

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	CABINET
DATE OF DECISION	30th October 2024
REPORT TITLE:	Update on the Housing Transformation Programme
CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR:	Susmita Sen, Corporate Director of Housing
LEAD OFFICER:	Lara Ashley, Housing Transformation Lead
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Lynne Hale, Cabinet Member for Homes
Key Decision?	NO
CONTAINS EXEMPT INFORMATION?	NO
WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1 SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Housing Transformation Programme following the last update to Cabinet in March 2024.
- 1.2 Work continues to progress well across the Housing Transformation Programme, with several projects now completed and others being added as required by the service. Projects are bringing about positive change to the experience of residents and partners through their closer engagement on strategies (Homelessness; Asset Management; Resident Engagement) where voices are helping shape the future direction of the service. This will be key to ensuring the Council delivers against the Executive Mayor's priorities to "Invest in council homes to drive up standards and develop a responsive and effective housing service" and "Develop our workforce to deliver in a manner that respects the diversity of our communities."
- 1.3 This report re-iterates the workstreams as agreed under the Housing Transformation Programme and details the progress to date on all the live projects, according to each workstream.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

For the reasons set out in the report and its appendix, Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the progress (set out in sections 4 and 5) since March 2024 on the Housing Transformation Programme.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide the Executive Mayor and Cabinet with oversight of the Council's Housing Transformation Programme.
- 3.2 To improve governance and transparency around decision-making.
- 3.3 To provide public information regarding transformation of the authority's housing related activities and practices to support meeting its best value duty.

4 BACKGROUND AND DETAILS

- 4.1 Members will be aware that in May 2021, following a self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), the London Borough of Croydon (LBC) was served with a regulatory notice for being in breach of both the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard and the Home Standard and as a consequence of this breach, there was actual and potential serious detriment to the Council's tenants.
- 4.2 The extremely poor living conditions suffered by residents at Regina Road in South Norwood were highlighted by the media and this led to the self-referral and subsequent regulatory notice.
- 4.3 It became clear in the subsequent investigation of this case that there was a serious broader issue of widespread disregard for the priorities and needs of residents as well as a long-term lack of investment in the Council's housing stock. This coupled with poor performance of the then supplier of contact centre and repairs services meant the housing service lost the voice of residents and couldn't identify trends in repairs sufficiently.
- 4.4 In December 2022, Cabinet approved a Housing Transformation Programme to work closely with residents to transform the services provided by the Housing Directorate and return to compliance with the Regulator's Consumer Standards. This report to the Cabinet sets out the current position on compliance with the expectations set out in the Voluntary Undertaking and highlights those projects which directly addressed the breaches with the Consumer Standards so that LBC can evidence its return to compliance.
- 4.5 On the 4th of September 2024, the Grenfell Inquiry report on the tragic fire which led to the death of 72 residents was released. One of the key findings was that the Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) who managed the Grenfell Tower '*were found to be*

consistently ignoring residents' views'. The TMO 'lost sight of the fact that the residents were people who depended on it for a safe and decent home.'

The tragedy at Grenfell Tower has brought about a step change in the governance and oversight of social housing landlords through the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and the Consumer Standards which require that residents are given influence on how their homes are managed.

Key to this Transformation Programme is the promotion of a culture of fairness and respect to residents and giving residents a voice. This is in part achieved by having a Housing Improvement Board, tasked with oversight and driving the programme forward, and which has consistently provided challenge and insight to the work from a residents' experience and perspective. In addition, a key component of almost every project has been the involvement of the resident voice. This varies from involving residents in the procurement of the repairs' contractors to the formation of a reading panel to review updated policies and procedures. The customer voice sits at the heart of our projects.

The Council would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those involved for their dedication and hard work.

4.6 There have been a number of achievements in the programme since Cabinet was last updated in March 2024.

- A new Asset Management Strategy which details our long-term plan for the management of the Council's housing stock was approved by Cabinet and Full Council in July 2024.
- Stock Condition Surveys continue to be rolled out and are 55% complete with a target of 60% completion by March 2025. This will better inform our investment plans for all of our housing assets.
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy, drafted in full consultation with Croydon based social housing landlords and the voluntary sector, approved by Cabinet and Full Council in July 2024.
- A Resident Engagement Strategy (developed using the views of residents), which details our long-term plan for the management of the Council's housing stock, was approved by Cabinet and Full Council in July 2024.
- Resident engagement events held in varied formats – phone calls, surveys, focus groups, involving residents in the formulation of policies and procedures to enable a resident voice and influence on the management of council homes.
- We have recruited a new Housing Compliance Team, including a Head of Fire and Building Safety and a Head of Property Compliance, to ensure the Council's housing stock is fully compliant with legislation and the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing.
- Customer Care training has been rolled out to over 150 colleagues and managers between May and July 2024.
- As part of our review and renewal of Housing's Complaints Process, we have developed capacity in essential customer insight through the recruitment of a Customer Insight Manager and a Business Intelligence Manager

- Estate Cleaning Standards designed and established with residents will feed into an app which customers can use to report and feedback on cleanliness on estates.
- Regina Road Phase 1: The Council has appointed architects and a multidisciplinary team (of engineers and subconsultants) to progress design and preparation toward a build programme.
- Repairs Contact Centre: The contact centre is now fully staffed and trained with permanent staff and this service is already showing much improved service evidenced by clear monitoring data.

