose. The Council would

continue to work with CLP on delivering a more viable town centre informed by community engagement.

As notice of the remedy could have been served from February 2022, it was questioned why the Council was only moving ahead with it now. It was advised that the Council had been seeking to find an agreeable way forward through negotiations with CLP. As these discussions had not resulted in a resolution and to preserve the Council's position, it was no proposed that the notice of the remedy would be triggered

It was accepted that there was a considerable weight of public expectation upon the redevelopment of the town centre, but it needed to be recognised that the two developers, who owned the land involved were responsible for delivering any redevelopment and the Council's role was as the local planning authority and separately using its influence to promote the best outcome for Croydon. The ILTA was an agreement with the Council for the use of its compulsory purchase powers (CPO) and the remedy providing for works to the value of £4m indexed was to indemnify the Council against the cost of the CPO.

In response to a question about whether there had been consideration given to inserting other forms of compensation into the contract, it was advised that as none of the officers who had negotiated the contract were still employed by the Council, it was not possible to confirm. However, the advisors engaged by Council were specialists in their field and as such there could be a reasonable level of assurance that robust advice had been provided.

It was questioned whether the Council could ask for compensation for the loss of business rate income, that would have been generated through the Growth Zone scheme, from the non-development of the town centre. It was highlighted that at the start of the negotiations on the regeneration in 2010-11 the intention was to have a new mall which would solve all the issues of the town centre and increase business rates. The Growth Zone was a much later development and as such there was no link between the two.

Regarding the process for deciding what work was delivered under the remedy, it was advised that this was under negotiation with CLP. The key aspiration was for the work to lead to a new planning application from CLP, which had been the focus for the team working on the remedy. Any planning application was likely to be based upon a phased approach rather than a complete redevelopment proposed in the original applications. Any application

would be based upon on a masterplan, the development of which, including public consultation, would be delivered through the remedy. The Council would work closely with CLP to benchmark any work undertaken to ensure value was achieved, but the key outcome would be the redevelopment of the Town Centre. It was confirmed that there were robust governance processes in place to sign off any work, with a commitment to transparency and the release of information wherever possible.

It was agreed that it was important for the Council and CLP to work together to lead the way forward on the town centre. The Mayor had asked officers to start work on creating a vision for the town centre which was likely to be completed later in the year. Separately, it would be the responsibility of CLP to lead on the development of a masterplan and a planning application. It was advised that it would typically take approximately twelve months to deliver a masterplan document.

Regarding the activation of the Alders building, it was advised that CLP had hoped to have kept the existing traders in place, but due to significant health and safety issues relating to its condition, had needed to close the building. CLP had spent a considerable sum to rectify electrical, plumbing and escalator issues and there was an intention to find meanwhile uses for the building. It was originally hoped that this would happen before Christmas, but further maintenance work had been identified. The remedy also included investment for improvements in the Whitgift shopping centre

It was disappointing to note that the Council had been unsuccessful in its bid for levelling up funding, with only seven London boroughs awarded funding. The Committee asked to be kept informed of any feedback received from the Secretary of State on the reasons why Croydon's bid had been unsuccessful. The Cabinet Member confirmed that he would continue to work with the Mayor and officers to make the case for Croydon and pursue any new funding opportunities that became available. It was also important for the Council to ensure that its public realm infrastructure was well looked after as this would send out a positive message about Croydon.

It was accepted that the economy had changed in Croydon and a review was needed to inform the economic vision and to ensure there was a realistic understanding of the local economy. This would help to ensure that there was a clear strategy for office retention and job creation in borough, which were essential to growing a strong economy. It was suggested that any economic vision should be supplemented by a Business Retention Strategy and a plan for attracting inward investment.



At this stage the meeting moved into a confidential session to discuss the information set out in the Part B report. The discussion focussed on the timescales for the remedy and the legal process involved. A full summary of the discussion is set out in the confidential Part B minutes of the meeting.

Following the return to a public session the Chair brought this item to a conclusion by thanking those present for their attendance at the meeting and their engagement with the questions of the Committee.

### **Actions arising from the meeting**

Following the discussion of the Whitgift Indemnity and Land Transfer Agreement Remedy item at the meeting, the Committee agreed the following actions that would be followed up after the meeting.

1. The Committee that the Town Centre would continue to be an of focus in its work programme and that it would want the opportunity to review the following once available:-
  - a. The Croydon Limited Partnership (CLP) Town Centre Masterplan
  - b. The Mayor of Croydon's Town Centre Vision document
  - c. An update on the delivery of the works identified in the 25 January 2023 Cabinet report following the conclusion of the six month negotiation period with CLP.
2. The Committee would ask that any feedback provided by the Secretary of State on the failure of the Council's bid for levelling up funding is shared with the members of the Committee once received.

## Conclusions

1. The Committee welcomed the proposed use indemnity and land transfer remedy by the Council as a means of leveraging funding for improvement work in the Town Centre.
2. Although it was acknowledged that the work negotiated through the remedy process was subject to ongoing negotiation with CLP, given public frustration with the perceived inactivity in the redevelopment of the town centre and the redevelopment of the town centre being a key part of the Mayor's Business Plan, realistic time scales for delivery needed to be defined as soon as possible to manage expectation and provide accountability.
3. The Committee welcomed confirmation that the Mayor had asked officers to begin work on developing a Town Centre Vision and would request that pre-decision scrutiny is built into the timetable for the production of this document.
4. It was disappointing that the Council had not been successful in its bid for levelling-up funding, which increased the importance of working with CLP to redevelop the town centre. However, the Committee was encouraged by the Cabinet Member's commitment to pursuing all avenues for leveraging funding into the town centre and would suggest engaging with the Mayor of London, if not already doing so.
5. It was highlighted that job creation and office retention was key to the economic health of the borough and confirmation that an Economic Strategy was needed was endorsed by the Committee.

5/23

### **Pre-Decision Scrutiny: People & Cultural Transformation Strategy 2022-2026**

The Committee considered a report set out in the supplementary agenda, due to be considered by the Mayor at the Cabinet meeting on 25 January 2023, which proposed a new People and Cultural Transformation Strategy for adoption. The report had been included on the agenda to give the Committee the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed new Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings, Chief People Officer, Dean Shoesmith, EDI & Workforce ICBS/Tea Talks & Programme Managers for Crossing the Threshold, Barbara Grant, Staff Network representative, Kay Oshin, Guardians Scheme representative, Liz Uwadiae, Crossing the Threshold Facilitators, Olu Oludare and Klaudia Petecka attended the meeting for this item.

A presentation was delivered by the Chief People Officer, to introduce the report which summarised the staff engagement that had informed the strategy and outlined the next steps. A copy of the presentation can be viewed on the following link: -

<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s42711/People%20Strategy%20-%20Presentation.pdf>

Following this presentation, the Committee heard from several different staff representatives who had been involved in the development of the strategy. The responses given provided reassurance to the Committee that staff had been actively engaged in the development of the strategy through the 'Crossing the Threshold' workshops, as well as staff survey feedback, and that it could demonstrably be seen how feedback had shaped its content. The delivery of the next steps, including the co-creation of an action plan to deliver the strategy, would be crucial to carrying staff along the improvement journey. It was highlighted that there was an intent from senior management to make a positive change across the Council and that they were open to listening to feedback from staff.

