

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **17 November 2020**

Due to government guidance on social-distancing and COVID-19 virus the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 November 2020 will not be open to members of the public and press to physically attend. The press and public will be able to watch the meeting live online at the following link:

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Membership:

Councillors Luke Spillman (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Qaisar Abbas, Colin Churchman, Joycelyn Redsell and Lynn Worrall

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

Substitutes:

Councillors Daniel Chukwu, Sara Muldowney and Terry Piccolo

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.	

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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Wendy Le, Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **9 November 2020**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting?*

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- **relate to; or**
- **likely to affect**

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- **Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;**
- **Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and**
- **leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon**

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 September 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Luke Spillman (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Qaisar Abbas, Joycelyn Redsell, Lynn Worrall and Terry Piccolo (Substitute) (substitute for Colin Churchman)

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

Apologies: Councillor Colin Churchman

In attendance:

Carol Hinvest, Assistant Director of Housing
Ben Tovey, Strategic Lead for Housing Solutions
Keith Andrews, Housing Development Manager
Ryan Farmer, Housing Strategy and Quality Manager
Wendy Le, Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live streamed and recorded, with the video recording to be made available on the Council's Youtube channel.

11. Minutes

Councillor Redsell mentioned that there was a repetition of her questions within the minutes.

Subject to these amendments, the minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 June 2020 were approved as a true and correct record.

12. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

The Committee discussed the option of holding the next meeting in a hybrid setup which was agreed.

Carol Hinvest announced that Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health would be leaving his post in March 2021 to pursue other interests but would be attending the next few meetings of Housing Overview and Scrutiny until he leaves. The Committee praised Roger Harris on his hard work to the service.

13. Declaration of Interests

For item 7, Councillor Redsell declared a non-pecuniary interest as some of the garages mentioned within the report were situated in her ward, Little Thurrock Blackshots.

14. Housing Development Programme Update

The report, which can be found on pages 21 – 28 of the Agenda, was presented by Keith Andrews.

Councillor Abbas raised concerns in the way that the sites listed had been identified for development. He felt that a map should have been attached to the report to highlight where these sites were as well as the sizes and the red line boundaries as mentioned in the report. Referring to the Aveley Hall, he sought clarification on the development plans and the nine units listed as potential capacity on the site. He also noted that an indication for potential expansion of development had been given for Richmond Road where the Thurrock Adult Community College. He was concerned that the services from the college would be removed and sought clarification on the development plans for that site.

Keith Andrews explained that the red line boundaries had not changed and the infographics for the sites had been included in an information pack for Committee back in February 2020 when the item had been heard. The information pack could be brought back to Committee again if required. Some of the sites had been renamed for better transparency following Members' advice but the red line boundaries had not changed. If there were any changes, the process would be to bring these back to Committee.

In regards to the Thurrock Adult Community College, Keith Andrews said that there was no suggestion of a loss of the facilities on the site. There was potential to make the site more accessible and if this was the case, there would be a consultation process to follow which would then bring the site forward for redevelopment.

With regards to the Aveley Hall, Keith Andrews explained that the Housing Team would only become involved and have more details if the site was made available for development. If it became a housing project, the service would then look to provide affordable housing through that site. Councillor Abbas felt that Aveley Hall and Thurrock Adult Community College on Richmond Road should not have been mentioned on the site list if there had been no plans in place. He went on to say that there had been concerns on the sites from local residents who worried the facilities from the sites would be removed.

Carol Hinvest explained that the concerns of what would happen to the Thurrock Adult Community College would be better to be directed to the Education Team who managed the college. She went on to say that the sites in the list was listed if anything was to happen to those sites and that Councillor John Kent had raised the query of the college to the Corporate Director of Children's Services who was aware of Members' concerns. The site had been mentioned in the report because if the Thurrock Adult

Community College was to move, the site would then become bigger than it currently was. However, the site mentioned in the report did not currently include the land that the college was on.

Councillor Redsell commented that listing the site gave reassurance that there would be a consultation process should the site become available. Referring to the delivery of 699 new homes, she questioned whether these included the Tops Club and Chadwell St Mary. Keith Andrews answered that the Tops Club, Chadwell St Mary and Calcutta Road in Tilbury were all in addition to the 699 new homes.

In regards to Richmond Road, Lynn Mansfield asked whether there were homes on the site that would be demolished or if the land on the site was currently empty for properties to be built on. Keith Andrews explained that the red boundary line of the site surrounded the existing buildings on site but there were no plans to demolish any of those buildings and only to infill the site. If the wider site did become available, it would only be then that the red boundary line could potentially be expanded.

Welcoming the removal of Enborne Green from the sites option list, Councillor Worrall said that its removal would allow residents to continue to enjoy their green spaces. However, she was disappointed to see that Elm Park Road was still on the list as the site had a park that residents across the Borough used particularly during the current pandemic. She hoped that the Portfolio Holder for Housing would remove the site from the list after hearing residents' opposition to the site being on the list.

Councillor Worrall mentioned that Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL) was no longer operating in its current format and asked for an update on the TRL. Carol Hinvest answered that there was speculation around the future of TRL but Thurrock Council had made no formal decisions on the organisation yet. TRL still existed and was still managing the St Chads development in Tilbury.

Councillor Worrall questioned how the development of the 699 new homes would be financed. Carol Hinvest answered that with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), it would be a combination of borrowing and the use of the Council's Right to Buy Receipts which was how previous HRA developments had been financed. Keith Andrews added that if any of the units were developed for shared ownership, the Council would be able to access Homes England grants.

Referring to the land of Culver Fields, Councillor Worrall commented that the land was owned by Thurrock's residents rather than the Council and queried the process of selling that land over to private developers to ensure the best value was gained from the sale. Keith Andrews explained that the selling of Culver Fields would be a decision for Full Council to make and that the requirements for achieving best value for the sale of the land was a statutory requirement that was placed on Thurrock Council as the local authority. There would be a scrutiny of that report before it would go to Full Council for a decision.

Councillor Worrall questioned why the Housing Development List consider Houses of Multiple Occupancies (HMOs) which was needed for homelessness situations and why the Council did not build HMOs in the Borough. Carol Hinvest answered that the service had purchased the Brook House Hostel last year which was now run as a Council owned and managed hostel. The service was also working with Headstart and with the Children's Services Department on where HMO opportunities were available. The service tended to focus more on permanent housing solutions rather than on new temporary accommodation.

Councillor Worrall commented that Thurrock Council paid other Local Authorities to use their HMOs and could save on costs if Thurrock had their own HMOs. It would prevent families from being displaced as well. Carol Hinvest explained that a lot of HMOs would be needed in Thurrock for the number of families that Thurrock had and that there were objections to HMOs from the Planning Committee. The service was working with Headstart, which was owned by Thurrock Council, to identify potential properties to develop into HMOs but these were difficult to find. Councillor Worrall questioned if the service was still working St Mungos on HMOs to which Carol Hinvest explained that the contract had been re-let and the contract was now with Sanctuary Housing.

Referring back to the Culver Fields, the Vice-Chair said that the green spaces in the area was well used by local residents. He questioned whether some parts of the Culver Fields could be left undeveloped. Keith Andrews explained that the site had been through detailed consultation processes and there had been strong resistance from the local community to building on those green spaces in the area as the Vice-Chair had mentioned. He went on to say that the last set of designs retained much of the open space which acknowledged the concerns from the local community. Although not all of the Culver Fields had been retained, a significant portion had been. The Vice-Chair commented that the local community was unhappy and wanted the Culver Fields to be left as it was and it was an area that was used for recreational purposes by the local community.

The Committee discussed the need for HMOs further and agreed that a report on HMOs in private housing needed to be brought to Committee. There were some private HMOs in the Borough and in some, young adults were not looked after at night and caused issues of anti-social behaviour in some parts of the Borough.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

- 1.1 Note progress on the list of housing development sites to be taken forward for further detailed work, involving engagement with stakeholders and communities.**

1.2 Note the removal of site Enborne Green from the sites option list.

1.3 Note the completion of the Alma Court (formerly known as Tops Club) Housing Revenue Account new build project.

15. Housing Service COVID-19 Response - Update

The report, which can be found on pages 29 – 40 of the Agenda, was presented by Carol Hinvest and Ben Tovey.

The Chair questioned what the rent arrears were for the current year and how these compared to last year's. Carol Hinvest explained that the rent arrears for the current year was a lot higher compared to last year's and that the current year was the highest it had ever been. She went on to say that it was uncertain how future rent arrears would look particularly when the Government's furlough scheme ended. The service was currently part of Housemark, a benchmarking organisation and there was a predicted rise in rent arrears from October after the Government's furlough scheme ended. The Rents and Welfare Team were working hard to identify cases and referring people for support where needed.

Referring to the nine households that had moved from temporary accommodation without the Council support in the homelessness section of the report, the Chair questioned whether the service was still in contact or providing services to those households. Ben Tovey answered that some of those had been released from prison and had come to the Council for support but three of those cases had reoffended and was sent back to prison. One had reunited with family and two had found their own accommodation. One case had moved into Southwark and was being housed by Southwark Council and supported by St Mungos and Thurrock Council continued to support that person. There were two people who rejected the offer of temporary accommodation but one came back for support and the service was unaware of the other's whereabouts. The service was still in contact with three of those cases to ensure there were support plans in place to prevent them from becoming homeless.

With housing rough sleepers, the Chair felt that there had not been enough engagement between the Council and private landlords on this issue. There were not enough housing associations to house those who were homeless and 50% of the homeless in Thurrock had been placed out of the Borough. He asked what plans were in place to ensure better engagement between the Council and private landlords to house the homeless and where they would be housed. Carol Hinvest answered that the service continued to build and develop relationships with private landlords and housing associations and that there had been a Housing Association Forum before where housing associations had met with the service. Keith Andrews added that the service worked hard to engage with housing associations and that in housing association developments, there were issues of sales values and the prices of house values that were constructed within the Borough which were much lower than London. As a result, housing associations were not as active in

Thurrock although they provided support in general needs, the provision of supported housing was tougher. Carol Hinvest also said that the service was currently developing a joint housing project between Children's Services and Adults Social Care to try to commission more supported housing services to meet specific needs. Adding on, Ben Tovey said that in regards to the rough sleeper cohort, 50 of those had to be housed outside of Thurrock due to emergency accommodation on what had been available that day following legal obligations. The service had a good relationship established with the support agencies in the Boroughs that rough sleepers had been placed in but there was difficulty in placing them in Thurrock. However, Thurrock was competing with neighbouring authorities with London authorities and where the service was able to provide an incentive to private landlords through the access of additional fund, there was better success in housing rough sleepers.

In regards to repairs, Councillor Abbas felt there were some issues to be looked at as there were incidences where residents were being charged too much for a repair. He was concerned of how contractors liaised with residents and sought reassurance that residents were being treated fairly and with respect by contractors. He noted that most of the repairs had been completed or were due for completion and he questioned how certain was the service that the repairs would be completed on time and to the highest standards. In regards to homelessness, Councillor Abbas mentioned that two people had previously had visa issues so had no access to public funds and sought a further update. He raised concerns on people being evicted where there were financial difficulties. Referring to page 36 of the Agenda, Councillor Abbas commented that the term 'customers' should be referred to as 'residents' because residents should be treated as residents and that the Council was not a business so the term 'customers' was not suitable.

Regarding the repairs service, Carol Hinvest explained that the service had a contract with Mears and that a corporate meeting with them took place every month to go through performance indicators, residents' satisfaction rates and upheld complaints were looked at. She went on to say that specific complaints were picked up and that the repairs service usually had the most complaints as it had the highest volume of service undertaken. For certain complaints, the operational team provided learning outcomes from those complaints to improve the services offered. There were also follow up calls to those residents to get their feedback to identify where things had gone wrong and was used as part of the learning outcome to improve communications. During the pandemic, Mears had some repair issues where staff had been furloughed so there had been a staff shortage or staff had been unable to get into people's homes who were shielded. There had also been a national shortage of certain materials so these issues could have also contributed to the complaints in repairs. It was expected that most of the repairs would be completed by the end of the month with the exception of one that did not have an appointment yet.

In regards to the use of the word 'customers', Carol Hinvest said that future reports would use the word 'residents'. Referring to Councillor Abbas' eviction

concerns, she said that nobody could be evicted until the courts started hearing cases again and that those who received an eviction notice would need to have a six month period after a notice was served before a court hearing. The service had hardly served any notices since the national lockdown and had been advised by Government that the service should be focussing on residents who had long outstanding rent arrears from before lockdown which had been outstanding for over a year and on the most serious cases of anti social behaviour and domestic abuse. There were guidelines around supporting those who had fallen into rent arrears because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In regards to the two people who had visa issues previously, Ben Tovey said that one person now had a passport so was able to access public funds. Referring to housing rough sleepers, he explained that the service had a restructure in its team that were specific to the rough sleeper cohort and some roles looked at early intervention and prevention solutions if an individual or family was identified to be at risk of homelessness. There was an officer that managed the placements of homeless people and an officer that provided employment and support. Carol Hinvest added that a person with no recourse to public funds would not have employment opportunities or be able to get a tenancy agreement as it was illegal. The service was able to provide temporary accommodation and as the one person now had a passport, they would be able to seek employment and housing.

Referring to the homelessness section of the report, Councillor Worrall noted that 50 individuals had been provided with accommodation but in a Cabinet report for 16 September 2020, the report gave a figure of 32 individuals that had been accommodated. She questioned the difference in the figures on both reports. Carol Hinvest confirmed that the current report before the Committee was correct with the figure of 50 individuals accommodated. Councillor Worrall went on to ask if there was a financial impact to accommodating these individuals and whether there had been funds from Government or if the funds had come from the service's budgets. Carol Hinvest answered that the costs would be covered in the next finance report that was due at Cabinet on 16 September 2020. There were some funds from Government to cover the costs and the finance report would show the service's costs overall as part of the costs of the Covid-19 pandemic. Councillor Worrall pointed out that page 179 of the Cabinet Agenda for 16 September 2020 highlighted the figure of 32 individuals that had been accommodated and that the report outlined the impact of costs to the Housing service. Carol Hinvest answered that the finance report may also include costs to the private housing sector and enforcement issues. She would look into the report.

Councillor Worrall questioned the impact of Covid-19 on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and on the Housing's General Fund. Carol Hinvest said that the impact of Covid-19 to the HRA had been managed well as rent had continued to be collected so the Council was above August's target for rent collection. However, rent arrears were also higher than it had ever been in the past so as mentioned earlier, it was uncertain how rent arrears would

look in the future. The service continued to work with residents and through housing newsletters, advised residents to inform the service of any immediate changes such as a change in income to ensure the Council could offer support where needed. She went on to say that 68% of the rent arrears were from those on universal credit which was consistent across all housing organisations during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Rents and Welfare Team continued to work hard with residents to prevent them from falling into rent arrears where possible as once in that situation, it could be hard for people to get out of easily. She went on to say that the HRA was a statutory ring fenced account and could not be used to cover the General Fund or any other budget gaps as the HRA consisted of rents and service charges and was dedicated to services to tenants and leaseholders.

Referring to sheltered accommodation, Councillor Worrall commented that residents were not able to access the communal halls in their accommodation which were currently closed due to the guidelines of Covid-19 and continued to be with the new 'Rule of Six' law that would be in effect from 14 September 2020 from Government. However, residents continued to pay the service charges for the services of the communal halls which they were not able to use and raised concerns of mental health issues in the elderly residents residing in sheltered accommodation. Carol Hinvest said that the Sheltered Housing Team had been preparing the communal halls for reopening in line with the social distancing guidelines and had been looking into a booking system for the halls. However, with the Government's new 'Rule of Six', the risk assessment that had been undertaken for the communal halls would now need to be reviewed and reassessed to meet the new rules.

Referring to Councillor Worrall's concerns on the mental health of residents in sheltered accommodation, Carol Hinvest confirmed that the service continued to call those residents where the calls had been asked for, throughout lockdown and continued to do so. In regards to the residents' service charges, she explained that the charges were for the whole sheltered housing service and that the communal halls were a small fraction of that service. The bulk of the charges were for the services from the Sheltered Housing Officers that supported the residents and continued to do so.

Councillor Worrall questioned if CCTV was paid out of the HRA. Carol Hinvest confirmed that the bulk of CCTV was paid from the HRA as most the CCTV services were provided on HRA land and buildings.