These are in addition to what has already been achieved since the programme was developed in 2022. In particular:

- Residents Charter – co-designed with residents
- New Leadership Team in place.
- HRA Business Plan
- New Housing Strategy – with significant consultation with our residents
- NEC housing system adopted – removing manual and outdated systems
- Procurement of three new Repairs Contractors - with significant involvement from our residents
- In-sourcing of a Housing Repairs Contact Centre - to own the customer journey
- Voluntary Undertaking approved by the Regulator of Social Housing
- Rent-setting consultation programme
- Estate Inspection Programme
- GLA funding of £54m (approximately 50% of build-cost) approved for the regeneration of Regina Road

The Housing service is starting to see a tangible impact on our residents with a positive trajectory on many of our Tenant Satisfaction Measures which we report to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). But we are not complacent and recognise the significant work still underway to set and deliver a higher standard of service to our residents.

4.7 In early August a report was presented to the Housing Improvement Board (HIB) that sets out the current position on compliance with the expectations set out in the Voluntary Undertaking. This report highlighted those projects which directly addressed the breaches with the Consumer Standards, so that LBC can evidence to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) our return to compliance with these standards. On the basis of this report, Members of HIB were asked for their approval to an approach to the RSH to lift the current Special Measures and to normalise relations between LBC and the RSH. This approach to the RSH to be supported by an external review of our compliance with the Consumer Standards. Members of HIB supported this proposal.

4.8 The housing transformation programme aligns closely with the housing commitments made to the Improvement and Assurance Panel in its Exit Strategy. These commitments centre around:

- Our housing stock rendered safe and compliant, meeting consumer standards, in accordance with the Voluntary Undertaking
- Understanding our stock, its condition, and the residents who live there and using that information to inform service delivery and maximise income
- The long-term strategic aims and priorities of the Housing Directorate are determined by strategic business reviews.
- The Council develops and implements a Housing Regeneration and Supply strategy

Progress against these commitments is reported on a regular basis to the Panel.

5 PROGRESS UPDATE

- 5.1 The progress to date for each workstream is detailed below. These are in addition to regular updates to the Housing Improvement Board, the Regulator for Social Housing, Executive Mayor and Deputy Mayor. RAG-ratings have been provided for each of the projects in the left-hand column using the following key:

Progress rating	Project is complete and will no longer be reported on.	Project is on track to deliver the agreed outcomes by committed deadlines.	Project is not on track but does have a plan to ensure it delivers the agreed outcomes by committed deadlines.	Project is not on track and requires an immediate intervention to plan to return to committed deadlines.
Number of projects	11	18	8	0

- 5.2 Projects are constantly progressing and may change in RAG status from the point of report submission to Cabinet meeting and Members will be updated if that is the case. Where any deadlines/commitments change through the formal change control processes then it is against the new deadlines/commitments that the RAG status is provided.

Workstream 1: Vision, Direction & Transformation Plan for Housing Directorate

1.3 Housing Strategy	The Housing Strategy and its accompanying delivery plan were recommended by Cabinet for adoption by Full Council on 6th December and were approved by Full Council on 13th December.
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	<p>This strategy builds on our work to ensure residents are at the heart of what we do and strengthen the relationships with our partners. It is a non-statutory document, but it is required by some services to access government support. This is now complete and will not be reported on in future.</p>
<p>1.5 High level re-structure and recruitment</p>	<p>The senior leadership team has been stabilised. We are currently recruiting for the final position of Director of Housing Regeneration.</p> <p>We have also recruited for all the Head of Service positions across the directorate</p> <p>The restructure of the directorate is moving forward with plans in the final stages before implementation commences.</p>

Workstream 2: Governance & Information Management

<p>2.1 Revised Performance Framework and Business Intelligence</p>	<p>Our KPI dashboard has been agreed with the Housing Improvement Board. This framework sets out clear measures of performance for service areas and enables appropriate objective setting for staff, projects and initiatives, with a clear focus on customer services.</p>
<p>2.6 Website Update</p>	<p>All the Housing webpages have been reviewed and are being updated. The updates are being informed and approved by Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and submitted to Croydon Digital Service for completion. Significant focus is going into ensuring that the information on the site is up to date and useful, and that it is made more accessible by putting information from PDFs onto the main site pages. A new content designer is joining the design service and has been working on redevelopment of pages, including navigation changes, through workshops that began in September. Their initial focus will be on the homelessness webpages which will improve the service, in conjunction with the improvements which have already been made to the application process.</p>

