

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	CABINET	
DATE	27 March 2024	
REPORT TITLE:	STAGE 1: RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM SCRUTINY	
LEAD OFFICER:	<p>Jane West, Corporate Director for Resources</p> <p>Adrian May, Interim Head of Democratic Services adrian.may@croydon.gov.uk</p>	
LEAD MEMBER:	<p>Councillor Rowenna Davis</p> <p>Chair, Scrutiny and Overview Committee</p>	
AUTHORITY TO TAKE DECISION:	<p>Recommendations that have been developed from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and its Sub-Committees since the last Cabinet meeting are provided in the appendices to this report. The constitution requires that an interim or full response is provided within 2 months of this Cabinet meeting.</p>	
KEY DECISION?	No	N/A
CONTAINS EXEMPT INFORMATION?	No	Public
WARDS AFFECTED:	All	

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents recommendations to the Executive from Scrutiny following meetings of the Homes Sub-Committee held on 23 October 2023 and the Scrutiny & Overview Committee held on 16 January 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Executive Mayor has the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations contained within this report. The Executive Mayor in Cabinet is asked to:
1. Receive the recommendations arising from the meetings of the Homes Sub-Committee held on 23 October 2023 (Appendix 1) and the Scrutiny & Overview Committee held on 16 January 2024 (Appendix 2).
- 2.2 To provide a substantive response to the recommendation (a Scrutiny Stage 2 Report) at the Cabinet meeting on 15 May 2024.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

- 3.1** Part 4E of the Council's Constitution: Scrutiny and Overview Procedure Rules (paragraphs 8.5 – 8.7) and Section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000 require the executive to consider and respond to a Scrutiny and Overview report within 2 months beginning with the date on which the executive receive the report or recommendation.

4 BACKGROUND AND DETAILS

Homes Sub-Committee

Item: Croydon Housing Approach to the development of the Resident Engagement Structure

- 4.1** The Sub-Committee commended the work and acknowledged that this piece of work was needed and significant progress.
- 4.2** The Sub-Committee acknowledged that this piece of work was necessary. However, it was very important to make it to a high standard, even if it would take more time to complete it.
- 4.3** The Sub-Committee took reassurance from the acknowledgement of officers that there was a need to change the culture within the service and that this work was ongoing. It was agreed that the Sub-Committee would be able to assess the pace of change when it looked at the cultural transformation workstream at its meeting in April 2024.

Item: Report on principles for HRA Business Plan 2024-25

- 4.4** The Sub-Committee acknowledged that there had been a significant improvement in the approach to developing the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and the plans were promising.
- 4.5** The Sub-Committee commended the identified priorities for the Business Plan and agreed that they reflected the current needs within the service and of residents.
- 4.6** The Sub-Committee was reassured that the Council had sufficient reserves available to cover the overspend on the repairs backlog.
- 4.7** The Sub-Committee agreed that the information provided through the stock survey would form a crucial evidence base for the forthcoming Business Plan and agreed that it needed to be progress as quickly as possible and include as wider as variety of housing types as possible to provide better inform the development of the Plan.
- 4.8** The Sub-Committee noted that gaining access to properties to complete the surveys was impacted the completion rate and agreed that further work was needed in this area.

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Item: 6. Capital Programme and Capital Strategy 2023-29

- 4.9** The Committee acknowledged that both transparency and the governance processes of the Council have been improved due to the hard work of officers and the Cabinet. However, despite this hard work, the financial situation remained dire and potentially dangerous with the £38m budget gap remaining unresolved without further capitalisation and the Council being in breach of the Prudential Code.
- 4.10** The Committee also acknowledged that the financial situation for the Housing Revenue Account capital budget was much healthier than the General Fund capital budget and was supportive of the proposal to use reserves, rather than borrowing, to fund capital works in 2024-25.

Item: 7. Quarterly Procurement Plan Update

- 4.11** The Committee agreed that it was unable at this stage to provide reassurance that the Council's procurement process was as good as should be expected. However, it was acknowledged that significant progress had been made with improving the service.
- 4.12** The Committee was reasonably reassured that both council officers and the Cabinet Member for Finance were aware of the issues to be resolved and were taking steps to continue the improvement journey.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1** Scrutiny meetings do not necessarily result in any recommendations to the executive.