Councillor Redsell praised the Housing service and said that the service had performed well despite the current Covid-19 pandemic. She questioned if the service was still in contact with the housing organisation, Family Mosaic. She also asked if there were any ex-servicemen who were still homeless and if there were other areas in the Borough that CCTV could be installed. Keith Andrews answered that Family Mosaic was now a part of Peabody and the Housing service still had contact with Peabody from a housing development aspect. However, Peabody was more focussed on developing in central London Boroughs rather than Thurrock. Regarding ex-servicemen, Ben Tovey said that the service was currently assessing eight rough sleepers in Thurrock

and the Committee would be updated when that assessment was finished. On the CCTV point, Carol Hinvest said that the service was bidding for more CCTV in different areas with one of the bids being for the Grays Town Centre so it was possible to expand the network provided that there was capacity to do so.

The Committee further commented on the good work that the Sheltered Housing Team had undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to note and comment on the contents of this report which sets out the continued response of the Housing service in relation to the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

16. Garage Project Update

The report, which can be found on pages 41 – 48 of the Agenda, was presented by Carol Hinvest.

The Chair commented that most of the Borough's garages were not storing cars and the main purpose of garages were to keep cars off roads and pavements. However, the Borough's garages were too small to store today's modern cars and the question was whether to use the garages for cheap storage solutions or to turn them into affordable homes.

Councillor Redsell agreed and said that the better option would be to demolish the garages and build parking spaces in place. She went on to say that anti-social behaviour occurred behind garages as people could not be seen behind the garages. She queried whether the painting of the garages would be undertaken by Mears and that the painting should not be over another layer as it would cause the layers of paint to peel off. She went on to say that garages tended to be used to store items other than cars and in some cases, there had been hazardous items stored which resulted in a fire. Carol Hinvest explained that a plan was in place that outlined which garages would be demolished and which ones would be repaired. The Stock Condition Survey had identified which garages had a future; could become parking spaces; or needed refurbishment. Most of the garages were too small for modern cars and some residents stored their bicycles in the garages instead. There were a number of sites that were already on the housing development list which had previously been garage sites as well.

Councillor Redsell suggested that the service speak with Ward Councillors on garages within their wards. Carol Hinvest agreed and encouraged Members to speak with the Housing service of any other garage sites that could potentially be developed for council housing or other ideas for use.

Lynn Mansfield pointed out that the Council was still letting garages out and most were used for storage purposes. Carol Hinvest explained that the

service was aware that garages were rented for storage purposes and the issue was what was stored in the garages. It was acknowledged that the garages were too small to store cars and there was a Garage Tenancy Agreement which highlighted that nothing combustible such as gas canisters could be stored in the garages.

Councillor Worrall questioned if there was an income from the let of garages and if this paid towards the garages project or if there were reserved funds for the project. Carol Hinvest was uncertain from a revenues point and would ask for business case to be put together and circulated to the Committee. She went on to say that the garages were the Council's assets and some funds would need to be used to maintain them to prevent them from falling into a state of disrepair or being fenced off due to its unsafe structure. The Project Manager for the garages project was looking at which garage sites could be demolished and developed into homes or car parking spaces.

Councillor Worrall asked for an update of the project to be brought back to the next municipal year. The Chair agreed and said that he wished to see the project bring forth exciting and bold ideas that would add social value and also revenue potential to it. He gave the example of the bungalow project and Carol Hinvest said that the garages on Defoe Parade was the pilot scheme that would prove viability of the project.

RESOLVED:

It was recommended that Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive this report for information and comment.

17. Work Programme

The work programme was amended as follows:

- HMOs in the Private Sector was added with a date to be confirmed.
- Annual Allocations Report was added to 17 November 2020.
- Tenant & Leasehold Satisfaction Survey Results and Action Plan was moved to 19 January 2021.
- Fees and Charges was moved to 19 January 2021.
- Key Performance Indicators was added to 17 November 2020.
- Removal of Gates in Accommodation Complexes was added to 17 November 2020.

Councillor Worrall asked that the Fees and Charges report cover any cuts to be made in Housing. Carol Hinvest explained that the Fees and Charges report covered the Housing General Fund only. She went on to say that there were no foreseen cuts yet and if any were necessary these would be covered within the HRA Business Plan report due for the meeting on 19 January 2021.

The meeting finished at 9.07 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

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17 November 2020		ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Licensing Houses of Multiple Occupation		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Dulal Ahmed – Housing Enforcement Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest – Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris – Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report provides an update of Houses of Multiple Occupation [HMO] controlled under Mandatory and Additional licensing. Planning is not required for all HMOs.

HMOs represent a growing sector within the private rented sector and likely to increase in the future. Shared renting is regarded as higher risk than single occupancy homes, the conditions, facilities and management are regulated by Private Housing.

Licensing improves housing standards in the private sector and landlords must pass a fit and proper test before being granted a licence. The council helps landlords to manage HMOs more effectively with advice, information and controlled guidelines.

Some HMOs are subject to licensing and pay a fee to the council:

- Mandatory HMO Licensing
- Additional HMO Licensing
- Other HMOs which do not currently require a license are subject to Management of Houses of Multiple Occupations Regulations 2006.

Over the last three years, the council has granted 147 HMO licences, collected £216,155 income fee and issued financial penalties of £100,965 for failure to comply with statutory obligations against HMO landlords and managing agents.

Licensed HMOs are largely concentrated within the Additional Licensing areas. The Private Housing Team have identified a further 2,738 homes requiring investigation as to whether they are operating without a licence.

1. Recommendation

1.1 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note and comment on the report.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 HMOs present significantly greater risks to tenants' health, safety and wellbeing than comparable single occupancy homes. Risks such as dangerous gas appliances, faulty electrical systems and inadequate means of escape and other fire precautions are just some of the hazards that Private Housing investigate on a regular basis.

2.2 Cabinet approved Additional Licensing to deal with small HMOs, let to three and four tenants in the borough on the 16 January 2019. The Additional Licensing scheme came into force on June 1 2019 for a period of five years, to run alongside Mandatory Licensing as required under the Housing Act 2004, before the council must review it.

2.3 The Additional Licensing areas are : Grays Riverside, Grays Thurrock, Little Thurrock Blackshots, Stifford Clays, Aveley and Uplands, Belhus, Ockendon, Wet Thurrock and South Stifford, Chadwell St Mary, Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park, Tilbury St Chads

2.4 Some buildings are exempt from HMO licensing where the person managing or having control is

- A Local Authority
- A Registered Social Landlord
- The Police
- Fire and Rescue Authority
- National Health Service
- Specified education establishments eg halls of residence
- Religious buildings

2.5 Any other landlord failing to apply for a HMO licence could be prosecuted or face a civil penalty notice of up to £30k, under the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

2.6 Licensing is consistent with the Council's Housing Strategy 2015/20 to improve private rented accommodation. The council is exploring the introduction of a Selective Licensing Scheme to license all privately rented homes that are let to a single family household or two unrelated sharers.

3. Local Housing Context

3.1 The Valuation Office, April 2019 estimates there are 68, 266 homes in Thurrock. The borough has a target to build 30,000 new homes by 2037 to meet demand expected from people wanting to live here.

- 3.2 Table 1 shows a breakdown of the housing status from the national census of 2011

Table 1 Thurrock Housing Status

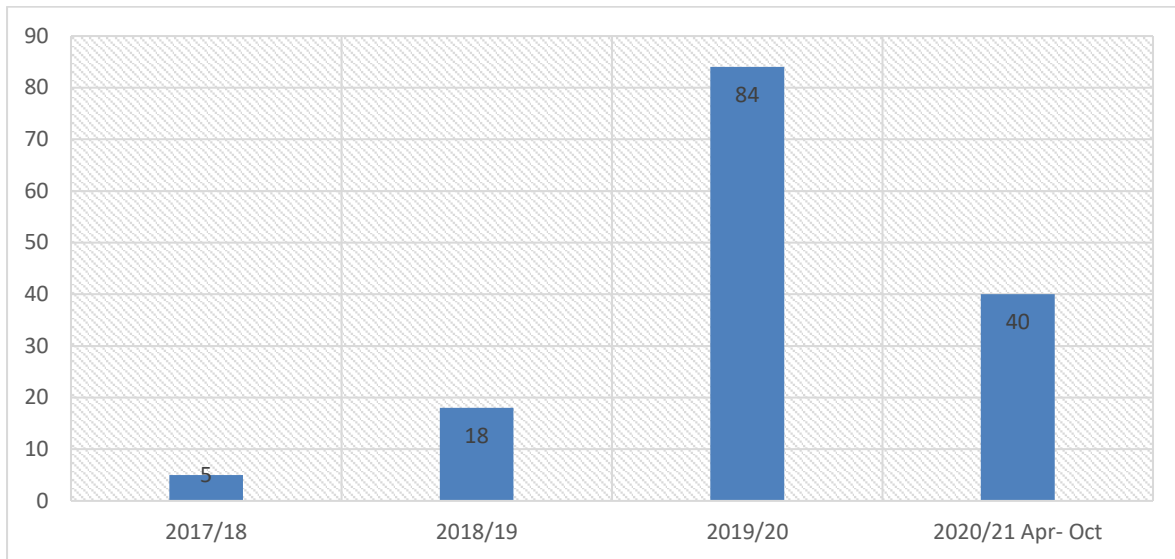
Housing status	Thurrock
Owner –occupier	66.2%
Rented from the council or housing association	18.4%
Rented privately	14.1%

- 3.3 The number of households living in HMOs has significantly increased over the last 9 years. The private rented sector and HMOs have an important role as housing provision in Thurrock. All residents living in the borough must have access to good quality housing.
- 3.4 The supply of HMOs support single households unable to enter the social housing market. This includes professionals, migrant workers, low skilled workers, benefit recipients, vulnerable adults, ex-offenders, care leavers, asylum seekers, and students.
- 3.5 HMOs are likely to increase in the future as the population increases and there remains a lack of affordable housing.

4. HMO Licensing

- 4.1 The council maintains a public register of licensed HMOs under section 232 of the Housing Act 2004. This contains 147 properties with licences granted.
- 4.2 Table 2 shows an increase of 1940% of licensed HMOs from 2017/18 to 2019/20. However, in 2020/21, new applications have temporarily fallen due to Covid19.

Table 2 HMO Licences Granted

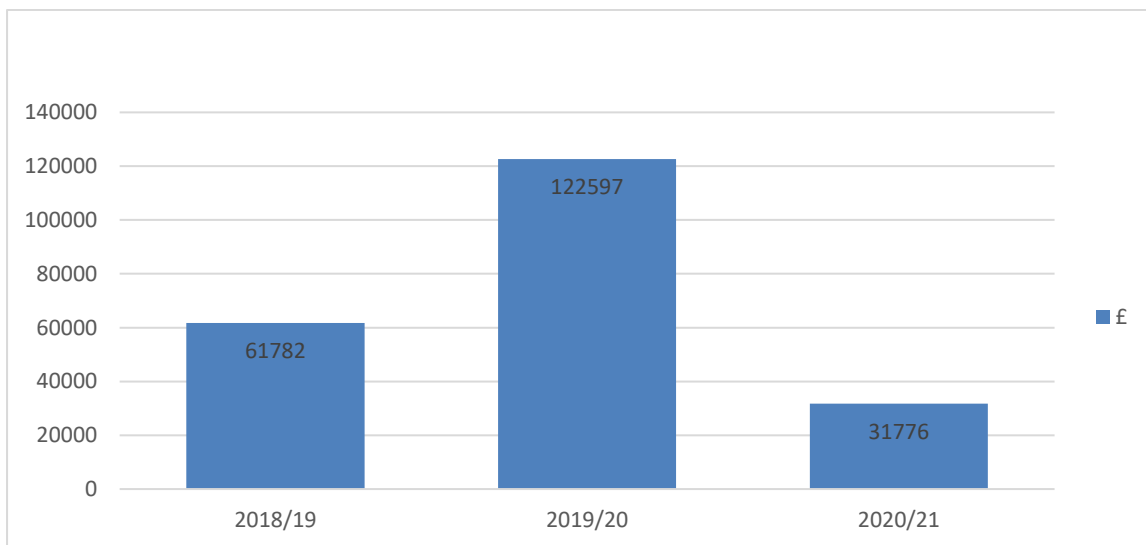


Source; Thurrock Council

4.3 HMO landlords must pay a licensing fee to the council to rent out their property. The HMO license fee is regulated under Section 63[3] of the Housing Act 2004. Fees are reviewed annually by the Private Housing Team and they cover the cost incurred in carrying out the licensing function.

4.4 Table 3 shows the HMO licensing income fee over the last two and half years totalled £216,155 to September 2020. All licensing income must be ring fenced to administer the licensing scheme in line with the regulatory guidance on HMO licence fees.

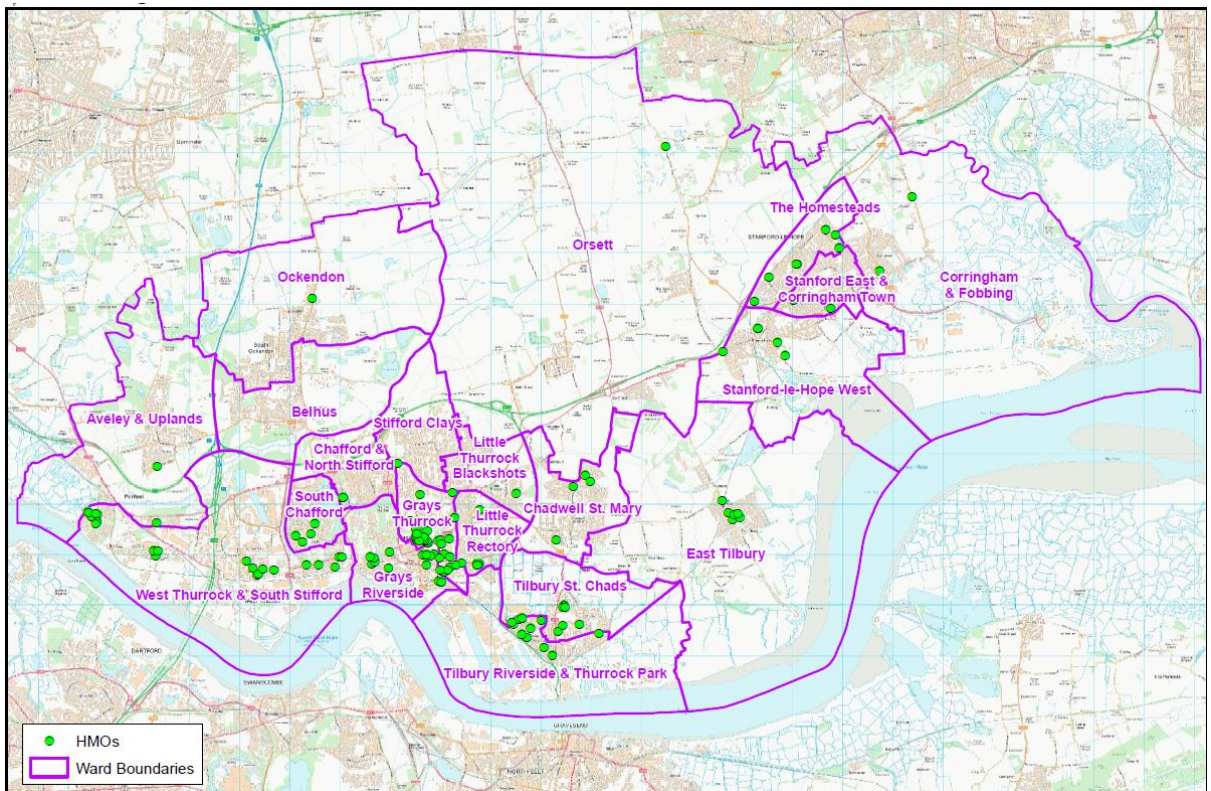
Table 3 HMO Licensing Fee Income



Source: Thurrock Council

- 4.5 The Private Housing Team inspects all properties to ensure they are up to minimum housing standards, suitable for the number of occupiers and the team carries out a fit and proper test that the proposed license holder is suitable to be a manager of the house before granting a license. This includes:
- Competence of the proposed licence holder/manager to manage the building
 - Suitability of the management structures to comply with day to day operations
 - And adequacy of the financial arrangements to carry out his/her obligations under the license and his/her general management functions
- 4.6 The provisions relating to management arrangements are identical for both Mandatory and Additional Licensing.
- 4.7 Map 1 shows the concentration of licensed HMOs in the borough. Licensed HMOs are largely located in certain wards eg Grays, South Chafford, West Thurrock & South Stifford and Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park.
- 4.8 The mapping exercise shows only a proportion of the estimated number of HMOs in the borough. The Private Housing Team estimates a further 2738 unlicensed HMOs operating without a licence based on investigate research. An audit programme is underway to inspect unlicensed properties so that landlords can take corrective action or face enforcement action.

