

Update on improvements to the Housing directorate and progress towards a Housing Strategy

David Padfield

Interim Corporate Director, Housing

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Brief for the committee

The Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee is asked to:

1. Note the update provided on the improvements to the Housing directorate and progress towards a Housing Strategy.
2. Consider and comment on the improvement work underway, and whether it will deliver the desired outcomes.
3. Consider whether there are areas of concern the Sub-Committee would like to investigate further at a future meeting.

Background

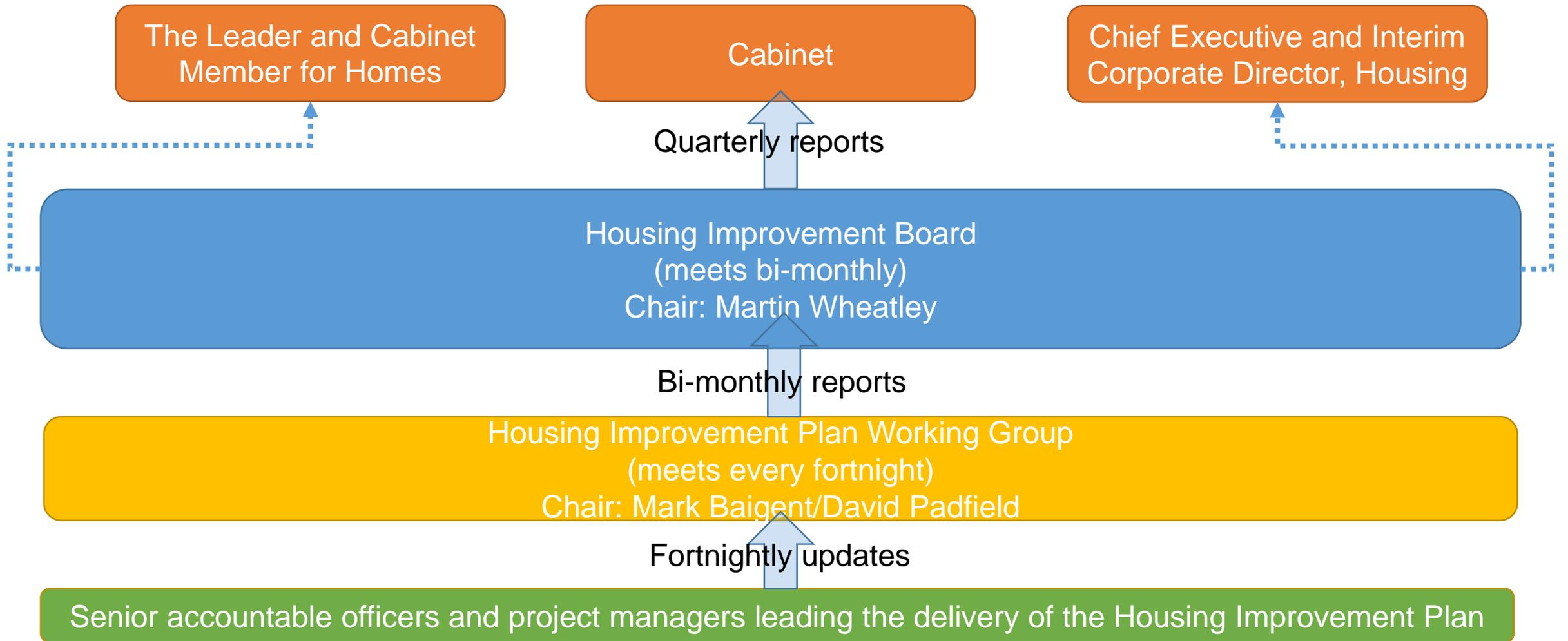
Since the publication of the ARK report, a programme of improvement has begun across the directorate to address the recommendations listed by ARK Consultancy.

