

# Scrutiny

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



HOUSING **RISK** VITALITY  
TRANSPORT  
SAFEGUARDING **RISK** ROAD ACCIDENTS

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## **Scrutiny Chair's Intro/Foreword**

Improving Scrutiny is essential for improving the Council. National government has been very clear that for Croydon to stand on its own two feet and remove the need for central government intervention, we must prove that we are continuously improving. The nationally appointed Improvement Panel that currently has directional powers over the Council will require this for its Exit Strategy. Rigorous scrutiny, whilst it might occasionally feel uncomfortable, is an essential part of that improvement journey. We are committed to being a critical friend to the Council to help it improve.

The Council's finances have been our key focus over the last year and will continue to be so. This is the number one issue for the Council and its residents. We have been pleased to see ambitious targets for transformations and savings over the last year, and we will continue to hold officers and members accountable for those targets. However, like the Mayor and senior council leaders, we know that Croydon can't escape its debt trap through cuts to services alone; it will require intervention from national government. Croydon Council must therefore continue its efforts to negotiate with Westminster to make sure we can become a more sustainable local authority.

As more councils face financial difficulty, national government is recognising the need to strengthen scrutiny's powers and is moving to do so. They recognise that stronger scrutiny earlier can prevent mistakes that might otherwise lead to expensive intervention later.

We are pleased to acknowledge that scrutiny is being taken more seriously in Croydon too. The Mayor has honoured his commitment to give the Chair of Scrutiny to an opposition member. That cross-party commitment has been reciprocated by the Committee, which has gone out of its way to waive normal proportional representation rules to make space for Green and Liberal Democrat voices in scrutiny. We welcome the contribution that this diversity of voices has brought to our work.

The introduction of a new scrutiny committee on Homes, also brought in with cross party support, has also helped deepen and improve our work on housing, supporting the housing department's improvement following the devastating treatment of tenants in Regina Road and those still languishing in expensive temporary accommodation.

We also want to acknowledge officers and cabinet members for their support. Officers are providing reports more quickly than the past, offering more regular briefings and answering more questions, although there is still room for improvement in timings. I also want to thank our existing team of two scrutiny officers, whose professionalism and support has been invaluable over the last year.

As scrutiny members we are also doing our bit to try and improve ourselves. We have worked hard to deepen community engagement and focus on the impact of our work. Scrutiny and Overview Committee alone has held five large public meetings and four visits in the last twelve months. The ability to listen and learn from tenants when we were scrutinising the housing repairs contract, or on foodbank and faith leaders on the cost-of-living crisis, has really enriched our work and we are very grateful to the time people have given us.

Thanks to the dedication of scrutiny members, we have managed to have a real impact over the last year. When looking at Council tax enforcement, for example, scrutiny members took the time to listen to residents struggling to pay their council tax bills who perceived the council to lack empathy and accessibility, and we made practical recommendations for changes based on their testimony. The open willingness of officers to respond to those recommendations means that residents will now be able to access information in different languages and be referred to support services where they need them.

Scrutiny will continue to push for improvement, both in our own committee and the wider Council. Chairs and vice chairs of all five of our committees now meet regularly to make sure we are reviewing our work and working together effectively. We continue to seek out new training opportunities, particularly on the budget, where all of us need to continuously upskill.

It has been an absolute privilege to work with colleagues over the last year in the service of the borough we call home. I hope that over the next year we can continue to help improve our Council, its finances, services and ability to listen, for the good of its people.

## Scrutiny and Overview Committee

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee directs the performance of all overview and scrutiny functions at the Council, including the development of procedures governing the operation of both the Committee and its Sub-Committees. It also has responsibility for scrutinising crime and disorder matters and flood risk management within the borough. The Committee will consider any call-in of Cabinet decisions other than those relating to education matters, which are heard by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

You can view the agendas, reports and minutes of this committee by clicking on the link: [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)

### 2022-23 Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Cllr  
Rowenna  
Davis (C)**



**Cllr  
Richard  
Chatterjee  
(VC)**



**Cllr Leila  
Ben Hassel  
(DC)**



**Cllr Jade  
Appleton**



**Cllr Sean  
Fitzsimons**



**Cllr Simon  
Fox**

## Chairs Introduction

Scrutiny is committed to improving itself to help improve the Council. Throughout all the topics we've addressed this year, we've been guided by two principles. First, the need to increase community engagement and, second, to focus on the impact we can have on helping the executive improve Croydon for its residents. Holding five large community meetings and four visits this year in Scrutiny and Overview Committee alone has really enriched both the questioning and the recommendations we've been able to make.

## Budget Scrutiny

Although the Scrutiny & Overview Committee first considered a report on the Mayor's savings proposals and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) at its meeting on 6 December 2022 when they were first provided by the executive, the Committee had prioritised monitoring the delivery of 2022-23 in-year budget throughout the year. This included the Finance Monitoring Reports prepared for Cabinet being scheduled for review at meetings of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee whenever possible. This allowed the Committee to identify areas of risk, such as transformation, that it wished to scrutinise in greater detail and provided reassurance on the financial controls of the Council.

The Committee recognised the Mayor's 'Opening the Books' review as an opportunity for the new administration to gain a more complete understanding of its financial position and increase its ability to manage potential risks. However, there was concern about whether the Fusion Oracle financial software was being optimised fully by the Council and given its importance to the management of the budget, recommended a project be established to maximise its functionality.

In advance of the first budget scrutiny meeting on 6 December, Scrutiny members received two training sessions, the first delivered by the Local Government Association, which provided an overview of scrutiny's role in the budget setting process. The second session was delivered by the Centre for Governance for the Scrutiny & Overview Committee and focussed specifically on reviewing and understanding budget reports. On 29 November 2022, the Committee also received a briefing from the Council's Section 151 Officer on the key budget principles and the approach to setting the budget.

At the Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 6 December consideration was given to the 2023-24 Budget, Medium Term Financial Strategy and Savings Proposals. From the discussion of the Committee, the approach of the Mayor to move towards a more transformation based approach to savings was welcomed, although caution was raised about the capacity within the organisation to deliver sustainable transformation without sufficient resources both in terms of staff time and financial investment, being allocated to the process. The Committee also raised concern about the budget being largely created using MS Word and Excel documents. However, it was encouraged by the confirmation that a project was being established to increase the integration of the Fusion finance system across the Council to ensure its potential benefits to the organisation were being maximised.

At its meeting on the 30 January 2023, the Committee conducted a deep dive on two specific areas of concern it had highlighted through the budget scrutiny process. These areas were Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector support, and the 2023-24 Transformation Programme. From its discussion of the support available for the voluntary, community and faith sector, the Committee welcomed confirmation from both the Council and Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA) of their commitment to building a deeper relationship between the Council and the important voluntary, community and faith sector in the borough. The commitment given to looking at creative ways of providing support to the sector, particularly reviewing the use of social value in contract arrangements was also welcomed.

After consulting with a range of community groups in the borough, the Committee did raise concern about the potential impact of the move to new ways of working with the voluntary, community and faith sector, particularly whether these would be in place in time to support organisations through the transition away from the funding currently provided by the Community Fund, when it ended in March 2023. Given there was a risk that some community groups may not be able to adapt to the new arrangements

in time, the Committee suggested that there was a need to implement a tangible support plan as a priority to mitigate the risk of services and activities being lost.

By scheduling a deep dive on the transformation programme, it enabled the Committee to have an early look at the development of the programme for 2023-24. The Committee agreed, along with executives, that more work needed to be done to flesh out exactly what and how the list of transformation projects provided would actually work. Confirmation that the Council was introducing new project management software across the organisation was welcomed as a step in the right direction towards improving the Council's ability to successfully track and deliver transformation. Given the importance of transformation programme to the delivery of savings, the Committee agreed that it would monitor the delivery of the programme in 2023-24.

The Committee meeting on 16 February 2023 was the culmination of the budget scrutiny process and the work conducted by the Committee. Scrutiny and Overview Committee worked closely with the sub-committees and shared and referred items to each other for maximum impact. The Sub-Committee Chair's fed back their findings from their deep dives into specific savings within their respective service areas.

Prior to the meeting the Committee held an online meeting, open to members of the public, giving them the opportunity to ask questions on the budget proposals. From the discussion held at this meeting, which was well attended and oversubscribed, it allowed the Committee to identify areas of questioning at the meeting on 16 February, particularly around the reasons for the 15% Council Tax rise and the support available for those who may be unable to afford the increased payments. This was clearly an emotive subject with residents expressing high levels of concern about the impact of any council tax rise on finances already stretched by a cost of living crisis, but all residents and financial leads at the Council conducted the meeting with real respect.

At the conclusion of the final Budget Scrutiny meeting on 16 February 2023, the Committee reached a range of conclusions on the Mayor's Budget. There was a reasonable level of reassurance that the budget had been set using a prudent set of assumptions and that it was reasonable to conclude that it was deliverable. However, the cost of servicing the Council's debt was a significant challenge to the delivery of a balanced budget and until a solution was found it would be difficult to achieve long term sustainability as a local authority. Whilst the Committee were encouraged to hear of the ongoing commitment of the Mayor and council officers to engage with the government to find a solution, Scrutiny members were concerned that there is currently no precedent for this kind of intervention from national government, nor any commitment from Westminster to deliver one.

Another key area of discussion for the Committee was the 15% Council Tax increase, with differing views on this proposal. Half of the Committee, including the Chair, thought that insufficient justification had been provided for such a high

increase, particularly given no other local authorities in similar financial situations had faced this rise. The other half of the Committee believed that the increase was needed to ensure a balanced budget. Everyone agreed that no other viable alternatives had been identified by the Council.

The Committee welcomed the introduction of the £2m Hardship Fund to mitigate against the potential impact of the Council Tax rise and at its meeting on 28 March 2023 had the opportunity to review the criteria for the scheme before its approval by the Mayor. From its review of the scheme, the Committee was reassured that its development had been based upon a data led approach and that a robust monitoring system was being put in place to ensure the scheme was reaching those most in need. As a further safeguard, the Committee suggested the sharing of data on the distribution of the fund with Members to identify potential anomalies.

### **Cost of Living Crisis**

The impact of the cost of living crisis upon residents was a theme revisited by the Committee throughout the year, particularly through the above mentioned budget scrutiny process. As part of this work, in July the Committee met with representatives from the voluntary & community sector (VCS) including leaders of food banks, faith groups, advisory services and charities, to listen to their experience of working with residents who were being directly impacted by cost of living rises. This meeting raised several concerns, related to residents' ability to engage with the Council, which included factors such as digital exclusion, and both financial and general illiteracy.

Other issues raised included the Council's relationship with the voluntary and community sector and the use of Council Tax enforcement. As a result of the discussion, it was agreed that these specific issues would be scheduled for review during the year. The Council relationship with the voluntary and community sector was picked up as part of the Budget Scrutiny process (see above) and at the meeting on 11 October 2023 Council Tax collection, recovery and enforcement was reviewed.

To inform their scrutiny of this item, the Committee organised a meeting of residents and representatives from the voluntary and community sector to hear about their experience of Council Tax collection and enforcement. While the evidence provided in this session was often challenging as many residents related huge financial pressures and often a perceived lack of empathy and accessibility from the Council, it did provide valuable insight for the Committee into the experience of residents, which helped to shape their questioning. As with the earlier cost of living meeting, the Committee identified a number of potential improvements to recommend for the consideration of the Mayor related to how the Council interacted with its residents, such as the wording used in Council Tax enforcement letters, offering translation services and training to officers to be able to support and refer residents to local support groups and legal advice services, as well as ensuring that information was



provided on the website in an easily understandable format. Following the meeting, the Committee commended the Council Tax team for the way they engaged with the issues raised by residents and their swift adoption of many of the solutions proposed.

### **Safer Croydon Partnership**

At its meeting on 6 September 2022, the Committee had the opportunity to review the performance of the Safer Croydon Partnership including a draft version of the Strategic Assessment. From its discussion of the item, the Committee were supportive of a proposed campaign to de-normalise low level sexual harassment against women but recognised that its success would be impacted without sufficient funding being allocated for delivery. It was also suggested that the possibility of partnering with the voluntary and community sector on this campaign should be explored.

In preparation for the meeting, the Committee visited the Family Justice Centre, which highlighted the high rates of domestic violence in Croydon. Although reassurance was provided through hearing about the great work that was being done at the Centre, there was a concern that cost of living pressures may put further stress on families leading to even higher rates. From questioning officers on the potential impact of the cost of living crisis on the levels of domestic violence in the borough, the Committee was encouraged that there was work underway to understand the impact of the cost of living crisis, and that through good communication between council officers and the Family Justice Centre, the level of demand would be monitored and managed accordingly.

The Committee welcomed confirmation that a new town centre Public Space Protection Order would focus on recording offences to provide the evidence base required to support the scheme. However, there was concern about whether there was sufficient coordination of information between the Council and Police, which would need to be revisited at a later date to provide further reassurance that there was effective data sharing. There were also questions about potential displacement and the follow up support given to those who were moved on, which officers said would be reviewed.

Another area of questioning asked whether there was any link between anti-social behaviour and areas with high levels of private rented accommodation. It was accepted that as residents living within this type of accommodation tended to be more transient, it could be difficult to understand the challenges faced by these residents. The Committee raised concern that residents living in the private rented sector may not receive the same level of support as those living in social rented housing and as such suggested that data gathering should be undertaken to gain a better understanding of the potential challenges.

### **Borough of Culture**

At the meeting held on 6 December 2022, the Committee reviewed the preparations for the year-long Borough of Culture event that was due to start in April 2023. From the discussion, there were concerns raised about whether the programme would reach across the whole borough or involve under-represented communities and seldom heard groups. However, the Committee was largely reassured by the commitment of the organisers to delivering diversity in the programme and ensuring the Borough of Culture had as large a reach as possible. Members particularly welcomed officers' commitment to embrace as wide a definition of culture as possible, which they felt would be more inclusive and deliver a more exciting programme.

The Committee was also reassured by the responses received to their questions on the distribution of the available funding for the programme, particularly that it would be closely monitored to ensure it was delivered within budget and also the availability of the Ignite Fund, which was targeted towards local groups and organisations in the borough.

Overall, the Committee commended the team for the work to date on the Borough of Culture programme, with many of their initial concerns being addressed. It was agreed that the Committee would review the Borough of Culture at a later date to ensure that it was achieving its original aims.

### **People & Cultural Transformation Strategy (Jan 2023)**

At the meeting on 23 January 2023 the Committee had the opportunity to review a draft of the People and Cultural Transformation Strategy before its consideration by the Mayor. The Committee was keen to scrutinise the strategy, as it was seen as part of the ongoing improvement journey of the Council and provided an opportunity to assess the progress made with changing the culture of the organisation.

The Committee invited members of staff to the meeting who had been engaged in the creation of the strategy, which provided reassurance it had been created with staff buy-in, increasing the likelihood of successful delivery. The plan to engage with staff on the co-design of the action plan to accompany the strategy was also commended by the Committee.

Although there was general agreement with the aims of the strategy, the Committee agreed that it could not be reassured about its delivery without having sight of the action plan. As such it was agreed that the item would be revisited later in the year, once the action plan had been prepared, to seek additional reassurance. This would also allow the opportunity to review the key performance indicators that would be used to measure the success of the strategy.

Confirmation that work was ongoing to improve the data captured on the Council's workforce was welcomed by the Committee who had concerns about whether the

current level of data collected was sufficient to inform key performance indicators which could be used to monitor the delivery of the strategy.

## **Town Centre**

At the meeting held on 23 January 2023, the Committee had the opportunity to consider the 'Whitgift Indemnity and Land Transfer Agreement (ILTA Remedy)' report ahead of its consideration by the Mayor in Cabinet. This report set out the opportunity for the Council to seek a remedy from the Croydon Limited Partnership (CLP) for having progressed the redevelopment of the Whitgift Centre.

This item provided the Committee the opportunity to review the proposed decision and also question the current status of the town centre redevelopment. From the discussion, the Committee welcomed the use of the ILTA remedy, as it would deliver improvement work to the North End area of the town centre to the value of £4m, including work to activate the Alders site, improvements to the Whitgift Centre and the provision of a consultation space to inform the development of the Town Centre Masterplan.

The Committee noted that 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. Given the years of inactivity surrounding the redevelopment of the Town Centre, the Committee was disappointed to hear that it was likely to be at least a further twelve months before a planning application was submitted.

The Committee was disappointing to learn that the Council had not been successful in its bid for levelling-up funding, however having subsequently reviewed the feedback provided by the Government on the bid, felt that it reflected positively on its quality and as such recommended that it should be published.

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

At its meeting on 30 January 2023, the Committee reviewed the support provided by the Council to asylum seekers, including those seeking refuge under the Homes for Ukraine scheme and unaccompanied asylum seeking children. This report had been requested for the meeting to provide an overview of the Council's role and responsibilities in supporting asylum seekers in accomodation in the borough.

In preparation for the item, members of the Committee visited a hotel in the north of the borough that was being used by the Home Office to accommodate asylum seekers while their claims were processed. The visit was extremely moving and led

to the Committee raising concern with the representatives from the Home Office in attendance at the meeting, about the potential risks of mixed cohort accommodation, residents having to share single rooms for long periods and the level of service being provided by Migrant Help.

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. Confirmation that the Mayor was picking up many of the concerns raised at the meeting with the Home Office and other partners was welcomed.

### **Establishment of Homes Sub-Committee**

At its first meeting of the year on 14 June 2022, the Committee had the opportunity to review the work undertaken by Council officers to re-procure the responsive repairs contract. Scrutiny of this report allowed the Committee to seek assurance that a robust process was being used and that the process was open, transparent and informed by residents.

In preparation for the item, site visits had been conducted to three Council blocks located across the borough to speak to residents and get an understanding of their views on the Responsive Repairs service. Finally, an online meeting was arranged on 13 June 2022 to give residents the opportunity to discuss the service, which provided excellent feedback to inform the questions of the Committee.