Workstream 3: Customer Excellence

<p>3.2 Resident Engagement Strategy</p>	<p>The Resident Engagement Strategy, setting out how residents will be engaged in decision-making, information-sharing and consultation, was approved by Cabinet and full Council in July 2024.</p>
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<p>3.4 Customer Information review</p>	<p>A programme of Tenancy Audits is in place and is central to the gathering and refreshing of our tenancy data.</p> <p>The tenancy audit form has been updated to capture equalities data.</p> <p>Further data is being collected through the Repairs Contact Centre as residents are asked to submit data during interactions with call centre staff who input it into NEC. Data will be compared to the 2021 census to identify the different groups in the borough. There will be an assessment of requirements regarding service delivery adaptations based on the information collected.</p> <p>Data is being analysed to plan resident outreach and adaptations to service delivery. For example, seven surgeries were designed and delivered between April and May 2024 in areas where resident satisfaction measured by the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) was low. Demographic data about age and disability was also used to inform the installation of hearing loops in community centres at two sites.</p> <p>The Tenancy Look Up feature has gone live on the website and enables residents to identify key officers connected to their postcode.</p>
<p>3.5 Customer Journey Review</p>	<p>Tenancy Services SMEs have reviewed a range of webpages and Leasehold SMEs have re-reviewed the Leasehold pages. User testing of web live pages began in September 2024 and amendments following feedback are underway.</p>
<p>3.7 Customer Service Training</p>	<p>This Customer Service change programme has been co-selected with residents and roll out is underway across the directorate. The programme is designed to support staff and managers in delivering services and interactions with customers which are helpful, respectful and make a difference. Embedding and communication plans are now in place to continue the momentum of the training programme throughout the remainder of the year.</p>
<p>3.8 Customer Learning & review of process</p>	<p>We are developing capacity in customer insight including through the recent recruitment of a permanent Customer Insight Manager and a new Business Intelligence Manager</p> <p>The backlog of complaint responses for the directorate has been addressed. A review of our Housing Complaints process is being undertaken and a separate and clearer complaints webpage is being developed for better signposting. A complaints handling training programme is being developed for housing staff in alignment with the customer first training programme.</p>
<p>3.9 “Stop Social Housing Stigma” Campaign</p>	<p>This project is dependent upon the Stop Social Housing Stigma campaign organisers developing their programme. We are part of the pilot line-up and awaiting further involvement opportunities.</p>

<p>3.10 Review of Consumer Standards</p>	<p>A report has been submitted to DMT and HIB outlining the progress of work that has been done to address Croydon’s breach of the Safety and Quality and Transparency, Influence, and Assurance Standards in 2021. Continued work goes into evidential assurance across all of the new standards using the Regulator for Social Housing’s Code of Practice and the published findings of the inspections that have already been undertaken by the RSH.</p> <p>There is a renewed focus on ensuring that the evidence to demonstrate how Croydon meets the new Consumer Standards is readily available.</p>
<p>3.12 Know our Neighbourhoods programme & Estate Inspections</p>	<p>Estate walkabouts are ongoing – In May 2024 we launched our Cleaning Standards photobook which was co-designed with residents. This articulates the expected standards of cleaning both in writing and pictorial form. There are plans to develop an app to allow residents to assess cleaning standards – this is scheduled for the end of October 2024 and will include user training.</p>
<p>3.16 NEC Post Go-Live Product Development</p>	<p>The new Housing Management IT system, NEC went live in June 2023, replacing OHMS and a number of other manual systems. This forms an essential part of the organisation’s way of working, as it increasingly facilitates a performance focused, data driven culture.</p> <p>Phase 2 Work has commenced on the Asset Management and Compliance modules.</p> <p>The Compliance module began mobilisation in July 2024 with asbestos management data, and the next area due to be rolled out is gas. We are taking a phased approach to mobilisation of the Compliance module to manage risk. The Asset Management module is being scoped and we expect this to mobilise in Winter 2024.</p> <p>The contact centre is utilising the NEC diagnostic tool. This is positively impacting on appropriate repair issues, and we are receiving improved levels of satisfaction with the service. We are validating the impact on call volumes, complaints and service delivery cancellations.</p> <p>Work has also commenced on the Voids key to key process with a view to simplifying the voids path and enabling improved reporting to better manage the process.</p>