Map 1 Licensed Mandatory and Additional HMOs



Source: Thurrock Council

- 4.9 Mandatory and Additional Licensing play a vital role in controlling and regulating HMOs and ensuring that legal standards are in place for fire safety, housing-related health and safety, space standards, amenities, management and the provision of good quality rental accommodation within Thurrock's housing stock
- 4.10 Community concerns arise regarding poorly managed HMOs that cause social and environmental problems.
- 5. Licensing Enforcement Performance**
- 5.1 Although Thurrock has some excellent landlords and letting agents, the Private Housing Team has a vital role in improving housing standards and tackling irresponsible landlords and preventing them from profiting from their non-compliance.
- 5.2 Table 4 shows housing's enforcement performance requiring the landlord to meet the minimum standards of amenities as well as managing their HMO property.

Table 4 Housing Enforcement Measures

Enforcement Measure	2018/19 No.	2019/20 No.	2020/21 Apr- Sept
Improvement Notice	17	36	13
Prohibition Order	8	3	3
Emergency Prohibition Order	0	0	0
Emergency Remedial Action	1	3	2
Environmental Protection Act S80	21	10	2
Hazard Awareness Notice	2	15	1
Suspended Prohibition Order	3	2	1
Suspended Improvement Notice	2	6	1
Building Act 1984/Public Health Act 1936 Drainage	4	8	2
Public Health Act 1936 Notice	4	3	3
Works In Default	6	10	1
Prosecutions	4	5	0
Civil Penalty Notice	0	15	3
Rent Repayment Order	1	0	0
No of HMOs improved under HMO licensing [mandatory & additional	113	568	185

Source: Thurrock Council

5.3 The council try to educate and work with landlords to secure compliance. However, the Private Housing Team has imposed civil penalties for a range of offences under the Housing Act 2004 as alternative to prosecution against HMO landlords. This has totalled £100,963 for failure to comply with statutory obligations.

5.4 Licensing is an important tool in driving out irresponsible landlords and protecting the reputation of those landlords and letting agents who take their legal responsibility seriously and run successful complainant businesses.

6. Planning

6.1 Planning permission is not required for all HMOs. The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories known as 'Use Classes'.

6.2 Use Class "C" relates to residential uses. Of relevance to this report are the following subsections:

C3 Dwellinghouses –

This class is formed of three parts:

C3(a) covers use by a single person or a family (a couple whether married or not, a person related to one another with members of the family of one of the couple to be treated as members of the family of the other), an employer and certain domestic employees (such as an au pair, nanny, nurse, governess, servant, chauffeur, gardener, secretary and personal assistant), a carer and the person receiving the care and a foster parent and foster child

C3(b) N / A

C3(c) allows for groups of people (up to six) living together as a single household. This allows for those groupings that do not fall within the C4 HMO definition, but which fell within the previous C3 use class, to be provided for i.e. a small religious community may fall into this section as could a homeowner who is living with a lodger

C4 Houses in multiple occupation - Small shared houses occupied by between three and six unrelated individuals, as their only or main residence, who share basic amenities such as a kitchen or bathroom.

Other relevant use classes

Sui Generis Uses

HMOs of more than 6 people fall outside the C uses, and are in the sui generis use class as “Larger HMOs”

- 6.3 Planning permission is not required for movement between the C uses identified above. Planning permission will be required for **all** HMOs with more than 6 residents, which are classified in planning terms as “Larger HMOs”. Some Local Authorities have Article 4 Directions in place which remove permitted development rights for changes to HMOs, of any size. Thurrock does not have any Article 4 Directions in place.
- 6.4 The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has determined 5 planning applications for changes of use to larger HMOs in the 2020 calendar year so far (all were refused), compared to 1 in 2019 (also refused). The LPA refused an application for a purpose built building to be used as a larger HMO in 2019, the developer appealed to the Planning Inspectorate who allowed the appeal.
- 6.5 Whilst the use of residential properties as HMOs is usually acceptable in principle the main concerns identified by the LPA as reasons for refusal relate to intensification of use, loss of amenity to neighbours and most often lack of suitable parking facilities which leads to on street parking compromising highways safety.

6.6 HMOs remain a frequent concern to residents and the Planning Enforcement team are often required to investigate potential breaches. Where cases of larger HMOs are identified the LPA will work to secure a planning application so that the matters can be formally considered.

7. Reasons for Recommendation

7.1 Planning and Private Housing regulate HMOs to have a positive impact on the local community.

7.2 HMOs are an important part of housing supply and the trend is likely to continue as the population increases and an acute lack of affordable accommodation limits housing options for large numbers in the borough.

7.3 Better managed and maintained HMOs improves the health and wellbeing of the tenants and have a positive impact on their local community.

8. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

8.1 The Community Safety Partnership, including Essex Police, and Essex Fire Authority were consulted on the HMO Licensing Policy of how the Private Housing Team administers the licencing of HMOs.

9. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

9.1 This report contributes to the council fulfilling its priorities to People and Prosperity in relation to improving the health and wellbeing of residents and building a strong working relationship with the private rented sector to enhance its reputation.

10. Implications

10.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Hannah Katakwe**
Housing Accountant, Finance & IT

The licensing fee and existing budget provision fund the Private Housing Team. HMO licences issued are valid for five years; which means income profiles annually can vary significantly. The council is accessing the local government income compensation scheme for loss of HMO licence fees because of COVID19 in 2020/21.

10.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**

**Deputy Head of Law & Deputy Monitoring
Officer, Law and Governance**

The council has a statutory duty to mandatory licence certain types of HMOs under the Housing Act 2004. Additional licensing is a discretionary scheme the council adopted to deal with the problems associated with HMOs that are not already covered by mandatory licensing.

The Licence fee is not fixed by legislation but must be reasonable and proportionate to the service costs incurred.

There are no additional legal implications associated with this report.

10.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager, Community Development & Equalities

There are no diversity or equality implications associated with this report. A Community and Equality Impact Assessment was carried out previously as part of the review of the Additional Licensing Scheme.

The Council is committed to ensuring good housing conditions for our residents. Licensing improves the standards for tenants in HMO regardless of whether they belong to a protected group[s] or not. It has a positive effect on a wide range of HMO residents. HMO licensing is only undertaken by authorised officers of the council.

10.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

HMOs are classified as high risk accommodation settings in relation to Covid19. The Private Housing Team works closely with Public Health to raise awareness of landlords and tenants of their duties and responsibilities to stay alert to coronavirus.

11. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

Additional Licensing of Housing in Multiple Occupation, 16th January 2019

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/houses-in-multiple-occupation/register-of-licensed-hmos>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities/guidance-for-local-authorities>

12. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author:

Dulal Ahmed

Housing Enforcement Manager

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17 November 2020		ITEM: 6
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2021/22		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Kelly Mcmillan – Business Development Project Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest, Assistant Director, Housing		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Local Authorities are involved in a wide range of services and the ability to charge for some of these services has always been a key funding source to Councils.

This report specifically sets out the charges in relation to services within the remit of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The charges dealt with are for the General Fund by the Housing Service. Charges will take effect from the 1 April 2021 unless otherwise stated. In preparing the proposed fees and charges, Directorates have worked within the charging framework and commercial principles set out in the report.

The full list of proposed charges is detailed in Appendix 1 to this report. The proposed deletion of current fees and charges are detailed in Appendix 2 to this report.

1 Recommendation

- 1.1 That Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the revised fees, including those no longer applicable, and that Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of this committee.**

2 Background & Introduction

- 2.1 The paper describes the fees and charges approach for the services within the Housing Scrutiny Committee remit for 21/22 and will set a platform for certain pricing principles moving forward into future financial years.
- 2.2 The paper provides narrative for the General Fund aspects of the Housing area and includes:

- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) License
- Housing Enforcement Notices
- Penalty Charges – Housing Planning Act 2016
- Penalty Charges – Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations 2015
- Energy Efficiency Regulations 2015
- Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector [England] Regulations 2020
- Mobile Homes Act 2013
- Travellers Sites
- Selective Licensing (proposal)

2.3 The fees & charges that are proposed are underpinned by statutory, regulatory and discretionary conditions.

3 Thurrock Charging Policy

3.1 The strategic ambition for Thurrock is to adopt a policy on fees and charges that is aligned to the wider commercial strategy and ensures that all services cost recover.

3.2 Furthermore, for future years, while reviewing charges, services will also consider the level of demand for the service, the market dynamics and how the charging policy helps to meet other service objectives.

3.3 Rather than set a blanket increase across all service lines, when considering the pricing strategy for 2021/22 some key questions were considered.

- Where can we apply a tiered/premium pricing structure
- How sensitive are customers to price (are there areas where a price freeze is relevant)
- What new charges might we want to introduce for this financial year
- How do our charges compare with neighbouring boroughs
- How do our charges compare to neighbouring boroughs and private sector competitors (particularly in those instances where customers have choice)
- How can we influence channel shift
- Can we set charges to recover costs
- What do our competitors charges
- How sensitive is demand to price
- Statutory services may have discretionary elements that we can influence
- Do we take deposits, charge cancellation fees, and charge an admin fee for duplicate services (e.g. lost certificates.)

3.4 For Housing, a number of different methods to tier their charges depending on the service area are used:

- **Houses in Multiple Occupation** – are tiered based on the number of rooms, and whether the landlord is accredited or unaccredited.

- **Enforcement Notices** – are tiered around the number of hazards in conjunction with the number of bedrooms in the accommodation.
- **Mobile Homes Licensing** - These charges are tiered around number of pitches
- **Civil Penalty Notices** – these are tier charges based on severity of the offence, potential harm and considers the landlord’s income and track record.

3.5 The key following points should be noted for 2021/22 fees and charges:

3.6 The Private Housing Enforcement Policy is regularly updated as required to meet the changing circumstances caused by COVID19 to ensure a pragmatic approach is taken when dealing with landlords and the council continue to emphasize the importance of keeping properties free from hazardous conditions.

- **Houses in Multiple Occupation** – These charges are comparable to neighbouring boroughs therefore will remain unchanged for 2021/22
- **Assisting with licensing applications** – these will increase by 2.57% (£1.64)
- **Enforcement Notices** – These will increase by 2%- 3% (£5.05 - £22.50)
- **Penalty Charges – Housing Planning Act 2016.** These charges were introduced in 2018/19 and are scaled up to the maximum sum allowed
- **Penalty Charges – Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations 2015.** These charges remain unchanged
- **Penalty Charges - Energy Efficiency Regulations 2015.** These remain unchanged
- **Penalty Charge - The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector [England] Regulations 2020 –** New charge
- **Mobile Homes** - These charges are comparable to neighbouring boroughs therefore will remain unchanged for 2021/22
- **Travellers Sites** - These will increase by 2.97% (£3.23)
- **Selective Licensing** - (proposal for 2021/22- no fee yet allocated)

4 **Proposals and Issues**

4.1 The fees and charges for each service area have been considered and the main considerations are set out below.

4.2 The increased fees and charges are challenging and represent our commercial ambitions as a Council.

4.3 Unless indicated otherwise, fees and charges for 2021/22 will increase in line with forecast inflation (subject to rounding).

4.4 The following sections outline the fees and charges implications for the individual service streams.

5 Mandatory and Additional Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licenses

- 5.1 The HMO license fee is regulated under Section 63(3) of the Housing Act 2004. This allows the Council to set its fee taking into account all costs it incurs in carrying out its licensing function. This has been done for all license applications for up to 5 years.
- 5.2 The regulations do not allow the Council to make a surplus by increasing its license fee above the fully loaded costs of issuing a license.
- 5.3 Additional licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation came into force on June 1 2019 for shared houses let to 3 to 4 unrelated persons in certain parts of the borough. It lasts for 5 years ending on May 31 2024.
- 5.4 Legislative changes require the HMO fee structure to be split into two parts to take into account of the actual staff time required to process HMO licenses.

Part 1 the amount that becomes payable on application

Part 2 – the amount that becomes payable on the grant of a license

Both parts give a total for licensing a dwelling.

All licensing income must be ring fenced to administer the licensing scheme as per the regulatory guidance on HMO license fees.

- 5.5 Mandatory and Additional licensing fees will remain the same for the financial year 21/22. This supports HMO landlords impacted by Covid19. Also, they remain comparable to our neighbouring boroughs.

6 Housing Enforcement Notices

- 6.1 Housing enforcement Notices are discretionary charges. The council will only serve an Improvement Notice on the landlord if this is the 'only way' of protecting the health and safety of the occupiers requiring the landlord to meet the minimum housing standards. The Housing Act 2004 allows the Councils to charge for the service of legal notices under the Act. The regulations state the costs should be reasonable and auditable.
- 6.2 These charges will increase by 2%-3% for the financial year 21/22.

7 Penalty Charges – Housing Planning Act 2016

- 7.1 Legislative changes under this Act allow the Council to serve civil financial penalties for certain housing offences under the Housing Act 2004.
- 7.2 Civil penalties cover:
- Failure to comply with an improvement notice [section 30]
 - Offences in relation to licensing of HMO [section 72]
 - Offences in relation to licensing of houses under Part 3 of the Act

[Section 95]

- Offences of contravention of an overcrowding notice [section 139]
- Failure to comply with management regulations in respect of HMO [section 234]

- 7.3 The standard of proof must meet a criminal prosecution standard to serve a Civil Penalty Notice.
- 7.4 The Council charge applied is scalable from the published minimum fee up to a maximum of £30k; at the discretion of the Private Housing Service based on the severity, repetition and cooperation of the third party in resolving the issues.
- 7.5 Under this framework the Council retain the financial penalty imposed rather the Courts for the fine paid as punishment for the offence. This new income from civil penalties must be ring fenced on private housing enforcement activities as per the regulation guidance.
- 7.6 This will be a transparent process which will be outlined in the council statement of principles, to be issued with the new fee structure. Appeals may also be made against the civil penalty charge, with the charge varied or waived dependent on individual mitigating circumstances. Where non-payment occurs the civil debt recovery process will be used to recovery the outstanding liabilities.
- 7.7 These charges will remain the same for the financial year 21/22. The tiered fee structure is comparable to local authorities nationwide.

8 Penalty Charges - Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations 2015

- 8.1 Legislative changes under this Act allow the Council to require the Landlord to pay a penalty charge for failing to comply with a remedial notice in regards to installing smoke and carbon monoxide alarms within a single dwelling private rented home. The amount to be charged has not been prescribed by the regulations; however, it must not exceed £5k.
- 8.2 The setting of a minimum charge of £1k increasing to the maximum sum of £5k allowed will be levied for repeated breaches within two years.
- 8.3 The service expects most landlords to comply with the law than face this financial penalty imposed by the Council.
- 8.4 The charges will remain the same in the financial year 21/22.

9 Penalty Charge - Energy Efficiency [Private Rented Property] 2015

- 9.1 This legislation requires private landlords of single dwellings to reach an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E before granting a tenancy from April 1st 2018 and will continue to apply to all tenancies from April 1 2020. Landlords with an EPC rating of band F or below G may not grant a tenancy to new or existing tenants unless an exemption is registered if they want to continue to

let it.

9.2 The Private Housing Service can impose a civil penalty notice if it is satisfied that a property has been let in breach of the Regulations or if the landlord has lodged false information on the PRS Exemption Register. A publicity campaign raising awareness of the changes in the private rented sector has been done.

9.3 The council will impose a civil penalty if the landlord has let a substandard property in breach of the Regulations for a period of less than 3 months scalable up to £4k at the discretion of the Private Housing Service. Also, if the landlord has registered false formation or misleading information on the PRS Exemptions Register it will impose the maximum fine of £1k.

9.4 The charges are set by Government.

10 Penalty Charge - The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector [England] Regulations 2020

10.1 This legislation came into force on the 1 June 2020, to improve electrical safety in all residential premises.

10.2 Landlords of privately rented accommodation must:

- Ensure national standards for electrical safety standards are met as set out in the 18th edition of the Wiring Regulations
- Ensure all electrical installation in their rented properties are inspected and tested by a qualified person at least every 5 years
- Obtain a report conducting the inspection and test which gives the results and sets a date for the next inspection and test
- Supply a copy of this report to the existing tenant within 28 of the inspection and test
- Supply a copy of this report to a new tenant before they occupy the premises
- Supply a copy of this report to any prospective tenant within 28 days of reviving a request for the report
- Retain a copy of the report to give the inspector and tester who will undertake the next inspection and test
- Where the report shows that further investigative or remedial work is necessary, complete the work within 28 days of any shorter period
- Supply written confirmation of the completion of the further investigative or remedial work from the electrician to the tenant and the local authority within 28 days of completion of the works

10.3 The council may impose a civil penalty notice which is scalable upto 30k who are in breach of their duties under the Regulations and failure to take remedial action to make their electrical installation safe. This income must be ring fenced on private housing enforcement activities. This is a new charge for 2021/22.