Following discussion of the item, the Committee recognised that an extensive amount of hard work had been invested into the re-procurement process to ensure that the best possible outcome was reached for residents. However, given the historic issues relating to the level of service provided in the responsive repairs contract, the Committee recommended exploring the possibility of including a clause within the new contracts to provide compensation for residents should below standard service be provided.

As a result of the discussion at the meeting and with cross party support, it was agreed that the remit of the Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee should be split to create a separate stand-alone Homes Sub-Committee to provide additional capacity to scrutinise the Council's Housing Service in light of the wide ranging Transformation Programme arising from the ARK report and the housing conditions at Regina Road. This Sub-Committee was set up at the Committee meeting on 11 October 2023, initially until the end of the municipal year, and has subsequently been renewed for a further two years.

## Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee scrutinises key issues affecting children and young people in the borough as well as the services provided by the Council and its partners. It has the power to scrutinise the functions of the Council as a Local Education Authority and examine the Dedicated Schools Grant on a yearly basis.

You can view the agendas, reports and minutes of this Sub-Committee by clicking on the link: [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)

### 2022-23 Members of the Children & Young People Sub-Committee



**Councillor  
Richard  
Chatterjee  
(Chair)**



**Councillor  
Maddie  
Henson (Vice-  
Chair)**



**Councillor Sue  
Bennett**



**Councillor  
Gayle Gander**



**Councillor  
Eunice  
O'Dame**



**Councillor  
Helen Redfern**



**Councillor  
Manju Shahul-  
Hameed**



**Councillor  
Catherine  
Wilson**



**Josephine  
Copeland  
Teacher Rep**



**Elaine Jones  
Catholic  
Diocesan Rep**



**Paul O'Donnell  
Parent  
Governor Rep**

### Chair of the Children & Young People Sub-Committee Councillor Richard Chatterjee

The 2022-23 year brought a permanent return to face-to-face meetings, following the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic, but the financial circumstances of the Council is another constraint which is pervasive and on-going.

The scope of work is as important as ever so the challenge of choice of subjects and how to deal with them means we have tried to remain disciplined and focused. It is clear that looked after children will remain of the highest importance, and this has been helped by some overlap in membership of this Sub-Committee and that of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

We have tried, where possible, to chime with themes across the other Scrutiny Committees, such as the Residents' Voice - an example of this is the visit we made to staff of the Health Visiting team to hear direct what their concerns and perspective

were. There has also been some coordination with the Scrutiny & Overview Committee in terms of work which could be better dealt with at that level. There have been many useful insights from the Sub-Committee and particularly the coopted members (representatives of the Teachers Union, the Catholic Diocese and Governors) which was especially helpful given the slender overlap in councillor membership from the preceding CYP Sub-Committee.

I would like to thank all the members of the sub-committee and the officers who have supported us this past year, both within the Council and of the NHS and other services such as the police, and of the other groups representatives which have attended and assisted the Sub-Committee.

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A summary of the items considered by the Children and Young People Sub-Committee in 2022-23 can be found below. Members also received the Early Help, Children's Social Care and Education Dashboard each meeting to ensure that they were reassured about the performance of the Children, Young People and Education Directorate across a number of different areas. The Sub-Committee received an update on Antenatal and Health Visiting at its meeting on 1st November 2022 and concluded that quarterly commissioning data on Health Visiting would be included alongside the Dashboard, when available.

## **Tuesday 21 June 2022**

### Children, Young People and Education Directorate Overview

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided an overview of the Children, Young People and Education Directorate to inform the development of the Sub-Committee's work programme for 2022/23.

The Sub-Committee asked questions about a number of areas that fell under their remit and had useful discussions which helped to inform the work that they would carry out for the rest of the municipal year. Members also stated their aspiration to engage in outreach work with children and young people in Croydon, as well of those in charge of delivering services.

## **Tuesday 27 September 2022**

### Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership - Annual Report 2021-22

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided the Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report for 2021-22. The Corporate Director Children, Young People & Education introduced the item and the Independent Scrutineer, Eleanor Brazil, to the Sub-Committee. It was noted that the Independent Scrutineer would be leaving the role soon and had served Croydon in many roles over a number of years; officers and Members thanked her for her hard work.

The Partnership had identified a number of themes throughout the year, and these were: the importance of Fathers/Male Carers; Professional Curiosity; Information Sharing; Safeguarding Supervision; Extra-Familial Harm. These themes had been used to influence the training offer for the following year. The Sub-Committee heard that an independent review of the Partnership had been commissioned to identify any areas of learning to inform the work and priorities of the Partnership in the coming year. The following had already been identified: Safeguarding Asylum Seekers; Early Help Transformation; Partnership Communication Strategy; Domestic Abuse; Sexual Abuse (inter and extra familial abuse).

The Chair noted the absence of a police representative and expressed the disappointment of the Sub-Committee. The Independent Scrutineer and Corporate Director Children, Young People & Education explained the commitment of the Police to the work of the Partnership and suggested the necessary change of dates may have led to their non-attendance. The Sub-Committee queried the disparity of proactivity and funding from some partners and the Corporate Director Children, Young People & Education responded that there had been huge pressures for all partners and there had been significant work over the last 12 years to improve frontline availability and engagement on children's' safeguarding from the Police.

Members asked how recommendations were implemented and tracked across the partners. The CSCP Quality Assurance & Development Officer explained that this responsibility sat within the Safeguarding Practice Review Group, which tracked key partners involvement and regularly looked at key themes across the reviews that came in. Key people involved in reviews often attended the Safeguarding Practice Review Group to monitor how actions were being implemented and how effective they had been. Whilst sometimes reports could take time to publish, learning from these was implemented and shared between the partners to ensure this was not delayed.

The Sub-Committee asked about the challenges of Safeguarding Education Standards and the Director of Education responded that schools shared safeguarding audits which were reviewed to identify best practice and gaps. Where gaps were identified, or audits were not completed, schools were helped to find how to close these gaps and, where significant safeguarding concerns were identified, visits would take place and an action plan would be developed. Audits would be shared with and signed off by Governors to ensure safeguarding was a key focus for school leaderships. Serious concerns were not often identified in education provision, but should they be, they would be discussed within the Partnership and with OFSTED where necessary. Members asked how the challenge differed for the Police and Health Safeguarding Standards and the Chief Nurse Croydon CCG/CHS explained that the auditing and reviewing was similar. The Independent Scrutineer explained that reports on auditing came to the Quality Improvement Group who provided further challenge.

The Sub-Committee asked how the experience of children and young people was used to inform the practices of the Partnership. The Head of Social Work with Families & Children with Disabilities 0-17 Services explained that this information was captured through direct work with children, multi-agency meetings, family

surveys, complaints and direct interactions with frontline workers and managers. Often feedback was good, and it was recognised that positive outcomes could sometimes not be as visible. There were a number of avenues used to collate this information, but it was recognised that more work needed to be done in this area and this was a part of all improvement plans across the Partnership. There would be a Practice Week in early October 2022 which would involve practitioners spending time talking to young people, children and carers to hear what they would like to see improved. Carers often attended social service meetings to discuss what was being done well and what could be done differently to allow social workers to reflect on their work.

### Insourcing of the South Locality Children's Centre Delivery

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Children's Centre Contract award for North and Central, and the insourcing of the South Locality Children's Centre Delivery.

The Sub-Committee asked why the Council was not able to find a provider for the South Locality but were able to for the North and Central Localities. The Director of Education explained that this was largely due to the funding envelope available, concern around Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE), a lack of clarity around building costs and issues with the internal capacity of the bidders. After the first round of commissioning, bidders had been asked to provide the reasons for not bidding and a warming exercise has been conducted. The provider for the North and Central Localities had not been able to take on the South Locality due to a lack of capacity.

Members asked if there were any lessons that could be learnt as a result of the failure to commission for the South Locality. The Director for Education explained that learning had been taken into account after the first round and had led to conducting a warming exercise, but this had not been enough to result in a successful bid. Members heard that unfortunately some things could not be changed, such as the funding envelope and the services the Council needed to be provided, TUPE and lack of clarity around the maintenance costs of buildings. Members heard that there was always an attempt to develop learning after any commissioning exercise. The Director Quality, Commissioning & Performance added that these were small providers, and the unknown costs were bigger risks for them than a larger business.

Members asked how existing services users were being supported into the new model, with some families having to travel further which would affect families without cars. The Director of Education explained this had been looked at during the consultation and that bus routes had also been considered and made available to families. It was acknowledged that the service had been reduced but that services would be signposted to families. There had been a long consultation on this strategy, but ultimately services had needed to be reduced in line with budget reduction. The Hub and Spoke Model was not just about Children's Centres and also focuses on delivering health services and more with partners.



**Tuesday 1 November 2022**

Update on Antenatal and Health Visiting Visits

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided an update on Antenatal and Health Visiting in Croydon. The Sub-Committee thanked Elaine Clancy (Chief Nurse at Croydon Health Services) for commissioning the two independent and external reviews into the services, and asked about 'New Birth Visits' and whether these were being targeted at the most vulnerable families. The Head of Public Health Nursing explained that the aim was to visit all new mothers within 10-14 days, but this was not always possible due to workforce challenges, and so prioritisation of visits was assessed based on the levels of need or where there were mental health challenges identified through partnership working and intelligence sharing.

Members asked how they could be reassured that those needing help were not being missed. The Head of Public Health Nursing explained that monthly data had to be provided to the commissioners on the visits that had taken place, and where they had not, why not; this data was also reported nationally by the Local Authority. Health Visiting services were accessible by phone, and the number was shared by practitioners and through other groups. The Director Quality, Commissioning & Performance stated that monthly monitoring of the service was robust and that intelligence was being shared between the Council and Croydon Health Services to ensure those that needed help received it.

The Sub-Committee asked for reassurance that the service was improving in the context of health visiting in Croydon underperforming over a number of years; in particular, poor retention and recruitment were highlighted as problems facing Croydon to a greater extent than other local authorities. The Deputy Director of Nursing explained that some local authorities provided health visiting services and were able to pay Health Visitors more; the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust provided services to multiple boroughs and were able to pay an inner London weighting regardless of where the services were being provided. Members heard that Lewisham, Greenwich and Bromley all provided recruitment retention bonuses and this, combined with other factors, led to stronger recruitment and retention in other areas, and to people leaving Croydon to work for other providers. The Deputy Director of Nursing stated that there were plans to address these issues by providing a more flexible work offer and by making remuneration of Health Visitors more in line with neighbouring employers alongside the improvement plans detailed in the report. The Director of Public Health added that services were already improving and that organisational and developmental changes were just as important to recruitment and retention as competitive remuneration. The Sub-Committee raised a strong challenge about the consequences of the service not improving for Croydon Health Services and the Council. Members heard that the Director of Public Health reported regularly to the Secretary of State on Health Visiting and that improving the service was a high priority. The Chief Nurse expounded on the commitment and passion of the Health Visiting team and explained how seriously they took their role to the residents of Croydon. The Associate Director of Operations added that governance processes were strong in monitoring month on month performance and that there was a monthly meeting of an

Improvement Board, chaired by the Chief Nurse, to provide additional internal challenge.

The Vice-Chair asked about the timeframes involved in the improvement journey and how priority of need was identified. The Head of Public Health Nursing explained that that an 'assessment of need' was undertaken on first contact with families and this determined the particular care pathway required; once need had been assessed, referrals could be made, or other services engaged, if required. Members heard that the level of risk was always taken into account, and where this presented the possibility of safeguarding risks or harm to the individual, an action plan would be developed and enacted and this could take place at any part of the process. The Chief Nurse explained that the two independent reviews of the service had been undertaken to identify areas for improvement and ways to mitigate shortfalls in the numbers of Health Visitors; many of the mitigation and improvement measures would take time to embed and to dramatically improve the service.

### Croydon Partnership - Early Years' Strategy

The Sub-Committee considered a paper which provided the report approved by the Executive Mayor at Cabinet on 21st September 2022 on the Croydon Partnership - Early Years' Strategy. Members asked about the criteria for the success of the Strategy and heard this this would be a key part of what would be developed as part of the delivery plan. Key indicators that the Strategy had been successful would be families knowing where they could access services and further indicators would be developed in conversation with parents, carers and schools. Responding to questions on the timeline for the Strategy, the Director for Education explained that this was a three-year strategy that would begin to be embedded following the completion of the delivery plan.

The Sub-Committee asked about funding for the Strategy and heard that this would be implemented using existing funding streams in Education, the Croydon Partnership and Public Health. There would be significant extra funding available for Family Hubs over a three-year period and this would help very young children, children up to the age of 19 and children with special needs and disabilities. The Family Hub model would look at priorities across education, health and children's social care to focus all of these aims into a single strategy document.

The Sub-Committee noted the key risk identified in the Children, Families & Education Delivery Plan 2021 – 2024 of the reduction in Children's centre service delivery impacting early identification, intervention and prevention support within the community for vulnerable children and families, particularly delivery of universal service through centres; Members asked if this was recognised in delivering the Strategy. The Director for Education confirmed that it was and explained that they understood the importance of maintaining Children's Centres in the borough delivering services, but it was acknowledged the offer was now narrower with a reduced budget.

The Vice-Chair welcomed the Strategy and asked about the engagement and consultation process. The Director of Education explained that they had already identified gaps in those who had not been engaged in the initial round of

consultation, and these groups would be targeted for the next round of engagement. The Sub-Committee asked about measuring the success of the strategy once it was implemented and heard that this would be evidenced by families knowing where they could find support and the implementation of a strong Family Hub model.

## **Tuesday 17 January 2023**

### Budget Scrutiny Challenge

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided identified budget proposals for 2023/24.

#### *Review of Front Door Services*

The Sub-Committee asked whether there was staff capacity to meet current demand, and the Head of Service, Access Support and Intervention explained that the service had been designed to meet current demand and needs and thought had gone into who the best teams were to respond to any given query. There was a significant number of staff in the MASH team with increased capacity through the Early Help triage team.

Members asked about the limited funding for the Social Workers in Schools (SWIS) programme and the future of the programme. The Director of Children's Social Care explained that schools participating in the programme saw significant benefits, and that SWIS was 80% funded by the Department for Education and 20% by the local authority and schools. Members heard that in an ideal world with no funding restrictions early help schemes designed to work with families where they were often were the most effective; schemes such as SWIS added significant costs due to having to operate from multiple locations. The Sub-Committee heard that in response to the financial challenges of Croydon and the challenge in recruiting qualified social workers, there had been a shift in approach to ensure that non-social worker roles could deal with cases, where appropriate, to free up qualified social worker capacity. This approach was supported by the Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership, and had not been decided in isolation.

The Sub-Committee asked how demand on the Front Door compared with neighbouring boroughs. The Head of Service, Access Support and Intervention explained that meetings with neighbouring boroughs and police colleagues were regular but, as they were smaller than Croydon, demand was significantly less. Not all enquiries to the Front Door led to referrals into the Children's Social Care system and partnership working was important to ensure that other interventions and services in the Croydon community were tried first; this approach was embedded in current MASH transformation activity. Members asked if data was compared with statistical neighbours, and were informed that this was the case and was done on a regular basis through a monthly dashboard.

The Sub-Committee asked how the effectiveness of the new structure would be measured. The Head of Service, Access Support and Intervention explained that practise would be considered within a quality assurance framework to look at the

outcomes that were being achieved for children and an evidence based performance framework would be used to look at and scrutinise data across the different service areas. Members heard that a live dashboard was currently in development to support MASH activity, and would show data on the number of contacts coming in to the Front Door and the number of open cases. Soft data from service user feedback would continue to be collected throughout interventions as part of the quality assurance framework.

Members asked about efficiencies that had been identified from process improvements, and the Head of Service, Access Support and Intervention provided the example of consistent management oversight for cases for their duration, which allowed for decisions to be made in a more efficient and effective way that was safer for children. In response to questions about whether efficiencies were about service improvement or saving money, the Director of Children's Social Care explained that it was both but that safeguarding children and responding to urgent referrals was always the priority. The introduction of contact and referral officers meant that qualified social workers had additional capacity, as they would not need to focus on administrative tasks, such as requests for information from the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS). The Early Help Triage was led by social workers who were experts in this area, and this meant that families were offered solutions quicker, which led to greater take up and reduced demand on social work services.

#### *The impact of the reduction in spend on the adolescent service*

The Sub-Committee asked about the Integrated Care Board funded roles and it was explained that these officers would work collaboratively with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) to decide the best plans for immediate follow-up intervention for children.

Members asked about disproportionality in safeguarding and whether officers were confident that early intervention was effective in reducing the number of young people in crisis. The Head of Service, Access Support and Intervention explained that there was a positive offer in Croydon across Young Croydon and Youth Justice Services with a wide variety of targeted early interventions across the continuum of need. Work was ongoing with Community Safety colleagues on identifying contextualised risk and to identify hotspot areas and provide youth interventions to tackle risk factors in the community. In response to questions on how the effectiveness of this would be measured, the Sub-Committee heard that the quality assurance framework went across Children's Services and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for individual services were scrutinised on a regular basis.

The Sub-Committee commended the thought that had gone into the transformation of the service. Members asked how the voice of the service user had been incorporated into transformation and whether complaints had increased. The Head of Service, Access Support and Intervention responded that complaints were used to assess how well services were working, but that none had been received on the reconfiguration of the services specifically; relations with children and parents were overall good, with complaints managed largely at the stage one and two level. Service user engagement was more developed in the Youth Justice Service, and Young Croydon were working with the service to further develop this.

### *The review of care packages for children with disabilities aged 0-17*

The Sub-Committee asked how many children were catered for by Calleydown Residential Home, and heard that currently there were 55 children who received overnight respite, and 10-15 children who received daytime respite. There were two children who were on the waiting list, but these children would begin receiving care later in the month. The capacity was seven children a night, but this fluctuated based on the needs of the individual children. Members heard that there were always at least four members of staff on site at any given time, but this also varied based on the needs of the individual children.