Workstream 4: Long-term Homes & Neighbourhood Planning

<p>4.1 Resolution programme for Regina Road.</p>	<p>The Council has appointed architects and a multidisciplinary team (of engineers and subconsultants) to progress Design and preparation toward a build programme.</p> <p>Residents have vacated block 1-87 which provides part of the required space to build the first phase. A number of tenants and leaseholders</p>
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	<p>remain in the adjacent maisonettes (89-123 Regina Road) and officers are actively working with them to secure their next home.</p> <p>Phase 1a & 1b demolition contract is out to tender and likely to be awarded in Oct/Nov 2024 subject to approval.</p> <p>Resident engagement continues with public/community consultation on new build design plus monthly Resident Working Group meetings taking place covering a range of subjects such as transport, access, design, demolition etc.</p> <p>The submission of a high-quality planning application is a crucial part of the Regina Road Project but there remain a number of critical actions such as obtaining vacant possession, providing a fire strategy specification, design specification and Employer's Requirements, all necessary prerequisites to the design and build programme.</p>
<p>4.2 Resolution programme for LPS blocks</p>	<p>The first phase is finished on the Regina Road site investigations with the first report from the Structural Engineer (Conisbee) received</p> <p>We will evaluate and use information to go into phase 2, which is a desk top evaluation of all the other blocks. This will enable the start of the Structural Building Safety cases which will be carried out by Structural engineering specialist Capital CC on 13 of the LPS blocks that are not in the demolition programme.</p> <p>The report of the public enquiry into the causes of the Grenfell Tower fire, published in September, has been examined for any further lessons learned.</p>
<p>4.3 Asset Management Strategy</p>	<p>The Asset Management Strategy was approved by Cabinet and full Council in July 2024.</p> <p>The stock condition surveys continue to be rolled out and these are currently 55% completed.</p> <p>The revised HRA business plan will incorporate all data analysis from stock condition surveys, and we are in the process of acquiring the appropriate modelling tool.</p>
<p>4.4 Estates and Improvement restructure</p>	<p>The purpose of this restructure is to redesign the way in which the Housing Assets are managed, repaired and invested in and to meet all applicable compliance standards. Changes have already taken place with a dedicated Damp and Mould Team and an increased Fire Safety and Building Safety Team. The broader re-structure of this directorate will be reported in project 1.5.</p>

Workstream 5: Asset Compliance

<p>5.1 Compliance plan for Fire and Building Safety Act 2021</p>	<p>Relevant Fire Safety specialist contractors/consultants are being procured with the assistance of the Strategic Procurement Manager for Housing.</p> <p>For the wider requirements, work is being done with other colleagues and existing contractors to provide the required elements, such as mandatory door checks which are underway.</p> <p>Retrospective fire strategies have begun and are being worked on in conjunction with the Asset Management Team.</p> <p>The LBC Building Safety Cases are progressing.</p> <p>Progress is being made on resolving high and medium risk actions.</p> <p>The web page updates reflecting the new fire and building safety requirements are progressing.</p> <p>The first draft of the new Fire and Building Safety Policy is back from Legal Services.</p>
<p>5.2 Compliance plan for Building Safety Act</p>	<p>All High-Risk Buildings were registered, within the deadline, with the Building Safety Regulator in October 2023.</p> <p>We are working hard with the procurement team to finalise requirements for the procurement of a broad range of consultancy support to assist with meeting the requirements of the Building Safety Act. This includes fire & structural engineering, building surveying, safety case and specialist contractors to support these surveys such as asbestos removal and concrete specialist. These surveys will be carried out over several years.</p> <p>This project is going to be reported within 5.1 Compliance Plan for Fire and Building Safety Act 2021 going forward.</p>

Workstream 6: Maintaining our Homes

<p>6.1 Repairs re-procurement / mobilisation</p>	<p>This project has now been completed.</p>
<p>6.2 Repairs Contact Centre mobilisation</p>	<p>LBC's in-house repairs contact centre went live on the 1st of August 2023. Stabilisation of this service is reported in project 6.9.</p>
<p>6.3 Repairs restructure and behaviour change programme</p>	<p>The Repairs service will be undergoing a restructure as part of the wider divisional restructure. Following which a further recruitment and culture change programme will be implemented in line with project 7.2.</p> <p>Team building sessions are due to be run in the assets and repairs team between September and December. The training plan includes modules on team identity, customer identity, collaboration mapping, empowerment and action, and changing and adapting.</p>

<p>6.4 Voids transformation</p>	<p>Reduction in Void turnaround is critical to supporting residents move out of temporary accommodation and also address our housing register pressure. Significant progress is being made in this area.</p> <p>A number of steps have been taken to reduce the number of ready to let properties which had not been allocated, whilst increasing the number of pre-allocated properties. Steps have been taken to enhance works to void properties which were hard to let and had been refused multiple times and required decorations, a replacement shower etc.</p> <p>We continue to take opportunities to convert properties to allow us to create large family accommodation i.e. four-bedroom properties. This has allowed us to provide permanent homes for residents who were previously living in temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Since April, the time taken to turnaround voids has steadily decreased. In July, combined turnaround times were just under 50 days, with the general needs' turnaround sitting under 40 days for the first time. We also achieved our highest level of satisfaction for tenants who commented on feeling that they were treated fairly and with respect, and the usefulness of the sign-up pack (both 91%).</p> <p>The Voids Policy has been reviewed by residents and the legal team and has been submitted to DMT.</p> <p>To establish the end of year void turnover, a reconciliation exercise took place to review the status recorded on all voids between April 23 and March 24, this ensured that the information was accurate, and learning was fed into service improvement. Enhancements will take place to the Northgate housing management system during September and October to enable better performance monitoring.</p>
<p>6.5 Disrepair transformation</p>	<p>An expanded disrepair team is now in place and actively managing existing claims, seeking early resolution and preventing escalation to court. A number of claims have been successfully diverted to a new Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Scheme to provide residents with a better experience and avoid legal costs. In addition, a pilot for a new Repair and Settle Model that aims to complete works at the earliest opportunity has commenced and is receiving positive feedback from residents. The Disrepair Turnaround Programme is progressing well and the average works cost per Claim has been reduced by 50% compared to the previous Financial Year. All of the outstanding claims from the original Regina Road class action have recently been concluded and closed.</p>
<p>6.6 Review of policies, procedures, business processes and customer journeys</p>	<p>We have completed the review of five policies: Damp and Mould Policy, Voids Policy, Tenancy Audit Policy, Tenancy Management Policy, and Succession Policy some of which have already been published on our website.</p> <p>The Residents' Reading Group have now fed back on a total of 9 policies with a further 2 in the pipeline.</p>