6 CONSULTATION / PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

- 6.1** The recommendations were developed from the deliberations of either the Scrutiny & Overview Committee or one of its Sub-Committees.

7 CONTRIBUTION TO EXECUTIVE MAYOR'S BUSINESS PLAN

- 7.1** Outcome 1: The Council balances its books, listens to residents and delivers good sustainable services:

Priority 4: Ensure good governance is embedded and adopt best practice. The Council must learn the lessons of past failures and embed sound governance processes to ensure that decision-making is transparent, open and honest. These must ensure effective control of our projects and programmes and encourage meaningful scrutiny and challenge.

- 7.2** Outcome 3: Children and young people in Croydon have the chance to thrive, learn and fulfil their potential:

Priority 2: Make Croydon safer for young people. Making the borough safer for our young people is a top priority. In the year to July 2022, serious youth violence in Croydon rose by almost a quarter compared to the previous 12 months. We will work

as one Council to strengthen partnerships with the voluntary, business and statutory sectors and schools in Croydon to tackle the root causes of youth crime, protect those at risk of offending and embed a strong joint approach to prevent youth violence and help our young people to be, and feel, safe.

7.3 Outcome 4: Croydon is a cleaner, safer and healthier place, a borough we're proud to call home:

Priority 1: Make our streets and open spaces cleaner so that Croydon is a place that residents and businesses can feel proud to call home. Residents expect and deserve to feel proud of our borough as they walk down the street. That means working with them and partners to look after our streets, parks and open spaces, and crack down on the graffiti and litter which blight our communities.

Priority 4: Ensure new homes are safe, well-designed and in keeping with the local area. New development will be design-led, not density-led. While we must continue to plan for new homes, schemes must respect the views of local people, enhance the character of our places, and recognise the need for amenity space.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1.1** The Scrutiny recommendations to the Executive may have financial implications. Following the recommendations being received at Cabinet, the Executive will identify and consider any financial implications as part of their response.
- 8.1.2** If any recommendation is subsequently progressed for consideration and decision by the Executive Mayor in Cabinet, full financial (as well as legal and equalities implications) would be presented.

8.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.2.1** Under Section 9F Local Government Act 2000 ("The Act"), Scrutiny and Overview Committee (SOC) have the powers to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken in connection with the discharge of any executive and non-executive functions and to make reports or recommendations to the executive or to the authority with respect to the discharge of those functions. SOC also has the power to make reports or recommendations to the executive or to the authority on matters, which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of its area.
- 8.2.2** Under Section 9FE of the Act, there is a duty on Cabinet to respond to the scrutiny report, indicating what (if any) action Cabinet proposes to take, within 2 months of receiving the report and recommendations.
- 8.2.3** Approved by: Sandra Herbert Head of Litigation and Corporate Law on behalf of the Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer. (06/02/2024)

8.3 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

8.3.1 There are no human resource implications arising directly from the contents of this report

8.4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

- i. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- ii. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- iii. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.4.2 The recommendations in the appendices to this report have equality implications and will require an EQIA as part of the development of the proposals. The implications will be explored to identify impact and mitigation utilised to negate any adverse impact where necessary.

8.5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.5.1 There are no environmental implications arising directly from the contents of this report, the report received recommendations from scrutiny, but no decision for recommendation.

8.6 CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

8.6.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from the contents of this report, the report received recommendations from scrutiny, but no decision for recommendation.

8.7 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

8.7.1 WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?

There are no Data Protection implications at this stage, but that the situation will be reviewed again at Stage 2 when Cabinet provide their response to the proposed recommendations.

HAS A DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT (DPIA) BEEN COMPLETED?

NO

9 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Stage 1: Recommendations from Homes Sub-Committee – 23 October 2023

Appendix 2 – Scrutiny Stage 1: Recommendations from Scrutiny & Overview Committee – 16 January 2023

10 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Meeting of the Homes Sub-Committee held on 23 October 2023

<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=485&MId=3707&Ver=4>

Meeting of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee held on 16 January 2024

<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=166&MId=3514&Ver=4>