11 Mobile Homes Act 2013

- 11.1 The Mobiles Homes Act provides greater protection to occupier's rights of residential park homes and caravans with planning permission under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 11.2 Under this Act it allows for licensing of '*relevant protected sites*' to ensure they are properly managed and health safety standards are maintained. A relevant protected site is defined in the Act as any land to be used as a caravan site with planning consent.
- 11.3 The council can charge a licensing fee for this function that includes
- A license fee for application to grant or transfer a license or an application to alter the conditions of a license
 - An annual license fee for administering and monitoring licenses
- 11.4 Examples of relevant protected sites are typically residential parks, mobile home parks, and or Traveller sites.
- 11.5 There are exemptions to this legislation where a caravan site license is not required under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960. For example
- Use within curtilage of a dwelling house
 - Use by a person travelling with a caravan for one or two nights
 - Use of holdings of five acres or more in certain circumstances
 - Sites granted for holiday use only
 - Travelling Showman sites are exempt from licensing
 - It does not include sites that are owned by the council
- 11.6 The charge will remain the same for the financial year 21/22. This supports Park Homes impacted by Covid19. Also, they remain comparable to our neighbouring boroughs.

12 Travellers Sites

- 12.1 The Travellers Charges for 21/22 will be increased by 2.97% to manage this function. The Council has three Travellers Sites with a total of 64 operational plots. The Gammon Field site is at risk by the proposed Thames Level Crossing to be relocated elsewhere in the borough. Housing remain engaged in discussions about the site's future with Highways England.

Location	Number of Plots
Ship Lane, Aveley, RM15 4HB	21 plots
Gammon Field site, Long Lane, Grays, RM16 2QH	21 plots
Pilgrims Lane site, North Stifford, Grays, RM16 5UZ	22 plots

- 12.2 An average of 66% of the residents receive full or partial Housing Benefit. The reduction from last year on this figure is due to the increased in Universal Credit applications. We are working with those who have moved across to set up direct payments to cover rental changes.

Location	HB Percentage
Ship Lane, Aveley, RM15 4HB	76%
Gammon Field site, Long Lane, Grays, RM16 2QH	62%
Pilgrims Lane site, North Stifford, Grays, RM16 5UZ	59%

13 Selective Licensing (Proposal)

- 13.1 The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed on the 18th June 2019 to explore a Selective Licensing scheme to cover all or certain parts of the borough. This is estimated to affect around 15,000 properties.
- 13.2 Although this is not in place at present and therefore there are no set fees and charges, this is something we are looking to introduce in 2021/22 when statutory consultation is safe to do so regarding the proposed scheme and fees.
- 13.3 The licensing fee covers the cost incurred by the council in carrying out its licensing function. Fees are typically in the region of £500 to £800 for a single property.
- 13.4 After the consultation closes, the selective licensing results are presented within a report. This report, alongside other evidence on the impact of the proposed scheme, will be considered by Cabinet and form part of our application to support the Secretary of State's decision making process.
- 13.5 This scheme will work alongside our Mandatory and Additional Licensing schemes that all privately rented properties would be subject to controls in order to improve standards.

14 Reasons for Recommendation

- 14.1 The setting of appropriate fees and charges will enable the Council to generate essential income for the funding of Council services.
- 14.2 Under Director's delegated authority, fees and charges can be varied within the financial year in response to commercial requirements.

15 Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 15.1 Consultations will be progressed where there is specific need. However, with regard all other items, the proposals in this report do not affect any specific parts of the borough. Fees and charges are known to customers before they make use of the services they are buying.

16 Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 16.1 The changes in these fees and charges may impact the community; however it must be taken into consideration that these price rises include inflation and no profit will be made on the running of these discretionary services.

17 Implications

17.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Strategic Lead – Corporate Finance

The effect of any changes to fees and charges on individual income targets will be determined as part of the 2021-22 budget setting process in which Corporate Finance and service areas will review anticipated level of demand, fee increases, previous performance and potential associated costs. Future reports will set out the 2021-22 targets across all directorates.

17.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallum**
Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Fees and charges generally fall into three categories – Statutory, Regulatory and Discretionary. Statutory charges are set in statute and cannot be altered by law since the charges have been determined by Central government and all authorities will be applying the same charge.

Regulatory charges relate to services where, if the Council provides the service, it is obliged to set a fee which the Council can determine itself in accordance with a regulatory framework. Charges have to be reasonable and must be applied across the borough.

Discretionary charges relate to services which the Council can provide if they choose to do so. This is a local policy decision. The Local Government Act 2003 gives the Council power to charge for discretionary services, with some limited exceptions. This may include charges for new and innovative services utilising the Council's general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. The income from charges, taking one financial year with another, must not exceed the cost of provision. A clear and justifiable framework of principles should be followed in terms of deciding when to charge and how much, and the process for reviewing charges.

A service may wish to consider whether they may utilise this power to provide a service that may benefit residents, businesses and other service users, meet the Council priorities and generate income.

Decisions on setting charges and fees are subject to the Council's decision making structures. Most charging decisions are the responsibility of Cabinet, where there are key decisions. Some fees are set by full Council.

17.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**

Community Development Team Manager

The Council is responsible for promoting equality of opportunity in the provision of services and employment as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. Decisions on setting charges and fees are subject to Community Equality Impact Assessment process and the Council's wider decision making structures to determine impact on protected groups and related concessions that may be available.

17.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

18 Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

19 Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Schedule of Proposed Fees and Charges for 2021/22

Report Author:

Kelly Mcmillan

Business Development Project Manager

Name of fee or Charge	Directorate	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Owner	Statutory/Discretionary Charge	VAT Status 20/21	Charge excl. VAT 2020/21	VAT Amount 2020/21	Charge incl. VAT 2020/21	VAT Status 21/22	Charge excl. VAT 2021/22	VAT Amount 2021/22	Charge incl. VAT 2021/22	Change from last year (incl. VAT)	Change from last year (% incl. VAT)	New, Removed, Unchanged
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 2 to 5 rooms - Landlord Accredited (Application Fee £550, License Fee £425)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 975.00	£ -	£ 975.00	O	£ 975.00	£ -	£ 975.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 2 to 5 rooms - Non Accredited (Application Fee £625, License Fee £505)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,130.00	£ -	£ 1,130.00	O	£ 1,130.00	£ -	£ 1,130.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 6 to 10 rooms - Landlord Accredited (Application Fee £570, License £455)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,025.00	£ -	£ 1,025.00	O	£ 1,025.00	£ -	£ 1,025.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 6 to 10 rooms - Non Accredited (Application Fee £650, License Fee £530)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,180.00	£ -	£ 1,180.00	O	£ 1,180.00	£ -	£ 1,180.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 11 to 15 rooms - Landlord Accredited (Application Fee £680, License Fee £450)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,130.00	£ -	£ 1,130.00	O	£ 1,130.00	£ -	£ 1,130.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 11 to 15 rooms - Non Accredited (Application Fee £780, License Fee £520)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,300.00	£ -	£ 1,300.00	O	£ 1,300.00	£ -	£ 1,300.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 16 to 20 rooms - Landlord Accredited (Application Fee £670, License Fee £565)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,235.00	£ -	£ 1,235.00	O	£ 1,235.00	£ -	£ 1,235.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 16 to 20 rooms - Non Accredited (Application Fee £770, License Fee £565)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,335.00	£ -	£ 1,335.00	O	£ 1,335.00	£ -	£ 1,335.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
New HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 21 to 29 rooms - Landlord Accredited (Application Fee £760, License Fee £660)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,420.00	£ -	£ 1,420.00	O	£ 1,420.00	£ -	£ 1,420.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
New HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 21 to 29 rooms - Non Accredited (Application Fee £870, License Fee £760)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,630.00	£ -	£ 1,630.00	O	£ 1,630.00	£ -	£ 1,630.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
New HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 30 or more rooms - Landlord Accredited (Application Fee £900, License Fee £745)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,645.00	£ -	£ 1,645.00	O	£ 1,645.00	£ -	£ 1,645.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
New HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 30 or more rooms - Non Accredited (Application Fee £1,025, License Fee £865)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,890.00	£ -	£ 1,890.00	O	£ 1,890.00	£ -	£ 1,890.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 2 to 5 rooms - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 485.00	£ -	£ 485.00	O	£ 485.00	£ -	£ 485.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 2 to 5 rooms - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 560.00	£ -	£ 560.00	O	£ 560.00	£ -	£ 560.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 6 to 10 - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 515.00	£ -	£ 515.00	O	£ 515.00	£ -	£ 515.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 6 to 10 - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 590.00	£ -	£ 590.00	O	£ 590.00	£ -	£ 590.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 11 to 15 - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 565.00	£ -	£ 565.00	O	£ 565.00	£ -	£ 565.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 11 to 15 - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 650.00	£ -	£ 650.00	O	£ 650.00	£ -	£ 650.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 16 to 20 - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 615.00	£ -	£ 615.00	O	£ 615.00	£ -	£ 615.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 16 to 20 - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 710.00	£ -	£ 710.00	O	£ 710.00	£ -	£ 710.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 21 to 29 - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 710.00	£ -	£ 710.00	O	£ 710.00	£ -	£ 710.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 21 to 29 - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 815.00	£ -	£ 815.00	O	£ 815.00	£ -	£ 815.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 30 or more units - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 820.00	£ -	£ 820.00	O	£ 820.00	£ -	£ 820.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 30 or more units - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 945.00	£ -	£ 945.00	O	£ 945.00	£ -	£ 945.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Other Misc. Income - Change of Manager - Accredited landlord	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 150.00	£ -	£ 150.00	O	£ 150.00	£ -	£ 150.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Other Misc. Income - Change of Manager - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 173.00	£ -	£ 173.00	O	£ 173.00	£ -	£ 173.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Assisting with Licensing application (First 30 minutes free for accredited landlords, thereafter £50.00 per hour pro rata) - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 63.86	£ -	£ 63.86	O	£ 65.50	£ -	£ 65.50	£ 1.64	+2.57%	INCREASED
Assisting with Licensing application (First 30 minutes free for accredited landlords, thereafter £50.00 per hour pro rata) - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 63.86	£ -	£ 63.86	O	£ 65.50	£ -	£ 65.50	£ 1.64	+2.57%	INCREASED
Failure to comply with an improvement notice [section 30] - Minimum Charge, capped at £30k maximum	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,545.00	£ -	£ 1,545.00	O	£ 1,545.00	£ -	£ 1,545.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Offences in relation to licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation [section 72] - Minimum Charge, capped at £30k maximum	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 2,500.00	£ -	£ 2,500.00	O	£ 2,500.00	£ -	£ 2,500.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Offences in relation to licensing of houses under Part 3 of the Act [Section 95] - Minimum Charge, capped at £30k maximum	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 2,500.00	£ -	£ 2,500.00	O	£ 2,500.00	£ -	£ 2,500.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Offences of contravention of an overcrowding notice [section 139] - Minimum Charge, capped at £30k maximum	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,000.00	£ -	£ 1,000.00	O	£ 1,000.00	£ -	£ 1,000.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Failure to comply with management regulations in respect of Houses in Multiple Occupation [section 234] - Minimum Charge, capped at £30k maximum	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 1,550.00	£ -	£ 1,550.00	O	£ 1,550.00	£ -	£ 1,550.00	£ -	-	UNCHANGED
Travellers Charges - Rent/ Water/ Amenity	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£ 108.77	£ -	£ 108.77	O	£ 112.00	£ -	£ 112.00	£ 3.23	+2.97%	INCREASED
Offences for Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations non compliance	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£1000 initial fine, increasing to £5000 for repetition within 2 years.	£ -	£1000 initial fine, increasing to £5000 for repetition within 2 years.	O	£1000 initial fine, increasing to £5000 for repetition within 2 years.	£ -	£1000 initial fine, increasing to £5000 for repetition within 2 years.	£ -	-	UNCHANGED

Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 1 to 4 Hazards - 1 Bed accommodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	365.65	£	-	£	365.65	O	£	375.00	£	-	£	375.00	£	9.35	+2.56%	INCREASED
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 1 to 4 Hazards - 2 Bed accommodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	412.00	£	-	£	412.00	O	£	422.50	£	-	£	422.50	£	10.50	+2.55%	INCREASED
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 1 to 4 Hazards - 3 Bed accommodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	453.20	£	-	£	453.20	O	£	466.00	£	-	£	466.00	£	12.80	+2.82%	INCREASED
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 1 to 4 Hazards - 4 Bed accommodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	545.90	£	-	£	545.90	O	£	562.00	£	-	£	562.00	£	16.10	+2.95%	INCREASED
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 1 to 4 Hazards - 5 or 6 Bed accommodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	592.25	£	-	£	592.25	O	£	608.00	£	-	£	608.00	£	15.75	+2.66%	INCREASED
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 1 to 4 Hazards - over 6 Bed or HMO accommodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	710.70	£	-	£	710.70	O	£	730.00	£	-	£	730.00	£	19.30	+2.72%	INCREASED
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 5 or more Hazards - 1 Bed accommodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	453.20	£	-	£	453.20	O	£	466.00	£	-	£	466.00	£	12.80	+2.82%	INCREASED
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 5 or more Hazards - 2 Bed accommodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	499.55	£	-	£	499.55	O	£	514.00	£	-	£	514.00	£	14.45	+2.89%	INCREASED
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 5 or more Hazards - 3 Bed accommodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	545.90	£	-	£	545.90	O	£	562.00	£	-	£	562.00	£	16.10	+2.95%	INCREASED
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 5 or more Hazards - 4 Bed accommodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	648.90	£	-	£	648.90	O	£	665.00	£	-	£	665.00	£	16.10	+2.48%	INCREASED
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 5 or more Hazards - 5 or 6 Bed accommodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	695.25	£	-	£	695.25	O	£	715.00	£	-	£	715.00	£	19.75	+2.84%	INCREASED
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 5 or more Hazards - over 6 Bed or HMO accommodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	772.50	£	-	£	772.50	O	£	795.00	£	-	£	795.00	£	22.50	+2.91%	INCREASED
Private Housing Services - Housing Non Statutory work for Border Agency (per case)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	169.95	£	-	£	169.95	O	£	175.00	£	-	£	175.00	£	5.05	+2.97%	INCREASED
Offences for Energy Efficiency Regulations 2015 non compliance - registered false or misinformation on PRS Exemption Register capped at 1k	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	1,000.00	£	-	£	1,000.00	O	£	1,000.00	£	-	£	1,000.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Offences for Energy Efficiency Regulations 2015 non compliance - sub standard property let with EPC F or G, capped at 4k	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	1,000.00	£	-	£	1,000.00	O	<3 mnths = £2000 & > 3mnths = £4000	£	-	<3 mnths = £2000 & > 3mnths = £4000	£	-	-	-	-	UNCHANGED
Mobile Home Licensing Fee [1- 10 pitches]	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed			£	-	£	-	£	-		£	-	£	-	£	-	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Mobile Homes initial set up - Application Fee	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	556.00	£	-	£	556.00	O	£	556.00	£	-	£	556.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Application to Transfer a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	253.00	£	-	£	253.00	O	£	253.00	£	-	£	253.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Application to Amend a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	319.00	£	-	£	319.00	O	£	319.00	£	-	£	319.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Mobile Home Licensing Fee [11- 20pitches]	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed			£	-	£	-	£	-		£	-	£	-	£	-	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Mobile Homes initial set up - Application Fee	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	600.00	£	-	£	600.00	O	£	600.00	£	-	£	600.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Application to Transfer a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	253.00	£	-	£	253.00	O	£	253.00	£	-	£	253.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Application to Amend a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	319.00	£	-	£	319.00	O	£	319.00	£	-	£	319.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Mobile Home Licensing Fee [21- 50 pitches]	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed			£	-	£	-	£	-		£	-	£	-	£	-	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Mobile Homes initial set up - Application Fee	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	644.00	£	-	£	644.00	O	£	644.00	£	-	£	644.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Application to Transfer a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	253.00	£	-	£	253.00	O	£	253.00	£	-	£	253.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Application to Amend a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	319.00	£	-	£	319.00	O	£	319.00	£	-	£	319.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Mobile Home Licensing Fee [51 -99 pitches]	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed			£	-	£	-	£	-		£	-	£	-	£	-	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Mobile Homes initial set up - Application Fee	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	688.00	£	-	£	688.00	O	£	688.00	£	-	£	688.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Application to Transfer a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	253.00	£	-	£	253.00	O	£	253.00	£	-	£	253.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Application to Amend a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	319.00	£	-	£	319.00	O	£	319.00	£	-	£	319.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Mobile Home Licensing Fee [100 pitches +]	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed			£	-	£	-	£	-		£	-	£	-	£	-	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Mobile Homes initial set up - Application Fee	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	732.00	£	-	£	732.00	O	£	732.00	£	-	£	732.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Application to Transfer a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	253.00	£	-	£	253.00	O	£	253.00	£	-	£	253.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Application to Amend a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	O	£	319.00	£	-	£	319.00	O	£	319.00	£	-	£	319.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Sheltered Housing Visitor's Room - Per night per person	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Sue Kane	D	O	£	12.00	£	-	£	12.00	O	£	12.00	£	-	£	12.00	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Dispersed Alarms - Lifeline Private	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Tina Mitchell	D	S	£	17.00	£	3.40	£	20.40	S	£	17.00	£	3.40	£	20.40	£	-	-	UNCHANGED
Offences of contravening electrical safety standard regulations 2020 'minimum charge' capped at £30k	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D								O	£500 - £30K	£	-	£500 - £30K	£	-	-	-	NEW	

17 November 2020	ITEM: 7
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Housing Development Programme Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Keith Andrews, Housing Development Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: David Moore, Interim Assistant Director of Place Delivery	
Accountable Director: Andy Millard, Director of Place	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

On 11th February 2020, Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to comment on a list of Council owned site options which had been selected as being potentially suitable for redevelopment for residential purposes. An update report was last given to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9th September 2020 and this report updates Committee further on progress of that Housing Delivery Programme.