	<p>Four policies are currently with Legal for review.</p> <p>Thirteen policies have been reviewed by subject matter experts and are now with the Heads of Service for a final review before they are submitted to Legal.</p> <p>Eight policies are still to be developed. Among these, three are Tier 1 complaint policies: Members and FOI complaints, Managing Complex Cases, and Persistent, Vexatious complaints. Our new Customer Insight Manager is developing these.</p> <p>A number of Tier 2 policies are also still to be developed: Electric Transport policy, Estate Parking policy, Compensation and Refund Policy, and Other Safety Checks.</p>
<p>6.7 Review of Capital Delivery Contract</p>	<p>The project is now complete.</p> <p>An independent company has completed the review of our capital delivery contracts evaluating the customer journey, customer satisfaction, and areas for improvement. The exercise provided third-party assurance of our contracts.</p> <p>The output from the report was considered and woven into the Asset Management strategy where appropriate.</p>
<p>6.8 Targeted Approach to Damp and Mould</p>	<p>Following the Housing Ombudsman’s Spotlight report on Damp and Mould, we have completed a self-assessment against the recommendations. Our Damp and Mould policy is close to finalisation and is aligned with the spotlight recommendations. Also included in our work plan is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a data intelligence workstream which looks at how we proactively manage data on properties to identify potential hotspots. - How we will use technology to reduce the risk of damp and mould, and react more quickly - Communications plan to keep residents informed of issues which could lead to damp and mould <p>Meanwhile, Service improvements are ongoing for both contractors, with Stage 1 works progressing well across all areas following the implementation of a new process to minimise information loss, but there is slower progress in completing Stage 2 works on target. Wates are onboarding new subcontractors for Stage 2 works.</p> <p>In June, the legacy Stage 1 work list for Wates closed.</p> <p>A new no-access process has been implemented, involving documentation of calls, visits, and a final hand posted letter before closing cases. Saturday appointments are also being offered to reduce no-access cases.</p> <p>Wates have reviewed their management team and have recruited a dedicated damp and mould manager for Sept 2024 and a resident liaison officer to support customers through the works.</p>

<p>6.9 Repairs Contact Centre Stabilisation</p>	<p>The Repairs Contact Centre was insourced on 1 August 2023 and now has a full complement of permanent, fully trained staff. KPI results have improved since April 2024, with call wait time reducing from 7.37 minutes (Jan) to 0.48 secs (June) and call answered up from 80.5% (Jan 2024) to 97.95% (June 2024).</p> <p>Residents are now better informed about their repair appointments – they receive a text message when they raise their repair, a further text message two days before the appointment; a further text message on the day of the appointment and they can track their operative on the way to their job via the contractor’s portal.</p>
<p>6.10 Asset Register and Management review</p>	<p>This project is tasked with ensuring we have stronger controls over our asset information and governance so that we can be assured our asset information is valid, charges are allocated appropriately and control points for changes and variations are managed tightly.</p> <p>A property control manual is being produced with the first draft completed in the week commencing 26th August for consultation.</p> <p>The stock reconciliation exercise is in progress, the asset management control points within the exercise have begun, and a governance model is being produced.</p> <p>The next focus will be the delivery of the property control manual and stock reconciliation exercise, and to scope the governance model. The data quality task and finish group is being scoped and will meet shortly.</p>

Workstream 7: People & Organisational Development

<p>7.2 Enabling high performing teams and setting behavioural expectations</p>	<p>Housing Needs Team Building Sessions have commenced. They will focus on Team Identity, Customer Identity, Collaboration Mapping, Empowerment and Action, and Changing and Adapting.</p> <p>Working with Assets and Repairs, Regeneration, and Housing Management to progress restructures ahead of Team Building Sessions.</p> <p>A tailored housing induction programme is in the early stage of design. Competency management sessions have been run across the directorate to support managers in coaching and focusing staff on positive behaviours aligned with the customer training programme and overall housing transformation.</p> <p>The corporate management development programme will also be used to support the development of high performing teams.</p>
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7.6 Talent acquisition: Apprenticeship/ Graduate Programme/EVP	Talent acquisition is ongoing with restructures progressing we will be recruiting permanently to posts which are vacant or filled by agency/temporary staff (allowing for restructuring practice). We are part of the apprentice programme and Graduate scheme. We are also collaborating with Croydon Works on engaging local residents with routes back to employment.
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Workstream 8: Managing our Housing Needs

