

Homes & Gateway Services

Cabinet Member Bulletin

Councillor Alison Butler

July 2020

LATEST NEWS

Rough Sleeper Update

Croydon achieved significant success in 2019 by halving its rough sleeping figures for a fourth year in a row. As soon as the pandemic broke the Council adopted the 'Everybody In' approach, providing accommodation both for rough sleepers verified by the Council's commissioned outreach service, Croydon Reach, and those at risk of rough sleeping. Rough sleepers were accommodated in locally procured first-stage emergency accommodation or were referred by Croydon Reach to hotels procured by the Greater London Authority (GLA) across London. The GLA procured hotel spaces for COVID-Protect accommodation in Croydon. All GLA provision was made available on a pan-London basis, with a centralised assessment and allocations process.

Some existing homeless services with shared sleeping spaces were closed due to COVID-19 infection risk, such as the somewhere safe to stay assessment hub and local night shelters. All residents were referred to procured self-contained hotel rooms, which were allocated dependent upon health and support needs

Croydon created a taskforce providing five day food parcels for rough sleepers with covid-19 shielding without a kitchen in temporary accommodation with the help of our partners at Night watch and Croydon churches floating shelter. This proved to be hugely effective in reducing the spread of coronavirus.

The Council has begun moving all rough sleepers into longer term housing solutions, working with key internal and external partners mapping the need and demand across those accommodated in hotels and first-stage temporary accommodation developing a number of work-streams to help achieve successful 'move-ons'. Croydon continues working alongside partners to source Private Rented Sector (PRS) accommodation to support move-on from hotel accommodation that is due to close, and from first stage emergency accommodation.

However, the issue with assisting those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) remains a huge one. Going forward we must ensure everyone who needs a place to stay is helped, even those denied assistance by the Government. The council, along with other London Councils is campaigning strongly and calling on the government to take the urgent action needed to ensure restrictions on some European Economic Area (EEA) nationals and on people who have NRPF does not undermine the collective effort to end rough sleeping.

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Community Connect/Food Stop and Local Collection Points

All three existing Food Stops (at Family Centre in New Addington, St Francis Church in Selsdon and Parchmore Methodist Church and Community Centre in Thornton Heath) have continued to operate throughout the COVID-19 crisis. They have each tweaked their service delivery in line with guidance such as implementing social distancing measures or introducing a delivery service (e.g. for residents who are shielding).

All are going over and above to support Croydon residents at this time and we are in regular communication with them and supporting them as needed. The Family Centre have also set up *Food Stop Plus* on Friday mornings to provide a shopping time specifically for residents over 65 to do their Food Stop shopping.

A Food Stop in the South of the borough has always been part of the Community Connect/Food Stop roll out plans – at Old Lodge Lane Baptist Church (OLLBC) in Purley. These plans were fast tracked because of COVID-19 and Food Stop No. 4 was launched on 10th April 2020. Food Stop at OLLBC is currently running mainly as a delivery service with the help of volunteers and OLLBC will revert to the traditional 'shop' model as soon as practicably possible.

The Food Stops have been supporting over 240 households per week during COVID-19.

Community Connect Local Collection Points (LCPs) - SCALE UP

As part of Community Connect/Food Stop there were two existing FareShare Local Collection Points in Croydon pre-COVID-19 – at The Family Centre in New Addington and at Parchmore Methodist Church and Community Centre in Thornton Heath.

A Local Collection Point is a central point for local charities, community groups, schools and others to collect surplus food from weekly. Becoming LCP members enables these organisations to provide food and/or nutritious meals as part of their respective services, consequently strengthening the local offer and spreading the benefits to more residents. The Local Collection Points are delivered in partnership with FareShare, the UK's longest running food redistribution charity, who believe that no good food should go to waste.

FareShare fees were waived for organisations supporting residents during COVID-19, we quickly worked with community partners and scaled up existing LCPs to enable more organisations to access FareShare food. We also set up two new LCPs to ensure as much FareShare food came into Croydon as possible (at Old Lodge Lane Baptist Church (OLLBC) and Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA)).

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We've gone from **2.3 tonnes** of food coming in to Croydon per week pre-COVID-19 to **6.3 tonnes** of food coming in each week during COVID-19.

Our Community Connect/Food Stop moves the Council's innovative Gateway approach beyond the local authority and its public sector partners into the community. It is a community-led, multi-agency ('Alliance') solution focused model that provides stability to those who need it most, including homelessness prevention support, employability support and food poverty solutions for the most vulnerable residents, ensuring residents become financially stable, maximise their income and gain employment.

The Food Stop is a key part of this. Residents who sign up as members receive £15-£20 worth of fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy and other foods each week for £3.50 per week, helping them save an average of £500-£700 per year on their food shopping bills. The scheme supports residents who are affected by welfare reform, in rent arrears, in financial or employment difficulties, at risk of homelessness and more.

For more information please contact Anita Konczak, Community Resources Delivery Manager - anita.konczak@croydon.gov.uk

Landlord Licensing

CPRPL 2020

A draft application for a new Scheme is at an advanced stage. Officers have held meetings with civil servants from MHCLG which has helped with the format of the application to be made. It is proposed to submit a single application outlining the two designations agreed by Cabinet.

Unfortunately, there are no guarantees on decision turnaround time from the Government but MHCLG will keep Croydon informed of progress so the Council can manage the end of the current Scheme and the proposed commencement date of the new Scheme of 1 February 2020.