The Sub-Committee asked about joint funding arrangements and were informed that a monthly Joint Funding Panel, chaired by the Director of Children's Social Care, reviewed and challenged joint funding arrangements with Health. The Director Quality, Commissioning & Performance explained that this was challenging and required a culture shift, but that partners were being engaged on multiple levels. Horizon scanning for opportunities through the South West London Integrated Care Board and Partnership were ongoing. The Sub-Committee asked, whether when service users were transferring between Children and Adults services, if it was seen that service users were eligible under the Adults framework when they had not been under the Children's framework. The Head of Service, Social Work with Families and Children with Disabilities responded that this was not something that had been noticed, but would be looked into outside of the meeting.

The Sub-Committee considered the case studies in the report and asked what happened when care packages were reduced. Members heard that officers had been unable to find an example of this happening in the last four months. It was thought that there may have been some reductions in care packages at the beginning of the review in 2021, but now as circumstances changed this needed to be looked at in the context of what else was available to the service user; for example, there may have been a decrease in domiciliary care, but this could have been supplemented by an increase in respite care. The Head of Service, Social Work with Families and Children with Disabilities explained that the impact on the individuals and families was always considered, explained and mitigated.

The Director of Children's Social Care explained that transformation funding would be used to fund an expert in house development to look at possible alterations or extensions that could provide additional bedrooms or the possibility of a self-contained flat on the grounds through the conversion of a garage. It was highlighted that these changes would require a number of approvals and capital expenditure.

Members asked about the use of data in the transformation of services and what this would mean for service users with the inherent risks of trying to maintain service levels with reduced resource. The Director of Children's Social Care explained that transformation of practise sat alongside data driven monitoring but that there was a difference between transformation of services and transformation funding.

Transformation funding was limited, and looked to enable changes to a system or service to provide better outcomes in the long term. The Director of Children's Social Care explained that the biggest risk to the Council was the possibility of increased

demand, which was not within the control of services and could lead to higher levels of risk held in families as a bottom line was reached. Members heard that this could lead to overspending as interventions that are more expensive are required.

### Education Estates Strategy

The Sub-Committee considered a paper which provided a report due for consideration at Cabinet on 25 January 2023 on the Education Estates Strategy for Pre-Decision Scrutiny.

The Sub-Committee asked about plans to deal with surplus school places and what powers the Council had to deal with this with a large number of academy schools in the borough. The Director of Education explained that the local authority was responsible for school place planning; the Head of Service, Early Years, School Place Planning and Admission explained that the Council was working with all schools through meetings with schools with the highest surpluses, and through locality clusters, to discuss and plan work on school place planning. A School Organisation Advisory Board is being set up and would be representative of all partners; this would look at the criteria of how the Council would need to work with schools to reduce places. Work had already been done with a number of schools to manage their surplus spaces, with the main route being a reduction in the Published Admission Number (PAN). Members heard from the Head of Service, Early Years, School Place Planning and Admissions that the Council was still mindful of schools' overheads in terms of maintaining necessary surplus and were exploring ways to harness this spare capacity through provision of enhanced learning units, early years provision or community based activities. There were a number of other options that would be considered such as federation mergers, reductions in class sizes or reorganisation of schools.

The Head of Education Services explained that they worked with Local Authority (LA) Maintained Schools who were in or at risk of budget deficit; surplus places was a common issue for these schools. All LA Maintained Schools submitted a yearly budget forecast, and those predicting a deficit submitted monthly returns that were scrutinised. Members heard that termly meetings were held with the leadership teams of these schools to explore solutions. Additional support was also offered including using a Department for Education financial advisor, looking at class sizes and other possible efficiencies. Common issues with school finances were managing surplus places, rising energy costs, rising staff costs and managing staff absences. There was an escalating model of support that was used to ensure schools received the help they needed. The Director of Education explained that the picture in Croydon on surplus places largely reflected the national situation and that London authorities were in dialogue on this issue.

Members asked about the work with school clusters to look at surplus spaces and heard that these discussions were taking place on a locality basis and schools were looking to come up with additional solutions. Schools had come up with lists of things that could be done which took into account their own individual circumstances and collective solutions with other schools. The Sub-Committee asked about the methodology of working out surplus spaces, and noted predictions from last year had increased a large amount. The Head of Service, Early Years, School Place Planning

and Admission explained that these numbers were kept under review, and the Greater London Authority (GLA) had been commissioned to produce the predictions used in the report; these numbers were likely to change again next year as new data was made available. Members heard that surplus places were highest in the North of the borough and much lower in the South.

The Sub-Committee asked about children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and issues with delayed assessments as well as the number of available SEND school places. The Director of Education explained that assessments were now 80% taking place within target timeframes, which had been a huge improvement; Members heard that support was also available to children awaiting assessments. Special school places had increased in a number of schools within the borough across all age ranges. The SEND Strategy priority is to educate children with special needs within borough, and where possible and appropriate, in mainstream schools. Data quality had improved which had allowed special school place planning to be much more effective, but parental choice is key in deciding provision and in, for some children and young people, suitable provision is out of borough.

### Education Standards 2022

The Sub-Committee considered a paper set which provided a report due for consideration at Cabinet on 25 January 2023 on Education Standards 2022 for Pre-Decision Scrutiny. The Sub-Committee heard that an Education Partnership Board had first been proposed to schools in 2020 to a positive reception. The Board would be made up of schools and key partners who would work to agree what local priorities were and enable greater school-to-school support and collaborative working. A draft terms of reference had been drawn up with a working group made up from representatives from a number of different schools and school types. Soft engagement with key partners had begun with those schools which were thought would be most difficult to reach and engage with the work of the Board, and the response had been encouraging. The Board would be launched in spring 2023, ready for being operational from the commencement of the new academic year.

Members commended plans for the Council to encourage schools to work together through the Education Partnership Board, and asked how schools had been engaged, noting the heavy workloads of Head Teachers. The Head of Education Services explained that Head Teachers had been engaged, but this had been alongside Business Managers, HR leads and governors. The Sub-Committee heard that engagement with schools had improved over the pandemic as the Council had been offering additional support. The Director of Education explained that a weekly newsletter to schools had been started during the pandemic, and the appetite had been for this to continue; this included information on lots of areas and helped to maintain an open conversation with Head Teachers.

Members asked how many schools would be needed to buy into the work of the Education Partnership Board for it to be effective, and the Director of Education explained that it was important that all schools felt represented on the Board. The Education Partnership Board set up costs would be initially Council funded, and possibly, the Council could continue to contribute funding for the first year or two

years; this was contrary to other areas where schools were required to pay into the model from its inception.

The Sub-Committee asked about young people who were not making expected progress from some specific groups. Members heard that some of these cohorts were very small, while others were very school and setting specific. The Head of Education Services explained that work was done with schools to identify cohorts of children who were underperforming to develop improvement action plans, to pair schools for peer support and to encourage collaborative solutions.

The Sub-Committee asked about high numbers of persistent absences from education, and asked who was responsible for reducing this, any available targets that could be shared, and how it was known that these children were safe. Members heard that this was a historic national issue, and that Croydon performed better than the national average. Central Government had identified this as an issue and a cross party national committee would be looking at this, but ultimately it was the schools responsibility to monitor this through welfare officers or commissioned services. The Director of Education explained that every school had a designated safeguarding lead and that the Education department worked closely with social services on children missing from education. The Director of Education explained that attendance proposals in the withdrawn White Paper were likely to return in new legislation at some point in the future. A monthly virtual attendance surgery would be rolled out in the coming year to assist schools with improving attendance.

## **Tuesday 28 February 2023**

### Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Update

The Sub-Committee considered a paper which provided a summary of the activity of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health (EWMH) services for children and young people residing and receiving education in Croydon. The report also provided an update on the position with current waiting times, access and performance.

The Vice-Chair asked if practitioners felt there were gaps in the current service offer and heard from the Chief Executive for Off the Record that there had been a large increase in demand for services since the pandemic; as a result of this, the length of counselling had been shortened to a standard offer of six. The Sub-Committee heard that young people and practitioners had identified that there were gaps for those in need of more substantial support, but who did not meet the threshold for CAMHS services. The Chief Executive of Croydon Drop-In explained that Off the Record were trialling the 'First Contact Method', 'Waiting List Groups' and carer helplines, but ultimately these were not substitutes for one-to-one support and did not reduce waiting lists. Members heard that there was good partnership working across the groups to try to identify and mitigate gaps in the offer where possible. The Service Director of CAMHS explained that NHS funding for CAMHS was around 1% of the total NHS budget, and it was known that this was often not sufficient to meet current need; many services had seen a doubling or more in the level of demand since the pandemic. The Sub-Committee heard there were gaps in a lot of the services being



offered, but that in-patient care was meeting current demand. It was stated that while the gaps were known, and a national issue, work was being done to target resources where they could do the most good to meet local priorities whilst utilising hotspot and equalities data.

Members asked about the Mental Health Support Teams in Schools (MHSTS) programme and heard that 45 schools in Croydon were receiving this service, jointly delivered by SLaM, Off the Record and Croydon Drop-In in different waves focussing on different areas. The SLaM wave focussed on School Exclusions, Off the Record and Croydon Drop-In jointly delivered a wave focussed on serious youth violence and a new wave had been introduced focussed on COVID recovery. The Sub-Committee heard that practitioners were based in the schools for a day a week for secondary schools, and for half a day for primary schools. Kooth, an online resource, was available for the schools who were not in the MHSTS programme.

Members asked about the long waiting times for assessments, and how long it took from assessment to receiving services. The Service Director of CAMHS explained that the majority of the longest waits were around the neurodevelopmental pathway and that this was linked to the work being done to change the Autism diagnosis pathway. The Sub-Committee heard that an Autism diagnosis would lead to a number of support packages and was not a mental health condition for which there was a treatment pathway. To reduce Autism diagnosis wait times, work was being done to look at how the system should operate and how it could cope with the current demand, and then to see what was in place to deal with the backlog. Members heard that CAMHS had been working with a private sector company called 'Clinical Partners' to increase capacity, reduce the longest waits and ensure a system was in place to manage ongoing demand. On the mental health pathway, waiting lists were being managed with dynamic reviews of risk to ensure the most acute needs were met as a priority; there was a single point of contact that triaged service users to ensure individuals were directed to the correct services through partnership working. The Service Director of CAMHS explained that they were seeking to increase the use of apps and virtual waiting lists so that, once individuals were registered, they could be signposted to services and receive some support whilst they were on waiting lists.

The Sub-Committee asked if there was a knock on effect to Children's Social Care from CAMHS not having as much capacity as would be desired. The Director of Children's Social Care explained that there were higher levels of mental health distress since COVID, both nationally and locally, which was a feature in safeguarding referrals. Members heard that this was a challenging aspect of safeguarding and required strong partnership working; where needs were acute the Director of Children's Social Care often met with Service Director of CAMHS to review cases to see where fast-tracking access to acute provision was needed. The Sub-Committee heard there was a need for every professional and parent to learn to recognise signs of mental distress and to upskill workers in contact with children to provide interventions. The Director of Children's Social Care explained that there was a Clinical Practice Team and qualified therapists in Croydon who worked directly with families and looked after children; there was also ongoing work focussing on suicidal ideation.

Members asked what was available for young people whilst they were waiting for assessments. The Service Director of CAMHS, SLaM explained that there was not a lot that was offered for these individuals but that there were attempts to make it clear how long people would be on the waiting lists, however, there were not sufficient resources in place to do much more. The Sub-Committee asked if it was possible to capture the impact of long waiting times on young people and heard that it was clear longer wait times often led to an increased cost of intervention at a later stage. The Chief Executive for Off the Record explained that they had set up a 'First Contact Team' to try and quickly meet with, assess and provide short term interventions for young people, and it was found that this had reduced counselling waiting lists. The Chief Executive of Croydon Drop-In explained that there were welfare check-ins for those on the waiting list for counselling that took place roughly every four weeks.

The Sub-Committee asked what the financial impact was to the Council as a result of unmet mental health needs leading to increased social care demand. The Director of Children's Social Care responded that this was very hard to quantify, but that there was a specific support offer to families awaiting Autism assessments. Members heard that mental health issues for young people with Autism were often a result of operating in a world that did not account for neurodivergence, which could cause significant stress and difficulty. The Corporate Director for Children and Young People highlighted the huge pressures on social care and mental health services and the importance of being transparent about this between partners.

Members asked about the pressures on services following the wind down of the Community Fund in 2023 in a context of existing funding pressures for services. The Sub-Committee heard that this would reduce the capacity of services, and that the 'Talk Bus' would likely see 1500 less young people than in previous years. The picture was difficult nationally and it was increasingly hard to bring in additional grant funding to supplement Council funding; the NHS were being looked at to supplement reduced funding from other areas. The Sub-Committee asked about the future of the 'Talk Bus' post March 2023, and heard the funding bids to continue this work had been developed over the previous 12 months. The Chief Executive of Croydon Drop-In explained that money had been saved over a number of years to replace the 'Talk Bus' with a more eco-friendly bus, and this had now been ordered; this was a shared community resource and every effort to continue funding it would be made. The Director of Performance and Partnerships, SLaM explained that all the organisations represented at the meeting worked together in partnership to deliver services and unlock resources to direct them where they were needed. The Chief Executive of Croydon Drop-In explained that they had received funding from the National Lottery to build a 'sensory room' for neurodiverse young people to use before counselling sessions. Members heard that a joint project between Drop-In, Off the Record and CAMHS on custody suites would be undertaken to provide counselling to young people.

### Police Representation and Multi-Agency Working

The Sub-Committee considered a paper which explained the partnership between the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Directorate, specifically Children's Social Care, and Police colleagues.

Members asked about the Youth Integrated Offender Management Partnership, and heard that the young people worked with were generally in the age range of 18-25. The Head of Service Access, Support and Intervention explained that police analysts had been integrated into this work, and that applying this intelligence had significantly reduced numbers of young people in the programme.

The Sub-Committee asked what was being done to increase trust amongst communities who had lost confidence in the police. Inspector Morteo responded that the new Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, Sir Mark Rowley, had launched a 'Turnaround Plan' featuring nine priorities, and that he was very open on trust and confidence. The Sub-Committee heard that there was a commitment to removing 'bad officers' and eliminating misconduct, and that there was more work happening with community groups than ever before. Members heard that it was thought that current methods of measuring trust and confidence were not sufficient, and needed to be improved. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety explained that the Youth Safety Plan was in development at the Council, and increasing trust amongst young people in the police was key to this being successful. Members heard that the Cabinet Member for Community Safety had been working closely with the police and local communities and that open conversations had been key in responding to an incident where the Central Police Team had conducted a Stop and Search where a young person had been put to the ground. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety explained that a new initiative had started that saw community members providing training to the police, to try to build trust between communities and the police. The Detective Inspector added that there were weekly meetings with partners to discuss 'every child every time' and what was being done by the police on a daily basis to increase police transparency. The Head of Service Access, Support and Intervention explained that the 'Complex Adolescents Panel' was a partnership group that met a weekly basis and considered exploitation within individual children's cases; the police co-chaired the Panel to enable shared accountability in developing and driving child safety plans. Members commended the role the police were playing in partnership working but recommended that the police do more to inform the wider community about the work they were doing.

The Sub-Committee asked about hotspot areas where children were more at risk and how this was monitored and mitigated. The Inspector explained that these hotspots moved depending on the time of year, school terms and what assets the police put into certain areas. Members heard that these hotspots were identified and monitored through intelligence sharing and crime reports. There had been a three-week operation focussed around Church Street to tackle schoolchild robbery, as levels of this offence were heightened in Croydon and across London. Neighbourhood Safety Officers were often deployed to hotspots and, where needed, central assets could be requested to Croydon to provide additional resource. The Inspector stated that work with other statutory organisations, such as the Council, was the best they had seen it. Members heard that there were 16 Schools Officers in priority schools who performed high visibility patrols and had been involved in the Church Street operation. The Head of Service Access, Support and Intervention explained that they had been working closely with the Violence Reduction Network and police to develop a locality based response model that recognised emerging needs and provided intervention and support to children and young people in these hotspot areas; it was recognised that intelligence sharing with the police was vital in

targeting support and intervention where it was most needed. The Youth Engagement team had been engaged in Church Street to try to minimise anti-social behaviour and risk.

Members commented on the need for more joined up thinking in the way that young people were dealt with to acknowledge their previous experiences and trauma. The Director of Children's Social Care agreed and explained that the Youth Engagement Team were very skilled at engaging young people to create teachable and reachable moments where valuable conversations could happen to change the perception and experience of the police for young people. The Director of Children's Social Care explained that there was a lot of joined up working that happened during 'Complex Strategy Meetings' that considered groups of young people whilst looking at 'places and spaces' as a focus for that work. It was acknowledged that this was a very difficult, fluid and complex area of work in the child protection landscape, where the focus on moving from prevention, to intervention, to arrest was happening simultaneously around different groups. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety commented on the complex relationship between being an observer, victim and perpetrator of violence. The Sub-Committee heard that the government had launched the 'Serious Violence Duty' that made links between youth violence and domestic abuse; the Safer Croydon Partnership would be developing a risk profile followed by a strategy and action plan for Croydon that brought these elements together. The Council is developing a Youth Safety Plan, and would be developing a Domestic Abuse Strategy, and the Cabinet Member explained that they were cognisant of linking in all of these elements to ensure the safety of children and young people.

#### Update on Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children in Education

The Sub-Committee considered a paper which provided information on the support available for children arriving in the borough on asylum schemes; information on access to education; and information to demonstrate that schools were being properly funded for taking in Ukrainian refugees as per national government support schemes.

Members asked how concerns that children could be behind, due to missing years of schooling, could be addressed and noted that this could present a barrier to integration,. The Director of Education explained that children who came to the country at a young age picked up English much more quickly than older children did. The Sub-Committee heard that the interim provision had been provided to develop English-speaking skills to aid in the transition to mainstream schools, and it was being looked at whether this would be reintroduced. The Sub-Committee heard that, whilst this was challenging, schools in Croydon were very open and welcoming, and it was more likely that children's experiences and trauma would create barriers; because of this it was important that support for children's mental health and wellbeing was in place.