8.1 Housing Needs restructuring	<p>Phase 1 of the restructure was delivered in October 2023 and a formal 6-month review has been completed. No significant changes are recommended however the Service must keep under review the supply & demand pressures. This will include the number of new homeless applications, caseloads per officer, new placements into temporary accommodation (TA), TA housing management & income collection patch sizes and the supply of move-on accommodation available (to include social and PRS stock). Whilst the restructure has enabled the service to be agile to meet competing demands a significant increase in demand will put a lot of pressure on the service.</p> <p>Phase 2 of the restructure will start in September 2024 and include a review of teams that were out of scope in Phase 1. This includes the Housing Register & Allocations Team and Reviews Team. Phase 2 will also review a number of specialist posts that were not reviewed in Phase 1. This will be complete by 31 March 2025.</p>
8.2 Supported Housing Review	<p>We commissioned Homeless Link to conduct a review of our supported housing contracts. This service provides approximately 230 beds across a variety of accommodation types. They have reviewed the effectiveness of the current service and made recommendations for the future. The recommendations feed into future commissioning intentions and opportunities. A new competitive tender opportunity will then be launched in the Autumn 2024.</p>
8.3 DPS – Procurement of contracts	<p>This project has been renamed Approved Landlord List for Temporary Accommodation. It will ensure we are utilising compliant landlords for housing our residents in TA.</p>
Renamed Landlord Approved List for Temporary Accommodation	<p>Existing providers went live on the new IT system in April 2024 and new providers have been able to apply to join the list from the end of August 2024.</p> <p>The strategy paper and associated key decision were signed on 13 August 2024. This project is now closed.</p>
8.4 Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy	<p>The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy was approved at the July Cabinet meeting. It was produced following extensive consultation; this has involved meetings with a range of partners such as the Family Justice Service, Evolve Housing, Crisis,</p>

	<p>SLAM, St Mungo's and Nightwatch as well as online sessions with residents. In addition, there are over 300 customer responses to recent surveys carried out in homelessness and the housing strategy which will provide input into the final strategy.</p> <p>Feedback from external partners (both statutory & voluntary) showed a strong desire to work in closer partnership with the Council to support homeless residents. This includes work to both support the prevention of homelessness and residents if they have been rehoused and need extra help in their new tenancy (which could include daily living skills and access to employment & training).</p> <p>The strategy includes workstreams to enable these pieces of work and includes the need for strong partnership delivery and resident involvement. The strategy was accepted at Full Council in June 2024 and this project is now complete as the delivery forms part of Business as Usual.</p> <p>A new strategic oversight group (to be called the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy Partnership Board) is currently being set up and will meet for the first time in November 2024.</p>
8.6 Housing Allocation Scheme	<p>The Housing Allocations Scheme has been reviewed and benchmarked against other local authorities. The scheme sets out how the Council assesses and prioritises applications for housing. The scheme has been redrafted and was approved at the 16th October 2024 Cabinet meeting.</p>
8.7 Temporary Accommodation policy	<p>The Temporary Accommodation policy relates to the allocation of temporary accommodation to those owed a relief of duty by the Council (compliance with part 7 of the Housing Act 1996). The policy sets out our approach to acquiring properties, their location and criteria applied for allocating in different locations. This policy has been drafted and was approved at the 16th October 2024 Cabinet as part of the first phase to approve the recommended changes prior to consultation.</p>
8.8 Housing Association Liaison Recharges & Nominations	<p>A new nominations agreement is now in draft and has been shared with all HA's who participate in the Council's choice-based lettings system.</p> <p>The agreement sets out a new charging schedule for all adverts placed and yearly fee.</p>
8.11 Temporary Accommodation Occupancy Checks	<p>As of 30th August, the service has completed 100% of the original 3,216 occupancy checks.</p> <p>As advised in earlier reports, this part of the project has been delivered 4 months later than scheduled, reflecting pressures on staff capacity.</p> <p>The team has identified 166 cases for discharge of duty, with an estimated saving of £8,000 per case.</p> <p>For the next phase of the project, the team is focussed on:</p>

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Progressing discharge of duty2) Updating NEC client records and ensuring documentation uploaded3) Progressing action on building-related or safeguarding concerns identified through the visits. |
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5.3 New Control Board for joint projects

5.4 A new Internal Control Board has been established to oversee joint working across the Council between Housing, Adult services and Children's services. The board is co-chaired by the respective corporate directors with the intention of stronger collaboration across the directorates to better serve our customers and manage service delivery more efficiently. The board programme manager is working closely with workstream leads to organise the framework for reporting and delivering against joint objectives. Projects which report into this board include:

- Collaborative Corporate Parenting
- Adults & Housing stock review
- Collaborative pathways
- Managing Demand
- Temporary & Emergency Accommodation provider review & acquisitions

5.5 Risks and challenges

5.6 Highlight reports are produced monthly and report on the risks and issues for the delivery of the Housing Transformation Programme at a project level. These risks, issues, and mitigations are reviewed each month at meetings of the Housing Transformation Steering Board. Any risks or issues with implications for the entire Council are elevated to the attention of the Corporate Management Team by adding them to the corporate risk log (JCAD).