Following the feedback from the staff representatives, the Committee was provided with the opportunity to ask questions about the strategy. The first question asked whether staff had been given the opportunity to feed into the final version of the strategy presented in the Cabinet report. It was confirmed that not all staff had been consulted on the final version, but there had been engagement with stakeholder groups, such as the staff networks. The responses given in the recent staff survey had also helped to shape the final document. The next step would be to engage with staff on the seven pillars outlined in the strategy and the actions behind them, with a communications plan being prepared.

It was noted that it was critical to get the pay offer to staff right as the Council was competing with 32 other local authorities and other employers. Given the financial challenges facing the Council it would be difficult to deliver the pay

offer strand but it was essential to find the right balance and external expertise may be required to assist with this. Brand management was important as improving the image of the Council as an employer would help with the recruitment and retention of staff.

Given that there had been other similar strategies in the past, it was questioned how the People and Cultural Transformation Strategy would be different. It was advised that crucially, engagement had helped to shape the strategy. By having meaningful engagement with staff, it would help to ensure there was a higher likelihood of success. The data gathered from the 'Crossing the Threshold' programme provided a strong representation of the voice of staff, as did feedback from the staff survey. It was essential to have proper reporting processes in place to measure progress and ensure that those responsible for delivery could be held to account, taking a data-driven approach. It was agreed that the culture of the Council had improved over the past couple of years since the first Report in the Public Interest.

It was commented that some parts of the strategy were not written in as accessible format as would be expected. This was acknowledged and it was agreed that the wording would be reviewed to ensure the intention was as clear as possible.

In response to a question about the support given to staff to attend the 'Crossing the Threshold' workshops and respond to the staff survey, it was advised that time was given during working hours for this. Other mechanisms such as staff and managers feeding back on their team engagement was also used. It was important to ensure that a variety of different avenues for feedback were available to ensure the widest possible response.

It was acknowledged that it would be important to ensure that the overall position of the Council was reflected in the strategy. This included working towards the wider aim of creating a sustainable council where there was employment certainty and staff were paid appropriately. To achieve this, it may require the Council to deliver a smaller range of services, but these would have to be delivered well.

It was highlighted that streamlining structures could sometimes have a detrimental impact on employee engagement which would need to be regularly tested as any changes progressed. It was suggested that a system of temperature checking changes made to the workforce should be included

in the strategy to ensure that they were being embedded and leading to a positive impact.

Although the Committee welcomed the engagement with staff to develop the strategy, it was highlighted that it was difficult to be absolutely reassured on the strategy with actions or timelines for delivery. It was advised that the next step was to talk to Workforce Board and CMT about the process for co-designing the action plan with staff. The plan had always been to get the strategy agreed and then develop the action plan with CMT, and informed by staff. It was expected that it would take approximately three months to develop the action plan. The Committee agreed that it would want the opportunity to revisit the strategy once the action plan had been developed later in the year.

It was agreed that when the Committee revisited the strategy, the accompanying report would need to include a range of indicators that could be used to judge progress. In response to a request for specific data the following was confirmed: -

- Staff turnover currently stood at 14%, which was on the high side.
- Up until the end of December 2022 in the current Council year, the level of recruitment was exceeding the number of staff leaving the organisation.
- The gender pay gap was 0%, the disability pay gap was less than 1% and the ethnicity pay gap was 7%. Although the ethnicity pay gap was higher, it was highlighted that it was significantly less than the national average of 15%.

At this stage the Chair brought this item to a conclusion by thanking those present for their attendance at the meeting and their engagement with the questions of the Committee.

### **Actions arising from the meeting**

Following the discussion of the People Strategy item at the meeting, the Committee agreed the following actions that would be followed up after the meeting.

3. The Committee agreed that it wanted to further scrutinise the People and Cultural Transformation Strategy in the summer following the creation of both the action plan and the communications plan to accompany the strategy.

## **Conclusions**

1. The Committee welcomed the extensive engagement with staff that had informed the creation of the People and Cultural Transformation Strategy and agreed that the feedback provided by staff at the meeting provided reassurance that their views had been reflected in the strategy.
2. The plan to develop the action plan for the delivery of the strategy through co-design with staff was also welcomed. The Committee agreed it would like the opportunity to review the action plan once had been created.
3. There was concern about the clarity of some parts of the strategy and the proposal to review the language used to make it more accessible was supported.
4. It was agreed that robust workforce data was needed to underpin the delivery of the People and Cultural Transformation Strategy and it was pleasing to note that work had already begun on improving data collection and that the key performance indicators would be developed in consultation with staff.

6/23

## **Scrutiny Work Programme 2022-23**

The Committee considered a report on pages 33 to 36 of the agenda which presented the work programme for review.

It was highlighted that an item on the new voter id requirements was being considered for the work programme later in the year, which could be informed by the experience from those local authorities with elections in May 2023. It was also noted that further items on the Town Centre and the People and Cultural Transformation Strategy would need to be scheduled, as discussed earlier in the evening.

**Resolved:** That the work programme for the Scrutiny & Overview Committee is noted.

7/23 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The following motion was moved by Councillor Davis and seconded by Councillor Chatterjee to exclude the press and public:

“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.”

The motion was put and it was agreed by the Committee to exclude the press and public for the remainder of the meeting.

8/23 **Pre-Decision Scrutiny: Whitgift Indemnity and Land Transfer Agreement (ILTA) Remedy**

Please note that a full confidential minute has been produced of the Committee’s discussion held in the exempt session.

The meeting ended at 9.37pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

.....  
.....

This page is intentionally left blank



## Scrutiny & Overview Committee

Meeting held on Monday, 30 January 2023 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### MINUTES

- Present:** Councillors Rowenna Davis (Chair), Richard Chatterjee (Vice Chair), Leila Ben Hassel (Deputy-Chair), Jade Appleton, Sean Fitzsimons and Simon Fox.
- Also Present** Councillors Jason Cummings (Cabinet Member for Finance), Patsy Cummings, Maria Gatland (Cabinet Member for Children & Young People), Andy Stranack (Cabinet Member for Communities & Culture) and Alasdair Stewart (Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance)

### PART A

9/22 **Disclosure of Interests**

Councillor Jade Appleton disclosed an interest relating to item 4 as an employee of London Councils, who had been negotiating with Home Office and Clearsprings Ready Homes over Pan-London Scheme for asylum seekers.

10/22 **Urgent Business (if any)**

The Vice Chair of the Committee, Councillor Richard Chatterjee addressed the meeting to put on record that a statement given to the press by the Chair following the previous meeting held on 23 January 2023 was not necessarily reflective of his recollection of the meeting concerning the discussion of the Committee on the Whitgift Indemnity and Land Transfer Agreement (ILTA) Remedy report.

11/22 **Support provided by the Council to asylum seekers, those seeking refuge under the Homes for Ukraine scheme and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children**

The Committee considered a report set out on pages 5 to 16 of the agenda which provided an overview of the support provided by the Council to asylum seekers, those seeking refuge under the Homes for Ukraine scheme and unaccompanied asylum seeking children. The report had been included on

the agenda to provide the Committee with an understanding of the support provided by the Council.

The Cabinet Member for Children & Young People, Councillor Maria Gatland, Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education, Debbie Jones, Director of Quality, Commissioning & Procurement, Kerry Crichlow, Public Health Programme Manager, Jason D'Silva-Williams, the Operations Director from Clearsprings Ready Homes, Tina Rea, Service Delivery Lead from the Home Office, Chris Hennigan and Ian McMeeken, a host for the Homes for Ukraine scheme, were in attendance at the meeting for this item.

