

# Homes & Gateway Services

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

### Councillor Alison Butler

#### July 2019

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#### Croydon celebrates 100 years of council homes

The council is collecting resident's stories, films and other memorabilia for a commemorative exhibition to celebrate 100 years of council homes at Croydon Clocktower throughout August.

It's 100 years since the 1919 Housing Act which saw the start of a huge council house building programme across the country. Many thousands of families have benefitted from council homes in Croydon, and the event is about marking this significant contribution to our communities.

Photographs of estates under construction, videos and an eclectic mix of memorabilia, such as rent books, vintage kitchenware and domestic appliances will be on display. Anyone with stories, photos, and memorabilia that will help really bring the exhibition to life, is encouraged to contact [residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk) or call 020 8726 6100, extension 47350.



Here in Croydon, the first council homes built in the borough after the Act was passed were in Godstone Road (1920), Woodside (1921) and Norbury (1921). Ex-servicemen, First World War widows and a growing commercial class such as clerks, postal workers and tram conductors were some of our first residents to be re-homed.

After the Second World War, the new estate at New Addington was begun in 1948, and Croydon's first high-rise blocks were built in 1957 in Lodge Lane and Violet Lane.

Historically, council housing referred to homes that were built by councils with government subsidy and managed by them principally through revenue gathered from rents. Traditionally homes were let to people who are unable to afford to rent from the private sector or to purchase their own home. Over the last decade and more, as public subsidies have dramatically dropped, a new form of 'council housing' has emerged as councils have begun to start building again, by new means such as setting up development companies. Croydon Council has done this with Brick by Brick currently building homes right across the borough to meet housing need.

The combination of austerity measures, freezing benefits over a period of four years and rising rents and house prices means the demand and need for affordable homes for Croydon residents remains high.

**AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON**

# Homes & Gateway Services

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

### Councillor Alison Butler

#### July 2019

---

The exhibition will run every day during August in Croydon Clocktower, followed by a tour in libraries across the borough.

[www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/residents/celebrating-100-years-of-council-housing-in-croydon](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/residents/celebrating-100-years-of-council-housing-in-croydon)

### Community Led Housing

The Council's first community led housing scheme is now live with bidders invited to submit applications for eight weeks from the end of May. The first site is The Lawns in Upper Norwood, a 0.33 acre site with the potential to accommodate three-to-four new family homes. A site visit held on the 8th May attracted a fantastic mix of different community groups interested in submitting bids for the site and further enquiries received since has indicated a strong level of interest in the scheme.



The application process is being hosted through the [GLA Small Site Small Builders portal](#) and will close on the 29th July. Bids will be assessed for viability, design and the council's other community-led housing criteria. When the winning bid is chosen, in the Autumn, the successful applicants will need to carry out detailed engagement with local residents before applying for planning permission. We hope that this will be the first of several community-led housing schemes in Croydon.



### London looks at fire safety

London's Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience, Fiona Twycross, hosted a major event on fire safety at City Hall on 8th May and I was pleased to be asked to speak about the work that Croydon has been undertaking in relation to fire safety and the retrofitting of sprinklers. The event was aimed at promoting best practice in fire safety and

**AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON**

# Homes & Gateway Services

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

### Councillor Alison Butler

#### July 2019

---

speakers included senior representatives from the London Fire Brigade, local government, the housing sector and safety experts.

As our sprinkler retrofit programme nears its completion, we are undoubtedly ahead of many other housing providers in having installed sprinklers in our tallest tower blocks. And the sprinklers were recently put to the test when a chip pan fire was successfully extinguished before it could cause significant damage in one of the blocks, reinforcing why it has been so important for Croydon to lead the way on the safety of our tenants and leaseholders.

### **Brick by Brick's Flora Court development**

Brick by Brick's Flora Court development, off Chipstead Avenue in Thornton Heath, has now been released for reservations. The development is 100% affordable and includes 24 shared ownership homes and 3 affordable rents homes which will be offered to people on the council's waiting list.

This site, a former derelict care home, has been transformed by Brick by Brick into a beautiful and modern development. The shared ownership part of the scheme is currently on sale, with homes starting from £78,750 for a 25% share. This is an excellent opportunity for Croydon people to get on the housing ladder.



The council set up Brick by Brick in 2016 to boost local affordable housing supply, with any profits from development to be returned to the council to reinvest in the borough. The first Brick by Brick homes went on sale at their Auckland and Ravensdale sites in Upper Norwood in March. Brick by Brick is currently on site another c25 schemes throughout the borough. Many more sites are at various stages of the planning process.

**AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON**

# Homes & Gateway Services

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

### Councillor Alison Butler

#### July 2019

---

#### Social Lettings Agency update

The Social Letting Agency has helped 50+ families avoid eviction from the private sector, saved them over £30,000 in rent and avoided the £344,250 cost of placing them in emergency housing. This is making a real difference to people's lives at a time of housing crisis.

The council set up Croydon Lettings last summer so private tenants at risk of homelessness who have financial or other difficulties, could get tenancy support. Advice and training is also given to landlords.

Less than one year on from the creation of Croydon Lettings, the council has:

- Moved 51 households - or 84 people - faced with eviction into more affordable rented properties
- Removed the need to spend £344,250 placing them in temporary council accommodation
- Negotiated with private landlords to reduce tenants' rents by more than £33,000, with one by as much as £350 per month
- Helped two people into a job and many more onto a pathway into employment

The scheme is targeted at both tenants who have either been homeless or are at risk of being unable to sustain a long-term tenancy and at landlords who want help managing their tenancies.

The Agency works by giving prospective tenants a six-week training course so they can maintain a long-term tenancy before being matched with a private landlord. The course includes budgeting advice, benefits support, tenancy tips and wider skills training.

Croydon Lettings also gives tenants a month's rent or deposit in advance to reduce moving costs, and it sets up the tenants' council tax and utility bill accounts.

Landlords benefit by getting a wider pool of vetted tenants, a guaranteed rent, paying no charges to the council unlike with high street lettings agents, a named contact at the council, which all means tenancies are more sustainable. If you wish to find out more about Croydon Lettings, please contact [CroydonLettings@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:CroydonLettings@croydon.gov.uk).



# Homes & Gateway Services

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

### Councillor Alison Butler

#### July 2019

---

#### **Council to create year-round homeless support hub**

The Council has been awarded £622,000 to deliver a Rapid Rehousing Pathway to individuals who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping in Croydon, which will boost our large network of services for rough sleepers.

We are now in the process of setting up a hub open for 24 hours, seven days a week, which will take same day referrals, so those in need can get immediate assistance. The Council already commissions a rough sleeping outreach team, Croydon Reach who respond to reports of rough sleepers, visiting their sleep sites and identifying a route from the street. The team has support from the GLA funded No Second Night Out hubs but rough sleepers are sometimes reluctant to travel outside the borough so this service will make all the difference. Our hub will provide a safe and secure safe place within the borough to take rough sleepers straight from the street, those in need will work with assessment staff to identify a personal action plan that addresses their housing and support needs and move on within an average of 72 hours.

The service will integrate with existing services, such as Croydon Reach, the drug and alcohol assertive outreach team, homeless health team, personal budgeting officers and the social lettings agency.

The funding will also fund a small number of Rough Sleeping Navigators who will provide intensive support to rough sleepers with multiple need to ensure that they have the support to move on from the streets successfully.

#### **Excellent rating for council disability employment team**

I am pleased to say that Gateway's Employment and Enablement Support Service has been awarded the top inspection 'Excellent' rating, with a score of 95.8% for their Supported Employment Service, which supports disabled people into paid employment, self-employment and work experience. The external organisation, BASE (British Association for Supported Employment) audited the service in 2018 and came back for the second visit in March 2019. BASE is the national trade association to support, promote and develop the principles and provision of supported employment.

The principles of supported employment involve assessing each disabled person's personality, career aims and skills, matching them with jobs and employers, and then providing ongoing support once they are in work through a holistic, person-centered approach. The team helped 36 Croydon residents into work, ranging from retail jobs and lifestyle coaching to developing educational children's toys in 2018.

# Homes & Gateway Services

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

### Councillor Alison Butler

#### July 2019

---

In November 2018, the team also won the Innovation award at the BASE Practitioners awards ceremony, which recognises the country's best schemes that boost disabled people's prospects. If you wish to find out more about the audit, please contact [emma.shepherd@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:emma.shepherd@croydon.gov.uk).

#### **Selhurst Park thank you tea party for homelessness shelter volunteers**

On Thursday May 2<sup>nd</sup> more than 100 volunteers who help our rough sleepers during the coldest months of the year were thanked at an event run by Crystal Palace FC and Croydon Council at the Selhurst Park Stadium.

Croydon Churches Floating Shelter has provided winter shelter to rough sleepers every year from 2004. The shelter, provided entirely by volunteers provides shelter to 14 rough sleepers seven nights a week in church locations across the borough from November to March.

They work alongside other volunteers, from Croydon faith groups to national charities to provide support for homeless people.