5.7 There are several challenges faced by the Council in delivering the Housing Transformation Programme. These include challenges which stem from legislative changes introduced by the Government in the past three years as well as upcoming proposed changes, which impact or could impact various aspects of social housing, housing needs, and homelessness:

- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2023
- Renters (Reform) Bill
- Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023

5.8 In addition to the new legislation, the Regulator of Social Housing and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have recently revised the Consumer Standards and Decent Homes Standard. The standards that social homes and our landlord services must meet have therefore been revised. A gap analysis was

previously undertaken on the proposed consumer standards to identify any risks. This has now been reviewed in light of the final consumer standards published on the 29th of February 2024.

- 5.9** The economic circumstances faced by the Council pose additional challenges for the delivery of the Housing Transformation Programme. Escalating costs related to building materials and labour, driven by inflation, have necessitated careful budgetary considerations for specific projects. Furthermore, the ongoing cost-of-living challenges have intensified the demands on the Council's homelessness services, requiring a delicate balance between the reform to the Housing Needs service and sustaining essential front-line services.

6 CONTRIBUTION TO EXECUTIVE MAYOR'S BUSINESS PLAN

- 6.1 This programme, alongside the development of the Housing Strategy 2023-2028, is key to ensuring the Council delivers against the Executive Mayor's priorities to "Invest in council homes to drive up standards and develop a responsive and effective housing service" and "Develop our workforce to deliver in a manner that respects the diversity of our communities."

7 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1.1 The delivery of the Housing Transformation Programme is funded through the Transformation Funding of General Fund (GF) project and the budget allocation included in the 2024-25 HRA Budget and associated HRA Business Plan for the HRA projects.
- 7.1.2 General Fund – Workstream 8 Managing our Housing Needs resulted in the financial benefits and realisation of savings targets set in 2023-24. Demand management is crucial in controlling the costs within temporary accommodation budget which is under significant strain. The Housing Allocation Scheme and Temporary Accommodation policy implementations will contribute to the cost avoidance and demand management activity being undertaken to manage the overspend on the temporary accommodation budget.
- 7.1.3 Housing Revenue Account – Workstream 3: Customer Excellence and the Resident Engagement work has resulted in the reintroduction of estate inspections and previous under investment in communal areas is increasing the number of communal repairs we are undertaking. The budget of £1m is under considerable pressure and may require a reprofile in order to allow ongoing investment works are not delayed.

- 7.1.4 Housing Revenue Account – Workstream 6: Maintaining our Homes benefits will be reflected in the next iteration of the HRA Business Plan with the implementation of the Asset Management Strategy
- 7.1.5 All financial savings and costs of implementation are being tracked through the monthly monitoring and forecasting which is reported to Cabinet through the period monitoring update reports.

Comments approved by Orlagh Guarnori on behalf of the Director of Finance (Date 05/09/2024).

7.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in the report. However, the following paragraphs highlight some of the key legal provisions that underpin the Council's housing transformation programme as set out in the report.
- 7.2.2 Under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 the Council is required, as a best value authority to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness'. The best value duty applies to all functions of the Council including delivery of its statutory housing services.
- 7.2.3 Under Section 21 of the Housing Act 1985, the Council has general powers of management of its housing stock. In addition, the Council has legal obligations in relation to how it maintains and repairs its housing stock under Sections 9A and 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and Section 4 of the Defective Premises Act 1972.
- 7.2.4 There is also a range of legislation which has been introduced in the past three years, which impacts on various aspects of the council's legal responsibilities in relation to the provision and maintenance of social housing, in particular:
- 7.2.4.1 The Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 require the Council as a landlord and responsible person to undertake fire risk assessments of its buildings with two or more sets of domestic premises, which should take account of the structure, external walls and doors. It also requires the display of fire safety instructions in a conspicuous part of the buildings.
 - 7.2.4.2 The Building Safety Act 2022 is intended to improve the design, construction and management of high-rise buildings introducing greater accountability and responsibility of landlords for fire and structural safety issues, throughout the lifecycle of buildings in scope of the new regulatory regime for building safety. Accountable persons (either a person or organisation that owns or is responsible for repairing any of the common parts of the building) will have to show that they have effective measures in place to manage building safety risks in the higher-risk buildings for which they are responsible.

7.2.4.3 The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 will introduce regulations that require the Council to investigate hazards and fix repairs including damp and mould in Council properties within strict new time limits or rehouse residents where a home cannot be made safe.

7.2.4.4 Finally, the Renters Reform Bill is currently in the initial stages of consideration in parliament, having recently entered the report stage in the House of Commons. In its current form, it proposes to abolish 'no fault' evictions.