1. Recommendation(s)

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

- 1.1 Note progress on the list of housing development sites to be taken forward for further detailed work, involving engagement with stakeholders and communities.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 During 2020, reports have been presented regularly to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, which have established and updated a list of Council owned housing development option sites to be taken forward for further detailed work, involving engagement with stakeholders and communities. It has been previously resolved that additional sites or amendments to the existing programme would be reported back to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis.

- 2.2 The aim of the Sites Options List is to provide greater transparency on the sites being considered for potential housing development, to address the Council's growth aspirations and housing development targets.
- 2.3 The list of development sites also provides a focus for Housing Development activity, leading to greater efficiencies and improved delivery.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

The Sites Options List

- 3.1 The Sites Options List currently stands at 15 locations. In total, they could deliver up to 699 new homes. It should however be emphasised that these figures remain largely indicative until schemes have progressed to detailed assessment and community engagement. Further work is currently underway to identify additional sites for consideration for development which will be reported to Committee once a preliminary technical assessment of each sites suitability has been completed
- 3.2 Progress on these sites is set out in Appendix A. For many of them, community engagement on initial proposals is the next step once the necessary preparatory work is complete. A detailed consultation process was reviewed by Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2020 and will be used on all future consultations for housing development projects.
- 3.3 Public consultation has commenced at Loewen Road in Chadwell St Mary which is an existing, vacant detached six bedroom house in large grounds that over a number of years has had a number of extensions and adaptations for the then occupants. The extensions are now not of a modern standard and the property is no longer in a habitable condition. The proposal would see the redevelopment of the site providing five new three bedroom houses for rent within the Housing Revenue Account with allocations made in line with the Council's policy.
- 3.4 Other sites currently progressing include the existing new build developments at Claudian Way in Chadwell St. Mary and the older persons Calcutta Road project in Tilbury. The Claudian Way development is for 53 new homes, a mix of houses bungalows and apartments all for rent within the Housing Revenue Account. At the time of writing 13 homes have been completed and handed over. The contractor currently forecasts the remaining homes will be completed in December 2020.
- 3.5 The 35 unit Calcutta Road project for older people has been designed to the HAPPI standard which provides generous internal space, plenty of natural light in the home and circulation spaces, avoids single aspect design apartments and promotes the use of balconies and provision of outdoor space for the residents. Work is progressing well with an anticipated completion date in summer 2021.

3.6 Following extensive public consultation earlier in the year a planning application is now being finalised for the Culver Centre and Field site and will be submitted in late November 2020.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The recommendation is informed by previous reports and the agreed Housing Delivery process.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 This paper provides opportunity for Members of this Committee to review progress on the delivery of the Housing Development Programme.

5.2 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee has previously considered the Housing Development Options List on 11th February 2020 and 16th June 2020 and 9th September 2020.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The list of housing development sites aligns closely with the Council's Vision and Priorities adopted in 2018. In particular it resonates with the "Place" theme which focuses on houses, places and environments in which residents can take pride.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director, Finance

The delivery of a housing programme will contribute to the wider objectives of the Council and support the Council's MTFS (where schemes are developed through TRL).

Costs associated with the initial feasibility assessment of schemes will need to be considered depending on the nature of the scheme and whether it is subsequently developed by the HRA or TRL.

The proposal is also likely to reduce the level of capital receipts available to the Council to fund other priorities.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**

Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

This is an update report which sets out a list of potential sites for development on Council owned sites for residential development via the Council's Housing Delivery Programme. There are no direct legal implications being a progress report. However Legal Services will provide all legal advice (if any) arising from this report, as and when required by the Council.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

The service has completed a Community Equality Impact Assessment (CEIA) in line with Equality Act 2010 requirements and to gather an understanding of the impact on protected groups through the implementation of the process set out in this report. The findings from the CEIA established that the implications for each protected group is currently considered neutral. Individual CEIAs will sit alongside development proposals with information gathered in consultation with communities determining potential impacts and mitigation where identified for individuals or groups with protected characteristics. This will ensure more detailed consideration of the impacts of particular developments than is possible within the scope of the overarching CEIA and process set out in this report.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 18 June 2019, New Council HRA Home Building Programme.
- Extraordinary Meeting, Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 29th October 2019, Housing Development Process
- Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee 11th February 2020, Housing Development Options List
- Cabinet, 15 January 2020, Housing Development Process
- Cabinet, 12th February 2020, Housing Development Options List.
- Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 16th June 2020, Housing Development Programme Update and Housing Development Consultation Process.

- Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee 9th September 2020, Housing Development Programme Update

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix A – Progress report on the list of proposed residential development sites

Report Author:

Keith Andrews

Housing Development Manager

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APPENDIX A

New Site Number	SCHEME NAME	Potential Capacity	Ward	Update
1	Aveley Library/Hall/Car Park	9	Aveley & Uplands	Library re-provided. Future of adjoining hall remains under discussion but could be incorporated if released for development.
2	Culver Centre & Field	176	Belhus	Second resident consultation event completed. Secretary of State consent given for change of use. Work progressing for submission of planning application in late 2020
3	Whiteacre	47	Belhus	Design team appointed. RIBA stage 2 completed. Design Council review held and response under development. Resident consultation and Planning submission are next stages.
4	Prince of Wales Public House	10	South Ockendon	Former public house to be demolished due to condition. Planning application required.
5	Broxburn Drive	60	Belhus	Employers Agent/Cost consultant, architect and Health and Safety advisor (CDMC) appointed. Resident consultation required to progress development options to next stage.
6	Crammervill Street/Fleethall Grove	6	Stifford Clays	Capacity Study completed and pre-planning advice taken. Initial cost plans being prepared. Feasibility study to be completed
7	Darnley & Crown Road	90	Grays Riverside	Capacity Study completed and pre-planning advice taken. Initial cost plans being prepared. Next step is to conclude feasibility study prior any decision to progress to public consultation.
8	CO1(Civic Offices).	82	Grays Riverside	Architects appointed and Design at RIBA stage 1 (Capacity study)
9	Argent Street	32	Grays Riverside	Capacity Study completed and pre-planning advice taken. Cost plans being prepared. Next step is to conclude feasibility study prior any decision to progress to public consultation.
10	Thames Road	89	Grays Riverside	Capacity Study completed and pre-planning advice taken. Cost plans being prepared. Next step is to conclude feasibility study prior any decision to progress to public consultation.
11	Elm Road Park	60	Grays Thurrock	Potential development with adjoining private sector led development. No progress proposed at this point as site is land locked
12	Richmond Road	20	Grays Thurrock	Appointment of architects completed. Capacity Study completed and build cost plan awaited. Future of the adjoining Thurrock Adult Community College remains under review and may offer scope for expanded development red line to accommodate approximately 50 dwellings.
13	13 Loewen Road	5	Chadwell St Mary	Capacity Study and pre-planning review complete. Cost plans in place. Resident consultation programmed for mid October 2020.
14	Vigerons Way	8	Chadwell St Mary	Architects appointed and work progressed. Capacity study complete and cost plans prepared. Surveys ongoing. Next step is to conclude feasibility study prior any decision to progress to public consultation.
15	River View	5	Chadwell St Mary	Architects, Employers Agent/Cost consultant appointed and work progressed. Capacity study complete and cost plans prepared. Surveys ongoing. Next step is to conclude feasibility study prior any decision to progress to public consultation.

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17 November 2020	ITEM: 8
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Housing Development Delivery Approach	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Keith Andrews, Housing Development Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: David Moore, Interim Assistant Director of Place Delivery	
Accountable Director: Andy Millard, Director of Place	
This report is Public.	

Executive Summary

The Council has chosen to pause and reflect on our current housing approach, in order to review the strengths and weaknesses of the TRL model and the Council's wider approach to housing delivery, especially in light of the covid pandemic and resulting economic crisis. Following extensive work, this paper sets out the forward position.

The emerging Local Plan identifies a need for around 32,000 new homes in Thurrock by 2038.

The Council have previously agreed its own ambitious targets for housebuilding as a contribution to this target, both through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and through Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL). The previously agreed targets are to build 500 affordable HRA homes between 2019 to 2029 and 1000 homes for sale and rent by TRL by 2023

On 15th January 2020, Cabinet agreed a process and criteria by which Council owned sites are selected for redevelopment for residential purposes. A further report to Cabinet in February 2020 outlined a list of sites that were agreed to be considered for residential development by the Council (through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)) or by the Council's wholly owned company, Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL).

This report explores various approaches to increase the Council's capacity to deliver housing development schemes and to assist in the wider regeneration of the Borough.

1. Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that members of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1.1 Note and comment on the proposals to adopt a mixed approach to Housing Development Delivery, in order to improve the Council's capacity to increase its delivery rate.

1.2 Note that potential schemes will be brought forward for approval in line with the Council's constitution in due course.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The emerging Local Plan identifies a need for around 32,000 new homes in Thurrock by 2038.

2.2 The Council have previously agreed its own ambitious targets for housebuilding as a contribution to this target, both through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and through Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL). The previously agreed targets are to build:

- 500 affordable HRA homes between 2019 to 2029
- 1000 homes for sale and rent by TRL by 2023

2.3 On 29th October 2019 and 15th January 2020 respectively, Housing Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet established the process and criteria by which Council owned sites are to be identified as potential housing development sites.

2.4 Further reports to Housing Overview and Scrutiny and to Cabinet in February 2020 agreed a long list of 20 sites, with an estimated delivery target of around 900 homes to address the Council's Housing Development targets.

2.5 Since then, the list has been reviewed and amended and regularly reported to Housing Overview and Scrutiny, the most recent being in November 2020. The November list comprised 15 sites (with an estimated delivery of around 700 housing units).

2.6 Further work has been carried out to consider additional sites that could be developed, as well as considering different development approaches to help increase the Council's capacity and capability to deliver against its specified delivery targets.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Review of current available sites for development

- 3.1 The Council committed to its delivery targets in February 2018. Progress since then has seen 29 new homes delivered on the former TOPS Club site (now “Alma Court”). A further site (Claudian Way) has commenced handover with all units expected to be complete in December 2020, providing a further 53 homes. A third site (Calcutta Road), with 35 units, is also due to be handed over in August 2021. The handover of all three sites has been delayed due to the recent Coronavirus pandemic.
- 3.2 Two other sites have the potential to be close to starting development, namely Belmont Road and the Culver Centre. The Belmont Road site is owned by TRL and planning permission has been granted for 80 homes. Delivery has been delayed due to concerns over access to the site for construction traffic. However this matter is subject to a pre-commencement condition attached to the planning permission which means that any concerns can be addressed through the discharge of the condition.
- 3.3 The Culver Centre site has been through two public consultations, resulting in a significantly amended proposal which better reflect the desires of the local community. The site is expected to deliver up to 175 homes. The site has also received approval from the Secretary of State to allow for its non-educational use. The scheme will shortly be brought forward for planning approval. The expectation was for TRL to start development on this site in 2021 however a decision on the most appropriate way to deliver the site remains under consideration.
- 3.4 Progress on seven other sites (three garage in-fill sites, three car parks and the site of an existing large HRA dwelling) has also restarted, following a pause on public consultation due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The sites are now starting to make progress with site and ground investigations, in advance of going out for public consultation. These sites are:- Crammerville Street, Broxburn Drive, Vigerons Way (all garage in-fill sites) and Darnley Road, Thames Road and Argent Street (all car park sites). Furthermore, the site at Loewen Road (redevelopment of existing housing) has also gone out for public consultation.
- 3.5 To increase the housing numbers, a further pipeline of sites is being prepared from a review of the Council’s surplus assets and housing stock. From an initial assessment, these sites could be expected to deliver up to a total of 200 further homes subject to further preliminary investigations and will be reported to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course in line with the agreed engagement process.

Increasing the Council’s capacity to deliver

- 3.6 The Council’s Housing Development team is small (6.6 FTE, including 1.6 FTE seconded to TRL). The recent introduction of a Commissioned Partner model has brought in additional capacity. However, if the Council wants to deliver at an increased pace, and recover the time lost to the Coronavirus pandemic, then a wider approach to delivery needs to be considered.

- 3.7 The following sections of the report explore various other options that could help to increase the capacity and ability of the Council to deliver housing development at a faster pace than is possible with existing limited resources and approaches.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- 3.8 As set out in para 3.1, the Council has recently brought forward three HRA sites that have either just been delivered or are close to hand over – TOPS Club/Alma Court, Claudian Way and Calcutta Road. The delivery of these sites has been well received, with broad Member and community support and are clearly, by definition, all affordable.
- 3.9 Four of the sites on the current Housing Development Options List are on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land, including the three garage in-fill sites mentioned above in para 3.4. Other sites being considered for development potential are also on HRA land and include redundant garage sites, other brownfield land and in-fill development.
- 3.10 35% Affordable Housing would also be expected from TRL's development sites (planned to be Belmont Road and Culver Centre) in line with existing planning policy. These dwellings could be purchased by the Council and let within the HRA, making use of retained RTB receipts and prudential borrowing within the HRA.

Private Sector

- 3.11 The Council is already working with the private sector to bring forward sites and larger housing programmes across the Borough, in a variety of ways.
- 3.12 This has included developers proposing sites for the Council to purchase for development as part of a wider private sector led proposals and separately the purchase of dwellings constructed as affordable housing where a developer is required to do so under S106 Planning Agreements. Other approaches been where a private developer has proposed 'package deals' of land and construction of new homes in a single approach.
- 3.13 Following the Council's approach to engaging with land owners and developers through the Design Charrette process that is supporting development of the new Local Plan, approaches have also been received from the private sector on collaborative approaches to bring forward new larger scale developments alongside the Council.
- 3.14 The Council also uses its Planning powers to negotiate with the private sector developers, using S106 planning powers to ensure that Affordable housing is brought forward on private sector-led sites, where viable.

TRL

- 3.15 To date, TRL has delivered one housing scheme (St Chads), providing 128 homes (including 26 affordable homes). TRL owns the site at Belmont Road, having purchased the site from the Council.
- 3.16 TRL was developed as a vehicle to complement the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), targeting sites that had remained dormant for many years and that the private sector was reluctant to develop, as well as providing a vehicle to deliver affordable homes.
- 3.17 This was reiterated in the Council's decision of 20th November 2017, to agree to the sale of the Belmont Road site to TRL. The report commented that "TRL will support the Council's place shaping agenda and will help deliver a range of housing tenures and other projects. By enabling TRL to develop quality housing on land that it owns the Council will provide an alternative route to private sector led regeneration which may otherwise be constrained by market conditions. Such housing will contribute to improving, and creating great places where community pride, good health and wellbeing and economic prosperity will thrive".
- 3.18 There is now an imperative to move matters forward by appointing a new Director/Directors and refreshing the approach to housing options and delivery in the borough. TRL had a Board of Directors which was comprised of 3 Council officers and 1 external party (from Homes England). All Directors have recently resigned from the Board, principally due a conflict of interest with their own Council roles.
- 3.19 However, going forwards, there is a need to strengthen the board in light of the changing and ever more complex market conditions, created by the global pandemic. To this end, consideration needs to be given the creating an expanded Board. A report to this effect will be made the Shareholders (the Council's General Services Committee) in the near future.