The improvement work includes the:

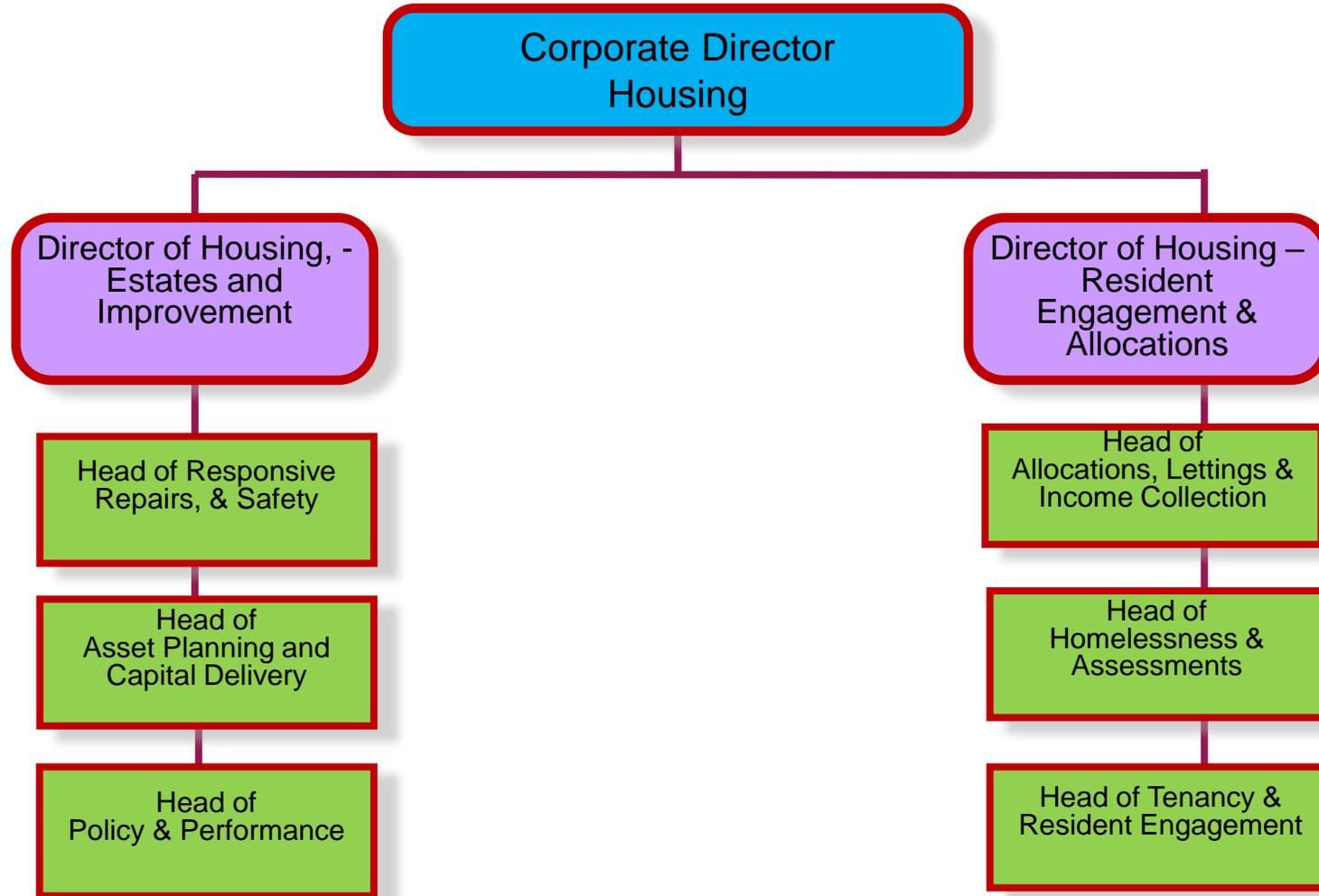
- Development of a Housing Improvement Plan
- Establishment of a Housing Improvement Board
- Progress towards a Housing Strategy

Governance

Informal reporting lines 



Organisational re-design



Key Performance Indicators for Housing

The latest suite of KPIs were approved by Cabinet this month and will enable the Council to “develop business intelligence systems” in response to the ARK report.