7.2.4 On 6 October 2023, The Improvement and Assurance Panel agreed an intervention Exit Strategy which describes the tangible improvements they expect the Council to make by March 2025. The Housing Transformation Programme and its delivery is an important aspect of the Exit Strategy, and this report provides details to Members on how progress is being made and monitored.

Comments approved by KM 21/10/24 on behalf of the Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer.

7.3 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.3.1 The Council has a statutory duty, when exercising its functions, to comply with the provisions set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The Council must, in the performance of its functions, have due regard to its duty to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.3.2 Access to safe and secure housing has a great bearing on the wellbeing of our residents and has a significant impact on equalities outcomes. As such, regard for the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) will be key to the Housing Transformation Programme.

7.3.3 Overall, transforming the Housing service is likely to have a positive impact on equalities outcomes. However, as the Housing Transformation Programme is developed, specific Equality Impact Assessments will need to be provided at a project level. The officers responsible for the development and delivery of these projects or workstreams will need to ensure that the EQIAs produced accurately assess the potential impact of any proposed changes on protected groups, and the aims of the PSED, recognising that this can be both positive or negative in nature. All EQIAs produced should be treated as living documents and be updated when new data or customer experience feedback becomes available.

7.3.4 The Transformation Programme includes a new IT system designed to improve data collection for residents. Improving data collection from service users across the nine

protected characteristics will benefit decision making by ensuring that decisions are based on clear evidence about the service user base, helping to assess the likely impact of proposed changes upon them. Projects will also benefit from data around customer satisfaction across the protected characteristics to ensure that the Council is delivering a fair and equitable service to all protected groups.

Comments approved by Senior Equalities Officer, on behalf of Helen Reeves, Head of Strategy & Policy.

7.4 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

7.4.1 There are no immediate human resources impacts arising directly from the recommendations in this report. However, there will be impacts associated with the development and delivery of the Housing Transformation Programme. The Housing Transformation Programme constitutes a key part of the Executive Mayor's Plan, and it is inevitable that the Plan will have an impact on the Council's workforce. This will be managed under the Council's policies and procedures as the need arises. It may include, but is not limited to, the Recruitment Policy as well as the Restructure & Re-organisation Policy, which may include redundancies/redeployment/insourcing/TUPE of staff.

7.4.2 To achieve an enduring culture change in the housing directorate a set of appropriate and carefully designed organisational development initiatives will need to be created and delivered to enable that change, with contextual relevance and sensitivity. To implement this action, input will be required from the Council's Learning and Development Team and may incur extra costs if additional capacity is required for designing and implementing the change programme via an external provider procurement.

7.4.3 Any HR issues arising will be managed under the Council's Corporate Policies and Procedures, including, as appropriate, meaningful consultation with the trade unions and affected staff groups.

7.4.4 Approved by Dean Shoesmith, Chief People Officer 3/9/2024.

7.5 CRIME & DISORDER IMPACT

7.5.1 Crime and disorder have a disproportionate impact on our housing tenants, across the whole crime spectrum from anti-social behaviour through to domestic violence and is one of the highest concerns of residents. The Housing Transformation Plan and the reconciliation of the HRA budget is strengthening our response to these concerns and is improving how we work as a Council and partner to support our residents, reduce crime and disorder, and make Croydon safer.

7.5.2 In particular, the new Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy will directly contribute towards improving ASB, protecting some of our most vulnerable residents, and our response to victims of domestic violence in the Borough, and is a key part of the borough's statutory work to reduce crime and disorder.

7.5.3 Comments approved on behalf of Director of Culture & Community Safety, Kristian Aspinall

8 APPENDICES

Appendix A Programme Workstreams

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

N/A

Appendix A

The eight workstreams within the programme are:

- Workstream 1: Vision, Direction & Transformation Plan for Housing Directorate
Purpose: To establish a direction for the directorate, identify key challenges internally and externally, determine priorities, structure directorate accordingly to deliver improve services
- Workstream 2: Governance & Information Management
Purpose: To develop a robust framework for effective governance of the directorate to ensure accountability, high performance, and effective financial and information management.
- Workstream 3: Customer Excellence
Purpose: To deliver a Customer Excellence approach to re-focus the directorate on delivery of excellent customer services that meet and exceed the Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard.
- Workstream 4: Long-term Home and Neighbourhood Planning & Investment
Purpose: The proactive management of our Homes and Neighbourhoods to create robust investment plans and deliver regeneration ambitions.
- Workstream 5: Asset Compliance
Purpose: To develop a compliance service with a robust framework for ensuring compliance with legislative and regulatory standards, ensuring safe and compliant homes
- Workstream 6: Maintaining our Homes
Purpose: The reactive maintenance of our assets to meet and exceed our obligations to the Home Standard, ensuring supply of homes is optimized for customers and income.
- Workstream 7: People & Organisational Development
Purpose: To proactively manage our culture, our development as a directorate and enable our workforce to deliver excellence to our customers, partners, and each other.
- Workstream 8: Managing our Housing Needs
Purpose: To proactively manage our Housing Needs Statutory Duty.