Joint venture partnerships

- 3.20 The Council could also consider entering into a Joint Venture (JV) with another partner, such as a major house builder, or a major fund investor. This option has been successfully developed and implemented by other Local Authorities.
- 3.21 Exploratory discussions have been undertaken with private sector led organisations. Other opportunities have also been explored to develop a JV with Homes England, which would bring the benefits of substantial resource, expertise and access to funding. The process of finding a suitable JV partner, and finalising the legal negotiations can, however, be lengthy and time-consuming and would clearly necessitate profit share.
- 3.22 The Council is also in contact with other Housing Associations across the Borough, mainly in an advisory capacity, enabling the Housing Associations to deliver Affordable Housing and providing support over the Planning process

and applying for grants. There is limited delivery activity through this route at the moment, although there are potential opportunities for more joint working.

Mixed approach to delivery

- 3.23 This report is recommending that the Council should choose to follow a mixed approach to delivery, rather than just relying on existing approaches. Adopting a range of delivery methods will enable the Council to address a more flexible approach to delivery in the housing development market.
- 3.24 The mixed delivery approach could include new approaches to housing development as referred to above. These include:
- Continued direct delivery on Council owned sites
 - Street purchase of existing private sector stock
 - Purchasing new homes through S106 opportunities
 - Purchase of existing private sector land or completed units
 - Continued TRL development on appropriate sites
 - Joint Ventures or collaboration with the private sector
- 3.25 The mixed approach described above is illustrative, but should deliver significant numbers of new homes across a range of tenures including affordable housing.
- 3.26 It is also recommended that a further review of the Council's own assets to highlight other sites for disposal or for housing development should be supplemented by engaging with industry experts to undertake a more strategic review to explore approaches to increase the opportunities for the Council to deliver new houses for our residents.
- 3.27 Given the Council's ambition for housing delivery and the wide range of potential delivery options outlined in this report, all sites for disposal will be agreed with Cabinet in respect of the intended nature of release (TRL or otherwise). Going forward, the delivery of the Housing Development Programme will continue to be scrutinised by Housing O&S and Cabinet.

4. Summary

- 4.1 The above options to improve the capacity of the Council to increase the rate of delivery of housing development schemes are not mutually exclusive. Adopting a wider range of options, in a flexible manner, would enhance delivery rates, the Council's contribution towards its own targets and contribute to the wider housing needs and regeneration of the Borough.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 None

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The proposed approach to the development of new housing aligns closely with the Council's Vision and Priorities adopted in 2018. In particular it resonates with the "Place" theme which focuses on houses, places and environments in which residents can take pride.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director, Finance

The delivery of a housing programme will contribute to the wider objectives of the Council.

Costs associated with the initial feasibility assessment of schemes will need to be considered depending on the nature of the scheme and whether it is subsequently developed within or outside the Housing Revenue Account.

Any proposed projects will need to be subject to a financial assessment undertaken to ensure they represent value for money and to understand any wider financial impacts on the medium term financial strategy. This will be assessed by the Director of Finance, Governance and Property in consultation with the Director of Place prior to any recommendation being made.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

This report which sets out a proposed range of approaches for development of residential accommodation both on Council and privately owned land. There are no direct legal implications from this report alone. However Legal Services will provide all legal advice (if any) arising from this report, as and when required by the Council.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

The service has completed a Community Equality Impact Assessment (CEIA) in line with Equality Act 2010 requirements and to gather an understanding of the impact on protected groups through the implementation of the approaches to housing delivery set out in this report. The findings from the CEIA established that the implications for each protected group is currently considered neutral. Individual CEIAs will sit alongside any development proposals with information gathered in consultation with communities determining potential impacts and mitigation where identified for individuals or groups with protected characteristics. This will ensure more detailed consideration of the impacts of particular developments than is possible within the scope of the overarching CEIA and process set out in this report.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

None

Report Author:

Keith Andrews

Housing Development Manager

17 November 2020	ITEM: 9
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
HRA Rent Setting Process	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Roger Harris – Corporate Director of Adults, Health and Housing, Sean Clark – Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property	
Accountable Assistant Directors: Carol Hinvest – Assistant Director of Housing, Jonathan Wilson – Assistant Director of Finance	
Accountable Directors: Roger Harris – Corporate Director of Adults, Health and Housing, Sean Clark – Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

Local authorities and registered providers have the ability to increase social and affordable rents in line with the Governments policy statement on Rents for Social Housing 2018. This report sets out the proposed rent increases for 2020/21 and their impact on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Council started a consultation process with residents on 2 November 2020 to explain the rent setting options, an indication of their impact on the overall resources and the legislative rules of the HRA.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on the proposal for engagement on rent increases within the Housing Revenue Account**

2. Introduction and Background

Central Government Directives and Policy

- 2.1 In accordance with central government policy, the increase in to any individual tenants rent is limited to inflation + 1% for the forthcoming financial year. Inflation is taken as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate at the prevailing rate for September 2020, which was official registered at 0.5%. Therefore, the increase in rents is limited to 1.5%.

3. Issues, options and analysis of options

Implications for Thurrock Council housing tenants

- 3.1 The majority of properties within the HRA are charged at a social rent. However, there are also a small proportion of newly developed units which are based on an affordable rent level (meaning it cannot exceed 80% of the equivalent market rent). This ensures these properties generate sufficient revenue to offset their ongoing associated costs without a wider impact on the HRA. The current stock level for the HRA has been updated to September 2020, and the impact of a CPI + 1% rent increase is shown below:

Social Rent properties

Number of Dwellings by Bedroom	Number of Properties	Average 2020/21 Actual Rent	Average CPI +1% uplift 2021/22	Average 2021/22 Actual Rent	2021/22 Annual Rent Yield
0	245	£ 62.20	£ 0.93	£ 63.13	£ 773,369
1	2,788	£ 75.65	£ 1.13	£ 76.78	£ 10,703,446
2	2,208	£ 82.50	£ 1.24	£ 83.74	£ 9,244,643
3	4,184	£ 103.08	£ 1.55	£104.62	£ 21,886,899
4	222	£ 115.82	£ 1.74	£117.56	£ 1,304,921
5	8	£ 116.86	£ 1.75	£118.62	£ 47,447
6	2	£ 126.16	£ 1.89	£128.05	£ 12,805
Total / Average	9,657	£ 89.72	£ 1.35	£ 91.07	£ 43,973,530

Affordable Rents

- 3.2 The rent setting process for the existing affordable rent properties will follow the same guidance as applied to the properties within the HRA that are charged a social rent. In addition, the Council will ensure that no rent exceeds the Local Housing Allowance level. The impact of a CPI + 1% rent increase is shown below:

Number of Dwellings by Bedroom	Number of Properties	Average 2020/21 Actual Rent	Average CPI +1% uplift 2021/22	Average 2021/22 Actual Rent	2021/22 Annual Rent Yield
1	49	£ 137.88	£ 2.07	£139.95	£ 342,877
2	182	£ 163.22	£ 2.45	£165.67	£ 753,808
3	93	£ 199.01	£ 2.99	£201.99	£ 313,088
Total / Average	324	£ 162.45	£ 2.44	£164.89	£ 1,409,772

- 3.3 The rent for affordable rent housing (inclusive of service charges) must not exceed 80% of gross market rent. Gross market rent means the rent (inclusive of any applicable service charges) for which the accommodation might reasonably be expected to be let in the private rented sector. Property size, location type and service provision must be taken into account when determining what gross market rent a property might achieve if let in the private rented sector.

3.4 The Council will try to ensure that it does not set the level of rent and service charge above the Local Housing Allowance level. This is the limit for which a tenant may receive housing benefit or universal credit towards the cost of the property.

3.5 **South West Essex Broad Rental Market Area (Local Housing Allowance)**

The 2020/21 Local Housing Allowance rates are shown in the table below. This is the total amount, including service charges that the HRA can apply to each dwelling without exceeding the benefits limit.

Bedroom Size	Weekly Rate
Single	£76.64
0	£161.10
1	£161.10
2	£201.37
3	£247.40
4	£306.66
5	£306.66
6	£306.66

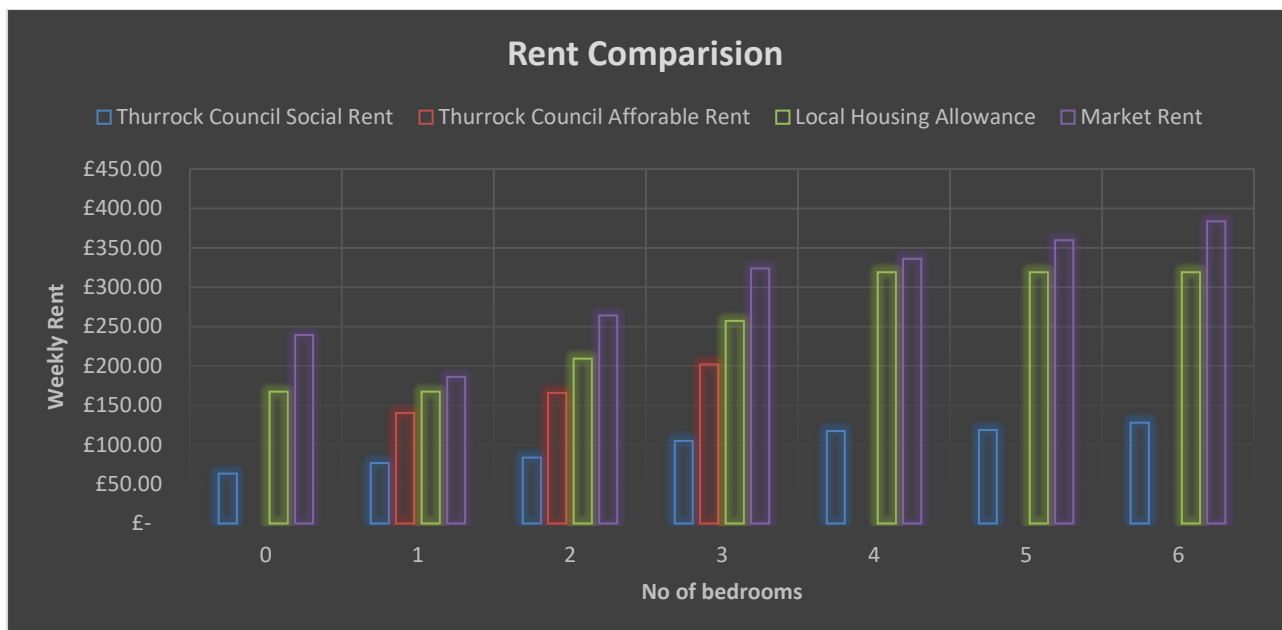
Garage Rents

3.6 The current weekly charges for garage rents are £10.50 per week for council tenants and £15.00 per week for non-Council tenants. It is recommended that these charges are increased by 2% in order to cover inflationary cost pressures which would be a proposed charge for 2021/22 of £10.70 for a Council tenant, and £15.30 per week for a non-Council tenant in 2020/21.

4. Reasons for recommendation

Wider context of HRA rents

4.1 The graph below is an illustration of how the Councils HRA rents compare to other levels of rents with the housing market. This demonstrates that whilst there is a requirement and recommendation to increase the current rents level in line with the government's proposals, social rent levels are still significantly lower than those of the local housing allowance and market rents.



Impact on HRA Business Plan

- 4.2 The decision to reintroduce the ability for Local Authorities to increase rents is essential in order to maintain and improve the existing stock, as well as introduce other improvements within the service. The following section of the report details the need for significant further investment into the existing housing stock. This is essentially where the additional income raised from rent increases will be spent, in order to maintain and improve the Councils housing stock. Without an increase in the current level of rent, it will not be possible to allocate sufficient additional resources to this without having to find reductions to the current level of front line services

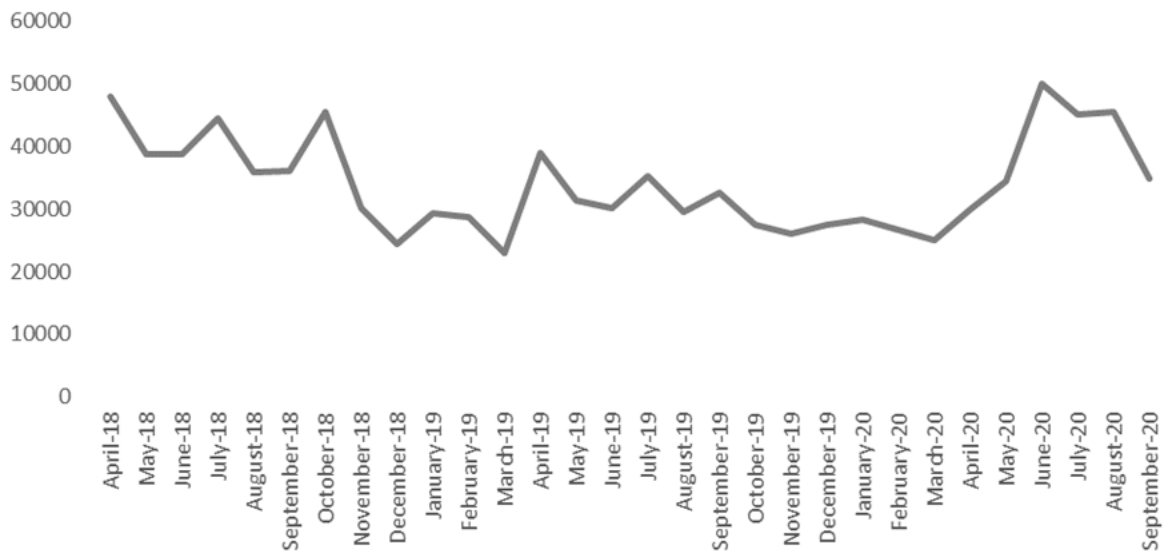
In order to meet any financial gap as a result of increasing rent, when faced with inflationary cost pressures,

HRA Revenue Position

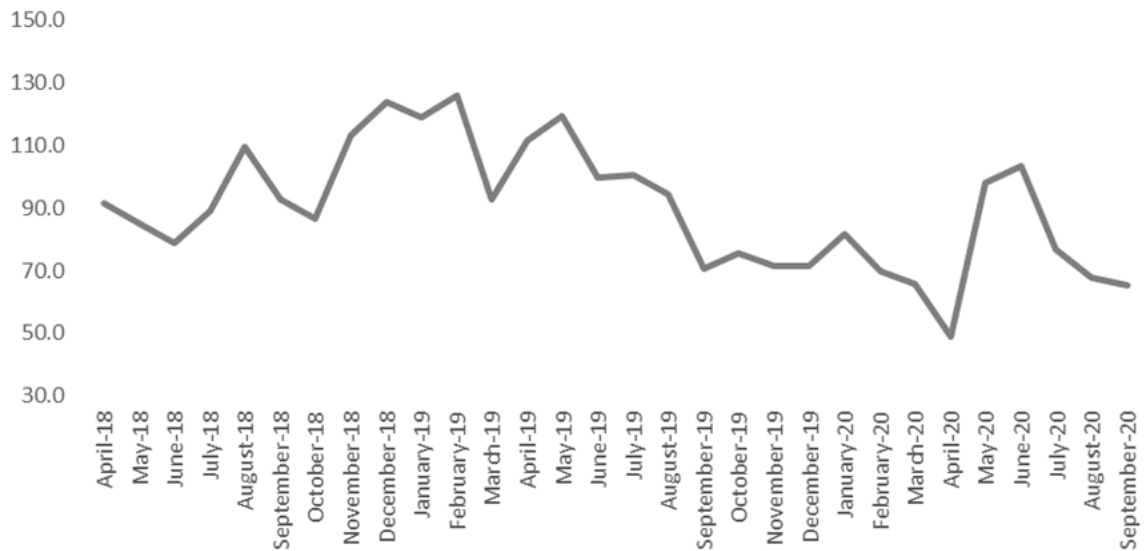
- 4.3 The HRA is forecasting a balance budget position for the current financial year. However, the remains concern over the on-going social-economic factors which will emerge as a result of the current pandemic.
- 4.4 In order to maintain a balance financial position, the HRA has implement the following efficiencies which, in conjunction with a rent strategy will support the long term business plan.
- 4.5 In 2018/19, the overall average re-let time was 95 days. Re-let times for capital voids steadily improved throughout 2019/20 ending with an average re-let time in March 2020 of 66 days and an overall average re-let time of 83 days for the reporting year.