Before the Committee commenced its questioning of the information provided, the Chair put on record the thanks of the Committee for the clearly written, informative report.

The initial focus of the Committee was on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, with the first question asking what would happen if a placement did not work and how the risk of homelessness was mitigated against. In response it was confirmed that the Council was not involved in the original matching of guests from Ukraine with hosts, but when they arrived in Croydon the Council had to make sure the housing needs were appropriate. If there was a breakdown in the relationship between guests and their host, the Government maintained a list of others who had expressed an interest in acting as a host. Although the Council did not have the ability to create a matching service locally, it did try to keep the networks alive in the borough. The Council also worked with other boroughs to find suitable opportunities.

Regarding mitigating against the risk of homelessness, it was advised that there was little the Council could do to mitigate against the risk of a breakdown in the relationship between a guest and their host. Schemes to help people move on to their own accommodation in the private rental sector were being looked at, but this could be a challenge without references and was also linked to the provision of universal credit support from the Government.

In response to a question about whether more could be done to signpost the support available for Ukrainians in London, it was acknowledged that the team were conscious of the need to put out information on the Council's website as it became available. It was agreed that the frequently asked questions of the website would be reviewed to ensure there was sufficient advice on managing breakdowns and the provision of new opportunities.

It was questioned whether there was support available for Ukrainians who did not arrive in the country via the Homes for Ukraine scheme. It was explained that there were three different visa routes and there had been instances where people had thought they were included in the Homes for Ukraine scheme but were not entitled to the support available under that scheme because they used a different visa route.

It was highlighted that the Government was reducing the grant funding available to councils for supporting new arrivals from £10,500 to £5900 per person and that it would be supplemented by a new £500m scheme to support the acquisition of new housing stock and topping up the Homelessness Prevention Grant. As such further information was requested on the new scheme and the potential impact it may have on the borough, particularly from other local authorities looking to house people in Croydon. It was advised that since the new scheme had first been announced in December, no further information had been forthcoming and until this detail was available it was not possible to provide a definitive answer. The Committee agreed that it would like to be updated on the scheme once this information was available.

It was questioned whether there had been a significant increase in workload for the safeguarding teams from new arrivals and how this was being managed. It was advised that safeguarding had been flagged as a risk early on, so team had worked with families to gain assurance that there were no safeguarding issues. There had been significant lobbying, both politically by the Mayor and through officers, to flag the additional strain placed upon the already stretched system.

Regarding the support available to help Ukrainians arriving in the borough to find employment, it was advised that the Council worked closely with the Department for Work and Pensions and Croydon Works to find both education and employment opportunities. People were also encouraged to actively engage with the range of services on offer.

Michael McMeekan attended the meeting to provide his own insight as a host under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This highlighted the issue that local schools did not seem to be aware of the funding available to support children placed in their schools after arriving in the borough under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. In response, it was advised that the Council had been required to go through a long process to match up each child and their location. This was then followed by a second process to filter all the

Ukrainians in schools to identify which are eligible for the scheme. This work had now been completed and payment would be provided in February 2023.

The discussion moved on to asylum seeking adults and families placed in Croydon, with the Vice-Chair providing feedback on a visit with the Chair to a hotel in the north of the borough used as initial accommodation for asylum seekers while their claims are processed. During this report, the following was noted: -

- The hotel opened as accommodation for asylum seekers in September 2021.
- The hotel tried to place single women near the reception so they felt safer.
- Following reports about the behaviour of security guards towards residents, Clearspring Ready Homes had replaced the original contractor with a different security contractor.
- Food was prepared for the residents by an external catering company. It was heard that the previous catering company had supplied food that was unappetising for the residents, with a lot of waste and many left hungry. An anecdotal example was given of a pregnant resident becoming malnourished to such an extent that her labour was induced.
- Each resident was provided with £8.24 on pre-paid cards each week for living expenses and as expenses were not provided for residents travelling 3 miles or less, they tended to walk everywhere. Although schoolchildren could get free travel, this could be problematic for parents who needed to accompany children to and from school.
- One resident family reported accumulating several issues over a nine month period, including a mouse and mould behind a wardrobe, but having complained about these on a single occasion were moved.
- The hotel rooms were designed for occupation by visitors for a limited period, typically guests on holiday or on business, rather than by families for an open-ended period (the current longest resident occupants had been at the hotel for 14 months).

- The rooms did not have sufficient space for larger items such as buggies or bikes, although there was a common area near reception where the buggies could be stored, and bikes could be stored outside.
- There was concern about the use of underground rooms as accommodation for any length of time given the lack of natural light and the cramped living conditions in these rooms.
- There was no external on-site amenity space for children, as the only open space was the car park at the front of the hotel. However, there was a park nearby that was used by residents.
- The two key issues raised by the visit were the fact that these hotels were not designed for long-term occupation, and that the length of stay was the result of the time taken by the Home Office to process asylum seeking applications.

Following this summary, the Committee continued to question the information provided in the report. The next question asked whether there was an issue with missing children in the accommodation provided by Clearsprings Ready Homes and whether the front of house staff were trained to deal with vulnerable children. It was outlined that the hotel procurement was engaged on a back to back contract basis and although Clearsprings provided retained an overview, the contractors were expected to provide services to the agreed specification. Very few children went missing and when case had occurred it was often the case of the child being lost and then quickly found again. When any child was identified as missing it would be reported to the safeguarding team and the Home Office Safeguarding Hub as a priority. Clearsprings had a high profile notification system in place which required accommodation providers to report on a range of different issues from low level maintenance problems to more serious concerns. Fourteen courses were provided on a range of issues including one on handling the cases of vulnerable children and people. The sub-contractors were required to evidence where staff had received training, which was tested by Clearspring to verify.

It was questioned how the issue raised on the behaviour of former security staff had been handled. It was advised that the incident had been addressed as soon as Clearsprings had been notified. This included the security team being removed from the site and the contract. It was acknowledged that there was sometimes a breakdown in reporting such as when service users did not want to make a formal report.

It was highlighted that residents could log any concerns 24 hours a day via the Migrant Help service, which was a Home Office contractor engaged for issue resolution. Once an issue was logged, the accommodation providers had to report on the issue and meet contracted time scales to rectify.

There was concern raised about the level of service provided by Migrant Help, with anecdotal feedback indicating that it could be difficult to contact the service. It was acknowledged that feedback had been received from service users on the challenges of contacting Migrant Help. Waiting times had come down, but there were still issues to be addressed. There were a series of key performance indicators that were mostly met by the provider which were scrutinised monthly by a Contract Management Group.

As the report highlighted that representatives from the Home Office and Clearsprings had not always attend the monthly monitoring and the monthly safeguarding meetings, this was raised as a concern. It was acknowledged that there had been instances where they had not been able to attend forums and it was hoped that apologies had been forthcoming. The Committee agreed that given the vulnerability of the residents it was important that the partners make every effort to attend these meetings

It was acknowledged that the use of windowless rooms was not acceptable and it was confirmed there was an intention to reduce the usage of these rooms for longer term accommodation, but this was dependent on the level of capacity available within the system to move residents to more suitable rooms.

There was also concern raised about having a mixed cohort sharing the accommodation with both single men accommodated in the same hotel as women and families. This was recognised as an issue, and the Home Office looked for as much separation as possible, with some hotels allocated specifically for single men, families, or single females respectively. However, at present, capacity across the estate was at a premium which resulted in a mixed cohort. The Committee suggested that in these instances steps should be taken to provide as much separation as possible within the accommodation.