The Sub-Committee asked how confident the Council was that all the available funding was being received to support Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children. The Director of Education confirmed that this was the case, and work was being done to pass this funding on to schools directly. Members heard from Co-optee Josephine

Copeland that integration had been successful at their school, but it was important that 'English as a Second Language' was a focus to ensure that lessons accounted for all of the children. Members heard that funding could be an issue as it did stretch resources with the example given of increased mental health needs. The Director of Education explained that the per-pupil funding was lagged, and that children arriving and leaving between census days could lead to a situation where funding was not received for these children. Members heard that this could create challenges but that support was provided wherever possible, however, school funding was complicated and sometimes did not account for pupil movement. The Director of Education stated that the Department for Education notified Local Authorities of available funding streams. The Early Help Service Manager explained that there had been a small grants funding process in late 2022 for voluntary sector organisations to provide additional services to, and activities for, the asylum-seeking community to provide opportunities outside of their accommodation.

Members asked how spending time outside of their main school setting affected the ability of children and young people to integrate. The Director of Education stated that this depended on each individual child, but that the idea of the interim provision had been to provide a short-term placement until the child was able to enrol at a mainstream school; this had also been to help the development of English skills. The provision had been located in St. Andrews School and a number of children had ultimately transitioned onto mainstream schooling at St. Andrews, which had been positive, as many had already integrated with their peers.

## **Tuesday 18 April 2023**

### Exclusions Update

The Sub-Committee considered a paper, which provided an update on Exclusions and Suspensions in Croydon. The Sub-Committee asked about challenge where patterns of disproportionality with exclusions were identified, and what training opportunities were provided to Head Teachers. The Head of Access to Education explained that there were training opportunities available, but these were at the discretion of Head Teacher to attend. Representatives from every school in Croydon had attended a training session on 'Adultification' in the 2021/22 academic year; this had been followed by other ongoing training sessions for which the Council held attendance logs. Academies held their own training and reported these sessions to the Council. The Head of Access to Education explained that the Council did undertake Section 11 statutory audits of safeguarding which included scrutiny of the training schools were providing. Members asked if training had been effective in reducing disproportionality for black children and the Head of Access to Education explained that it was effective on an individual basis and that strong challenge was being made on the basis of race, which would be reflected in this year's exclusions figure. The Head of Access to Education acknowledged that systemic change would take a much longer time to embed.

Members asked about the independent review of exclusions decisions and the Director of Education explained that every permanent exclusion went through an independent review panel that was usually convened by the school's governing

body. The Sub-Committee asked about Croydon's adoption of a 'Public Health' approach to crime, and whether there was a correlation between exclusions and youth crime. The Director of Education explained that there was a known link that had been identified through the Vulnerable Adolescents Review. Members heard that sometimes young people 'self-exclude' by taking a decision not to attend school and that this could impact on their outcomes. Members heard that Saffron Valley Collegiate, the Council's Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), have been involved in the AP 'taskforce' project and that pupils within the PRU were receiving support that extended beyond their education and incorporated a 'trauma informed' approach.

The Vice-Chair asked about scenarios where exclusions would or would not be challenged by the Council. The Head of Access to Education explained that there was always an initial challenge and conversation with a Head Teacher from the Exclusions Lead, followed by scrutiny of the exclusions paperwork. Members heard that the Council would investigate whether there had been a lack of effort or intervention with the child prior to the exclusion, and if there was any evidence of discrimination or unfair treatment. The only circumstances where the Council would not challenge is when the paperwork and evidence for the Exclusion were 'watertight', but this was extremely rare. The Vice-Chair asked how confident officers were that the advice and support being provided to parents by schools was good and relevant. The Director of Education responded that the Council worked closely with Head Teachers, and that they were confident that Head Teachers had a strong understanding of the exclusions process and their statutory responsibilities.

Members asked about disproportionality with regards to children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and whether there was best practice in regards to reducing disproportionality for Black Caribbean students. The Director of Education explained that children with Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) were not excluded from schools, and that any concerns were picked up in the annual review process. Members heard the reducing disproportionality for Black Caribbean students was a priority and that work with Head Teachers was ongoing, but that the Local Authorities' power here was limited. The Education Partnership would have representatives from all schools and would set priorities across Croydon; the Director of Education would be suggesting that inclusion and the reduction of disproportionality be a priority for the Partnership. The Head of Access to Education explained that where serious concerns around disproportionality were identified, the Council could intervene under safeguarding legislation; this had happened a few times in the last year and had resulted in visits from the Director for Education and members of the Exclusions Team to conduct in depth reviews of the school's practices.

The Vice-Chair asked about the increase in primary exclusions and the Head of Access to Education explained that there two trends that had been acknowledged. The first was increased numbers of children in nursery with complex needs, SEN and EHCP applications; this was impacting on the ability of schools to meet the needs of some very young children coming into schools. The second was children who had missed significant amounts of nursery and reception schooling during the pandemic. Long wait times for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and the complex diagnosis pathway for Autism and ADHD was also acknowledged as a contributing factor. The Director for Education explained that

Croydon Locality SEND support was providing funding into primary and secondary schools to support early interventions for students; this would be rolled out to Early Years settings in the near future to pick up on the needs of children at an earlier stage.

Members commented on the need for school governors to be trained and aware of best practice to ensure they were best able to scrutinise the decisions of Head Teachers. The Director of Education agreed and explained that the Council did provide training to governing bodies and that the best training did include examples of best practice. It was agreed that it would be a good idea to have experienced chairs of governing bodies talk at these training events and that this would be something considered in the future.

### Elective Home Education

The Sub-Committee considered a paper which provided a briefing on Elective Home Education (EHE) in Croydon, including the data showing the number of Children and Young people receiving EHE.

The Sub-Committee asked what the Council could do to address children who fell significantly behind in EHE. The Director for Education explained it was expected that any child with a special need was in a school that could meet their needs, but where families had chosen to EHE, they would be responsible for meeting these needs without resources from the Council. The Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education explained that there was very little power for the Council to intervene over issues that could not be in the child's best educational interest, but that forthcoming legislation may change this. The Sub-Committee heard the Council was supportive of this legislation changing. The Sub-Committee asked how many SEN children were being home educated and heard that currently there were seven in Croydon with an EHCP, but some parents may be in the process of applying for EHCP, or have less substantial needs. The Head of Access to Education explained that families were responsible for delivering the EHCP should they chose to EHE.

The Sub-Committee asked if the Council knew how many 'not known' EHE students were in Croydon, and whether there were any processes to try to identify these children. The Director for Education explained that families did not have to register with the Council to notify of EHE, but the Council would know if the child had previously been on a school roll. The Vice-Chair asked how an EHCP process would be conducted for a child receiving an EHE. The Director of Education explained that a parent or GP could submit an application for an EHCP assessment. Members asked about the increase in parents not providing a reason for EHE and heard that this was not known but that possibly this was because it was the first year that this option had been included as a 'tick box' on the notification form.

The Sub-Committee asked about the most common obstacles facing children in receipt of EHE. The Head of Access to Education explained that many families delivering EHE did so very successfully. Challenges were referred on to the 'Children Missing Education' team, and referrals for EHE were only accepted when the family wanted to EHE; if this were found not to be the case, then the school would be challenged and this could lead to a referral to Children's Social Care. Members

asked if the Council tried to intervene with students and families who taken the EHE route as a result of bullying. The Head of Access to Education explained that this was the case and that there would be an immediate conversation with the school. It was likely that these cases would not sit under the EHE team for very long and would be passed on to the 'Children Missing Education' team to work with the family alongside inclusion officers where a number of options could be considered, including a move to a different school.

The Sub-Committee highlighted families who had wanted to move to EHE who were involved with Children's Social Care or were on child protection plans. Members noted that the report stated that this had been challenged robustly and asked how it was ensure that these children were still attending school. The Director of Education explained that the Council would monitor attendance for these children in conjunction with Social Care; a social worker would be assigned to each of these families. Members asked if pupils who received EHE disproportionality went on to become 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETs)'; the Head of Access to Education explained that this was difficult to benchmark for a number of reasons.

### Experience of Care Leavers

The Sub-Committee considered a paper which outlined the position of Care Experienced young people in Croydon as assessed by Officers in the Annual Self-Assessment and Improvement plans and a recent review and recommendations by Mark Riddell, the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, at the Department for Education (DfE). The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People explained that this report was a very early response to the recent review and recommendations by Mark Riddell, and that a full report would be coming forward through Cabinet and the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Members asked about the housing offers available to Care Leavers, and whether there was effective support from the Council Housing department. The Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education explained that significant work with Housing colleagues was already underway, but the scale of the challenge in this area was not being underestimated. A full Cabinet paper would be forthcoming on the housing responsibilities to Care Experienced Young People that would be a collaboration between the Housing department, Deputy Mayor, Children, Young People and Education department and Cabinet Member for Children & Young People. The Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education agreed with the Sub-Committee that a 'whole Council' approach was needed in addition to good partnership working.

The Chair asked what housing support and options were offered to Care Leavers. The Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers responded that a large number of Care Leavers had 'stay put' arrangements where they were able to stay with their foster carers. Some young people did not want to do this and wished to live independently, but housing waiting lists for those who wished to move on could be long, and often other alternatives had to be sought in the private rental market, rent guarantee schemes or supported living where appropriate. The Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers stated there was an aspiration for more supported housing to be available. Members heard that there were a number of wraparound



services that were available and work had begun on developing these further to provide some additional support. The Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers explained that Housing colleagues were on-board with further developing housing pathways for Care Leavers.

The Sub-Committee asked about KPIs and monitoring of the service. The Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers explained that a number of KPIs were received by and monitored by the Corporate Parenting Panel who would also be receiving the full action plan once completed; in addition to this, the department also had a number of internal KPIs. The Cabinet Member for Children & Young People highlighted the work happening on the Corporate Parenting Strategy that it was hoped would be launched in September 2023. The Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education explained that this report was an introduction and overview to the next phase of a significant improvement plan; it was recognised that this work would involve the whole of the Council and its partners.

## Health & Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee scrutinises the work of local healthcare organisations and social care services provided to adult residents of the borough. It also, in conjunction with neighbouring local authorities, investigates and responds to emerging health and social care issues and changes affecting more than one borough.

You can view the agendas, reports and minutes of this Sub-Committee by clicking on the link: [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)

### 2022-23 Membership of the Health & Social Care Sub-Committee



**Councillor Sean  
Fitzsimons**  
(Chair)



**Councillor Sherwan  
Chowdhury**  
(Vice-Chair)



**Councillor Adele  
Benson**



**Councillor Patsy  
Cummings**



**Councillor Robert  
Ward**

**Councillor Fatima  
Zaman**

**Gordon Kay**  
Healthwatch Croydon  
(Non-Voting)

**Yusuf Osman**  
Croydon Adult Social  
Services User Panel  
(Non-Voting)

### Chair of the Health & Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee Councillor Sean Fitzsimons

**TBC**

A summary of the items considered by the Health & Social Care Sub-Committee in 2022-23 can be found below. Members also received an update from Healthwatch Croydon at each meeting.

### Tuesday 28 June 2022

#### Health & Social Care Overview

The Sub-Committee considered a series of reports which provided an overview from the Social Care, Public Health and Healthcare partners on their priorities for the year

ahead. The updates were provided at the meeting to help the Sub-Committee with setting its work programme for 2022/23

It was agreed that consultation on the redesign of Sexual Health services would be added to the Sub-Committee work programme in the coming year. It was also agreed that the work of the Public Health team on childhood obesity may also be considered for scheduling in the work programme should there be capacity.

In response to a question about mental health support for menopausal women, it was explained that there were specialist hormone intervention clinics, but this was delivered by a small service. It was acknowledged that there was further work that could be done in this area, which may benefit from a whole system approach. The Sub-Committee agreed that this may be an area to revisit as part of its work programme, along with looking at the issue from a workforce perspective and the support available for staff.

It was noted that the level of referrals for older people to mental health services had decreased during the pandemic and as such it was questioned whether the local performance had been benchmarked with data from other areas. It was advised that work on this had been conducted as part of the South West London Mental Health Strategy, but there was a need to review the support available for older people across the system, including building capacity within the community and voluntary sector. It was agreed that mental health provision for older people would also be considered for the work programme.

Members questioned whether the identified savings in Adult Social Care were being kept under review to check that they were still deliverable. Reassurance was given that savings were tracked monthly and had been reviewed by the Government appointed Improvement and Assurance Panel. The delivery of savings was on track, but should this change, there were processes built into the system to flag this. It was agreed that the delivery of the Adult Social Care budget would be a standing item at each meeting of the Sub-Committee to seek continued reassurance that it remained on track.

It was highlighted that there was concern within the local community about the possible impact from savings upon vulnerable residents and as such it was questioned how reassurance was being provided to those affected. It was advised that the aim of the savings programme was to enable people to lead an independent life and would be managed through engaging with residents on an individual basis. Work was underway to ensure the voice of people was being heard and used to co-produce services. It was important that the level of service provided was flexible to ensure it could be increased or reduced as needed. There was a statutory role for the Director of Adult Social Services to ensure that both the quality and safety of services was maintained, and a Challenge Panel was in place should there be concern about the fairness of any changes delivered. The Sub-Committee agreed

that it would continue to look for assurance on the maintenance of safety throughout the year ahead.

## **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

### South West London Integrated Care System Update

The Sub-Committee considered a presentation which provided an update on the delivery of the South West London Integrated Care System. An introduction was provided to the Sub-Committee by the Croydon Health Services Chief Executive and Place-Based Leader for Health, Matthew Kershaw.

Members noted the close work between the ICS and Healthwatch and heard that funding had been received by Healthwatch for an executive lead to coordinate the six Healthwatch groups in the ICS areas. The Sub-Committee asked about the complexity and pace of implementation in the ICS. The Croydon Health Services Chief Executive explained that so far responses had been timely and effective; an example of this was given on securing funding for health inequalities that had been granted for Croydon at higher levels due to quick responses, as a result of strong and effective relationships in the borough, that demonstrated Croydon's higher levels of need.

The Chair asked about place-based accountability for the ICS and what would be done to keep the Sub-Committee abreast of upcoming workstreams. The Croydon Health Services Chief Executive responded that he was a representative of Croydon at the ICS, and was responsible for ensuring that Members remained sighted on workstreams at the Croydon and South West London level. The ICS were committed to providing good forewarning of upcoming work and it was highlighted that early work on shifting commissioning responsibility for dentistry to the ICS level was being undertaken following enquiries from the Chair. The Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care added that all Health and Wellbeing Board Chairs were included in the ICS and also met separately. The Chair welcomed the support of both the Croydon Health Services Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care in ensuring Croydon was well considered by the ICS.

### Croydon Safeguarding Adult Board (CSAB) Annual Report 2021/22

The Sub-Committee considered the Annual Report for 2021-22 from the Croydon Safeguarding Adults Board, with a view to reassuring itself on the performance of the Board, prior to the report's consideration by the Cabinet. The Independent Chair of the Board, David Williams, introduced the report.

The Chair asked about the effectiveness and key strengths and weaknesses of the Partnership. The Corporate Director Adult Social Care & Health stated that the commitment of the partners was a particular strength, with strong participation across many sub-groups from the partners; it was recognised, however, that data

collection and the building of the scorecard still required additional work. The Detective Superintendent for Public Protection commented on the willingness of the partners to learn from each other and to engage with the action plans resulting from Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) but felt that transitions between the Children and Adult Safeguarding Boards could be strengthened and would be a key area of focus for the partnership going forward. Members heard that increasing inequality and vulnerability in Croydon, and nationally, remained a key challenge. The Independent Chair explained that the engagement and commitment of partners were key to the success of the partnership, and that work to improve data collection would be prioritised.

Members asked about referrals to safeguarding and the suggestions that these had decreased, in part, due to the Croydon Adult Support Team having been able to divert people to other services where safeguarding was not needed. The Sub-Committee asked if the training the Croydon Adult Support Team had received allowed them to properly pick up on safeguarding issues, and if there were any figures for those who had been directed away from safeguarding services in error. The Corporate Director Adult Social Care & Health explained that the 'front door' had changed to include experienced staff and social workers to perform triaging on the referrals that were coming into the safeguarding service. There was a daily meeting with the Section 42 Team to review cases to see if they required a full Section 42 enquiry or an alternative service or assessment. The Corporate Director Adult Social Care & Health stated that they were confident in the training staff had received and that robust processes were in place with experienced staff at the 'front door'.

In response to questions about what training was provided by the Partnership on mental health, Members heard that the Metropolitan Police had an internal mental health team that provided training to other officers and that this included training on neurodivergence and autism. The Corporate Director Adult Social Care explained that there was a full multiagency training programme on safeguarding in Croydon, that was open to professionals and the voluntary sector; data on attendance could be provided to Members at a later date. The Independent Chair explained that there had been extensive conversations with the chair of the Training and Development Sub-Group about measuring training outcomes.

### Adult Social Care Budget & Reforms

The Sub-Committee considered a report on Adult Social Care Budget and social care reform with a view to reassuring itself about the delivery of the 2022-23 Adult Social Care Budget and to understanding of the implications for Croydon from the Government's social care reforms. The Corporate Director for Adult Social Care & Health provided an introduction to the report.

The Chair asked about any emerging risks or changes that had been identified since the report was written and heard that Adult Social Care was still predicted to come in on budget and that forecasting for peaks in demand in the winter had been

undertaken. Pressures on Croydon University Hospital had been high throughout the year and there were a number of workstreams focussed on this, including hospital discharge and prevention work. Members heard that the department was working closely with partners, such as Virtual Wards, GPs and the voluntary sector, to mitigate and prevent hospitalisation. The NHS backlog and long waiting lists could lead residents to have contact with Adult Social Care who would normally not have. Members heard that increased isolation over the last two years as a result of the pandemic had also likely led to declines in the mental health of some individuals which had increased demands on the service. The Corporate Director for Adult Social Care & Health stated that the priorities of Adult Social Care were to meet statutory requirements, to manage demand, complete reviews in a timely way and to manage contracts and the market well. The importance with hearing the voice of every individual the service worked with was highlighted.