4.6 The coronavirus pandemic has adversely affected re-let times in 2020/21 as choice based lettings were suspended for a period of time which meant the properties which were void before or during the period of suspension remained void for a much longer period of time than usual. This has now begun to improve again and capital voids let in September took an average of 65.3 days to re-let.

Void Loss



Capital Void Re-let times



4.7 The earmarked reserves within the HRA are committed towards supporting the transforming homes programme, and the remainder are ring-fenced for the delivery of additional housing purposes and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Reserve	Opening Balance	Estimated Closing Balance
	£'000	£'000
Balances	2,175	2,175
Development Reserve	1,659	1,659
Regeneration Reserve	1,274	1,000
Capital Reserve - Existing Stock	744	744
RTB Attributable Debt	4,928	-
RTB Buy Backs	102	102
Grand Total	10,882	5,679

5. Consultation

- 5.1 A full, detailed engagement exercise with tenants, to fully explain the process and implications of the proposed rent increase is underway, which started on 2 November 2020. Due to the restriction in place as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, a presentation with audio commentary will be made available online. This will detail the rent setting process, the various options and explain how the funding is used. This will allow sufficient time to provide detailed feedback of this exercise to inform further reports in relation to future year's rents. The increase will ultimately be subject to a report to Housing Overview and Scrutiny in January 2021 and formal ratification by Cabinet as part of the 2020/21 budget setting approval.
- 5.2 The engagement process will aim to engage residents and the Excellence Panels.

6. Impact on corporate priorities

- 6.1 The recommended increases in rents, in line with Central Government policy is essential to ensure the HRA's remains financially sustainable, while ensuring the required capital investment is available to maintain the stock and ensure compliance with health and safety regulations.
- 6.2 The HRA is required by statute to make a minimum revenue contribution to finance the capital improvements required for existing stock. This is known as the transforming homes work and has been calculated at £10.30m.
- 6.3 The wider 5 year capital programme that commenced in 2020/21 and continues to address the medium term investment requirements highlighted in the stock condition survey, as well as essential health and safety and legislative requirements. The allocation of this funding is set out below:

Programme	Year/£m			
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Transforming Homes	10.30	10.30	10.30	10.30
Major Adaptations	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15
Sheltered Improvement Project	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fire Safety Works	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Tower Block Refurbishment	14.42	2.58	0.00	0.00
Non-Traditional Refurb	1.72	2.34	3.03	0.00
Garages	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Gas Boiler Installs	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60
Lifts (Installation)	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14
Door Entry Installations	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35
Water Mains	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16
Staffing Costs Capital Programme	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16
Capital financing requirement	29.50	18.28	16.39	13.36

6.4 Further to this, new medium term Capital works have been identified and the existing programme has been progressed.

6.5 The works on the Tower blocks have now been tendered, and will commence during the current financial year.

As part of this process, a project is being undertaken to look at the long term sustainable heating source solutions. Presently, the preferred option would be Ground source heat pumps. This would fit within the Carbon neutrality requirements, as well as, over the long term providing a much more efficient and cost effective heating source.

This would be financed through a combination of government grant funding and prudential borrowing.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director Corporate Finance

The financial implications are set out in the body of the report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Martin Hall**
Housing Solicitor / Team Leader

Section 76 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 imposes a duty on local housing authorities to prevent debit balances arising in their Housing

Revenue Account (“the HRA”). The HRA is a record of revenue expenditure and income in relation to an authority’s own housing stock.

The principal statutory provision governing the fixing of rent for Council property is contained in section 24 of the Housing Act 1985, which provides that authorities may “make such reasonable charges...as they may determine.” Further, it requires the local authority, from time to time, to review rents and other charges and make such changes, as circumstances may require.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
**Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer**

The Councils Housing Revenue Account works to reflect the Council’s policy in relation to the provision of social housing with particular regard to the use of its own stock. In addition to the provision of general housing, it incorporates a number of budgetary provisions aimed at providing assistance to disadvantaged groups. This included adaptations to the stock for residents with disabilities.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report**

None

9. **Appendices to the report**

None

Report Author:

Mike Jones
Strategic Lead
Corporate Finance

17 November 2020	ITEM: 10
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Automatic Gates	
Wards and communities affected: Aveley and Uplands, Belhus, Chadwell St Mary, Grays Riverside South Ockendon, Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park, West Thurrock and South Stifford	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Susan Murray, Asset Delivery Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest, Assistant Director for housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report is to provide an updated position in relation to the automatic gates in the Housing stock. There are currently gates at six Sheltered Housing complexes and four high rise blocks.

The report advises on the works required and associated costs to ensure these gates meet new regulations. The report outlines the planned resident consultation and, if gates are to be retained, the proposed implementation of a service charge for those benefitting from this provision, in order to cover refurbishment costs and ongoing service and maintenance.

1. Recommendation(s)

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the proposals to:

- 1.1 Consult with residents regarding the ongoing requirement of automated gates on applicable sites and, if the consensus is that the gates remain, the subsequent implementation of a service charge.**

- 1.2 **Remove gates which are situated at several high rise sites where new parking restrictions no longer require gates to control parking.**
- 1.3 **Remove gates at specified Sheltered Housing complexes which do not provide additional security or parking deterrent benefits due to style and location if residents do not support keeping them.**
- 1.4 **The final decision to be made by the Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.**

2 Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The safety and function of all automatic gates and doors is governed by the Machinery Directive 2009/127/EC. Guidance for compliance with the directive for gates is also delivered by BS EN 12453:2017. There was an update to the guide to the application of the Machinery Directive in November 2018. This guidance specifically highlights the need for “state of the art” technology to be used in guaranteeing the safe operation of all automation.

As an example, if a gate had been installed five years ago with safety sensors that were not monitored but the gate operated correctly, it would have been compliant. However, if those sensors failed (in a certain way), the gate might still operate, but unsafely. Since then, there have been significant improvements in safety technology and today sensors are monitored, so if one fails in any way the gate will not operate and will be safe. This approach uses “state of the art” technology to improve safety.

In the above example, if the gate did not have the sensors and/or other hardware upgraded, then it would no longer comply with the directive.

It is also not accepted within the directive or the standard to assume that a machine was safe at the time of incorporation and therefore does not need to be upgraded.

- 2.2 All the automated gates on Housing sites are between 15 to 20 years of age, and as a result of the new legislation and consideration to the age of these gates, a full review has been undertaken.

There are currently six sheltered housing complexes with automated gates out of a total of 29 complex within the Housing stock, and four automated gates situated at the high rise blocks out of a total of 15 high rise blocks.

Each site has been inspected against a set of specific principles in order to make appropriate recommendations for each gate. Details of each site is listed in the table below.

The principles used in the inspections considered:

- the area in which gates are located, for example if they are on an estate, at the end of a road, close to schools, or close to train station

- any parking restrictions in the area
- any ASB in the area
- whether a secondary form of door entry security is in place
- the type of front doors on the properties and level of security these provide
- any CCTV on site

3 Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The reviews undertaken have demonstrated that all automated gates require significant investment to meet the current legislation. The total investment required is £207,000 for all automated gates. There are a number of gates which have been taken out of service as they require significant repair works or total replacement to ensure they are compliant. The decision to take these gates out of service is a direct response to the changing legislation in order to ensure safety.

3.2 There have been a number of options considered for each gate which has been reviewed. These options are:

- to remove the gates completely
- to repair or replace the gates in order for them to be compliant
- to implement parking restrictions
- to install alternative fencing options to mitigate residents' security concerns
- to implement a service charge in order for the council to recover the costs

3.3 The below table sets out the recommendations made for each site after consideration had been given to each of the options and the outcome for the resident consultation which has taken place at the Sheltered Housing sites.

Location	Ward	Recommendation	Consultation Outcome
The Sycamores	Aveley & Uplands	<p>It is recommended upgrading and maintaining the two gates at the front entrance on Dacre Avenue and removing the gates at Elm Road</p> <p>The gates on Elm Road are not security gates - these are a barrier style and also used by 4 private houses as access into their rear gardens</p>	<p>6 residents voted in favour of the gates remaining in situ and pay the service charge</p> <p>25 residents voted for the gates to be removed</p> <p>Outcome</p> <p>Gates to be removed</p>

Location	Ward	Recommendation	Consultation Outcome
New Maltings	Aveley & Uplands	It is recommended these gates are maintained due to the locality	<p>10 residents voted in favour of the gates remaining in situ and pay the service charge</p> <p>6 residents voted for the gates to be removed</p> <p>Outcome</p> <p>Gates to remain and service charge applied</p>
Helford Court	Belhus	It is recommended these gates are maintained due to the locality of the site and no secondary security	<p>14 residents voted in favour of the gates remaining in situ and pay the service charge</p> <p>8 residents voted for the gates to be removed</p> <p>Outcome</p> <p>Gates to remain and service charge applied</p>
Benyon Court	Ockendon	It is recommended that these gates are removed. Initial feedback demonstrated the only issue was some reports of children riding their bikes through the complex.	<p>Consultation is due to take place in the next week</p>
Rookery Court	West Thurrock & South Stifford	It is recommended these gates are removed as there are no current issues within the location and they have secondary security by way of door entry systems.	<p>26 residents voted in favour of the gates remaining in situ and pay the service charge</p> <p>7 residents voted for the gates to be removed</p> <p>Outcome</p> <p>Gates to remain and service charge applied</p>

Location	Ward	Recommendation	Consultation Outcome
Alexandra Road	Tilbury & Riverside	It is recommended these gates are removed as they have been out of commission for a long period of time. These gates are also a barrier style and do not prevent access into the site.	No Consultation has taken place due to the gates being ineffective.
Poole House	Chadwell	It is recommended these gates are removed when Controlled parking zones are implemented.	
George Crookes House	Grays Riverside	It is recommended these gates are removed when Controlled parking zones are implemented.	
Davall House	Grays Riverside	It is recommended these gates are removed when Controlled parking zones are implemented.	
Freemantle House	Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park	It is recommended these are maintained for the present as the gates are in full working order. If CPZ is considered for this site then it will need to be a consideration to remove gates in line with all tower block gates.	

3.4 However the proposal is that the decision on whether to retain or to remove the gates facility on the sheltered sites should be subject to resident consultation and if residents did opt to retain, a service charge would need to be applied.

4 Financial Considerations

4.1 Should the consensus of the residents of the sites benefitting from the gates be to keep them and therefore invest in the required improvements, the

proposal is to implement an additional service charge of £1.55 per week for those sheltered sites. This new charge would cover the servicing, annual maintenance and the renewal of the gates. The charge will only be applied to the sites where the gates are to remain so only the residents who benefit from this additional service will pay for it.

- 4.2 The average cost for the servicing and maintenance for the gates at each site is £420 a year.
- 4.3 If all the five sheltered sites decide they would prefer to retain the gates the total cost for the replacements will be to £113,000.
- 4.4 The service charge has been calculated to cover the annual service and maintenance costs and recovery of the investment made to replace the gates. The recovery of the replacement costs has been considered to spread the costs over a 10 to 15 year period.
- 4.5 If all sites opt to keep the gates the annual service charge debit from the 140 properties benefiting would be £11,284. This amount would adjust accordingly depending on the number of sites opting to retain the facility.
- 4.6 See table below for the example if all sites opt to retain the gates:

Number of Properties Benefitting across the 5 Sites	140
Total Annual Service Charge Income @1.55 per week	£11,284
Annual cost of service and maintenance across 5 sites @ £420 per site	£2,100
Annual recovery of replacement costs	£9,184
Number of years to recover the replacement costs of £113,000	12.3 years

- 4.7 The income the HRA receives in relation to this service charge will be ring-fenced and will only be used to fund costs associated directly to automatic gates. This will ensure that the cost of the service is not subsidised by all of the

housing tenants and the additional income raised is only used to pay for the cost of the service.

- 4.8 The current weekly service charge for all sheltered sites is £10.00 per week, this is for the following services:

The provision of the intensive housing management service provided by the Sheltered Housing Staff and the communal facilities which includes all communal hall areas and communal blocks: laundry room, washing machine, tumble drier repairs and the replacement if required, kitchen, cooker and dishwasher repairs and replacement, utilities, contractor work/maintenance i.e. lifts, fire alarm checks, intruder alarm checks, water treatment checks, door entry systems, ongoing repairs, contract cleaner for communal hall areas, window cleaning and grounds maintenance.

5 Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 All the automated gates currently in place within the housing stock need considerable investment to ensure they are compliant.
- 5.2 The gates provide benefit to a very small selection of our residents, therefore if the consensus is to retain the gates the recommendation is for a service charge to be introduced. This will ensure that only the residents who are receiving this facility pay for it and the residents who do not benefit do not have to contribute to the refurbishment and ongoing costs associated with a service they do not receive.

6 Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 6.1 Meetings have been held with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and with Ward Councillors where the automatic gates are situated. Alternative solutions suggested by councillors during these discussions have been fully explored. These included the installation of fencing around the perimeter of one site (Benyon Court). However it was found that these works were a more expensive option than replacing the gates. The implementation of parking restrictions has also been explored and these are now being implemented at the high rise blocks in Grays and Chadwell.
- 6.2 The consultation with the residents at Rookery Court Sheltered Housing complex has been undertaken. Each resident received a letter explaining the situation and were able to vote on the option of either removing the gates completely or retaining the gates and paying a service charge of £1.55 per week. The residents at Rookery Court have now completed their consultation and submitted their preferences - the majority have opted for the gates to remain and to pay the service charge.
- 6.3 Consultation has now commenced at each of the other sites where automatic gates are situated. Depending on the outcome of these consultations gates will either be removed or made compliant with a service charge applicable.

7 Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 7.1 Any impact on the communities living in the identified areas will be mitigated through appropriate engagement and consultation activity as outlined in this report.
- 7.2 If it is determined that a new service charge for the ongoing maintenance and repair of automatic gates is to be implemented, this may need to be considered alongside and as part of the wider Housing Revenue Account fees and charges setting activity.

8 Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Strategic Lead – Corporate Finance

The introduction of a service charge will provide additional resources to allow the HRA to fund the maintenance and replacement of the electronic gates. These will be ring-fenced to the service and separately identified within the Housing Revenue Account.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Monitoring Officer

Given that this is essentially an update report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, there aren't any direct legal implications arising from it. Specific relevant legal provisions are noted in the main body of the report.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager - Community Development and Equalities

The possibility of Anti-Social Behaviour occurring as a result of the automatic gates not functioning or being removed has been considered. There is a very low risk of ASB at these sheltered housing complexes, it is considered that there is no additional risk of harm to vulnerable residents as a result. A full Community and Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of the delivery of the housing investment programme. This CEIA did not identify any negative impacts though will be monitored for any changes. Residents are being consulted on whether they would like the gates to be removed or remain and incur a service charge, the views of all responses to this

consultation will be considered when making the final decision – including any concerns raised around affordability of any additional service charges.

8.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None.

9 Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

10 Appendices to the report

None

Report Author:

Susan Murray

Asset Delivery Manager

Housing

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17 November 2020	ITEM: 11
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Sheltered Housing Decommissioning – Alexandra Road/Dunlop Road	
Wards and communities affected: Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Ryan Farmer – Housing Strategy and Quality Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest – Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris – Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report sets out the proposals for the future of the Alexandra Court Sheltered Housing complex in Tilbury, comprised of 36 properties at Alexandra Road and four properties at Dunlop Road.

The report outlines the options which were considered relating to accessibility to the communal blocks at this complex, as well as the opportunities which are available through one of the Council's current new build schemes at Calcutta Road, Tilbury.

1. Recommendation(s)

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment on:

- 1.1. **the proposal to decommission the Sheltered Housing properties at Alexandra Road and Dunlop Road in Tilbury.**
- 1.2. **the proposal to implement a local lettings plan for the new housing development for older people at Calcutta Road which gives priority to tenants affected by the above proposed decommissioning.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1. In March 2019 a report was produced which considered the condition of communal entrance points in the Sheltered Housing complexes across the council's housing stock. This review included the 36 properties at Alexandra Road and the four properties at Dunlop Road, which collectively form the

'Alexandra Court' Sheltered Housing complex in the Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park ward.

Residents are being supported to live independently in Sheltered Housing properties for longer and later in life than they may have been able to historically. Whilst this is positive, as people age and their mobility reduces they may face additional challenges due to the condition of the communal access points for their homes, which subsequently impacts upon their quality of life and independence.