In response to a question about engagement with ward councillors, it was advised that there was a series of multi-agency forums in the areas where asylum seekers are housed, which ward councillors were often welcomed to attend. If councillors had a concern about a specific site, these should be

raised directly with officers. The Committee agreed that it would be useful to formally invite ward councillors to the multi-agency forum meetings.

Further information on the healthcare support available for residents was requested. It was advised that residents were able to access local GPs, but this presented its own issues as local GP services could become overwhelmed. This had resulted in a focus on priorities areas, such as pregnant women, young mothers, children, and adults with pre-existing conditions. It was acknowledged that health partners were not able to provide the level of care they would like to be able to due to the stretch in the system. Another issue for residents was having to travel to access healthcare, as if it was under three miles, they had to make own way, which could be a challenge. The Committee agreed that this may be an area for the Health & Social Care Sub-Committee to investigate in further detail.

Given there was a surplus of places in Croydon schools, it was questioned why there was an issue with children accessing education. It was explained that the main issues related to children aged 15 to 16 in Key Stage 4. As the curriculum for this age group was set at the start of the year, it could present a challenge for a child entering mid-year. The Education team were looking at creative opportunities and hoped to have a solution in place shortly. The Committee agreed that this may be an issue for the Children & Young People Sub-Committee to investigate in further details.

At the conclusion of this item the Chair thanked those present for their attendance at the meeting and their engagement with the questions of the Committee.

### **Actions arising from the meeting**

Following the discussion of the Asylum Seeker item at the meeting, the Committee agreed the following actions that would be followed up after the meeting.

1. That a response is sent to the Home Office and Clearsprings Ready Homes to advise of: -
  - a. The Committee's concern about the potential risk of having a mixed cohort sharing initial accomodation and would recommend that every effort is made to ensure that in the first

instance hotels are allocated to a specific cohort and if not possible due to capacity issues that all options are explored for providing clear separation to safeguard potentially vulnerable people and children.

- b. The concern raised from anecdotal feedback about the level of service provided by Migrant Help and request that this is investigated and a response provided to the Committee on the outcome.
  - c. A request for local Ward Councillors to be formally invited to the multi-agency forum meetings on a regular basis.
2. That a further report is provided, when appropriate, for the Scrutiny & Overview Committee on the full implications of the new scheme introduced by the Government to cover reduced funding under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This report should also include an assessment of the risks from other council's housing people in borough when they moved on from the Homes for Ukraine scheme, as well as the extra pressures on an already overly stretched private rented sector, and the work to mitigate this risk.
  3. It was agreed that the Children & Young People Sub-Committee would schedule in its work programme a report on the support available for children arriving in the borough on asylum schemes, particularly for those who were not in full-time education. This will include making sure there is proper access to education, particularly KS4 where the Council has sometimes struggled to find school places for children. This will include follow up work to make sure that schools are being properly funded for taking in Ukrainian refugees as per national government support schemes.
  4. It was agreed that the Health & Social Care Sub-Committee would schedule in its work programme a report on the healthcare support for asylum seekers staying in the borough, given concerns raised about the lack of provision in the report.



## Conclusions

Following its discussion of the Asylum Seeker report, the Scrutiny & Overview Committee reached the following conclusions: -

1. The Committee welcomed the quality of the report provided for its meeting and thanked officers for all their work in supporting those staying in the borough under asylum schemes.
2. The Committee agreed that the delay in processing asylum applications which resulted in people staying for months in hotels not intended for long term habitation was putting unsustainable and unacceptable pressure on vulnerable people and impacting upon the Council's resources.
3. The Committee put on record their disappointment that representatives from the partners involved had missed the monthly monitoring and monthly safeguarding meetings, given their importance in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the people staying in the initial accommodation across the borough.
4. It was disappointing that Government guidance on the new funding arrangements for the Homes for Ukraine scheme had not yet been provided to Council officers despite being announced in December 2022 as they do not currently know how the new funding will work or if it will be sufficient. There is a real risk of increased homelessness if this is not properly planned and provided for.
5. The Committee welcomed confirmation that the Mayor was picking up many of the concerns raised at the meeting with the Home Office and other partners.
6. The Committee agreed that that the Council webpage for the Homes for Ukraine scheme needed to be regularly updated with signposting to other support for Ukrainians and wider networks.

**a Voluntary Community & Faith Sector Support**

The Committee considered a report set out on pages 17 to 26 of the agenda which gave an overview of the support provided to the voluntary, community and faith sector from the Council. This report was included on the agenda as part of the Committee's Budget Scrutiny workstream to allow the Committee to seek reassurance on the Council's relationship with the voluntary sector following confirmation that the Community Fund would expire on 31 March 2022.

Cabinet Members for Community & Culture, Councillor Andy Stranack, Corporate Director for Resources, Jane West, Assistant Chief Executive, Elaine Jackson, Corporate Director for Adult Social Care & Health, Annette McPartland, Director of Policies, Programmes & Performance, Gavin Handford and the Chief Executive of Croydon Voluntary Action, Steve Phaure attended the meeting for this item.

During the introduction to the report from the Cabinet Member for Communities & Culture it was noted that due to the significant financial challenges facing the Council, it was not possible to continue the Community Fund once it expired in March 2023. Even so, the Council would continue to be the largest supporter of the community & voluntary sector (CVS) in the borough.

Those organisations directly affected by the discontinuation of the Community Fund had been informed in November and this had been followed up with a series of one to one meetings, the outcomes from which had helped to inform the new ways of working. These ideas included increasing the number of contracts available for local providers to bid for, the Council partnering with CVS providers on government contracts, venue hire, supporting CVS organisation to access health funding and looking at where CVS organisations could provide Council services. Thanks was given to all the groups for their positive ideas and challenge and to the thousands of volunteers in the borough.

Steve Phaure, the Chief Executive from Croydon Voluntary Action had been invited to the meeting to provide insight on behalf of the CVS, during which it was noted that there was widespread buy-in to resetting the sector's

relationship with the Council. There was a good basis upon which to build in the borough and the consultation had resulted in a positive list of actions. However, there was a need to firm up these proposals with a robust plan for delivery as there was an immediate crisis from the reduction in funding available that needed a short term response.

Issues for the sector included the need to find a way of supporting preventative work in the borough and being clear on what funds were being raised for which would accompany a fundraising strategy. Fundraising should have a focus on both internal commissioning and attracting funding from outside of the borough. Social value commissioning should also be revisited to find a mechanism by which it can work. Above all, it was important to ensure that the support provided for vulnerable residents remained at the heart of the conversation going forward.

Following the introduction and the feedback from Croydon Voluntary Action, the Committee had the opportunity to ask questions on the information provided. The first question related to the end of the Community Fund and whether the new arrangements would be in place to support organisations from the end of March. CVA confirmed that they did not expect the Council to have its new ways of working to be in place within that timeframe, but it was hoped that an action plan would be in place to move forward at pace.

This was followed up with a question about what the plan was for the immediate future. As previously noted, it was confirmed that all 31 groups impacted by the end of the Community Fund had been invited to attend a one to one meeting to discuss the way forward. Two groups had indicated that they were unlikely to survive without Community Fund, so the Council was helping them to access different funding sources. Going forward, it would be important to hold regular meetings with community groups and to ensure that any new funding routes were directed towards the local CVS.

In response to a request for practical examples of support that had been given, it was highlighted that the Council had assisted the New Addington Pathfinders group with identifying funding available from the Great London Authority (GLA) and written a letter of support for their bid.