The Sub-Committee asked about the at-risk savings identified under the Medium Term Financial Strategy and service user and staff involvement in the deep dive analysis of the budgets in Transitions, Disability Services, Older Peoples Services and Mental Health. The Head of Improvement explained that due to a lack of staff resource, efficiencies from case and waiting list reviews were not possible. The Corporate Director for Adult Social Care & Health explained that there were regular meetings with the CEO, Section 151 officers and lead finance officers and that staff were regularly involved, but as this was more around accounting, service users and residents were not involved.

The Sub-Committee asked how the individual would be considered in work to mitigate the Cost of Living Crisis. The Corporate Director for Adult Social Care & Health stated that there had been a small uplift in Personal Independence Payments but acknowledged that this was a very difficult time nationwide for staff and service users.

## **Tuesday 28 November 2022**

### Update on proposed health facilities in Coulsdon and New Addington

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided an update on the provision of new health facilities in Coulsdon and New Addington by Croydon Health Service NHS Trust (CHS). This update had been included on the agenda to inform the Sub-Committee of the reasons for the delay in delivering these projects.

Regarding the timeframe for the negotiations with the developer, it was confirmed that CHS was looking to resolve the outstanding issues by the end of March 2023 as a longer delay would impact upon the funding provided by NHS England requiring an extension to be negotiated. It was expected that negotiations with the developer should be concluded within six to nine months. There was a commitment from both CHS and the developer to work together on this site, but if the outcome from the

negotiation meant it was not viable to proceed, then other options would need to be considered.

It was confirmed that neither the Coulsdon nor New Addington developments were reliant on the other to proceed. The same developer had been appointed for both sites, but they could be developed separately if needed. Given the delay to the provision of health facilities on the Coulsdon site, it was highlighted that the Purley War Memorial Hospital was the hub for the south of the borough. CHS was looking at improving both the surgical and diagnostic services available from this site.

In response to a question about feedback from the local community on the delays, it was highlighted that the health service had been managing without these facilities and would continue to do so. There had been conversations with patient groups throughout the process and information had been shared at the Healthwatch Croydon AGM. CHS would continue to share information wherever possible.

### Balancing Adult Social Care Legislative Duties with the Available Financial Resource

The Sub-Committee considered a report which explained how the Adult Social Care service maintained its statutory requirements in the face of delivering its budget savings targets. This report had been requested to allow the Sub-Committee to seek reassurance that there were sufficient safeguards in place to ensure that any changes to individual care provision was managed safely.

Members questioned whether staffing was a particular issue exacerbating patient flow through the system. It was confirmed that staffing was always one of the contributing factors to patient flow through the system. Although the hospital was doing well in terms of nursing staff, the availability of therapists along with shortages in social care were creating issues. There was also staffing hotspots in other areas across the system that had an impact. The Government had announced new funding to help health and social care services manage the impact of winter pressures. Croydon had been given the biggest allocation in South West London, which equated to £2.5m for the borough. 60% of this would be allocated to health care services and 40% to social care.

Given it was recognised that health and social care services nationally were going through a challenging time, it was questioned whether there was sufficient capacity within the system to manage any unexpected issues that may occur. It was advised that contingency plans were in place to manage the demand for services over the winter, but it was expected to be a very demanding period. The Service worked with Public Health colleagues to encourage the take up of vaccinations to prevent the possibility of a flu or covid-19 spike. Longer term plans were being made to ensure a sustainable social care system was in place going forward, which focussed on keeping people fit and well by working across the health and care system.

Further information was requested on the support being provided for the care market in the borough. It was highlighted that there were two care networks aimed at supporting the market to ensure it was managing the pressures from risks such as the cost of living crisis and increased energy costs. Only one care home in the borough had closed in the past year, but that was due to the provider not wanting to continue in the sector. The Service was looking at how best to support care homes with inflation and specific pots of money such as those available through the Government's Fair Cost of Care provision had been distributed. The care home market in the borough was sustainable and the Council continued to be able to buy beds as needed.

Officers were asked to explain how they were reassuring themselves that the Service was keeping people as safe as possible when going into or leaving hospital. It was advised that there was a Life team in place to support people leaving the hospital environment, with a virtual ward system set up to monitor people outside of hospital to the same level as would be the case on a ward. People are first visited within 24 hours of leaving hospital and all cases are reviewed within four weeks to ensure the resident continued to be safe and was receiving the required level of care. Although there was confidence in the system to support vulnerable residents, it was acknowledged that sometimes things did go wrong and when this happened, there was a robust safeguarding process in place to review any such case.

It was questioned whether there would be any impact upon the services provided by non-statutory partners in the community and voluntary sector from the discontinuation of the Community Fund. In response it was highlighted that many of the contracts in the Community Fund were naturally coming to an end in March 2023. The Adult Social Care service worked with voluntary sector providers to access the various pots of money that were available for different services, such as the previously mentioned services to help alleviate winter pressures. The carers contract was due to be reprocured in the New Year and work would continue with the voluntary sector on the provision of Personal Independence Coordinators.

It was confirmed that the Service was in the second year of a three year transformation journey, with the first year's targets met last year. The Service was also on track to deliver the second year's targets this year. A key part of the role for the Statutory Director of Adult Services was to ensure that the transformation programme was being delivered both properly and safely. There were risks around areas such as transitions and the workforce which were being actively managed, with a combined health, care and education approach being used to ensure the best outcomes for the young people supported by the Transitions service.

It was questioned how conversations with service users and residents had shaped the service. As previously mentioned, the Voice of the People Group had recently been set up to provide direct feedback, with the most recent meeting held earlier in the day to discuss the budget. The Service had worked with the National Team for Inclusion to ensure that service users felt that they were part of the solution. The



immediate focus was on managing demand, pathways and ensuring they reflected lived experience. The membership of the group was fluid to ensure it focussed on residents with lived experience. It was acknowledged that there will always be people who are hard to reach, but it was about finding ways to communicate such as through representative groups. There was also a need to create connections with other groups such as local Community Partnerships.

## **Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

### Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022

The Sub-Committee considered the Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2022. The report focused on how circumstances and experiences can impact on people's health outcomes and spotlighted how these influences impact people unequally. The report discussed what can be done to reduce health inequalities across the life course and highlighted the work already happening around the borough to address them.

The Sub-Committee asked about the recommendations in the report, the budget for delivering these and how they would be prioritised. The Director of Public Health explained that this was not an action plan that this is an Independent report providing a compendium of health information for Croydon, and that Health Inequalities were not something that could be resolved by the local authority or NHS alone. The Director of Public Health explained that the report made a number of recommendations that reflected her view on measures that could be considered to reduce Health Inequalities that could be used by a number of organisations. Members heard that the Public Health budget was £22 million, but the content of the Annual Report was a separate statutory function to commissioning public health services with this ring-fenced funding, another statutory function of the Director of Public Health.

The Chair welcomed the content of the Annual report and stated that they hoped that Health partners in Croydon read and engaged with the recommendations. The Sub-Committee noted the report and thanked the Director of Public Health for taking the suggestions of Members into account for future Annual Reports.

### Responding to Urgent and Emergency Care Pressures

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided an update from Croydon Health Service NHS Trust on Urgent and Emergency Care Pressures. The Chief Executive of Croydon Health Service NHS Trust and Place Based Lead for Health introduced the item and summarised the key points of the report.

The Sub-Committee asked about patient pathways and anecdotal evidence of patients presenting at A&E instead of GPs, due to long waiting times, and pressures caused by part-time GP working. Members asked what was being done to address

this, manage demand and drive residents to enrol at GPs. Members heard that capacity in hospitals, community services and primary care was greater than ever before, and that there were now double the number of GPs at the front of A&E to divert appropriate cases. The Chief Executive of Croydon Health Service NHS Trust explained that as quickly as capacity was being created, this capacity was being used due to increased demand and the slowing down of the flow of patients through services. Members heard that it was crucial to look at expanding capacity and how this capacity was used at the same time to ensure services were efficient. This was being done in conjunction with colleagues in Health and Social Care and a national pilot to integrate services was due to start in Croydon called the Frontrunner programme.

The Chair commented on mental health as a topic on the work programme, and the prevalence of long-term hospital stays on mental health grounds. The Corporate Director for Adult Social Care and Health explained that there was work happening with the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and the Bethlem Royal Hospital to support hospital discharge and that it was vital that support services and placements were available in the community for these patients.

In response to questions on follow up community support and reduced funding for these services, the Corporate Director for Adult Social Care and Health explained that the authority had encouraged local partners to bid for the Innovation Fund to deliver 'Pathway Zero'; this had been successful for the bids submitted by Age UK, the Red Cross and Croydon Neighbourhood Care Association. This was short-term funding until the end of March 2023, which would be monitored to see how this effected the flow of patients through the hospital, and whether 'Patient Zero' would be funded long-term. The Chief Executive of Croydon Health Service NHS Trust added that the Social Care Discharge Fund would be replicated next year.

The Chair welcomed the government's increase in short-term funding and the signs of good partnership working in Croydon. The Sub-Committee acknowledged that certainty and long term funding would be significant challenges that were largely not in the hands of the partners and needed to be addressed by central government. The Sub-Committee were of the view that certainty and proper funding were essential in making services work properly.

#### Adult Social Care & Health Directorate - Budget & Performance

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided the 2022/23 Period 7 (October 2022) budget and savings position, 2023/24 indicative savings and benchmarked key performance indicators for the Adult Social Care & Health Directorate. The Corporate Director for Adult Social Care and Health introduced the item and summarised the report.

The Chair asked about the Period 7 Financial Monitoring figures. It was noted that an underspend was predicted for 2022/23, and it was asked why savings had not been achieved in some areas. The Director of Adult Social Care Operations highlighted

the area of Disability Transitions; it was noted that significant savings had been made but that there had been difficulties in meeting the targets that had been set. The department was looking to address this through increased recruitment of staff to conduct reviews, as it was acknowledged that reviewing capacity was not sufficient; whilst there had been constant recruitment there had still been a shortfall in staffing. There had been better management of costs in the market since the start of the Director of Adult Social Care Policy & Improvement, by looking at ways to ensure the market remained resilient and was developed to provide better and more cost effective solutions.

The Director of Adult Social Care Policy & Improvement explained that there had been issues with recruiting to Commissioning inside of Adult Social Care, and that good strategic commissioning was vital to delivering savings targets through a partnership approach with Operations. Commissioning capacity was now in place, it was thought that the department was in a much better place moving into 2023/24 to deliver a greater pace around reviews which it was hoped would make savings targets achievable. The importance of supporting staff who had been under significant pressure for an extended period was noted, and failure to do this properly was highlighted as a risk.

The Sub-Committee commented on concerns about compromising on the safety and quality of care packages in delivering savings and asked for reassurance that this was not the case. The Corporate Director for Adult Social Care and Health stated that this was not happening, and that all individuals were assessed to ensure that their care needs were met in the most cost-effective way that could deliver the best outcomes for the service user; it was also important that reviews were carried out in a timely manner. Members heard that the department was going through assurance and would be inspected to verify that this was the case.

Members asked about the risk of burnout for social workers with high caseloads. The Corporate Director for Adult Social Care and Health explained that those doing overtime on reviews were being monitored closely, as were caseloads to ensure that these remained manageable. The Director of Adult Social Care Operations added that the quality of work was also being monitored, and that Heads of Service and Team Managers were watching caseloads to ensure the quality of work remained high. Outstanding reviews had been organised by the age of the cases to ensure these were tackled in an appropriate order.

The Chair related a question from Selhurst Ward Councillors about plans in the 2023/24 budget for closing the Whitehorse Day Centre and Cherry Orchard Garden Centre, both of which catered to residents with learning disabilities. It was asked if the impacts of these closures had been properly assessed, whether there had been sufficient consultation with service users and if the proposed savings were significant. The Corporate Director for Adult Social Care and Health explained that they would be meeting with Ward Councillors to discuss this in January 2023; the Whitehorse Day Centre service would not be closed, but there was work to find

alternative buildings to provide efficiencies. The Sub-Committee heard that service users of both sites were being engaged on the plans, and that no decisions had been taken on either site. The Corporate Director for Adult Social Care and Health stated that an Equality Impact assessment on the proposals had been completed. Members heard that all provisions in the directorate had been looked at through the lens of statutory provision, which running a garden centre was not, however use of the Cherry Orchard Garden Centre featured on the care plans of 11 service users, all of which would need to be looked at closely should it close to find alternative provision. In addition to this, there were nine volunteers who worked at the Centre who would also be carefully considered for alternative provision. The decision on these sites would ultimately be made by Members and it was acknowledged that the potential savings were not large in and of themselves but contributed to wider financial figures. A comprehensive report considering all factors would be provided to support any decision that was made. The Whitehorse Day Centre supported 65 people on average and work was ongoing with these individuals, their families and staff; none of the staff or care packages for service users were at risk, as a new location for these services was being investigated. It was highlighted that both sites required ongoing investment, should they be retained, and that services were moving to an 'Active Lives' approach to ensure that people were engaged in the community, as opposed to building based services.

## **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

### Croydon's Mental Health Transformation

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided an update on the transformation journey of mental health services in Croydon. The update had been included on the agenda for the Sub-Committee to review the provision of mental health services in the borough and would be used to identify possible areas for a future deep dive.

At the start of the meeting, thanks were given by the members of the Sub-Committee for their visit to the Bethlem Royal Hospital on 21 March, to view the facilities provided by the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLAM) at the site and presented with an overview of mental health services delivered by partners in the borough.

The Sub-Committee asked whether the pathways to accessing mental health services in the borough could be easily understood by the public, and what were the strengths and weaknesses in the current approach. It was acknowledged that the routes into secondary mental health services were not necessarily clear or straightforward, with multiple pathways available. Further work was needed to map out the various pathway to ensure it was as clear as possible without making it too linear for multiple entries into the system. It was suggested by the Sub-Committee that the present system was confusing, especially for friends and family members who may be looking for additional support for an individual. It was agreed that a

simple 1-page communication should be created for use by partners such as the Police or Housing Officers, who may encounter individuals in crisis, to ensure they were aware of the best routes for support. A request was made for this document to also be shared with Councillors, once it was available.

A new pathway, a Health and Wellbeing Hub in the Whitgift Centre, had recently opened to provide walk-in access to mental health support, and it was planned that similar hubs would be rolled out in other locations across the borough. Other existing pathways include through GP referral, or through emergency access in the Accident & Emergency (A&E) department at the Croydon University Hospital.

It was highlighted that there was a significant level of unmet demand for mental healthcare services within the borough, and as such, it was questioned whether resources were being focussed effectively and how assumptions on the service delivery were tested. It was advised that using a population health approach would be key to developing future services. The basis of this approach was to use data to identify areas of need, which would enable the production of a more targeted offer. It was acknowledged that this approach was not fully optimised at the present time, but it was the direction of travel for the commissioning of services moving forwards.

It was highlighted that there seemed to be an almost infinite demand for early intervention mental health support, and as such it was questioned how the process was being managed to ensure the support was prioritised towards those in most need. It was advised that the Social Care team had increased capacity at the front door of the service with the employment of a mental health wellbeing assessor. Training was also provided to staff to enable them to signpost residents to available support. There were also performance indicators linked to the front door of the service which would help to provide an explanation of the reasons for the high demand for mental health support. The representatives from SLAM advised that demand management also needed to have a focus upon supporting communities through a multi-layered approach. For instance, the Health and Wellbeing Centre had a clinical psychologist located within the service which helped free up clinical time elsewhere within the mental healthcare system. It was important to enable staff to work in a targeted way to ensure that the system operated efficiently. Another programme highlighted was the Ethnicity Mental Health Improvement Programme which was targeted towards upskilling faith leaders on early stage support and to help identify where support was most needed.

In response to a question about how the patient experience was monitored regarding safeguarding, it was highlighted that the Council produced a range of data on safeguarding. The use of restraint at the Bethlem Royal Hospital was monitored at a service level and by the SLAM Trust Board. There was a target to reduce the use of restraint including a zero level use of prone (face down) restraint. SLAM had also embarked on a refreshed approach to managing patient distress and the use of restraint, but there was still work to do in Croydon to embed best practice. It was confirmed that data on the use of restraint could be broken down by ethnicity.

There was concern amongst the members of the Sub-Committee about the level of support provided to residents in social housing and whether there was sufficient engagement with social housing providers on how to support residents with mental health needs. It was agreed that housing placements needed to be carefully considered to ensure that residents were being placed in the right type of accommodation for their needs. It was agreed that this topic would be flagged as a potential area for review in conjunction with the Homes Sub-Committee for 2023-24.

It was questioned whether there was sufficient data available to demonstrate whether services were performing effectively. In response, it was advised that there was a significant amount of data for established programmes, but further work was required to produce data for new or transformed services. This included setting baseline data and identifying the performance indicators to be monitored. The Sub-Committee agreed that it was important to have as much data as possible to available in the public domain to ensure there was transparency over performance and how the data was being used to transform services.

## **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

### Croydon Health Services NHS Trust - Quality Account 2022/23

The Sub-Committee considered a report which set out a draft version of the 2022-23 Quality Account for Croydon Health Service NHS Trust (CHS). A draft of the Quality Account had been provided for the comment of the Sub-Committee, which would be taken into consideration by CHS in preparing the final version of the document. The Chief Executive of the Croydon Health Service NHS Trust (CHS) and Croydon's place based leader for health, Matthew Kershaw attended the meeting for this item, to provide an introduction and answer questions arising.