- 2.2. The reviews which were carried out assessed the level of accessibility for each block and communal entrance point in the context of the *Equality Act 2010* as well as against the ideal standards as set out in the *Building Regulations 2010 Part M: Access to and use of Buildings; Volume 1: Dwellings; M4(2) Category 2: Accessible and adaptable dwellings*.

In some cases, where dwelling or communal area accessibility is identified as being below the standard which the council is aiming to achieve across all its Sheltered Housing complexes, the work to rectify the issue is relatively straight-forward. In other instances there are significant constraints which hamper the identified remedial work, and this is the case at Alexandra Court.

- 2.3. Approximately 400 metres from the Alexandra Court Sheltered Housing complex, construction is currently underway for a new development of 35 council-owned flats for older residents at Calcutta Road. The development, which will be called Beaconsfield Place, will have 31 one-bedroom flats and 4 two-bedroom duplex flats, and these are due to be completed in Summer 2021.

This development will have indoors communal spaces, private communal gardens for residents, ample parking and mobility scooter storage. The support of a sheltered housing officer will be provided at this new development.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1. The assessment of the access to the blocks at the Alexandra Court Sheltered Housing complex indicated that they do not currently meet the accessibility standards which the council is aiming to achieve. The options which have been considered include:
 - A. undertaking the identified work to bring the blocks in line with the standard
 - B. maintaining the current level of block accessibility below the required standard and retain the complex as a Sheltered Housing scheme
 - C. decommissioning this Sheltered Housing complex as it is unfit for the future

The scale of the suggested work which would be needed to meet the required standards for access to the blocks at Alexandra Road and Dunlop Road would be extremely disruptive to residents by affecting the only entrances to each block, meaning that it would be highly likely that temporary decants would be required. With this in mind, and due to the space constraints at this site which significantly limit the viable options for the identified work to be carried out, it has been determined that it would not be feasible to undertake these external alterations.

- 3.2. It should be noted that even if the work to improve the external access to blocks were to be carried out, a number of other internal accessibility issues would still remain. The only way to access the first-floor flats at this complex is by stairs as there is no lift access. In addition to this, the age of construction combined with the internal layout of each block means that whilst access to the flats could be improved, each individual flat would be no more suitable for residents with limited mobility.
- 3.3. In light of the above assessment of the available options, it can be seen that option A is not feasible and that option B does not provide an appropriate solution for the future for this complex.

It is recommended that the Alexandra Court Sheltered Housing complex should be decommissioned in line with option C. Whilst this would cause a level of disruption to residents currently living within this Sheltered Housing complex as all residents living in these blocks would be required to move, there would be a comprehensive package of support available to help them to move to alternative accommodation suitable for their needs.

As part of the decommissioning process, the Council will no longer advertise or make permanent offers of accommodation for these properties as they become void. The Sheltered Housing service will also be withdrawn, however this will not happen whilst any Sheltered Housing tenant remains at the complex.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1. The nearby construction of Beaconsfield Place, a development using HAPPI principles for older people's housing, provides an opportunity for residents at the Alexandra Court Sheltered Housing complex to move to a new home within their current community which is designed with accessibility requirements in mind.

A local lettings plan is proposed which will ensure that those tenants being decanted from the Alexandra Court Sheltered Housing complex are prioritised for the Beaconsfield Place development, should they wish to move there. A formal expression of interest period will be conducted in January 2021, however initial consultation with residents has already been carried out. Details of this appear in the consultation section of the report.

All residents will also be awarded the highest priority band on the council's housing register, which will allow them to consider moving to another Sheltered Housing complex or appropriate property elsewhere in Tilbury or across Thurrock.

As all residents would be required to permanently move from the Alexandra Road and Dunlop Road blocks, a 'home loss and disturbance' payment will be made to each affected household as stipulated by the *Home Loss Payments (Prescribed Amounts) (England) Regulations 2020*.

All residents will be fully supported with their future move by a dedicated officer who would provide assistance with key elements of moving home, such as:

- making a transfer application
- packing and removals
- assisting with the home loss and disturbance payment
- general moving requirements
- providing a smooth transition from one property to another

- 4.2. Once the recommendation to decommission the Alexandra Court Sheltered Housing complex has been agreed and residents start to move to other properties elsewhere in the borough, the number of void properties will increase at this complex. In the short-term, once all properties in a given block become empty, consideration can be given to utilising these as temporary accommodation for homeless households.

In the longer term, decommissioning this complex allows the entire site to be considered as a redevelopment opportunity to provide new council-owned family-sized homes for the borough.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1. Consultation and engagement activity has already been carried out with residents at the Alexandra Court Sheltered Housing complex as well as with ward members and the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

A letter was hand-delivered to all residents on 28 September 2020 which outlined the proposals for decommissioning the complex as well as the options which would be available to each household for the future.

Included within the letter was a pre-arranged socially distanced appointment for the residents and their next of kin or carer to meet with the Sheltered Housing Officer at Alexandra Court, if they wished, in order to discuss these proposals in more detail and ask any initial questions which they may have had.

- 5.2. The below table demonstrates the engagement methods which have been chosen by tenants at this complex.

Engagement Method	Count
Attended appointment	14
Attended appointment with next of kin	5
Telephone call	13
Telephone call with next of kin	4
No appointment or telephone call	2

- 5.3. Feedback from residents has been supportive of the proposals. As part of this period of engagement and consultation, initial feedback was collected with regards to interest in moving to the Beaconsfield Place development as well as moving to any other Sheltered Housing complex in the borough. The tables below outline the feedback received in this regard.

Interest in Beaconsfield Place?	Count
Yes	27
No	8
Unsure	3

Other area preference	Count
Chadwell St Mary	3
Corringham	1
Grays	3
South Ockendon	1
Tilbury	15
Unsure	2

Other area preference	Count
No preference shared	14

In addition to understanding the preferences of each resident towards a preferred location to move to, the Sheltered Housing Officer has worked with residents to collate any health or medical issues which need to be considered alongside any other comments or preferences which had been expressed.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1. The community impact of these proposals has been managed and mitigated through thorough comprehensive support and engagement with those who will be affected by the change. The specific needs of each individual household are being considered and addressed on a case-by-case basis.

The longer term redevelopment aspirations for this site supports the Council's 'Place' priority as well as the intentions to provide up to 500 new council homes.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Strategic Lead – Corporate Finance

The proposal in this report to decommission this sheltered housing complex will have financial implications due to the potential for rent loss whilst properties remain void and through the home loss and disturbance payments which will need to be made. This will be managed as part of the 2020/21 budget position.

The properties will remain part of the Council's assets, and further consideration will be given as to how best utilise them in the future

Bearing this in mind, the proposal also removes the necessity for the Council to undertake a significant amount of work to improve the external access of these blocks which may only have limited benefit.

The proposal also provides an opportunity to reduce the financial impact of temporary accommodation placements in the private rental sector by utilising decommissioned properties for this purpose, therefore also reducing the potential lost rental income at this complex.

7.2. Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

This report proposes a recommendation to decommission a sheltered housing complex and seek alternative accommodation for the current tenants in order to best meet their needs. The proposals have been considered against relevant legislative and regulatory documentation as outlined within this report.

7.3. Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

Whilst a number of residents would be impacted by the recommended proposal within this report, the consultation and engagement activity which has already been carried out and the offer of personalised support which will be provided going forward evidences that consideration has been given to the individual needs of each household, such as age and any disabilities.

7.4. Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Not applicable

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

9. Appendices to the report

None

Report Author:

Ryan Farmer
Housing Strategy & Quality Manager
Business Improvement - Housing

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17 November 2020	ITEM: 12
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Housing Service COVID-19 Financial Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Ryan Farmer – Housing Strategy and Quality Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest – Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris – Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report provides an update regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the Housing Revenue Account and Housing General Fund services. This update looks at the financial position and activity of the Housing service in the first half of the 2020/21 financial year.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1. **Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment on the contents of this update report.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1. The Government’s ‘Stay at Home’ guidance on 23 March 2020, introduced as a result of the COVID-10 pandemic, has had a significant impact on the delivery of services as well as on the lives of citizens who use the Council’s Housing services.

The Housing service of Thurrock Council, much like the wider organisation, has worked to mitigate and manage the operational and financial challenges brought by COVID-19.

- 2.2. Temporary suspensions, alterations and reductions in service provision have resulted in some areas of increased expenditure or lower levels of income. This report provides further details and also outlines the efforts which have been made to address these challenges.

3. Housing General Fund

3.1. Homelessness

3.1.1 Whilst the first two periods of the 2020/21 financial year showed some stability in the number of people presenting themselves as homeless or at risk of homelessness, this trend is unlikely to continue throughout the remainder of the year.

3.1.2 One of the most common causes of homelessness in Thurrock is as a result of landlords imposing eviction measures in the private rental sector. A national moratorium on eviction proceedings which was implemented by the Government in March 2020 expired in September 2020.

There is concern that court proceedings recommencing will lead to an increase in the number of households presenting as homeless throughout winter. However, the Government has taken mitigating action by extending the eviction notice period which landlords must give to tenants to six months in all but the most serious cases, such as where anti-social behaviour or domestic abuse is a factor.

As the wider economic impacts of the pandemic are felt, this may further increase pressure on the service, and hence there is a forecast pressure in this area.

3.1.3 56 people in 53 households (consisting of 50 individuals and three couples) were identified as rough sleepers as part of the 'everyone in' initiative, and these have been housed in short-term emergency accommodation since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The average cost for this level of short-term emergency accommodation is in the region of £70 per day.

The full-year effect of this is reflected in the level of anticipated spend in the corporate forecast at £0.818m. However, the service is reviewing this cohort of people to find alternative, longer-term housing solutions. There is a varying degree of need, vulnerability and suitable accommodation provision across the demographic, ranging from the ability to place people in HMOs through to supported accommodation placements.

3.1.4 There is an expectation that presentations to the homelessness service may increase later in the financial year as wider economic impacts of COVID-19 are felt, and eviction protections are removed for those who are renting. The forecast overspend on the net homelessness budget of £1.468m is £0.960m.

3.2. Private Sector Housing

3.2.1 The Private Sector Housing service has an income requirement to achieve circa 50% of its overall net costs built into the base budget. One of the key income streams is through the inspections of privately let accommodation. Social distancing measures have led to a restriction in the level of work permitted, which will have a direct detrimental effect on the overall budget position. A claim has been made for the loss of this income, presently £0.096m, against the Government's income compensation scheme.

3.3. Grants and Funding

3.3.1 There is a further expectation that an increase in the caseload of the homelessness service is likely to arise later in the year as the wider economic impacts of the pandemic are felt and protections against eviction change for tenants. A further £1.000m contingency has been factored into the Council's forecast outturn position, to be funded in the main, from the COVID-19 grant allocations.

3.3.2 The below set of tables indicates the amounts of funding which have been allocated and provided for the Housing General Fund Services.

Funding	Amount
Overall Council Allocation of COVID-19 Support Fund	£14,257,000
Allocation to Housing General Fund	£ 2,041,000

Income Loss Compensation Scheme	Amount
Private Sector Housing	£ 97,000

Central Grant Funding	Amount
Cold Weather Fund	£ TBC
Flexible Homelessness Support Grant	£ 512,504
Homelessness Reduction Grant	£ 195,794
Rough Sleeping Funding	£ 258,674
COVID-19 Response Funding	£ 6,000
Next Steps Accommodation Payment	£ 75,000

4. Housing Revenue Account

4.1. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant challenges for the Rents and Welfare Team in 2020/21. As almost all members of Housing staff continue to work from home, the interactions which would ordinarily have taken place

face-to-face through home visits have instead been undertaken by telephone or email.

Despite these initial challenges, the Rents and Welfare Team have surpassed the 92% profiled target for rent collection and have successfully collected 93.35% of rent which was due at the end of September 2020, as well as supporting a large number of tenants through financial inclusion work.

- 4.2. So far in 2020/21, there has been a 21% increase in tenants claiming Universal Credit, increasing from 2,317 tenants in March 2020 to 2,812 tenants at the end of September. Rent arrears for tenants claiming Universal Credit also increased by a margin of 52% alongside a 10.21% reduction in Housing Benefit income against the same period last year.
- 4.3. In order to achieve the above-profile level of rent collection whilst addressing the additional challenges of increased Universal Credit arrears, reduced Housing Benefit income and the possible financial pressures of COVID-19 being experienced by tenants, the Rents and Welfare team have proactively contacted those who would benefit from financial inclusion support and assistance.
- 4.4. The work of the Financial Inclusion Officers in the Rent and Welfare team has been impacted by the restrictions implemented through Government guidance and have only been able to support tenants over the telephone, rather than in community settings as would ordinarily be the case.

At the start of the financial year, the Financial Inclusion Officers undertook welfare calls to provide advice to new Universal Credit claimants, as well as tenants who were furloughed and experiencing financial hardship. They also contacted tenants who were in rent arrears to offer debt advice.

- 4.5. At the end of September 2020, Financial Inclusion Officers had supported a total of 668 tenants, representing an increase of 54% compared to the same period in the previous financial year last year. This work has generated an additional income of £174,967, an increase of 35% against the same period in 2019/20.

Financial Inclusion Officers look to maximise the income of tenants by advising and assisting with any claims for benefits which they may be eligible for. This includes elements such as Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Council Tax Support and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). Financial Inclusion Officers will also work alongside tenants to explore any other grants which they may be entitled to and can offer food vouchers and assist with clothing, furniture and white goods.

- 4.6. At present, there has been no additional Government funding to support the Housing Revenue Account.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1. The COVID-19 pandemic has tested the resilience of the Housing service, and this report outlines the financial pressures faced and the action taken in response to maintain the provision of critical services in the most challenging of times. This document can be referred to in any upcoming exercises to identify and review the 'lessons learned'.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1. There is no impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance or to wider communities as a result of this update paper.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Strategic Lead – Corporate Finance

COVID-19 has had a financial impact on service delivery across the Housing service. Where relevant, namely in relation to financial demands relating to homelessness and rough sleeping, additional costs are being recorded against the central government funding allocations.

In relation to rent loss, this will continue to be monitored as part of the Housing Revenue Account's forecast budget outturn position, and reported corporately.

A continued increase in the number of existing tenants claiming Universal Credit poses a significant financial risk to the stability of the Housing Revenue Account.

7.2. Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

As an update report on action taken, there are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

7.3. Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

As an update report on action taken, there are no diversity and equality implications directly arising from this report.

7.4. **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

9. **Appendices to the report**

None

Report Author:

Ryan Farmer

Housing Strategy and Quality Manager

Business Improvement - Housing

**Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme 2020/21**

Dates of Meetings: 16 June 2020, 9 September 2020, 17 November 2020, 19 January 2021 and 16 March 2021

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
16 June 2020		
Housing KPI Performance (2019/2020)	Roger Harris/Carol Hinvest	Officers
Tenant & Leaseholder Satisfaction Monitoring	Chris Seman	Officers
Housing Development Programme Update	David Moore	Members
Housing Development Consultation Process	Keith Andrews	Officers
Housing Social Value Framework	Susan Cardozo	Members
Housing Service COVID-19 Response	Ryan Farmer	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
9 September 2020		
Housing Development Programme Update	David Moore	Members
Housing Service COVID-19 Response - Update	Ryan Farmer	Officer
Garage Project Update	Carol Hinvest	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

17 November 2020		
HRA Rent Setting Process	Roger Harris	Officers
Housing Development Programme Update	David Moore	Officers
Licensing Houses of Multiple Occupation	Carol Hinvest	Members
Automatic Gates	Carol Hinvest	Members
Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2021/22	Kelly McMillan	Officers
Sheltered Housing Decommissioning - Alexandra Road and Dunlop Road	Ryan Farmer	Officers
Housing Service COVID-19 Financial Update	Ryan Farmer	Chair
Housing Development Delivery Approaches	Andy Millard	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
19 January 2021		
HRA Business Plan	Roger Harris	Officers
Housing Development Update	David Moore	Members
Tenant & Leasehold Satisfaction Survey Results and Action Plan	Chris Seman	Officers
Procurement of Capital Programme Delivery	Sue Cardozo	Officers
Annual Allocations Report	Ryan Farmer	Officers

KPIs	Carol Hinvest	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
16 March 2021		
Housing Development Update	David Moore	Officers
Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeping Strategy - Action Plan	Ryan Farmer	Members
Housing Strategy Update	Carol Hinvest	Members
Private Sector Stock Condition Survey	Carol Hinvest	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

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