There was a question about whether the local meaningful proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) could be used to provide ongoing grant funding for local organisations. This was raised as the current funding

provided through CIL was ending. It was agreed that this would be followed up outside of the meeting to clarify.

As it had been previously noted that one target under the new ways of working was to increase the level of grant funding locally, it was questioned whether there would be an increase in the level of local grant funding over the next twelve months. It was advised that it would not be possible to provide a definitive target at the current time as it was reliant on contractual and procurement changes being introduced. There was a commitment to delivering change in this area, but it was likely take place over several year and include a focus on social value.

It was questioned whether there had been feedback sought from local groups about the potential impact from the discontinuation of rent subsidies and rate relief. It was confirmed that it would be difficult for some groups, but it was about being creative on sources of funding. The Council had consulted with all affected groups on a one to one basis and was looking at the different types of support it could provide including options such as community asset transfers and shared spaces. Given the financial challenges facing the Council it was important to look at options such as maximising the use of council assets.

It was highlighted that should the Council stop funding services; it may lead to unforeseen costs in the future and as such it was questioned whether there had been any analysis of the potential impact. It was advised that it had become clear that if the Council stopped commissioning advice services, they could be difficult to restart, so alternative funding for these services was being explored. Groups that provided care and support services were also being looked at and reassurance was given that any shortfall in provision was being met.

At the conclusion of this item the Chair thanked those present for their attendance at the meeting and their engagement with the questions of the Committee.

### **Actions arising from the meeting**

Following the discussion of the Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector Support item at the meeting, the Committee agreed the following actions that would be followed up after the meeting.

1. The Committee requests that feedback is provided on the key outcomes from the Mayor's meeting with representatives from the voluntary, community and faith sector on Friday, 3 February 2023.
2. That clarification is provided on the Council's ability to allocate part of the local meaningful proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy for grant funding of local voluntary, community and faith organisations.
3. It was agreed that the Council relationship with the voluntary, community and sector would be scheduled for review by the Committee to evaluate the success of the Council's new approach to its relationship with the sector.

## **Conclusions**

Following its discussion of the Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector support report, the Scrutiny & Overview Committee reached the following conclusions:

1. The Committee welcomed confirmation from both the Council and Croydon Voluntary Action of their commitment to building a deeper relationship between the Council and the important voluntary, community and faith sector in our borough.
2. There were serious concerns flagged about the risk that the new ways of working with the voluntary, community and faith sector would be in place in time to support some of the organisations with the transition away from the funding provided by the Community Fund when it ended in March 2023. Given the risk that some community groups may not be able to adapt to the new arrangements in time, the need to implement tangible support plans needed to be a priority and treated with urgency to prevent the risk to services and activities being lost.
3. The Committee welcomed the commitment to looking at creative ways of providing support to the sector, particularly reviewing the use of social value in contract arrangements.

**b Transformation Project Deep Dives**

The Committee considered a report set out on pages 27 to 30 of the agenda which provided a further information on two of the transformation projects listed in the Cabinet Budget report considered by the Committee at its 6 December 2022 meeting. The report had been requested to allow the Committee to review in further detail two of the projects listed, namely the Income & Debt Review and Commercial and Income Opportunities.

Cabinet Members for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings, Corporate Director for Resources, Jane West, Assistant Chief Executive, Elaine Jackson, Corporate Director for Adult Social Care & Health, Annette McPartland, attended the meeting for this item.

The first question on this item asked whether the aim of the fees and charges review was to improve governance or to improve income streams. It was confirmed that it would be both, as it was aimed at ensuring that fees and charges were updated annually on an incremental basis rather than larger increases every few years.

Regarding the £500,000 estimated increased income from the fees and charges review, it was confirmed that this equated to a small proportion of the uncollected debt to the Council. The viability of sharing debt collection services with other local authorities would also be explored as a means of reducing costs and increasing income. Reassurance was given that although the figure of £500,000 increased income was realistic, it had not been built into 2023-24 as further work was needed to gain a greater level of certainty on its delivery before it could be considered for inclusion in the budget.

It was confirmed that there was a National Fraud Initiative which cross referenced information across the Council, with it highlighted that improved correlation of data would increase the instances of fraud identified. As the use of data had not been as good as expected, it was likely that initially there would be several quick wins once improvement work started, before levelling out.

A question was asked about the potential income from digital bus shelters, as an agreement for the delivery of this project had first been agreed in November 2021. It was confirmed that the project was currently under discussion and an update would be provided for Members in the near future, as soon as it was possible to do so.

In response to a question about the value that could be generated from contractors who provided services to different directorates, it was advised that this was still being mapped, so it was not possible to provide an exact figure at this stage. This work would be prioritised towards the areas that provided the biggest opportunity, but it would help to improve contract management processes across the Council.

Regarding the Premier Supply Programme, it was questioned how the projected £200,000 income would be achieved. It was explained that this would be achieved by getting more suppliers into the programme and that there were a few areas of the Council that still had to introduce their suppliers to the programme.

It was confirmed that no figures had been included in the report for the Commercial Income project as it was still being worked through and the opportunities needed to be properly scoped before any potential targets could be confirmed. It was important to have a degree of rigour in the process to identify figures as this would help to ensure people could be held to account on delivery.

At the conclusion of this item the Chair thanked those present for their attendance at the meeting and their engagement with the questions of the Committee.

### **Actions arising from the meeting**

Following the discussion of the Transformation Projects Deep Dives item at the meeting, the Committee agreed the following actions that would be followed up after the meeting.

1. The Committee asks that confirmation is provided on the estimated timelines and key milestones for each transformations project once defined, to assist with planning the scrutiny work programme.

## **Conclusions**

Following its discussion of the Transformation Projects Deep Dive report, the Scrutiny & Overview Committee reached the following conclusions: -

1. It was accepted that the two projects reviewed by the Committee were still in their infancy and in the process of being mapped out. This meant that any assurance on these projects would need to be reserved until further information was available.
2. The Committee would like to see further evidence of the transformation programmes being mapped out with key milestones and time lines, once available. This will provide reassurance that processes are being followed and enable the Committee to hold people to account through timetabling further scrutiny at the appropriate time.
3. The Committee welcomed confirmation that work was underway to map out the Council's contracts, as this was an area of work that had previously been flagged as a concern by Scrutiny.
4. Confirmation that that the Programme Management Office was leading a project to introduce a new project management system was welcomed, as improved reporting was essential to ensuring there was a robust monitoring system in place.
5. Confirmation was welcomed that the savings targets attributed to the transformation projects in the 30 November 2022 Cabinet report had not been included the 2023-24 budget unless it was clear how it would be delivered.
6. It was agreed that a range of intended outcomes for the transformation projects, beyond purely financial savings, needed to be set out during the mapping phase of each project to ensure clarity of purpose.

## **13/22 Budget Engagement**

The Chair advised the Committee that due to the large number of responses submitted on the Budget engagement it had not been possible to analysis the



results in time for a report to be prepared for this meeting. Instead, the report would be available for the next Committee meeting on 16 February 2023.

As the item was not available, the Committee took the opportunity to outline the areas for further scrutiny when the Budget was considered at its next meeting on 16 February. The areas outlined were: -

- The biggest risks to the delivery of the budget
- The level of reserves held and the justification for this.
- An explanation of the implications for different levels of Council Tax increase.
- An explanation of any final assumptions included in the Budget.
- An equalities impact assessment.
- A summary of the budget engagement feedback
- Analysis of the main options discounted for inclusion in the Budget.