Last winter, the service was complemented by Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) accommodation provided when the temperature was forecast at zero or below. The SWEP service, was delivered jointly by Crystal Palace FC and Croydon Council at the Selhurst Park stadium, supported by volunteers from within Crystal Palace FC and Croydon council staff and with donations from Selhurst Park Sainsburys.

At the event, volunteers were given afternoon tea and the chance to tour the ground.

A tribute was paid to long-term volunteer John Broom, who for over 20 years has co-ordinated the Croydon churches' winter shelters and a network of around 1,000 volunteers. A tribute was also paid to Julia Pitt, our Director of Gateway Services for her work and enthusiasm.

#### **Free holiday activities and healthy food for Croydon children during 2019 summer holidays**

Croydon continues to recognise the difficulties for many low-income families in ensuring their children are well-fed and occupied during the school holidays. So, in a really important move thousands of Croydon children will get free summer holiday

# Homes & Gateway Services

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

### Councillor Alison Butler

#### July 2019

---

activity clubs and healthy meals after the council and the national charity Family Action jointly won £650,000 in funding.

Croydon Council and Family Action will deliver this pilot programme this summer which will offer sports and other activities as well as welfare support for up to 9,000 young people and their families throughout the summer holidays.

This programme is the largest of its kind to date in Croydon and will include targeting the 7,000 children who qualify for free school meals. Croydon is in the highest national 25% of children eligible for free school meals (19.8% or 11,483), and 24% of Croydon residents are in low-paid employment, with 21% the London average.

Up to around 100 eligible organisations that work with young people, including schools and youth clubs, have been invited to bid for the funding. The organisations will be based across Croydon and in key wards where 7,800 (70%) of the borough's 11,483 children live, including Bensham Manor, Thornton Heath and New Addington South.

As well as encouraging young people to lead a healthier and more active lifestyle during the long summer holidays, the programme will also support their families to improve their finances and job prospects through budgeting advice, training and housing information.

Organisations will deliver a minimum of 16 four-hour sessions over four weeks, and funding will be particularly targeted at key free school meals groups, including looked-after children, families in emergency accommodation and young people with special educational needs.

To date, over 50 applications have been received from a variety of organisations such as charities, schools, childcare providers, faith groups and sports providers who will be delivering a wide range of activities (e.g. forest fun, arts and crafts). Clubs will be taking referrals from organisations such as the Councils Gateway service, schools, housing associations and food banks. While the majority of providers will be delivering programmes for children and young people, other clubs will be welcoming whole families.

<https://www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/children-families/holiday-food-and-fun/>

For further information in relation to Croydon's Holiday Food & Fun programme you can contact [laura.flanaghan@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:laura.flanaghan@croydon.gov.uk) and [chantell.james@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:chantell.james@croydon.gov.uk)

# Homes & Gateway Services

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

### Councillor Alison Butler

#### July 2019

---

#### Parchmore Community Centre's birthday street party

On Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> June, Gateway Officers went to the Parchmore Community Centre's birthday street party to celebrate and to share our plans with the Community for having a permanent presence in their centre. There were street games, music and food and Officers had a lovely time playing, chatting and supporting them on their special day. We spoke to all that were there about Gateway, plans for our presence and the Food Stop and there is a real buzz in the church community about it.

Rev Nadine also said that Employment Support Manager Karl has brought smiling and laughter to the church which was so needed. She also said that she is amazed by the caring nature of everyone she has ever met from Gateway.



**Rev. Nadine also sent an email on Sunday:**

*Hi Karl and Paul,*

*Thank you for what you both put into helping people to understand the help you are bringing to our community. It's really appreciated, as is your approach!*

*Best wishes  
Nadine*

## AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON



# Homes & Gateway Services

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

### Councillor Alison Butler

#### July 2019

---

#### New homes pipe-line for Brick by Brick

As a council we are determined to continue to deliver much needed homes for Croydon people, right across the borough. The council's cabinet has therefore agreed to sell 60 sites to Brick by Brick so it can develop up to 502 extra homes for local people, including a target that 50% of the homes are affordable. However, this is subject to terms and conditions, including that the sites gain planning permission

These sites may have the potential to provide much needed new homes, however, there are a number of steps that will be taken by Brick by Brick before they decide whether to progress with a planning application.

The immediate next steps is for Brick by Brick to undertake technical site investigation and analysis to understand if a particular site can come forward for redevelopment. If that analysis suggests that the site could potentially accommodate new homes, they will put together a team to develop new housing designs. At this point they will engage local residents in a variety of ways, all of which will aim to give them an opportunity to view and comment on the proposed designs as they develop.