The Council is receiving a lot of queries from landlords about the proposed new Scheme and meetings with landlords are to be offered to share information, though these will currently be held online as opposed to in person forums.

If Croydon gets approval for a new Scheme we would then need to advertise that for a 3 month period. Therefore any protracted delay from Government may well impact on the proposed start date of 1 February 2021 for the new Scheme.

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CPRPL 2015

We have 3 months remaining of the current Scheme. Officers are planning for the conclusion, ensuring all licences are issued and also managing enforcement cases and landlords who have and will not have licensed.

Some initiatives –

Gas safe – landlords applying during COVID are being asked to upload their most recent gas safe certificate. The enforcement team will advise landlords of the need to manage gas safety until a contractor can visit their premises.

Properties with an EPC of F or G – For licensed landlords the opportunity to get advice on energy improvements and access to grants – ECO and Mayor with partner Happy Energy. The Council will work with all landlords to see how the Minimum Energy Efficiency rating of E is achieved.

Enforcement against unlicensed addresses – In April & May 2020 up to 60% of licensing applications were as a direct result of the work of the enforcement team. In 2019/20 the Council continued to receive in excess of 200 applications a month.

Financial penalties and prosecutions – 48 financial penalties (including intentions to impose – the first stage) have been imposed. We still have some prosecutions in the pipeline for more serious offences often linked with not-licensing.

Number of applications received for a licence – 38,243 (end May 2020)

New Regulations

Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 - are in force and the first compliance deadline comes up on the 1st July 2020.

Landlords of privately rented accommodation must:

Ensure the electrical installations in their rented properties are inspected and tested by a qualified and competent person at least every 5 years.

Obtain an electrical safety report, act on the results and note the next inspection and test date.

Supply a copy of this report to the existing tenant within 28 days or new tenants from the 1st July 2020.

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Landlords were informed of the regulations in the June newsletter and will be reminded again in the July newsletter.

New council homes at Longheath Garden

18 tenancies have now been granted to our excellent new council homes built by Brick by Brick at Longheath Gardens, with 3 waiting to be allocated. As part of our local lettings plans, in the first instance these homes were offered to those living locally in housing need.

Reshaping Shrublands



A number of sites have been identified for potential new homes on the Shrublands estate, in Shirley. The majority of these are being considered by Brick by Brick but one site has been earmarked exclusively for community-led housing, offering the chance for local community group to develop and then manage permanently affordable housing.

To ensure a holistic approach to maximising the opportunities that these sites can collectively deliver for Shrublands, the council has worked on a joint community engagement programme with Brick By Brick focusing on residents' priorities for the estate. Named, Shaping Shrublands, the programme has aimed to gather the views of residents about a range of things including: the types of new homes they would like

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to see; green spaces on the estate; what could be included on the community-led housing site; and parking in the local area.

Shaping Shrublands has included a number of estate walk arounds and one-to-one interviews. A community day event was planned in late March but unfortunately due to COVID-19 restrictions had to be cancelled. The council and Brick By Brick have instead produced a booklet which will be delivered to all residents offering them the chance to have their say. The information collected will be used to help shape both the community-led housing programme and Brick By Brick's development sites on the estate.

Updated Covid-19 guidance for people in shared homes

The council has sent updated Covid-19 guidance on contact tracing and hygiene advice to thousands of tenants across the borough living in private shared properties.

There are around 1,000 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) in the borough, most of which have between three and six unrelated individual people living under one roof with separate bedrooms and shared facilities.

When lockdown restrictions began in March, the council sent out Covid-19 guidance outlining related restrictions and health advice for residents in council-run and private accommodation, including HMOs. This went to over 12,000 council properties, around 650 households in emergency accommodation, management companies that run around 2,000 temporary accommodation units and thousands more in private rented accommodation.

Updated guidance has now been sent that includes advice on contact tracing and reminders around social distancing and good hygiene practices in shared accommodation. The leaflet can be found on the council website.

Throughout lockdown, the council has also provided regular updates to council tenants and residents in temporary accommodation, as well as setting up an advisory group including local accommodation managers.

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Fairfield Homes approved

Brick by Brick's (BBB) proposals for 421 homes, shops, open public space and improved town centre pedestrian access on the site of a demolished multi-storey car park has been approved. The site is next door to the historic Fairfield Halls arts venue, which reopened last autumn after a major refurbishment. Once BBB homes are built, money from sales will pay for the estimated £42.6m cost of having extensively restored Fairfield Halls to its former glory.

The new homes – a mix ranging from studios to two, three and four-bedroom family-sized apartments - will be built in five blocks ranging from seven to 29 storeys in height. The scheme will include:

- A 1,000 sqm space for an NHS health centre
- Shops
- More than 40 specially-designed flats for people who use wheelchairs
- Step-free access to improve pedestrian links between Fairfield Halls, neighbouring developments and towards East Croydon station
- 750 sqm landscaped open space, including a children's play area
- Sustainable energy measures such as solar panels and air-source heat pumps
- More than 780 cycle spaces
- 13 disabled parking spaces and 12 car club parking bays

The development will be built next to The Fair Field public open space, a project funded by the council and Coast to Capital to revitalise land between Fairfield Halls and Croydon College. The project is set to reintroduce the fun of the fair, reinstating the area's original name and including a wide range of facilities such as a water mirror, innovative lighting and landscaping when developed in 2021.