14/22 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This motion was not required.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

.....  
.....

This page is intentionally left blank

# Agenda Item 5

## LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

<b>REPORT:</b>	<b>Scrutiny and Overview Committee</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>16 February 2023</b>
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>Budget Scrutiny 2023-24</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Jane West Corporate Director of Resources &amp; S151 Officer</b>
<b>PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:</b>	<b>Jane West Corporate Director of Resources &amp; S151 Officer</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBER:</b>	<b>Jason Perry Executive Mayor  Councillor Jason Cummings Cabinet Member for Finance</b>
<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	This report has been included on the agenda for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee to inform the budget scrutiny process.
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	<p>The Scrutiny and Overview Committee is asked to:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the Cabinet report presenting the Administration's proposed Budget for 2023-24.</li> <li>2. Consider the conclusions of the Committee on 2023-24 budget, to be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 22 February 2023, including:-             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Are the savings deliverable, sustainable and not an unacceptable risk?</li> <li>b) Is the impact on service users and the wider community understood?</li> <li>c) Have all reasonable alternative options been explored and do no better options exist?</li> <li>d) Consider whether there are any further conclusions on the 2023-24 budget the Committee would like to bring to the attention of Cabinet.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>PUBLIC/EXEMPT:</b>	Public

### 1      2023-24 Budget

- 1.1. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee will be provided with a final update on the progress made with setting the 2023-24 budget. This will include the latest budget reports scheduled to be published as part of the Cabinet agenda for 22 February 2023.
- 1.2. The purpose of this update is to inform the budget scrutiny process, from which the Committee will be looking to reach a view on the deliverability and sustainability of the 2023-24 Budget. The Committee will also be looking to ensure that there is an understanding of the key risks and ownership of the proposals by the Council's political leadership.
- 1.3. To prepare for the budget scrutiny process, members of the Committee have received two training sessions, one delivered by the Local Government Association and one delivered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny on best practice for budget scrutiny. The Committee has also received a briefing from the Council's Section 151 Officer on the key budget principles and the approach to setting the budget.
- 1.4. At the Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 6 December 2022, the agenda included and update on the setting of the 2023-24 Budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy. From the discussion a number of areas were identified for further investigation, such as for the Children & Young People Sub-Committee and the Health & Social Care Sub-Committee should undertake deep dives on the ongoing transformation savings programmes in Children and Adult Social Care. Since the meeting the Scrutiny Chairs have followed up these issues directly with reports taken to respective meetings of the Sub-Committee.
- 1.5. At the meetings of the four sub-Committees (Children & Young People, Health & Social Care, Homes and Streets & Environment) in January/February each had a budget challenge item focusing on specific areas of the budget identified for further scrutiny. The outcome from these sessions will be fed back to this Scrutiny & Overview Committee meeting on 16 February 2023.
- 1.6. As this meeting is the final opportunity for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee to consider the budget setting process, at the conclusion of this item the Committee should finalise its conclusions on the 2023-24 Budget. These conclusions will be reported to the Cabinet meeting on 22 February.

## **2 APPENDICES**

- 2.1. Cabinet Budget Report – To follow

## **3 BUDGET DOCUMENTS REVIEWED BY SCRUTINY**

- 3.1. To aid the Committee in its final consideration of the budget, a series of links are provided below to agenda papers and minutes (where available at the time of publication) already considered over January/February 2023.

## **Scrutiny & Overview Committee - Tuesday, 6th December, 2022 6.30 pm**

### **Items Considered:**

[2023-24 Budget Update, Medium Term Financial Strategy and Savings Proposals](#)

### **Minutes**

## **Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee - Tuesday, 17th January, 2023 6.30 pm**

### **Items Considered:**

[Budget Scrutiny Challenge](#)

This item focussed on the following three areas:

- The review of care packages for children with disabilities aged 0-17
- The impact of the reduction in spend on the adolescent service
- Impact of the review of the Front Door and practices

### **Draft Minutes**

## **Scrutiny Health & Social Care Sub-Committee - Tuesday, 24th January, 2023 6.30 pm**

### **Items Considered:**

[Adult Social Care & Health Directorate - Budget & Performance](#)

This item focussed on the following three areas:

- 2022/23 Period 7 (October 2022) budget and savings position.
- 2023/24 indicative savings (as of 10 January 2023).
- The Council's position in relation to the benchmarked key performance indicators.

### **Draft Minutes**

## **Scrutiny & Overview Committee - Monday, 30th January, 2023 6.30 pm**

### **Items Considered:**

[Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector Support](#)

**Scrutiny Streets & Environment Sub-Committee - Tuesday, 31st January, 2023  
6.30 pm**

**Items Considered:**

[Budget Scrutiny Challenge](#)

This item focussed on the following three areas:

- Parking Services (including information on the Parking Policy review)
- Planning Service (including information on the Planning Transformation programme)
- Building Control (including a short update on the Building Control transformation programme)

[Period 7 Financial Performance Report](#)

**Draft Minutes**

**Scrutiny Homes Sub-Committee - Monday, 6th February, 2023 6.30 pm**

**Items Considered:**

[Update on the Housing Revenue Account and Housing General Fund Budget](#)

This item focussed on the following four areas:

- Housing Revenue Account P7 outturn position.
- Housing Revenue Account Business Plan key headlines.
- Housing General Fund budget.
- Housing General Fund P7 outturn position.

## LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

<b>REPORT:</b>	<b>Scrutiny and Overview Committee</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>16 February 2023</b>
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>Scrutiny Recommendations</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Simon Trevaskis – Senior Democratic Services &amp; Governance Officer - Scrutiny</b>
<b>PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:</b>	<b>Councillor Rowenna Davis – Chair of the Scrutiny &amp; Overview Committee</b>
<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	<p>The Scrutiny &amp; Overview Procedure Rules in the Council’s Constitution requires recommendations from Scrutiny Sub-Committee’s to be submitted to the Committee for its comment and consideration, before approving their submission to the appropriate decision maker.</p> <p>The Cabinet response to recommendations made by the Scrutiny &amp; Overview Committee is provided for the Committee’s information.</p>
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	<p>The Scrutiny &amp; Overview Committee is asked to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve the recommendations made by its Sub-Committee’s for submission to the Executive Mayor for his consideration.</li> <li>2. Review the response provided by Mayor to recommendations made by the Scrutiny &amp; Overview Committee.</li> </ol>
<b>PUBLIC/EXEMPT:</b>	<b>Public</b>

### 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1. The This report sets out for the consideration of the Committee the recommendations arising from recent meetings of its Sub-Committee. These are presented in accordance with the Council’s Constitution for approval by the Committee for submission to the appropriate decision maker.
- 1.2. This report also sets out the response from the Mayor in Cabinet to recommendations made by the Scrutiny & Overview Committee. This is provided for the information of the Committee.

## **2 APPENDICES**

- 2.1. Appendices 1 to 4: Cabinet Response to Recommendations Made by the Scrutiny & Overview Committee.

Appendix 5: Recommendations from Scrutiny Sub-Committees

## **3 SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1. Paragraph 1.5 (iii & iv) of Part 4E – Scrutiny and Overview Procedure Rules of the Council’s Constitution sets out the requirement that recommendations made by Scrutiny Sub-Committees should be submitted for the consideration of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee, to approve their submission to the relevant decision maker.
- 3.2 The exception to this requirement is for specific powers delegated to Sub-Committee relating to the scrutiny of Health Services and the duties and functions of the Council as an Education Authority. For these matters, the relevant Sub-Committee can make direct recommendations.
- 3.3 Set out in Appendix 5 is the recommendations arising from the meeting of the Streets and Environment Sub-Committee
- 3.4 The Committee is asked to review this recommendation and confirm its approval for them to be submitted to the next available meeting of the Cabinet for consideration.