The first comment on the Quality Account highlighted that the report mentioned Croydon being the youngest borough in London but did not acknowledge it also had the ninth highest number of people aged over 60 as well. It was agreed that this would be picked up and reflected in the report. It was suggested that it may be helpful include graphs or diagrammatical indicators within the Quality Account to better help demonstrate performance.

The importance of the workforce upon the delivery of services was highlighted, with it questioned whether workforce issues had impacted upon the performance of CHS. It was advised that staff had been required to work through a tough set of issues including going through the pandemic, ongoing industrial action, and a high level of vacancies. Targeted work had reduced the number of vacancies in the nursing workforce, with CHS having a lower level of vacancies than had in recent years. Both the health and wellbeing, and the support of and engagement with staff would continue to remain a top priority. It was confirmed that CHS had undertaken local, national, and international recruitment campaigns for staff, with a lead in place

helping to support staff from overseas to acclimatise. This had helped the Trust to reduce the use of agency staff and lowered vacancy rates. The recruitment of physio and occupational therapists remained a challenge, with avenues such as apprenticeships being explored.

CHS was congratulated on its maternity services achieving a good rating by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The hospital was one of only two maternity units in London that achieved a good rating on the safe care and well led aspects in the CQC inspection. CHS had a new Director of Midwifery in place who was leading the ongoing improvement work and had connected well with both staff and patients. It was important for CHS not to become complacent on the performance of the service, as the provision of midwifery was a tough challenge across the country, requiring a continued focussed. In response to a question about the stroke facilities in the borough, it was advised that these had been reorganised several years ago, with St George's University Hospital in Tooting becoming the local unit for specialised stroke care. Clinical evidence indicated that having specialised urgent care services for stroke patients located in one hospital improved patient outcomes. The stroke facilities available in Croydon provided rehabilitative support for patients in their recovery post-stroke, once they no longer required the urgent care provided by St Georges

Given the priority for hospital acquired infection had not been achieved, it was questioned whether this should be a worry for residents. It was acknowledged that the risk of infection was a significant concern for patients, but the historic performance of CHS in this area was good and the hospital had good infection control processes. It was hoped that there would a reduction in the number of infections in the forthcoming year.

It was highlighted that there was a national issue within maternity services, with BME patients facing worse outcomes. As such it was questioned whether CHS could provide data on the performance at Croydon University Hospital. It was confirmed that this was a core issue in Croydon due to the diverse population with the Health Equity and Racial Disparity in Maternity (HEARD) campaign targeting improvement in this area. It was confirmed that metrics from the HEARD campaign and the core maternity service could be shared with the Sub-Committee. It was suggested that this may be an area of scrutiny to schedule in the forthcoming year.

Regarding patient complaints, it was acknowledged that there had been a slower level of response following the pandemic, which had created a backlog that was being addressed. In the past two to three months CHS had brought in additional capacity to help respond to complaints, which was getting on top of the backlog, with responses sent to most of the outstanding complaints from 2022.

It was agreed that health visiting was an important issue and although some progress had been made, it remained a massive challenge. New birth visits had been prioritised for improvement as these were a crucial point of assessment for the

early identification of potential issues. It had been included in the Quality Account to ensure there was a greater level of focus on the Trust's performance in this area. It was suggested that it may be helpful to share the work plan for the service with the Children & Young People Sub-Committee.



## **Streets & Environment Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

(formerly the Streets, Environment and Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee)

The Streets and Environment Scrutiny Sub-Committee has a broad remit. It investigates services and issues relating to public and private transport, Croydon's highways, waste management and environmental issues. In all its work, the Sub-Committee seeks to promote sustainability and to promote the health and wellbeing of Croydon's residents.

At the meeting of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 18th October 2022, it was agreed that the remit of the Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee would be divided through the formation of a separate Homes Sub-Committee until the end of 2022-23 Council year.

You can view the agendas, reports and minutes of this Sub-Committee by clicking on the link: [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)

### **2022-23 Membership of the Streets & Environment Sub-Committee**



**Councillor Ria Patel (Chair)**



**Councillor Amy Foster (Vice-Chair)**



**Councillor Simon Brew**



**Councillor Danielle Denton**



**Councillor Christopher Herman**



**Councillor Mohammed Islam**



**Councillor Luke Shortland**

### **Chair of the Streets and Environment Scrutiny Sub-Committee Councillor Ria Patel**

As Chair of the Streets and Environment Scrutiny Sub-Committee from October 2022, the focus of this committee has been scrutinising key services in the Sustainable Communities, Regeneration & Economic Recovery (SCRER) Directorate, like the transformation plan for the planning department, as well as the procurement of the next Waste Collection and Street Cleansing contract. Prior to the change in Chair and split of Sub-Committees, the Sub-Committee also scrutinised items like the revocation of the Croydon suburban design guide supplementary planning document (SPD2) and the Housing Transformation Plan.

At each meeting the department's finances have also been scrutinised, through the Financial Performance Monitoring report, as well as in January via the Budget paper, asking questions on the determination of savings during the budget-setting process, the shortfall in income from parking services, the transformation of the planning service, and risks from future building control legislation.

A key consideration has been investigating the robustness of savings targets and ability to deliver efficiencies, with a context of increasing workloads, scarcer resources, and inflationary pressures, as well as monitoring the impact of these savings on the quality of services to our residents. Throughout the year we emphasised the importance of using data collected to inform an evidence-led approach. We raised concerns at the slow pace in workforce recruitment, as well as the minimal progress on a coherent climate and environmental strategy.

I would like to thank the members of the Sub-Committee for their hard work, particularly Councillor Amy Foster, the Vice Chair. Thank you to all the officers in SCRER, and Tom Downs, the Sub-Committee's Scrutiny Officer, who supported us so well over the past year. Finally thank you to Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel, the previous Chair of the Streets, Environment & Housing Sub-Committee.

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A summary of the items considered by the Streets & Environment Sub-Committee in 2022-23 can be found below. Members also received the Financial Performance Monitoring report from the most recent Cabinet meeting to ensure that they were reassured about the delivery of the Sustainable Communities, Regeneration and Economic Recovery Directorate budget.

### **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

#### Sustainable Communities, Regeneration & Economic Recovery Directorate Overview

The Sub-Committee considered a report that provided an overview of the Sustainable Communities, Regeneration & Economic Recovery (SCRER) Directorate to inform the development of the Committee's work programme for the year. The Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment went through their initial priorities in post including Graffiti Removal, working with community groups, residents' associations, and parks Friends Groups. This work was to identify these groups' priorities and to rebuild trust and relationships with the Council. Members heard that work had begun on 'Clean Up Croydon' and the Veolia contract to identify issues and develop plans with officers.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration explained that they were looking at improvements that could be made in the Planning Service with the Planning Advisory Service review due to be published imminently. The Sub-Committee heard that the Town Centre Regeneration plan was being updated to bring it in line with current circumstances.

## Housing Directorate Overview

The Sub-Committee considered a report that provided an overview of the Housing Directorate to inform the development of the Committee's work programme for the coming year. The Cabinet Member for Homes introduced the paper with a short summary adding that close work with residents to deliver quality and value for money services would be their priority. The Sub-Committee were informed that this would be a process that took time but that a new Corporate Director was in place to bring stability and leadership to the directorate. Work was underway on re-procurement of the Responsive Repairs Contract, which had been reported to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee before approval by the Mayor at Cabinet; the Residents' Charter had also been approved at Cabinet. There had been detailed discussions with the Housing Improvement Board regarding the Housing Improvement Plan which would be reshaped and reinvigorated incorporating the views of residents.

The Sub-Committee asked about previous poor service provided to residents and asked whether there had been consideration of compensating residents; the Cabinet Member for Housing reminded Members that this had been a recommendation of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and was awaiting a response from the Mayor.

Members highlighted the burden on residents of private sector rents and poor-quality private housing and asked about licensing in the private rented sector. The Sub-Committee heard that the previous landlord licensing scheme renewal had been rejected by the Secretary of State as it was not backed by enough data and as there was not a housing strategy in place. The Cabinet Member for Housing stated that any new scheme would take time to develop and emphasised the importance of the private sector providing quality affordable housing. Members heard that there were examples of the Council prosecuting rogue landlords under other legislation and encouraged any known issues to be reported.

The Sub-Committee asked about plans to address backlogs of complaints that had been reported by tenants. The Cabinet Member for Housing explained work to catch up on complaints was ongoing but that the department was currently overstretched, demoralised and with a large number of vacancies. Progress was being made alongside development of key performance indicators (KPIs) which would also be reported to the Tenants and Leaseholders Panel. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments informed Members that, on the homelessness side, it was known that there were common complaints, and these were being looked at to improve the strategies being used. It was explained that a different kind of service was required and there needed to be greater openness with residents about what was and was not possible.

## Revocation of Croydon Suburban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2 (SPD2)

The Sub-Committee considered a report which had been approved by the Executive Mayor at Cabinet and recommended the revocation of the Croydon suburban design guide supplementary planning document (SPD2) to Council. The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration by way of a short presentation prepared by the Head of Spatial Planning and Interim Head of Growth Zone and Regeneration.

In response to questions from the Sub-Committee it was clarified that identification of areas of gentle intensification were designated within the Local Plan and not SPD2, even though the desire to move away from density driven targets was identified in the report as a reason for the proposed revocation.

The Sub-Committee queried why revocation was proposed before replacement supplementary planning documentation on residential extensions and alterations was ready to take its place, as was thought to be plan making best practice and carried reduced risk of poor quality residential extension and alterations. It was further asked whether this alternative approach was considered. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration stated that once the political decision had been taken to fulfil this election promise, this was the best way to achieve it in the view of the Executive.

The Sub-Committee understood that since the SPD2 had been adopted in 2019, there had been a number of planning policy changes and that alterations to the document were needed. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration informed the Sub-Committee that legal advice had been that a partial revocation was not possible. Members were advised that new guidance on residential extensions and alterations would be written as soon as possible, taking into account planning policy changes on design codes and design guidance. The Sub-Committee were informed that policy on residential extensions and alterations was in place before SPD2 would now be the fall back position (including local planning policy and the London Plan) should SPD2 be revoked. The Head of Spatial Planning restated that there was still a development plan and guidance at a national and London Plan level in place that could be used in the absence of SPD2 to determine applications.

The Sub-Committee requested that the fall-back guidance, on the London Plan and national level, that would be used in the absence of SPD2 be shared noting that reasons for application refusals often referenced SPD2. It was stated that without this it was very difficult to ascertain what risk residents would be faced with if SPD2 was revoked without new residential extensions and alterations guidance to take its place. Members were advised that this risk had not been assessed but were reassured by the Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration that policy to determine applications was in place in the event that SPD2 was revoked. The Committee were informed that there had been a period of time, before the adoption of the Local Plan in 2018 and of the SPD2 in 2019, when determinations on residential extensions or alterations had been made using other planning guidance including the National Planning Policy Framework, the London Plan, Croydon masterplans and Croydon Planning Policy Framework.

Members highlighted significant upcoming changes in the planning sector with the new London Plan and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (expected early 2023). The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration clarified that upcoming planning

changes in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill looked at building on the existing planning system rather than revolutionary change and would provide for transitional arrangements. The Chair asked the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration whether now was the right time for producing new planning guidance when this could result in abortive costs as the draft Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill could result in SPDs becoming redundant. An additional consequence could be the waste of officer capacity that is already under strain. The Chair also highlighted that the cost of producing the document would be met by reserves earmarked for the Local Development Framework / Local Plan review and asked how risky this approach was, as it could leave the work needed to bring the new Local Plan to adoption under-resourced. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration stated they felt there was a political mandate for the revocation of SPD2 but and that, in their opinion, there were equal risks to maintaining the SPD2 document and revoking it.

## **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October**

### Housing Needs Transformation Plan

The Sub-Committee considered a report that provided an update on the development of the Housing Needs Transformation Plan. The Sub-Committee asked about the suggestion in the report that the service was not currently 'customer centric' and heard that the number of entry points to the service led to an inconsistent quality of advice and service for vulnerable people and that this needed to be addressed to ensure they were treated with kindness, respect and dignity.

The Sub-Committee asked about a court case the Council was appealing, referenced within the paper, and asked if it would have been cheaper not to appeal it. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that the Council had lost a High Court case which determined that anyone in unsuitable accommodation must jump the housing queue and be provided a permanent home within weeks; the decision also implied that the financial situation of a council would no longer be considered. Local Authorities across the country were very concerned about the implications of this case as it could lead to significant issues and it was regarded as a test mark case nationally.

The Chair asked why the report did not provide any financial information on the stated work streams. The Head of Temporary Accommodation explained that the starting position was to achieve savings of £1.8 million in the next financial year; some plans had been developed and some were still at early stages. It was noted that homelessness demand was likely to increase alongside the cost-of-living crisis which would provide some additional budget pressures.

Members asked about how vulnerable people in private accommodation were helped and the Head of Homelessness & Assessments stated that currently the service was the last port of call but that the intention was to adopt an early intervention approach so that support could be provided to these individuals through a strategic, comprehensive, and multi-agency response to reduce the risk of homelessness. The Sub-Committee asked about how the needs of vulnerable people were being considered when being placed into temporary or emergency accommodation. Members heard that there was a statutory test for vulnerability and that this had a high

threshold. Data on needs was now being collected at a person's first contact with the service to try to ensure the best choice, advice, and outcomes for customers.

The Chair asked about residents who had been turned away from the service for not having an eviction notice and highlighted that this was contrary to the early intervention approach set out in the report; it was also noted that there was a lack of follow up from the Council when residents had been in touch with the service and it was asked how this culture would be changed. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments acknowledged that staff were still working with antiquated systems and explained that there would be cultural change through workshops and various forms of training. The lack of training had been identified as a barrier to adopting early intervention which needed to be changed to ensure staff were proactive and could work with residents before eviction notices had been issued. The new service looked to ensure that residents met an officer on the day they came to the Council, who would remain assigned to their case and develop a personal housing plan.

The Sub-Committee raised concerns about the quality of private sector temporary accommodation and asked how this could be improved. Members heard that the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) would allow temporary accommodation to be procured from specific vetted suppliers, who would sign up to a framework, and would help manage these relationships by monitoring certifications and stock checks. This would hopefully unlock capacity for staff to inspect sites where complaints had been received to gather evidence.

The Sub-Committee asked how the Transformation Plan managed the risk of increased pressures on the service from the cost-of-living crisis. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained that there was also additional pressure from Ukrainian and Afghan refugees and that this would be very difficult to manage. It was expected that the new system would be more flexible to try to mitigate challenging circumstances for customers. The Chair asked if there were earmarked reserves and the Head of Temporary Accommodation confirmed that these were in place to deal with additional demand to the value of around £970k, and that meetings with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and other authorities to horizon scan were ongoing.

#### Healthy Streets and Active Travel (including Healthy Neighbourhoods, School Streets, Vision Zero, Cycling and Walking Strategy) Update

The Sub-Committee considered a report that provided an update on the Healthy Streets / Active Travel Programme including (Healthy Neighbourhoods, School Streets, Vision Zero, Cycling and Walking Strategy). The Chair explained the background of this item and stated that a briefing on the implementation and monitoring framework of Healthy Neighbourhood schemes had been held before the meeting.

The Chair asked the Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment about the manifesto commitment of the Mayor to review Healthy Neighbourhood schemes and the appearance that this had not undertaken. The Cabinet Members for Streets and Environment responded that a review of the original Traffic Management Advisory Committee decision had been undertaken and these were being implemented due to

financial implications for the budget but with amended signage and road markings. The Sub-Committee asked whether this was contrary to the Mayor's manifesto and heard that the Council was going above and beyond in its engagement with residents to ensure schemes were sensitive. The Head of Strategic Transport explained the process that needed to be followed at the end of the Experimental Traffic Management Orders (ETMOs) and explained that this would be running alongside extensive engagement including independent polling, receipt of objections, street audits and drop-in sessions. A comprehensive review of Healthy Neighbourhood schemes would be presented to Cabinet after 12 months with suggested next steps at the end of the ETMOs.

The Chair explained that the engagement approach did not necessarily mean that schemes would be removed as the default position in national policy was that unless significant harm from schemes could be proven then they would be retained. The Head of Strategic Transport explained that whilst there was a presumption that schemes would be retained, officers would need to draw together all material factors in the final report to Cabinet about whether schemes should be removed or made permanent. Officers would use their professional judgement to form these recommendations alongside the results of monitoring, ministerial guidance and resident engagement.

Members noted that data was being collected on schemes now but asked what data had been collected before schemes were implemented to evaluate how well schemes had performed. The Head of Strategic Transport explained that TfL had encouraged very quick implementation during the pandemic which had restricted advance data gather. As a result, other data had been used to form the picture pre-implementation of schemes, and these included traffic flow information and TfL databases including IBus data.

The Sub-Committee asked what the key lessons were for ensuring that residents understood schemes that had been learnt from the implementation of the first tranche of School Streets. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that for the second tranche of School Streets, discussions had been held with school leaderships to ensure proposals were in line with what was wanted by schools before engagement went out to the wider community. The Chair asked if any other lessons had been learnt and Members heard that the need for advanced signage was vital. The Sub-Committee heard that for the first tranche of School Streets, informal consultation had been undertaken, and the results of this would be reported to Cabinet in October 2022; dependant on that decision it would then be decided whether to proceed with ETMOs. The Chair asked about how School Streets would be monitored and heard that work was being done with a third-party supplier and that monitoring would be installed on the schemes implemented by ETMOs in April 2022. Approval was being sought at Cabinet in October 2022 to continue this monitoring and to install air quality traffic monitors in the local areas of these schools.