Available data shows that the following areas require attention:

- Responsive repairs
- Void turnaround times

Improvements have been seen in the:

- Reduction in no. of households in temporary accommodation
- Increase in no. of households supported by DHP

Engagement with residents

- Resident engagement is at the core of the Housing Improvement Plan
- The independent Housing Improvement Board, comprising of four tenants and residents oversees the delivery of the Plan.
- The Plan will be accompanied by the Council's response to the Charter for Social Housing Residents, co-designed with residents and tenants.

Engagement with residents

- A door-knocking exercise to understand the experiences of tenants in the borough, targeting high-rise blocks, has found that 30% of respondents have had a “good” or “excellent” experience as a Croydon tenant.
- Council officers are at the Regina Road site every weekday to provide a face-to-face service to residents, and ensure repairs concerns are handled.

Progress towards a Housing Strategy



HRA Business Plan and Review

The implementation of robust financial governance of the HRA is being addressed through:

- HRA revenue budget setting for FY 2022/23
- Revision of the 30-year HRA Business Plan

The HRA revenue budget is being right-sized to reflect activity and services provided.

A review of the HRA Business Plan will be based on up-to-date stock conditions data, and will be presented to Cabinet in March 2022.

LB Croydon HRA Business Plan 2020/21+										
Base Version										
HRA Summary										
Year Financial Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	2020.21	2021.22	2022.23	2023.24	2024.25	2025.26	2026.27	2027.28	2028.29	2029.30
HRA 30 YEAR SUMMARY										
Dwelling rents	76,797,000									
Non-dwelling rents	1,247,000									
Service charge income	6,026,000									
Other income and contributions	1,057,000									
Total income	85,127,000									
Repairs & maintenance	11,676,000									
Management (incl RRT)	36,866,000									
Bad debts	750,000									
Dwelling Depreciation	12,565,000									
Debt management	149,000									
Total costs	62,006,000									
Net income from services	23,121,000									
Interest payable	-11,994,813									
Interest income	0									
Net income/expenditure before appropriations	11,126,187									
Set aside for debt repayment	0									
Revenue contributions to capital	-11,001,000									
Allocation to/from other reserves	0									
Other appropriations	0									
Net HRA Surplus/Deficit	125,187									
HRA Balance brought forward	15,428,000									
HRA surplus/(deficit)	125,187									
HRA Balance carried forward	15,553,187									
<i>Alert</i>										
Other reserves brought forward	0									
Appropriation from HRA	0									
Release of reserve	0									
Other reserves carried forward	0									

Update on ARK Report Recommendations

All 11 issues identified by ARK as requiring immediate action have been addressed:

1. Resourcing of the Council's compliance function
2. Damp and mould problems at 1-87 Regina Road
3. Outmoded culture and attitude among Council staff towards tenants
4. Compromised fire safety measures
5. Stigmatisation of residents
6. Lack of effective and clear route for concerns and complaints
7. The Council is not seen as open and accessible to tenants
8. Lack of a 'mature' relationship with AXIS
9. Data and business-intelligence is not used
10. Insufficient investment in improvement planning
11. Lack of oversight of similar problems in other high-rise blocks

Update on ARK Report Recommendations

Immediate issues have been addressed through the actions below. Further issues will be addressed in the Housing Improvement Plan.

- Recruitment of a Compliance Manager to oversee four compliance officers.
- Specialist damp and mould treatment across all three Regina Road blocks.
- Development of skills gap analysis for Council staff.
- Procurement of Northgate IT system to improve stock condition data.
- Commissioning of independent surveyors to begin a programme of detailed assessments at all 26 high-rises in the borough.
- Revision of 30-year HRA Business Plan to inform the Asset Management Strategy.
- Establishment of monthly governance for asset planning.
- Establishment of Regina Road Resident Support Group and Housing Improvement Board.

Thank you