## **4 CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The rights of scrutiny to make recommendations to the Cabinet, Council, non-Executive Committee, Partner Agency or Partnership Board is set out in Section 8 of Part 4E – Scrutiny and Overview Procedure Rules of the Council’s Constitution.
- 4.2 When making a recommendation to the Cabinet, a response needs to be given within two months to confirm whether the recommendation has been accepted or not. If accepted, this response should include how the recommendation will be implemented.
- 4.3 To ensure the Committee can monitor the response given to its recommendations, this report will be included as a standing item on each agenda, setting out in Appendices 1 to 4, the response from the Cabinet to the recommendations of the Committee.
- 4.4 The Committee is asked to note the responses given.



## Appendix 1 - Community Safety Partnership

Considered by Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 7 September 2022

REC No.	SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPTED / PARTIALLY ACCEPTED / REJECTED (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
Page 41	1. The Committee would recommend that the evaluation criteria for the Violence against Women and Girls Strategy should include space for victims' voices and exit questioning	Councillor Ola Kolade, Cabinet Member for Community Safety	Accepted	Kristian Aspinall, Director of culture & Community Safety	None	To be included in development of the Tackling VAWG delivery plan in Spring 2023	Tackling VAWG delivery plan to be timetabled onto scrutiny agenda before cabinet in Spring 2023
	2. The Committee urges the Council and the mayor to publicly recognise and celebrate frontline workers who works so hard to help with violence against women during the pandemic and beyond, particularly the independent domestic violence workers at the Family Justice Centre.	Councillor Ola Kolade, Cabinet Member for Community Safety	Accepted	Kristian Aspinall, Director of culture & Community Safety	None	Ongoing – communications plan for 2023 being developed on the work of the crime reduction partnership including the FJS	As action 1
	3. The Committee welcomed the extra attention given to 'high priority areas' that suffer the vast majority of crime harm and recommends the creation of bespoke community plans to be created for these areas that involve their own unique community partners.	Councillor Ola Kolade, Cabinet Member for Community Safety	Accepted	Kristian Aspinall, Director of culture & Community Safety	None	Spring 2023 – currently in early development on the three bespoke hotspot areas (Croydon Town Centre, New Addington, Thornton Heath)	At next annual Crime & disorder scrutiny
	4. The Committee recommends the police and the Council seek to partner with the voluntary sector on campaigns to de-normalise low	Councillor Ola Kolade, Cabinet Member for Community Safety	Accepted	Kristian Aspinall, Director of culture &	None	To be included in the development of the Tackling VAWG delivery plan for Spring 2023	As action 1

REC No.	SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPTED / PARTIALLY ACCEPTED / REJECTED (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
	level sexual harassment against women such as 'cat-calling'.			Community Safety			
5.	As it was heard that it would increase the powers available to the Council to tackle antisocial behaviour in the private rented accommodation, the Committee recommends the development of a Landlord Licensing Scheme for Croydon being treated as a priority.	Councillor Ola Kolade, Cabinet Member for Community Safety	Under review	Nick Hibberd, Corporate Director of Sustainable Communities	Under review	Under review	Under review
Page 42 6.	There was a recognition that at present there had been insufficient analysis to understand the links between the private rented sector and crime. As such the Committee would recommend that a workstream on this is created to ensure that an understanding is developed	Councillor Ola Kolade, Cabinet Member for Community Safety	Partially accepted – to be included in the next Strategic Assessment as a specific strand of work, which will be developed summer / Autumn 2023	Kristian Aspinall, Director of culture & Community Safety	None	Summer 2023	Annual crime and disorder scrutiny
7.	The Committee would recommend that an emphasis is placed upon community engagement in informing the review of the Community Safety Partnership, with engagement being as extensive as possible within available resources. This should include community, voluntary, faith and resident groups.	Councillor Ola Kolade, Cabinet Member for Community Safety	Accepted – the new Community Engagement Board will specifically include community, faith, resident, and voluntary groups who have previously not been involved in the partnership working.	Kristian Aspinall, Director of culture & Community Safety	None	Spring 2023	Annual crime and disorder scrutiny
8.	That officers are asked to investigate the potential for introducing a scheme to train Domestic Abuse Champions within local communities across	Councillor Ola Kolade, Cabinet Member for Community Safety	Accepted – to be explored as per recommendation in the new Tackling VAWG delivery plan	Kristian Aspinall, Director of culture &	Potential depending on scale & scope	Spring 2023	As per action 1

REC No.	SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPTED / PARTIALLY ACCEPTED / REJECTED (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
	the borough as an action in the forthcoming Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.			Community Safety			
9.	The Committee was supportive of the proposed youth engagement work outlined at the meeting and would recommend that work aimed at preventing crime was well embedded in future strategies.	Councillor Ola Kolade, Cabinet Member for Community Safety	Accepted – prevention to be included as one of the four main strands of the Youth Safety Delivery Plan	Kristian Aspinall, Director of culture & Community Safety	Potential depending on scale and scope of Youth Safety Delivery Plan	Spring / Summer 2023	Youth Safety Delivery plan to be added to scrutiny forward plan when ready for cabinet in Summer 2023

This page is intentionally left blank

## Appendix 2 – Budget Monitoring – Month 4

Considered by Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 7 September 2022

REC No.	SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPTED / PARTIALLY ACCEPTED / REJECTED (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
1.	The Committee would request that a meeting is arranged with the Improvement and Assurance Panel, as part of the Budget Scrutiny process, to allow the Panel to share its insight on the Council's budget.	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	Accept	Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources & S151	None	By invitation by the Committee	By invitation
Page 45 2.	The Committee requests that future Cabinet Budget Monitoring reports include: - a. An explanation of potential changes to the Council's reserves b. The use of a dashboard in the Executive Summary to provide an easily digestible overview of the budget position. c. The estimated financial value when outline risks and other issues in the budget (see para 2.12 in Month 4 report for example). d. When income projections are included, actual income figures from previous years should be included for comparison. b) e) In light of being told it will possibly take 'two years' to get the Council's financial	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	Accepted	Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources & S151	None	Fully implemented for 2023/24 Financial Performance Reports	June 2023

REC No.	SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPTED / PARTIALLY ACCEPTED / REJECTED (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
	reporting systems up to standard, the Committee feels it would be beneficial to monitor how this is progressing through the inclusion of milestone targets that can be tracked.						