The Sub-Committee asked about how Active Travel and Healthy Streets linked to wider policies around reducing traffic and road fatalities. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that additional funding had been offered from TfL for Croydon's third Local Implementation Plan (LIP3) and that this would include the implementation of road safety schemes. The Chair commented on current uncertainty until TfL funding settlements were known and asked how a more integrated approach

could be adopted that told the story of these policies to residents. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that it was always their aim to link up these policies as part of a coherent strategic approach, but that there was often a tension between achieving this and responding to disjointed funding offers to implement schemes. The Corporate Director of SCRER acknowledged that more could be done to bring these policies together but that there were always efforts to link schemes to a wider strategic picture. The Chair acknowledged this and highlighted the importance of taking the emotion out of the picture and presenting the benefits of policies to residents as a cohesive narrative.

## **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

### Waste Contract Performance Paper

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided an update on the performance of the Council's waste collection and street cleansing contract and identified areas of service improvement and management of known and emerging risks to the service. The Director of Sustainable Communities introduced the item and Scott Edgell (Veolia General Manager for South London & South) and Andrea Lowe (Veolia Senior Contract Manager) who went through a short presentation (Appendix 1).

Members asked about consistent underperformance from Veolia and what the Council were doing to assist in improving this, and how Veolia had adapted services as a consequence. The Chair noted that the Council had served a Service Improvement Notice to Veolia in February 2022, and that there had been three contract management meetings held since May 2022. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that the contract contained a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with a required minimum level; there was a Performance Bond paid to the Council by Veolia, which was paid back when KPIs were achieved to a minimum level. The Council had not been satisfied with Veolia's performance and had served a Service Improvement Notice due to performance against three main areas; these were missed collections, repeat missed collections and container delivery. Veolia had produced a plan in response to the Service Improvement Notice to rectify missed collections and repeat missed collections; discussions on container delivery were ongoing. Members heard that contract monitoring was multifaceted and that there were daily and weekly operational meetings, as well as structured monthly performance meetings that were fed back to the SLWP.

The Chair asked about Croydon's recycling rate, and the suggestion in the report that it was on track to reaching the Mayor of London's target for 50% recycling by 2025. The Director of Sustainable Communities stated that Croydon had been at a near 50% rate before the pandemic, but that behaviour changes had led to a downward trend in recycling rates. For the current period, the provisional recycling rate was at around 46%.

The Sub-Committee asked about weed and moss clearance on Council Estates and collection of communal waste from new buildings. Members heard that a lot of this was dependant on the developers and managing agents being proactive, but that it



was a challenging area with crews taking many keys and fobs, as well as having to remember a large number of access codes, to ensure all communal waste could be collected. Consistency in crews was important in ensuring missed collections were minimised, but Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) driver and crew shortages had made this difficult to maintain. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that communal waste access was a challenge and some standard advice on this had been put together for new developments. One of the big challenges of the contract was the contamination of waste on estates across the borough.

The Vice-Chair asked about enforcement and the strategy for tackling fly tipping hotspots identified through the 'Love Clean Streets' app. The Director of Sustainable Communities acknowledged that there was some reliance on public reporting, but that this would not be the case in a perfect world. The Council and Veolia were aware of fly tipping hotspots in the borough but had limited resources to do as much as they would like on tackling this; targeted clear ups did happen, alongside evidence gathering where possible. The Director of Sustainable Communities noted that there was a national trend in increased fly tipping and there was not a single solution to tackling this.

The Chair asked about the lapse in performance following an initial improvement after the Service Improvement Notice was delivered in February 2022. The Veolia Senior Contract Manager explained that peak annual leave times leading to greater agency and temporary staff use had contributed to this. There were efforts to increase recruitment to rectify this and keep a consistent service and performance levels. There had been some success in the recruitment of HGV drivers but this remained a significant challenge in a very competitive market. Veolia were offering HGV training to all staff, had run radio adverts, and were working with local job centres and linking in with First Military Recruitment to increase recruitment.

Members asked about the distribution of fly tips in the borough and what actions the Cabinet Member would take to incentivise proper disposal of waste and to crack down on fly tippers. The Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment explained that they were gathering data currently, and looking at creating better education through the SLWP and the Council website, as well as being more proactive with hotspot data and relationships with Friends and Residents groups. There would be a campaign on fly tipping in early 2023 and a ward-by-ward approach to clean problem locations that was still being developed. The Director of Sustainable Communities added that there was a bulky waste collection service and three recycling centres open seven days a week; making sure residents were aware of these facilities would be a key part of the campaign to reduce fly tipping.

#### Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Contract

The Sub-Committee considered a Cabinet Report on the Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Contract for Pre-Decision Scrutiny. The Vice-Chair noted about the Mayoral Pledge to pursue the recommendation in the report and asked for reassurance that the recommendation was driven by evidence and data. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that the recommendation not to extend the contract had been reached in collaboration with the other Partners in the SLWP and with legal advice taken on Veolia's proposed contract extension. The provision to extend the contract

by mutual agreement is contained within the contract, and the decision not to extend would only take effect in March 2025, which left extensive time to work on a re-procurement process and to conduct consultation with the Greater London Authority (GLA), which was required. Members heard that a large amount of soft market testing had taken place to look at options, and this had been fed into the information contained within the report and Appendix 2.

On the development of a future contract, the report contained a commissioning timeline for a process of consultation and engagement on its development before a future report would be submitted to Cabinet in March 2023 with a recommendation on the commissioning model and procurement strategy. The Chair and Vice-Chair emphasised the strong feeling on waste issues from residents in Croydon and asked about the opportunities for Member and resident engagement. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that the Mayor and Cabinet had already been engaged on the recommendation not to extend the contract, and consultation with Members on any new contract would be a part of its development. Resident feedback from the SLWP triennial survey results had been received and Croydon officers would be briefed on this in November 2022; details of this could be shared once they had been compiled. There would be a dedicated resident engagement piece, which the SLWP would lead on across the partner boroughs, once the Mayor had accepted the recommendation not to extend the contract.

The Vice-Chair asked how confident officers were that the decision not to extend the contract would lead to good outcomes for Croydon residents, and heard that officers were confident that it would help to protect Croydon from possible legal challenge. The Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment stressed that a new contract could also lead to improved services and KPIs. The Chair asked about the risk of a reduced market and a number of authorities looking to retender for waste contracts at the same time. The Director of Sustainable Communities highlighted the importance of due diligence and explained that soft testing of the market had been ongoing for some time, alongside discussions with other boroughs, to try to mitigate these risks.

Members asked about whether the Council's current financial position might put off potential providers and heard that it was unlikely that this would be the case. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that the contract was of significant value and that they were keen to explore any options that might provide employment opportunities to Croydon residents and maximise social value.

The Sub-Committee asked whether the Council had talked to other authorities about the benefits and challenges of developing an in house provision. The Sub-Committee heard that this was the case and that these discussions were ongoing.

Members went on to discuss confidential aspects of the paper in Part B session.

**Tuesday 31 January 2023**

Budget Scrutiny Challenge

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided specific proposals on the following 2023/24 budget areas: Parking Services; Planning Services; and Building Control. The Sub-Committee went on to review these proposals to determine whether they were resilient and sustainable, and whether they had been fairly prioritised. The findings of the Sub-Committee were reported to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee as part of the overall scrutiny of the 2023/24 budget.

### Parking Services

Members noted the revised 23/24 budget figures for parking and asked how these had been calculated. The Director for Sustainable Communities informed Members that analysis had been carried out, alongside benchmarking activities on income streams with neighbouring boroughs, to ascertain the correct figures to right size the budget. The Sub-Committee asked specifically about Automatic Number Plate Recognitions (ANPR) cameras and Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs), and the possibility that residents were better complying with regulations in the current economic environment. Members heard that resident behaviour had changed significantly over COVID and this had been studied to identify trends, which had been fed into the budget setting process. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that there was a detailed model to track the issuing of PCNs across the borough; this had identified a downturn in numbers, which had informed the revised budget figures.

The Sub-Committee asked if there were currently an appropriate number of Civil Enforcement Officers to maximise parking income and enforce traffic regulations. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that it was currently difficult to recruit to Civil Enforcement Officer posts, and agency workers were being used to fill gaps in the service; other London boroughs were being engaged to see if this was a wider trend and to ascertain if there were different options to tackle the recruitment shortfall. Members asked if ANPR schemes were working as predicted and if they were making predicted income targets. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that there had been delays to the implementation of these schemes over the last 18 months that had affected income collections; there had been two elections over this period that had caused delays to decision making, in addition there has been some delays in the mobilisation of the contracts and with getting the functionality of the cameras in place. The Director of Sustainable Communities added that Transport for London (TfL) funding arrangements had been chaotic over the COVID period, which had caused delays to delivery of the Local Implementation Plan (LIP) programme; it was stated that confirmation of funding for 2022/23 had only been received in October 2022.

The Sub-Committee asked how much of the borough was covered by Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs), and how this compared with other London boroughs. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that around 34% of the borough was covered by CPZs; data on this was submitted to TfL on an annual basis, but data from 2021/21 covering other boroughs had not yet been collated by TfL and provided for analysis. Members heard that the Parking Transformation policy would be looking at how effectively CPZs were managing the kerbside and whether further measures were needed in areas of intensified development.

The Chair asked how confident officers were that the adjusted budget figures for 2023/24 were resilient. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that they felt the figures were based on strong analysis of data, but that there were always risks with parking budgets, as they needed to reflect resident behaviours, which had changed and could change again, and macro-economic conditions. There had previously been assumptions that parking accounts could be increased with inflation year-on-year, but this had been dispelled across all local authorities.

The Vice-Chair commented that they felt robust resident engagement was absent in the current Parking Policy, and asked what was being done to embed this in the new policy. The Director of Sustainable Communities stated that consultation with communities was important, and that consultation and engagement on the new policy would take place. Members heard that there was a clear requirement in the Road Traffic Act for consultation and engagement on any new Parking Policy. The Vice-Chair asked about wider communications with residents, for example on Healthy Neighbourhoods, and how this could be done better. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that often the pace of implementation as directed by other organisations, such as the Department for Transport and TfL, often made conducting the expected level of engagement difficult, but it was understood how important this was for any future schemes.

### Planning Service

Members asked if the fall in major planning applications was a local or national issue. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that there were some suggestions that this was a national issue, but it was currently hard to say and depended on Inner or Outer London location; it was suggested that this likely was a result of the economic environment and rising construction costs.

The Sub-Committee asked how the Planning Service would tackle the backlog of applications, and heard that work on this had been ongoing for 12 months. Members heard that resources had been increased with additional officers and increased productivity through 'clearance weeks'. Officers had been refocussed on determining applications over and above other duties, as this was a statutory function, and this had been effective in significantly reducing the backlog and officer caseloads. As the backlog was reduced, a careful balance would be struck between determination of applications and engagement with the wider public and applicants.

Members asked why the 2022/23 fee income target had been set at a level that was unlikely to be achieved. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that budgets were set before year-end, and often required adjustment. The Sub-Committee heard that there was often the inclination to increase fee income targets based on inflation that could lead to a mismatch between the target set and income achieved.

Members asked what work was being done to ensure that fee income targets for 2023/24 were achievable, and the Corporate Director of SCRER explained that a piece of work, looking at current fee income, was being undertaken and was finding that that income was continuing to decrease due to reduced applications; work was being done to ascertain if further adjustments to budgets would be necessary.

The Sub-Committee asked if there was a staffing shortage in Planning Services. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that this was a difficult question to answer, as application quantum changed all the time, and this was why the department was staffed by a balance of agency and permanent workers to respond to changes in demand. The backlog of applications was being tackled, but additional officers were always welcome as more time could be devoted to working on planning policy as well as engaging with applicants, the public and customers. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration stated that they felt the department currently had the correct number of case officers in light of the downward trajectory of applications, but that this would be kept under constant review. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration explained that additional staff would always be welcomed, but efficiency, improvements to processes and IT resources also needed to be correct and would be addressed through the Planning Transformation Programme to ensure the department was effective.

The Chair asked about the timeline of the workstreams in the Planning Transformation Programme. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that there would be a detailed Cabinet report on this and on the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) review of the service; the workstreams were identified in the paper at 4.21 and the Cabinet Report would include an action plan and timeframes. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration explained that the Transformation Plan did not sit in isolation, and ran alongside the rest of the transformation work in the Council. Members heard that the PAS review was extremely helpful as it gave specific points of improvement that were needed in the Planning Service. Much of the transformation programme would be delivered over the next 12-24 months with the aim to deliver savings from 2024/25

The Chair asked about any other key risks in the Planning Service and what mitigations were planned, or in place. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that an uncertain external environment could lead to a further decline in applications and reduced income; work to ensure income targets and budgets were aligned to demand were ongoing to ensure that these remained achievable, but still presented risk. The Planning Transformation Programme was highlighted as a big opportunity for operational and reputational improvement, but it was explained that the possibility that this failed was a risk. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that planning was highly political at both a local and national level; there was a changing national policy and legislative environment, and failure to adapt and respond to this was a key risk. Members heard that planning was becoming increasingly litigious, with increasing numbers of Judicial Reviews, which also presented reputational and financial risks.

### Building Control

The Sub-Committee asked how pan-London collaboration could impact the borough if other authorities turned to Croydon, who was already struggling. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that Croydon was one of the few boroughs who was engaging neighbours to understand their resiliency as new proposals would likely require more collaboration. Members heard that it was important this was also done at a pan-London level through London Councils, to ensure there was resilience and collaboration across London in light of new

proposals. The Sub-Committee were informed that there were proposals through the Local Authority Building Control and London District Surveyors' Association to ensure that London rose to the challenges of the Building Safety Act, but it was too early to say if the right pan-London approach would be put in place. A number of final proposals were still awaited from the Building Safety Regulator to see how this would work. Croydon was seeking to position itself to ensure it had the correct level of surveyors and expertise in place.

The Chair asked how vacancies in the service would be filled, and whether the three new trainee staff would be sufficient, given they were not qualified surveyors. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that the Council was always looking for surveyors, but this was very difficult given the disparity in pay and conditions between the public and private sector; market supplements, flexible working and strong training and development offers were being used to make Building Control positions attractive. Members learned there would now be five trainees instead of five, who would effectively be undertaking an apprenticeship; this was seen as a very positive effort to bring new people into the industry and rise to the challenge of the Building Safety Act.

The Vice-Chair asked about corporate risks of not having a resilient Building Control service. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained not having a resilient Building Control service was a key risk that commissioning of the iESE study and the Transformation work sought to manage and mitigate. The Chair asked about the three options considered in the report and whether one had been chosen. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that these were all still being considered in more detail to decide on the most appropriate option for Building Control in the context of current restraints to recruitment and the new responsibilities in the Building Safety Act.

Members asked how the £300k savings figure from transformation had been calculated. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that this was a target and was difficult to estimate as a delivery model had not yet been chosen; these figures would not be built in to budgets until a model had been decided, and were for 2024/25.

The Chair asked how the workloads, resiliency and wellbeing of officers was being considered. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that considerations of these aspects was a core workstream in the Planning Service Transformation. The Corporate Director of SCRER highlighted that the People Strategy had been approved at Cabinet in January 2023 and included detail on how all staff were supported through their employment at the Council. It was highlighted to Members that senior officers were conscious of the challenging environment for local government officers, with long days and high workloads. The Corporate Director of SCRER stated that a number of ways to support officers were in place, but this did not mean that it was not still a challenging environment.

**Tuesday 14 March 2023**

Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract Specification

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract Specification. The Director of Sustainable Communities introduced the item and went through the presentation at Appendix A.

The Chair highlighted the 'Options Appraisal' and asked whether any options had been disregarded at this stage. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that the only option that had been discounted was that of extending the current contract past 2025; delivery of services by in-house provision, re-procurement or Local Authority Trading Company were still on the table for consideration. The Chair asked if there had been consideration of delivering different elements of the service through a mix of these options and the Sub-Committee heard that this was still a possibility.

The Chair asked if officers were confident that the Council was within the timeline for delivering the possible options that had been set out, noting the need to account for the Greater London Authority (GLA) Collection Conformity assessment. The Sub-Committee heard that the GLA only looked at the collection element of the service and that the current provision already met the requirements of the GLA. Members heard that the GLA submission had already been undertaken, and that approval could take up to 108 days, which sat within the proposed timeline for the final officer recommendation to Cabinet. On the procurement pack, Members heard that officers were running activity for all options in parallel, and it was acknowledged that the timelines were tight but achievable. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that, if it were decided to go out to the market, then conversations would be consolidated where possible. The aim was for any contract to be awarded by early 2024, if this was the option that was chosen, to ensure there were 12 months for a contractor to purchase vehicles and be ready to deliver services.

The Sub-Committee asked how it was possible to ensure that any Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the new contract would be achievable, and how these would compare to other similar boroughs. The Director for Sustainable Communities acknowledged that the KPIs in the current contract had been set at a level that was too ambitious when compared to neighbours. Members heard that benchmarking with other authorities would take place to inform the setting of KPIs for the new contract, as well as incorporating industry standards; realistic targets would be set, with ambitious stretch targets to incentivise good performance. The Vice-Chair asked what outcomes were being sought as a part of the new contract, and whether these would be realistic given potential costs. Members heard that there was a desire to maintain the current frequency of collections, which conformed to the standards set out by the Mayor of London, and to improve collections for flats above shops.

The Chair invited Councillor Ben-Hassel to ask a question relating to Environmental Enforcement. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained any option would consider how the service provider would deal with fly-tipping as a first contact to check whether there was any evidence that could lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice; this was a provision in the current contract. Members heard that evidence of this kind was relatively rare, but there were aspirations that the new specification sought a proactive approach to fly-tipping that was not just reactive to reports. Councillor Ben-Hassel asked if it had been considered that there be better join up between reporting

and investigating systems for fly-tipping. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that this was an aspiration for the future service and would be included in the method statement for this element.

The Chair asked how data sharing between contractor and Council systems would work for the future service. The Director for Sustainable Communities explained the current system had fully automated integration between the two systems that allowed for data analysis on fly-tipping hotspots and areas of repeated missed collections. Members heard that this would be continued in the future delivery of the service, but that consideration needed to be given as to what was required to tighten this up further.

The Vice-Chair asked what collaboration was taking place with the Housing department on collections for estates. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that they had recently attended the Tenants and Leaseholder Panel to speak about the Council's Housing Stock, and that it was understood that a Housing Waste Infrastructure review was needed to understand what had changed to ensure adequate bin provision; this would then feed into the future service delivery.

Members raised concerns about inflationary pressures on wages that had come close to causing industrial disputes under the current contract. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that indexation and inflation would be important aspects of any new contract that these elements would be up to date with best industry practice. Members heard that cost of delivering the service was discussed during annual reviews under the current contract, which could lead to elements being renegotiated, and it was important that any new service delivery made similar allowances.

The Vice-Chair asked about how communication and engagement with residents could be improved. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that there was a South London Waste Partnership communication and engagement plan, but that there needed to be a consideration of targeted communications on what was needed for Croydon. It was highlighted that the Residual Composition Analysis suggested that there needed to be better engagement and education on recycling, which could help with communal waste collections to maximise the collection of recyclates and resultant income.

Members asked about assisted bin collections and the Director of Sustainable Communities explained that a review of assisted collections had taken place recently to understand where these were still required. The review had reduced the number of assisted collections and going forward it was hoped this would be undertaken every couple of years as this had not been the case previously. The Cabinet Member for Streets & Environment explained that they had undertaken walkabouts with crews and assisted collections had been identified as an issue due to the large number that had accrued before the review. The Sub-Committee suggested that those who only needed the service for a short time should be able to state this when they applied for it.

The Vice-Chair asked about resident awareness of the bulky waste collection service and whether better awareness, or reduced charges, could result in lower levels of fly-



tipping. The Director of Sustainable Communities acknowledged that there were probably some residents who were not aware of the service; having been through periods when the service was free and charged, as it was currently, had not shown an impact on the levels of fly-tipping in the borough. The Chair asked about cases where fly-tips had been reported, and then moved on to private land by contractors; the Director of Sustainable Communities responded that this was not acceptable and that they would look into this personally.

The Chair asked how Members would be able to collaboratively feed into the process going forward, in lieu of a cross party working group. The Director of Sustainable Communities explained that the Resident Survey results would be used, alongside the points raised at Sub-Committee meetings to inform the development of the contract. It was explained that a holistic approach was preferred over Member focus groups as it was felt that this would provide more representative data from a larger set of Croydon residents that also included Councillors. Preliminary feedback from the Resident Survey had only just been received, and focus groups with residents would be meeting to discuss issues raised in the survey alongside telephone interviews; this would be combined into a report that would be completed in April 2023.

#### Local Planning Authority Service Transformation

The Sub-Committee considered a Cabinet report on Local Planning Authority Service Transformation. The Chair asked how the workstreams would be managed and prioritised. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained this was still in its very early stages, but that there would be a project plan for each workstream. Members heard that the appointment of the Planning Improvement Manager was key and would follow building capacity for transformation into the service. Once the Planning Improvement Manager was in post, the workstreams, project plans and programme would be established; as part of this, how to monitor and report on progress would be considered. The Chair asked if every recommendation from the PAS review would be addressed, and the Corporate Director of SCRER explained that the review was a snapshot of the service and that the recommendations would need to be prioritised, with most of them directly addressed.

The Vice-Chair queried the Planning Department's current strategy and asked how resources would be prioritised over the coming months. The Chair enquired how the tensions between the budget, delivery of services and transformation would be managed. The Corporate Director of SCRER responded that there had been reductions in the number of staff and shortfalls in income generated by planning applications, which had made it difficult to resource the service and address capacity issues. There had been a budget correction of £1 million in recognition that income targets had been less than what had been achieved. Members heard that there was a continuing risk of reduced income from a downturn in planning applications.

Members asked what checks and balances were being put in place to ensure the department remained resilient. The Corporate Director of SCRER highlighted the importance of correctly resourcing the department, and noted the particular pressures that had been felt during the pandemic. Members heard that improvements to efficiencies, processes and IT were important to make workloads

more manageable for staff. The Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration explained that the PAS review, Mayor's Business Plan and National Policy changes would all be used to inform transformation plans. The Cabinet Member highlighted the strong governance structures in place for the programme and importance of workforce development in ensuring it was a success.

The Vice-Chair asked how different the service was now in comparison to when the PAS review was conducted, and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration explained that the department was on an improvement journey, and was making good progress. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that recruitment to planning roles was a national challenge, particularly in London, and that work to clear the backlog of planning applications was ongoing, but that progress was being made. The Chair asked how well the backlog was being managed, and the Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that headway had been made in reducing the backlog from roughly 1800 to below 1000 over the last 12 months. Members heard that around 800 live applications was thought to be a manageable amount. The backlog had been reviewed to ascertain the age of applications and it had been found around 2/3 were 'out of time', with around 1/3 'in time'; the Sub-Committee heard that the aspiration was to flip these ratios. Clearance weeks were taking place roughly once a month to help reduce the backlog, and recently had also been used to also review the 'out of time' applications to analyse why these had not yet been determined. Members heard this had been successful in making progress for these older applications and that learning from each clearance week was taken forward to improve processes. The Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration highlighted the digitalisation workstream and explained that it was hoped this would further help with prioritising applications for determination in future.

The Vice-Chair highlighted the loss of retail units on highstreets where conversions to HMOs took place. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that there had not been a great deal of this kind of Permitted Development in Croydon Town Centre, but acknowledged that this was a concern for District Centres. An Article 4 had been considered for Croydon, but Members heard that the Government had set the bar for this at such a high level that it was thought not to be achievable; an Article 4 also required sign off from the Secretary of State. The Sub-Committee heard that other London authorities had applied for Article 4s and that these had been curtailed dramatically or rejected entirely. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration stated that they would keep an eye on this area, but that in their opinion applying for an Article 4 was not a wise use of resources at this time.

The Chair asked if there was sufficient resource had been allocated to tackle the six workstreams in the transformation programme. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that greater capacity was always desirable, but that funding had been allocated to the programme and was currently sufficient. Members heard that some aspects of the programme, particularly digitalisation, might require more funding than had currently been allocated; if there was a business case to do so, it may be the case that transformation funding from other areas could be redirected to the Planning transformation programme. In response to questions on how the Review of the Local Plan would be funded, the Sub-Committee heard that an earmarked reserve for this was built into the budget.

Members asked about the deployment of temporary staff to address the enforcement backlog. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that temporary staff in enforcement only covered for vacant positions, and highlighted the national difficulties in recruiting to enforcement posts. Members heard that there was ongoing work to revise the job description for the 'Deputy Team Leader' post to turn this into a 'Team Leader' post, so that a permanent staff member could be recruited. Recruitment had been ongoing, with a permanent member of staff due to fill the last open vacancy soon. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that agency staff were helping to manage current caseloads and reduce the backlog by participating in clearance weeks, and closing down cases where possible. The Corporate Director of SCRER highlighted the busy nature of planning in Croydon, and the importance of ensuring enforcement officers prioritised cases. In response to questions about the size of the enforcement department, the Corporate Director of SCRER explained that the service was small for the size of the borough. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration highlighted the importance of providing development opportunities for enforcement staff going forward.

The Vice-Chair asked about the planned actions for Q1 2023/24 under 'Review the Resourcing of the Planning Service' on page 107 of the agenda, and raised concerns that these had not yet commenced. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that the backlog had already been reduced without additional resource. Members heard that the Planning Improvement Manager would be looking at programme management, workstreams and ensuring that progress was taking place; budget for this had already been approved and the recruitment process had begun. The budget correction that had taken place did not provide additional resource to the service, and it was acknowledged that it would be a challenge for the department to deliver transformation with the small amount of transformation funding and existing resources it had. The Chair asked if this was reasonable and whether transformation could be delivered within current resource. The Corporate Director of SCRER responded that greater capacity and resourcing was desirable, but that a great deal was possible with the existing resources of the department. Members heard that the Government was consulting on planning fees, which could potentially increase the resources available should these increase. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that better IT implementation and efficiencies would speed up determinations and increase officer productivity. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration highlighted a number of quick wins in digitalisation that were attainable for the service.

The Chair highlighted the importance of staff welfare and Members asked how frequently staff were working overtime, and whether they were compensated or given time in lieu. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that a great number of staff worked beyond their contracted hours, and that it was important to set boundaries to ensure staff were not overburdening themselves; staff were provided compensation or time in lieu as appropriate for overtime. The Chair asked about staff turnover, and heard that this had been higher over the last couple of years, but that there were many staff members who had been in Croydon for significant periods of time, and staff who had left and come back. The PAS review had acknowledged comradery between officers in the department, and the Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration acknowledged the importance of developing

officers and providing a compelling offer to keep staff in Croydon; Members heard that this would be a focus of the transformation programme.

The Chair asked about the implication of national policy changes for Croydon. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that national policy changes were always being considered by Government, and that the department kept abreast of proposed changes, making changes to respond to new policy where required. The Government were keen to encourage digitalisation, which formed a workstream in the transformation programme, but there were no large changes to national policy on the horizon.

## Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee has a broad remit, albeit focused on the specific housing issues arising in the borough. It scrutinises services and issues relating to housing policies and needs, Housing Improvement Plan, homelessness and rough sleeping, temporary and emergency accommodation, housing associations in the borough, social housing and Housing Revenue Account.

The responsibility for the scrutiny of housing related issues used to fall within the remit of the Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee. However, at the meeting of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 18th October 2022, it was agreed that the remit of the Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee would be divided through the formation of a Homes Sub-Committee until the end of 2022-23 Council year. Subsequently, at the Scrutiny & Overview Committee meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, it was agreed to extend the separation of these Scrutiny Sub-Committees until the end of 2024-25 municipal year.

You can view the agendas, reports and minutes of this Sub-Committee by clicking on the link: [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)

## 2022-2023 Membership of the Homes Sub-Committee



**Councillor  
Leila Ben-  
Hassel (Chair)**



**Councillor  
Joseph Lee  
(Vice-Chair)**



**Councillor  
Adele Benson**



**Councillor  
Kola Agboola**



**Councillor  
Danielle Denton**



**Councillor  
Claire Bonham**



**Councillor  
Ellily  
Ponnuthurai**

## Chair of the Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee

**Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel**

**Chair's Introduction TBC**

A summary of the items considered by the Homes Sub-Committee in 2022-23 can be found below.

## **Monday 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2022**

### Updating the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

The Sub-Committee conducted pre-decision scrutiny on a Cabinet report that provided an update on the Council's approach to revising the existing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Plan for 2023/2024, following guidance from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DHLUC), and for undertaking a comprehensive review of homelessness in the Borough in developing a three-year strategy from 2024/2025.

The Sub-Committee concluded that (1) the department were taking the right approach by not rushing into producing a new Strategy and extending the current strategy with an updated Action Plan and members were reassured that DHLUC were on board with the approach; (2) trend data for homelessness should be included in future reports for Croydon and comparable boroughs; (3) should central government grant funding for Croydon be reduced, then the plan to address this should be shared with Members; (4) officers considered historic policy data concerning 'Fairbnb' in Croydon and that this was reviewed and considered as an additional housing prevention pipeline. The Sub-Committee were of the view that under occupancy of registered social landlord properties should be investigated to see if this could provide additional Temporary and Emergency Accommodation capacity. Additionally, Members were encouraged that additional resource and expertise was being sought to address substance misuse.

The Sub-Committee recommended that (1) the Action Plan is updated to show (i) overall timeline of the action plan, key milestones, deliverables for each workstream and that interdependencies and associated risks be highlighted and included in the Action Plan; (ii) that the Occupancy Checks workstream covered both the remit of ensuring the accommodation is occupied by homeless households placed by the Council to meet housing duty and of monitoring how long new clients were staying in Temporary or Emergency accommodation; (2) Occupancy Checks proactively looked to see that accommodation was still meeting the needs of clients that had been placed there and that this was supported by appropriate staff training to empower them to anticipate and identify changing needs; (3) that suitable policy or guidance is in place once Occupancy Checks started, to ensure those who had left accommodation were not penalised if they had done so for legitimate reasons; (4) that the Executive Mayor write to the DHLUC to lobby for additional homelessness funding for Croydon, recognising the homelessness situation is acute in Croydon on a par with inner London boroughs.

### Distribution of the Household Support Fund Grant

The Sub-Committee conducted pre-decision scrutiny on a Cabinet report on the Council's approach to the distribution of the Household Support Fund of

£3,013,689.49, as allocated by the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP), covering the period 1st October 2022 to 31st March 2023.

From its consideration of the report, the Sub-Committee (1) requested that simplified information on grant eligibility be provided to Members and residents; (2) concluded that Members should be involved in helping to identify possible allocation for the Fund.

Members recommended that publicity be clear on the criteria and exceptions relating to the distribution of the discretionary part of the fund and that consideration be given to using social media advertising to proactively publicise the Fund. It was further recommended that all councillors are provided with the information in a timely manner so they can promote the availability of the fund through community networks and other social media channels. The Sub-Committee also recommended that a provision for emergency situations be investigated for the discretionary element of the Fund.

### **Monday 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2022**

#### Update on the Re-Procurement of the Repairs/Void and Heating Contracts

The Sub-Committee considered a report, which provided an update on the process to re-procure the repairs/voids and heating contracts for the Council's housing stock. The report had been included on the agenda to allow the Sub-Committee to seek reassurance that the re-procurement had followed the process agreed by the Mayor in June 2022. It would also help inform the Sub-Committee's consideration of the Cabinet report on the outcome of the re-procurement process at its next meeting on 27 February 2023.

As it was recognised that the re-procurement process had produced a lot of good practice, it was questioned how this learning could be fed into other transformation projects across the Council. It was advised that delivery of the re-procurement of the repairs/voids and heating contracts had not solely been the responsibility of the Housing service, with the Procurement and Finance teams also involved along with project support from the Programme Management Office. A lessons learnt exercise had been run half-way through the procurement process to check that nothing had been missed and to record what had gone well. It was highlighted that the high level of resident involvement in the project had made a fundamental difference and once the new contracts were implemented there would be further engagement with residents on the delivery of the contract.

The Sub-Committee agreed that the project remaining on track was a positive indicator that the culture of the organisation was improving. Going forward it was essential that the experience and learning from the re-procurement process was used to inform the wider corporate learning on project management.

The Sub-Committee was happy that the level of tenant and residents' involvement reflected what was set out in the original tender strategy and agreed that the level of engagement should be seen as an example of best practice by the wider organisation.

The Sub-Committee welcomed confirmation on several areas, including (i) the contracts being split to provide an opportunity for smaller contractors to bid; and (ii) financial penalties being included in the contract.

Given that prior feedback from tenants and leaseholders had raised significant concerns about staff culture, the Sub-Committee welcomed acknowledgment of this issue and confirmation that steps would be taken to define and provide training on the expected staff culture going forward during the mobilisation period.

The Sub-Committee agreed that there was a risk of there being a significant backlog of work outstanding at the end of the current contract and welcomed confirmation that officers were working with the contractor to understand this and put appropriate mitigation in place.

#### Update on the Housing Revenue Account and Housing General Fund Budget

The Sub-Committee considered a report, which provided an update on Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the current in-year budget position for the Housing General Fund and proposals for 2023-2024 budget. The report had been included on the agenda as part of the Budget Scrutiny process to allow the Sub-Committee to reach a conclusion on the deliverability of the budget which would be reported to the next meeting of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 16 February 2023.

From the meeting on 6 February, the Sub-Committee concluded that there was insufficient budgetary detail provided in the report to enable it to reach a decision on whether it was reassured on the deliverability of the budget.

As such, it was agreed that a briefing would be agreed for the Sub-Committee to seek further assurance on the budget. The outcome from this session would be reported to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 16 February 2023, to inform its consideration of the wider Council budget.

#### **Monday 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2022**

#### Update on the Re-Procurement of the Repairs/Void and Heating Contracts

The Sub-Committee considered a Cabinet report on the re-procurement of the responsive repairs contract, which included recommendations on the contract award for decision by the Mayor. The report had been included on the agenda to allow the Sub-Committee to review the content prior to the decision being taken, providing the opportunity to flag any recommendations for the consideration of the Mayor as part of the decision.

The Sub-Committee commended the team for the hard work it had invested into managing the procurement process up to this date, particularly when it had been delivered within a relatively short time frame.



Although there was concern that the procurement had been opened for bids over the summer of 2022, it was accepted that the results of soft market testing provided a reasonable level of reassurance that a good range of bids had been received.

It was seen as a positive move that a dedicated team was being set up to manage the mobilisation process, but concern remained about the overall capacity within the Housing service to deliver the mobilisation process within the timescales available.

The Sub-Committee noted that key risks to the success of the new contracts included the integration between the Council's new NEC system and those of the contractors, and the ongoing work to improve the culture within the Housing service. As such these projects needed to be properly resourced to give them the best chance of being successfully delivered.

The involvement of residents throughout the procurement process was commended and the plans for ongoing engagement with residents on the delivery of the new contracts was seen as essential to rebuilding the trust of residents.

#### Update on the Housing Transformation Programme

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided an update on the delivery of the Housing Transformation Programme. The report has been included in the delivery of the programme and to flag any areas of concern.

The Sub-Committee extended its thanks to the officers involved in developing the Housing Transformation Programme, which was agreed to be well balanced, noting that a significant amount of work had been invested in its development.

There was concern about whether there was sufficient resource available within the Housing service to deliver the programme or whether there was sufficient investment available to increase the level of resource if needed. It was important that these factors were kept under review going forward.

It was important that a system was put in place to ensure that any learning arising out of the programme was recorded and implemented, as an ongoing mechanism for driving continuous improvement.

#### Update on the Regina Road Project

The Sub-Committee considered a report, which provided an update on the Regina Road Project and the consultation with the residents on the future options for their homes.

The Sub-Committee welcomed the ongoing work to engage with residents of Regina Road on the future options for their homes. Confirmation that engagement with Ward Councillors was planned was also welcomed by the Sub-Committee.