## Appendix 3 – Council Tax Recovery, Collection & Enforcement

Considered by Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 11 October 2022

REC No.	SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPTED / PARTIALLY ACCEPTED / REJECTED (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
1.	That the Administration provides a response to the submissions of the South West London Law Centre and the Croydon CAB made at the Scrutiny & Overview Committee meeting, addressing the issues raised in these submissions.	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	ACCEPTED	Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources & S151	No	Completed	12 Months
2.	That officers are asked to review the literacy of formal communication with residents to ensure they meet best practice in terms of accessibility.	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	ACCEPTED	Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources & S151	No	Partially Completed & Ongoing	12 Months
3.	That officers are asked to review and, subject to national requirements, amend the wording on the Taking Control of Good Notices, to ensure they reflect the Council's own approach to enforcement.	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	REJECTED (Wording is prescribed in law).	Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources & S151	No	NA	12 Months
4.	That the Cabinet Member for Finance writes jointly to all three Croydon MPs asking them to: -  1. Champion in Parliament changing the legislated wording of the 'Taking Control of Goods Notices' and  2. Champion in Parliament changing the legislation around enforcement, including	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	1) ACCEPTED (Revenues to draft a letter to Croydon MPS)  2) REJECTED (Payment arrangements can be agreed post summons)	Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources & S151	No	31 <sup>ST</sup> January 2023	12 Months

REC No.	SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPTED / PARTIALLY ACCEPTED / REJECTED (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
	the requirement preventing pay arrangements being reached following a summons being issued.						
5.	That when they are next reviewed, officers are asked to ensure that the key performance indicators for Council Tax service present both a quantitative and qualitative overview.	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	ACCEPTED (Reviewing KPI'S against the Mayor's Business Plan)	Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources & S151	If Collection rates are lower than anticipated this will have a financial implication	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	12 Months
6.	That officers are asked to review the Council's website to ensure that;  a. residents' rights are clearly set out, including how to make a complaint,  b. that advice and hardship services are signposted and  b) the criteria for funds, such as the Hardship Fund, are clearly explained.	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	ACCEPTED	Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources & S151	NO	This is work in progress, working with Croydon's Digital Service, SWLLC & CAB	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023
7.	As part of the wider improvement journey of the Council, consideration is given to the evidence that can be provided to reassure Members that there is improved collaboration across services to support residents with multiple needs.	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	ACCEPTED	Jane West, Corporate Director of Resources & S151	NO	Ongoing	12 Months



## Appendix 4 - Call-In - Mayor in Cabinet Decision on Temporary Workers Staffing Contract

Considered by Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 11 October 2022

REC No.	SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPTED / PARTIALLY ACCEPTED / REJECTED (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
1.	<p>That the Monitoring Officer be asked to</p> <p>a. review the Council position on the disclosure of information to ensure that there is a presumption toward publication, unless doing so would present an obvious legal risk, and</p> <p>b) provide clear, practical guidance on what information should be provided in Part A &amp; B reports to provide clarity for both report authors and Members.</p>	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	<p><b>This recommendation is accepted.</b> The Monitoring Officer has undertaken the review. The issue raised is adequately dealt with in the Council's Constitution. The Access to Information Protocol provides:</p> <p><b>“4. Applying the principle of openness when writing reports</b></p> <p>4.1 Reports to Committees and the Cabinet will only be marked as exempt when this cannot reasonably be avoided in order to protect the interests of the Council and/or third parties in accordance with the statutory rules on exempt reports.</p> <p>4.2 When Officers are preparing a report that contains information about terms proposed in the course of negotiations for a contract they will separate the exempt from the non-exempt information so the latter can be freely circulated. Sometimes information in reports can be made anonymous without the effectiveness of the report being reduced. This is one way of ensuring that as many reports, and as much information, are made accessible as possible. This applies in all cases and not just where category 3 of Appendix 1 of Part 4B of the Access to Information Procedure Rules is relied on. There will still inevitably be a number of reports which are marked exempt.</p> <p>The Access to Information Procedure Rules further sets out information that should be exempt and contained in a Part B report. They include information (in accordance with Part 1 of</p>	Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, Director of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer	None	December 2022	TBC

REC No.	SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPTED / PARTIALLY ACCEPTED / REJECTED (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
			<p>Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An individual (including information that reveals the identity of an individual).</li> <li>• Financial and business affairs of people or companies (including the authority holding the information).</li> <li>• Legal professional privilege.</li> <li>• Information that reveals that an authority proposes to either give a notice imposing requirements on an individual, or to make an order under any enactment.</li> <li>• Any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.</li> </ul> <p>Information will only be exempt "if and so long" as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information</p> <p><b>Qualifications</b> The lists of information that will be considered exempt is subject to a number of qualifications, as well as the public interest requirement.</p> <p>Further guidance to be provided jointly with the Head of Strategic Procurement &amp; Governance on information that should be contained in Part B report on procurement and contract related matters.</p>				
2.	<p>That the Monitoring Officer be asked to review the provision of legal guidance contained in reports to ensure: -</p> <p>a. The potential risks and their mitigations of a decision are clearly explained and avoid ambiguity, and</p>	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	<p><b>This recommendation is accepted.</b> The Council's committee report writing guidance includes requirement for potential risk to be identified and explained including any mitigation. The grounds on which parts of a report is deemed confidential or exempt should also be explained.</p>	Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, Director of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer	None	December 2022	TBC

REC No.	SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPTED / PARTIALLY ACCEPTED / REJECTED (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
	b) Where a confidential report is required, there needs to be a clear explanation of the grounds for this in the public part of the agenda.						
3.	That all Members are offered training on what information should be available in Parts A and B of a meeting and why.	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	<b>This recommendation is accepted.</b> The Statutory Scrutiny Officer to liaise with the Monitoring Officer to take this forward.	Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, Director of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer	None	January 2022	TBC
4.	That any contracts awarded by the Council need to have a qualitative framework in place to ensure that an evaluation can be made on the success of the contract beyond the purely financial, and that staff from a variety of levels are included in this process	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	Accepted.  This is already in place within the Councils Tender and Contracts regulations which can be found online here:  <a href="https://www.croydon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Tenders-and-Contracts-Regulations_2022.pdf">https://www.croydon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Tenders-and-Contracts-Regulations_2022.pdf</a>  To note that these regulations are due to be updated	Scott Funnell, Head of Strategic Procurement & Governance	None	Complete	TBC
5.	That officers are asked to proactively track data on how many times individual staff contracts are re-extended to be able to better evaluate the service.	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	Accepted  Adecco has confirmed they will produce at the start of the new contract, which will ensure that all extensions will be monitored, including repeat extensions for the same agency worker placement. Management information on extension will therefore be readily available. Adecco has agreed to meet with all directorate DMTs on a regular basis to receive feedback and to ensure a thorough evaluation of the service.	Dean Shoemsmith, Chief People Officer			

REC No.	SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPTED / PARTIALLY ACCEPTED / REJECTED (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
6.	That officers are asked to engage with organisations including the Greater London Employment Forum when preparing the People Strategy.	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	Accepted  The draft People Strategy is currently under development, and when completed it will be sent to London Council's for their professional overview and input to provide external perspective	Dean Shoesmith, Chief People Officer			
7.	That the Chair of Scrutiny is given the opportunity to input into the latest constitutional review, where appropriate.	Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance	<b>This recommendation is accepted.</b> The Chair of the General Purposes Committee (responsible for amendments to the Constitution) to be advised of this request. The opportunity to input may be more appropriate on proposed changes relating to the scrutiny function. The Statutory Scrutiny Officer to liaise with the Monitoring Officer to take this forward.	Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, Director of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer	None	January 2023	TBC

**Appendix 5 - Streets & Environment Sub-Committee; Item: Budget Scrutiny Challenge, 31 January 2023**

<b>Recommendation Number</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Political Lead</b>	<b>Officer Lead</b>
Recomm.1	The Sub-Committee recommended that recruitment and retention formed a key workstream in the transformation work taking place in all three areas (Parking Services, Planning Service & Building Control), as it was felt this would be key to ensuring this could be delivered with sufficient capacity to also successfully engage with residents and stakeholders.	Councillor Jeet Bains	Nick Hibberd

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank