



Crawley Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Agenda for the **Overview and Scrutiny Commission** which will be held in **Committee Room C - New Town Hall**, on **Monday, 5 June 2023** at **8.00 pm**

Please note the time of this meeting.

There is a training session for Scrutiny Members only commencing at 6.30pm.

Nightline Telephone No. 07881 500 227

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. J. ...', positioned above the title 'Chief Executive'.

Chief Executive

* **Membership:** * To be determined at Annual Council on Friday 26 May 2023.

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The order of business may change at the Chair's discretion

Part A Business (Open to the Public)

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Disclosures of Interest and Whipping Declarations

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, councillors are reminded that it is a requirement to declare interests where appropriate.

Councillors must also declare if they are subject to their party group whip in relation to any items under consideration.

3. Minutes

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 6 March 2023.

4. Public Question Time

To answer any questions or hear brief statements from the public which are relevant to the items on this agenda. The period will end after **15 minutes** or later at the Chair's discretion.

5. Homelessness in Crawley

To consider report SHAP/87 of the Head of Strategic Housing.

6. Staff Health, Morale and Sickness Updates

To consider report LDS/200 of the Head of Governance, People and Performance.

7. Appointments and Membership

The Commission is asked to ratify the appointments attached in OSC/310.

8. Forthcoming Decision List - and Provisional List of Reports for the Commission's following Meetings

To consider any requests for [future items](#). Those highlighted items have been referred to the Commission.

OSC – 26 June

Cabinet – 28 June

	Report	PFD
1	Financial Outturn 2022-2023 (Quarter 4)	Yes
2	Treasury Management Outturn 2022-2023	Yes
3	Alcohol Related ASB – PSPO Extension	
4	Energy Procurement Contract Arrangements	
5	Forward Programme of Key Procurements July-Dec 2023	

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9. Supplemental Agenda

Any urgent item(s) complying with Section 100(B) of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Monday, 6 March 2023 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

T G Belben (Chair)

K Khan (Vice-Chair)

M L Ayling, H Hellier, I T Irvine, R A Lanzer, A Pendlington, S Piggott, S Pritchard, T Rana and S Sivarajah

Also in Attendance:

Councillors S Buck, B J Burgess, R D Burrett, G S Jhans and M G Jones

Officers Present:

Ian Duke

Deputy Chief Executive

Heather Girling

Democratic Services Officer

Amanda Kendall

Head of Crawley Homes

Diana Maughan

Head of Strategic Housing

Nigel Sheehan

Head of Projects and Commercial Services

1. Disclosures of Interest and Whipping Declarations

No disclosures or whipping of interests were made.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 30 January 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were asked.

4. Tenancy Policy Crawley Homes

The Commission considered report [CH/199](#) with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Head of Crawley Homes and Head of Strategic Housing. The report sought approval for the amended Tenancy Policy.

During the discussion the following comments were made:

- Recognition that from 1 April 2023 all new Council tenants would be offered secure periodic tenancies. Existing flexible tenants would be offered a new secure

periodic tenancy to replace their flexible tenancy, the grant of these new tenancies to take place over a two year period commencing 1 April 2023. It was confirmed that introductory flexible tenancies would be phased out using the provisions of section 103 of the Housing Act 1985. This was a prescribed process to be followed should the policy be approved.

- It was noted the phase out was resource intensive and a 2 year period offered stability during the transition and would not require additional finances to administer. The phasing out process of introductory flexible tenancies was discussed in detail together with clarification provided on the communication methods and publicity required for tenants including letters, social media, and newsletters.
- Recognition that the Council has had limited success to date creating opportunities for best use of stock through the review process at the end of the tenancy fixed term. Only a small percentage (less than 30%) of the Council's stock has been let on a flexible tenancy and there was a limited number of those tenancies that have been subject to review to date.
- Acknowledgement flexible tenancies presented the Council with a number of difficulties and/or challenges associated with ongoing management. However, despite the number of management challenges there were also benefits to the Council of offering flexible tenancies, including the opportunity of rightsizing households at the end of the fixed term although such outcomes had been limited to date but over the longer term this pattern could change.
- Confirmation that downsizing can be difficult to achieve other than through negotiation or incentive and further details on the incentive scheme were provided. Opportunities for financial incentives together with other options (such as property condition and repair) were being investigated as it was important to enable movement within the housing register. Additional information was provided with regards to under-occupation, mutual exchange, and the potential for lodgers.
- Recognition that whilst benchmarking with other local authorities had not taken place directly it was observed that other landlords had taken similar decision routes.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

5. Cabinet Member Discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing

The Commission noted the update given by Councillor Buck and questioned her on a variety of issues relating to the [portfolio](#). The following topics were discussed:

- The past year had been challenging across the housing service, particularly with regards to costs of homelessness and temporary accommodation. It was noted that in terms of the financial pressures should the costs not be sustainable in future years, there would be a need to look at efficiencies, new income or as a last resort reduction in services. The Council had been requested to take part in a high housing demand case study and it was felt this would be beneficial in highlighting the current housing situation within the borough.
- The achievements were also recognised such as housing developments, the new housing management system, Crawley Homes retrofit initiatives, acquisitions for land/dwellings and the Temporary Accommodation budget, which would provide the flexibility to acquire properties on the market for either general needs or temporary accommodation purposes.

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6 March 2023

- Recognition that the number of responsive repairs had increased, particularly due to damp and mould queries. The strategy and processes for dealing with damp and mould cases were discussed in detail, including redefined triage, communications and repair.
- The first point of contact for complaints was with the landlord, whether this is a housing association or the council. The council has its own housing stock and it was pleasing that the level of formal complaints was low compared to the stock size, less than 2%. The [Social Housing White Paper](#) would strengthen measures across all social landlords, establish new regulation and a strengthening Housing Ombudsman. It was also noted the Audit Committee received updates on housing fraud and potential for properties being recovered.
- Acknowledgement that land supply opportunities were reducing and other options were being investigated. The 'duty to co-operate' arrangements continued to be included in the Council's Corporate Plan to work with neighbouring authorities in the spirit of partnership to deliver housing to meet Crawley's needs.
- Further information was provided on the decision to grant British citizenship to people of Chagossian descent and potential impact on housing costs. Whilst applications had been received, currently there was minimal information on the resultant pressures and impact for the town's housing.
- Clarification was sought as to the regulation of social landlords and housing associations. It was felt it would be beneficial to scrutinise the current situation with regards to housing associations within the town, together with service standards, satisfaction and complaints received, ideally with witness sessions from various housing associations. It was noted the OSC had previously received a report ([SHAP/69](#)) containing information on the housing associations operating in Crawley and third-party data was difficult to mandate. It was therefore proposed by Councillor Belben (seconded by Councillor Pritchard) that the OSC receive a follow up report on the current situation and operations of the housing associations within the town. Upon being put to the Commission, the proposal was declared as carried.
- The Housing teams were praised for their continued hard work throughout a challenging time.

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission thanked Councillor Buck for attending and for the informative discussion that had ensued. It was agreed that a follow up report on [SHAP/69](#) be received by the Commission.

6. Exempt Information – Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

7. Waste and Recycling Contract Extension

Exempt Paragraph 3

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

The Commission considered report HPS/34 of the Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services. The report requested approval to extend the contract to the waste and recycling service.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability and Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services, Councillors made the following comments:

- Acknowledgement that the proposal enabled the Council the continuity of the waste and recycling service and would ensure the waste vehicle fleet was operating efficiently and fit for purpose. The procurement of a new waste vehicle fleet with a view to new vehicles coming into operation at the beginning of the extension period in February 2024 would assist in maintaining the delivery of service benefits to residents.
- Recognition that the arrangement enabled the Council to assess options for making amendments to the local waste collection arrangements in response to the National Waste Strategy which the Government had indicated would be released in the 'near future'. The Council's target to net zero was highlighted and it would be important to consider the environmental factors and any impact.
- Support for a further report to OSC once the National Waste Strategy was known indicating proposals for the Council's collection regime.
- Confirmation that an options analysis had been considered as part of the vehicle fleet and was reference within the report. However, clarification was sought about the specifics documented within the proposals. It was moved by Councillor Pritchard (seconded by Councillor Ayling) that the specific options analysis be compiled and sent to Cabinet for its consideration. A vote was taken and upon being put to the Commission, the proposal was declared as carried.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet, with the additional recommendation above.

Re-Admission of the Public

The Chair declared the meeting reopen for consideration of business in public session.

8. Forthcoming Decision List - and Provisional List of Reports for the Commission's following Meetings

The Commission confirmed the following reports:

26 June 2023:

1. Treasury Management Outturn 2022-2023
2. Financial Outturn 2022-2023 (Quarter 4)
3. Leisure Contract - PART B

The OSC is also due to receive an update on K2 Crawley together with the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing portfolio discussion in June.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.29 pm

T G Belben (Chair)

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Crawley Borough Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission 5th June 2023

Homelessness in Crawley

Report of the Head of Strategic Housing – SHAP/87

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report has been produced in response to a request by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to provide an overview of homelessness in Crawley.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 This report is for information purposes and therefore it is asked that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission receive this report, note progress to date and acknowledge any future service actions.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 Under the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, it was requested that a report be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on the current drivers for homelessness in the borough.

4. Background

- 4.1 Local housing authorities' statutory responses to homelessness are directed by legislation, the Code of Guidance, best practice and case law. However, the causes of homelessness are often nuanced and complex - a blend of personal circumstances, the impact of national policy decisions, the pressures brought on by broader economic issues and the local housing market.
- 4.2 Two of the most prolific causes of homelessness, both locally and nationally are households who are no longer willing or able to accommodate friends or family members, and loss of private rented sector accommodation. The pressures on household finances (as a result of cost-of-living pressures) and on the private rented sector (as a result of policy decisions to change taxation and the security of tenure) only fuels instability, driving more people to approach Local housing authorities for help.
- 4.3 The Covid-19 pandemic had a swift, significant, and lasting impact on homelessness and the services that support those affected. 2020 saw a 40% increase in approaches to the Council's Housing Options service and a similar increase in the use of temporary accommodation. Escalating and ongoing cost of living pressures have meant that the demand on homelessness services has not and is not likely to return to pre-pandemic levels.

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- 4.4 Local authorities' ability to meet these challenges is dependent on Government funding. The formula for funding homelessness services recently underwent a review, and alongside a significant reduction in funding for Crawley, high levels of inflation only worsen the impact. The differential in funding nowhere near matching the differential in pressures and demand on the service. This has put the Council's finances under unprecedented pressure and is unsustainable in the longer term. Currently, approximately 20% of the Council's total General Fund revenue expenditure is allocated to homelessness functions and the rising level of costs of, and demand for temporary accommodation, coupled with a real term reduction in Government grant resulted in an overspend of approximately £1.6m for 2022/23.

5. National Policy Context

- 5.1 Direct Homelessness Policies such as *The Homelessness Act (2002)* in England and Wales brought in new duties and preventative approaches which meant more people could access advice and assistance. This prevention led approach resulted in a reduction in homelessness acceptances in 2009/10.
- 5.2 From 2010, rough sleeping and acceptances began to rise again with the impact of welfare reform, rising rents and the housing crisis. This led to the most significant change to homelessness legislation in 40 years, *The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)*, which brought about significant new duties and burdens to prevent and relieve homelessness, implemented from April 2018.
- 5.3 Wider policy in housing and welfare may not be designed to tackle homelessness, but can have a direct impact, and indirectly affect the efficacy of homelessness policy and practice. The decline in house building and availability of social rented accommodation over the last 45 years, the lack of affordable housing to tackle homelessness, including the reduction in available stock through right to buy, is a key determinant in whether local authorities across Britain can discharge their homelessness duties. This is regardless of how progressive the homelessness policies are.
- 5.4 Changes in welfare policy, the anticipated changes to section 21 Notices and changes to tax benefits for landlords, pose challenges in assisting homeless people. The current gap between private rental prices and the Local Housing Allowance rates available is a key homelessness driver, along with the shrinking private rental market as landlords reduce or dispose of their portfolios. This both causes homelessness and restricts the ability of local authorities to address it.
- 5.5 Events in Syria, Afghanistan, Hong Kong and Ukraine have resulted in assistance and resettlement schemes which increase the demands upon a housing market that is already under pressure in the UK.

6. Local Context

- 6.1 *Temporary Accommodation* - The pandemic and subsequent pressures on the cost of living resulted in a substantial and sustained increase in the use of nightly paid temporary accommodation (see table below). With most local authorities being in the same position, competition for temporary accommodation led to scarcity values with providers increasing the amount they are charging, with average nightly costs [per room per night] almost doubling from £40 to £75.

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	Total households in temporary accommodation	Of which in nightly paid temporary accommodation
Snapshot as at 31 st Dec 2019	158	4
Snapshot as at 31 st Dec 2020	249	86
Snapshot as at 31 st Dec 2021	284	113
Snapshot as at 31 st Dec 2022	399	192

- 6.2 This issue is not localised to Crawley. Expenditure on temporary accommodation has escalated across the country, with local authorities in England spending over £1.1bn per annum pre-2020, this figure has now risen to over £1.6bn per annum and is expected to increase.
- 6.3 *Private Rented Sector* - In 2022, a tenancy in the private rented sector ending took over from parental exclusion as being the most given reason for homelessness in Crawley. Nearly half of those seeking help from the Council cited the landlord selling the property as the reason for their tenancy ending. Landlords are leaving the rental market in increasing numbers, resulting in a constrained supply of rental accommodation and an increase in rents.
- 6.4 A snapshot of rental data for Crawley taken in January 2023 showed the average shortfall between the rent and the maximum amount benefits can cover (through the Local Housing Allowance), was over £300 a month. The same snapshot taken three months later in April 2023 showed the number of privately rented properties available had halved, rents had increased, and the average shortfall between rents and LHA rates had increased to over £400 per month.
- 6.5 Nearly 40% of households owed a prevention, relief, or main homeless duty in Crawley have this duty met through the private rented sector. A reduction in the size and affordability of this sector will place increased pressure on social housing to meet this demand.
- 6.6 *Housing Register* – In April 2023 there were over 2,100 households on the housing register, of which approximately a fifth were homeless applicants. This is over 200 households more than in April 2020 and will continue to rise as wider pressures impact people’s ability to access affordable housing.
- 6.7 Crawley (via West Sussex County Council) is currently hosting 800 Afghan nationals in bridging accommodation, plus a further 800 other nationals in asylum contingency accommodation. This need is being met across five hotels within the borough. Whilst households will be made two offers of accommodation under the asylum dispersal scheme, should any choose to refuse both offers, they are likely to approach the Council for assistance.
- 6.8 The number of Ukrainian households residing in Crawley under the family scheme is unknown, whilst the number on the sponsorship scheme is estimated to be in the region of 45-60 households. If current arrangements break down, they are likely to approach the Council for assistance.
- 6.9 In November 2022 the Chagossian British Overseas Territories Citizenship scheme was launched, with over 4,700 applications for British passports and citizenship made to date, including from households already in the UK. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) recognises that the majority are likely to want to settle in Crawley, where the largest existing Chagossian community in Britain resides. The Council awaits confirmation of new burdens funding from Government and will be faced with unprecedented demand on homelessness and housing register services in addition to the existing local demand from

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local need. This will require the establishment of a separate team to work alongside the existing service to respond to this new demand and to source additional temporary accommodation. Out of borough solutions will need to be pursued as there is an insufficient supply of accommodation within Crawley.

7. Crawley Borough Council's Response

- 7.1 With the approval of the Head of Service and Cabinet Member for Housing, the percentage of properties allocated to homeless households via the housing register was increased as a short-term measure to reduce the pressure on temporary accommodation and speed throughput.
- 7.2 Every effort is being made to increase the Council's own stock of temporary accommodation, through both acquisition and development. Six additional units with support delivered in 2022 with funding secured through a successful Rough Sleeping Accommodation Pathway (RSAP) bid. Eleven additional units with support delivered in 2022 in partnership with Crawley Open House and a private landlord, funded by a successful Next Steps Accommodation Pathway (NSAP) bid. The acquisition of a twenty-seven-unit property and the delivery of modular housing schemes are also currently being progressed.
- 7.3 Whilst the Council continues to operate the Crawley Deposit Service to help households facing homelessness access the private rented sector, the deposit bond is becoming less attractive to landlords. The Council will be reviewing what it can do to make its offer more attractive and encourage uptake of its services but realistically given the competing demands on this sector opportunities will be, at best, limited.
- 7.4 The Council has a successful track record in the delivery of new affordable housing and remains committed to the delivery programme. Despite water neutrality requirements stalling housing delivery, over 600 affordable homes have been delivered over the past three years, with over 480 completions forecasted for the coming two years, and a further 350 expected to start on site.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The pandemic fundamentally shifted the demand for and expectations around housing. The impact of national pressures, funding decisions and Government action around British Citizenship and changes to bridging accommodation provision has put considerable strains on Council resources and the supply of accommodation within Crawley.
- 8.2 The pressures faced in Crawley have and continue to be raised with Government departments at every opportunity. However, with funding to homelessness services being reduced in real terms, the future remains challenging as the Council continues to respond to a situation driven by factors outside of our control.

Report author and contact officer:

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Crawley Borough Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission 5 June 2023

Staff Health, Morale, and Sickness Updates

Report of the Head of Governance, People & Performance, *LDS/200*

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission (OSC) with a progress update following the information provided to the OSC in June 2022. The updates cover the Council workforce's health, wellbeing, and sickness levels. It examines out how employees have transitioned back into the workplace since the pandemic and sets out the measures the Council has put in place to support and monitor employees.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission is requested to receive this report, note progress to date and acknowledge the ongoing approach.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 Under the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, in March 2021, it was requested that a report be provided to the OSC on Council staff sickness levels during the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact and effects of homeworking. Reports were provided to the OSC in June and November 2021 and June 2022. At the Commission's request further updates have been provided to the Commission.

4. Background

- 4.1 The report presented to the OSC provided an overview of the situation and measures put in place for its workforce.

5. Current situation

- 5.1 Impact on sickness of Crawley Borough Council employees

- 5.2 There are no longer government restrictions or guidance that employers need to follow should they have Covid or the symptoms of Covid. However, the Council has continued to record Covid sickness. Employees are still required to report if they test positive for Covid. In cases where the employee is well enough to work and the role can be undertaken remotely, they should work from home. If they are unwell, they should not attend the physical workplace or work remotely from home. In circumstances where the employee tests positive for Covid and their role cannot be undertaken remotely from home, they should not attend the physical workplace until they achieve a negative test. The intention to provide employees with an assurance that the workplace is as safe as it can be. The reporting process is reviewed periodically. If employees wish to do so they may wear face coverings. The Council

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had seen two cases of long Covid. Both employees have returned to work with support. No further long-term cases have been identified.

- 5.3 The Council monitors sickness absence and during the first three quarters of 2022-2023 Covid continued to be within the top three reason for sickness absence. However, during Quarter 4 the Council has seen a decline in reported sickness relating to Covid.
- 5.4 Other reasons for sickness relate to musculoskeletal (not back related), stomach conditions and mental health.
- 5.5 The winter flu vaccination programme was successful in uptake, and it will again run a programme towards the end of summer 2023.
- 5.6 Working in the Town Hall
- 5.7 Employees based in the town hall complex (old building) continued to return to the office. Social distancing was encouraged, and specific desks were taken out of use to ensure that social distancing was maintained. Higher levels of cleaning continued across the town hall and other council worksites. Hand sanitizer for personal use and cleaning products to wipe down desks and equipment were provided. Employees were encouraged to work a minimum of two days a week in the physical workplace if they were a full-time worker and a minimum of one day a week for part-time workers.

Support to the workforce

- 5.8 The Council's offer of support to employees has been made through its learning and development programme. The support facilities and resources listed in the earlier reports to OSC continue to be offered both 'in person' or online via Microsoft Teams and the CBC learning channel.
- 5.9 The financial cost of living crisis impacts the workforce, and the Council has issued several reminders to employees to highlight the organisations from which they can seek support, guidance and money saving tips. The Council has placed a specific focus on financial well-being and has provided workshops on this topic to help employees better understand their relationship with money. The workshops have provided strategies and tactics to improve their financial habits. Other guidance has looked at financial planning and practical knowledge on the key elements of managing everyday finances e.g., budgeting, managing debt, seeking support they are struggling.
- 5.10 For people managers and aspiring managers, the Council has developed and is currently rolling out a suite of essential training sessions for managers. These sessions cover: -
- managing sickness absence
 - discipline & grievance
 - managing performance
 - having difficult conversations
 - investigation training
 - equality, diversity & inclusion
 - safeguarding.

The Council continues to offer sessions outlined in the previous report along with the workshops for:

- The essential skills of conducting an effective interview
- How to support the team through anxiety

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- Coaching conversations for managers
 - Challenging conversations for managers
- 5.11 To work alongside the essential training for managers a review of several of the people-related policies and procedures is taking place.
- 5.12 A wide range of sessions are offered through the Council's wellbeing team:
- Starting the year- be kind to yourself in 2023. A guide to taking care of your mental health
 - Motivation for the year ahead-kick start 2023 with healthy eating habits
 - NHS Heart Health Check
 - Food waste- top tips to reduce food waste and how to plan weekly meals
- 5.13 Other initiatives offered by officers within the Council include:
- Workplace Savings Scheme which enables staff to transfer money into a savings account directly from their salary
 - Pension Benefits, with the recently introduced AVC scheme for participants off the local government pension scheme
 - Energy at home – top tips on ways to make energy saving
- 5.14 As the Council has previously advised the OSC, it has continued to see an increase from its workforce taking up the counselling service. The prediction was that more employees would be requiring this service, and this has been the case. Many employees who took up this offer have requested further sessions beyond the normal 6 sessions earmarked for an individual employee.
- 5.15 The Council has continued the programme of reflective practise, the aim is to develop personal awareness, resilience, skills, and competence across professional, interpersonal, and relational domains that enhance the workplace. This initiative has supported individual teams to use a confidential reflective space in which they can reflect upon, and how they feel about what they do, the impacts the pandemic has had upon them and the service providers they work with. The sessions cover many aspects including managing work boundaries, threats to resilience, coping with change and maintaining well-being. Feedback has been positive. The programme will be continued to be offered to other teams across the Council.
- 5.16 Every 3 years, the Council circulates an employee survey looking at a range of areas that can be monitored and compared to the previous survey. This was most recently undertaken in the autumn of 2022. The results are very positive. In all nine topic areas there are improvements since the previous survey. This is really encouraging and reflects the work that has been done. Some highlights include:
- Up 3 per cent: Crawley Borough Council cares about my health and wellbeing at work
 - Up 7 per cent: I feel I am working in a safe environment
 - Up 2 per cent: I know how my day-to-day work contributes to making Crawley a better place
 - Up 3 per cent: I have received the training I need to do my job
 - Up 10 per cent since: I feel safe to express my views and opinions honestly
 - Up 8 per cent: I believe / feel my ideas will be listened to
 - Up 6 per cent: CMT generally seek suggestions and ideas from staff.

The survey indicates that there is still work to be done in some areas. CMT is working on an action plan to focus on these areas and will work with employee

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groups and the People Board to develop it. Once complete this action plan will be shared.

- 5.17 The Council has and will carry on providing ongoing support to its workforce and will continue to encourage colleagues to take up the opportunities presented to them. Whilst there is responsibility on the Council (as employer) to ensure it exercises its duty of care to staff it is also for staff to take responsibility for themselves, take advantage of the support and reach out when they are struggling. The legacy of the Covid pandemic will remain for a long time to come.

6. Employees working in the office environment

- 6.1 Employees began to move into the New Town Hall, the Create Building, in December 2022. The design of the workspace is open plan and desks are shared. Office cover is agreed locally by service teams and divisions. The benefit of having employees working a combination of in the office environment and at home has proved popular. The benefits of having people in an office environment as opposed to offering permanent working from home arrangements are to share learning, to induct and help support new colleagues. It contributes to being able to check in with colleagues around their health and well-being. The model for hybrid working is one the Council will continue to promote. The Council is not alone in its thinking as more organisations are finding that bringing employees back into the office environment (whether on a full time or hybrid basis) can increase productivity and provide a better work life balance with more social interaction which can help reduce stress levels and improve mental health and increase creativity.

7. Impacts to the externally focused workforce

- 7.1 The external workforce has continued to carry out its function and has adhered to risk assessments and guidance appropriate to specific work areas. This includes outside in public areas, in depots and in work vehicles. This extended to working in bubbles, having separate rest rooms and working in vehicles with people they knew.

8 Next steps for the Council

- Continue to provide learning and development and support workshops appropriately to meet the needs of both employees and service delivery.
- Continue to provide and raise the profile of the support available to employees for their wellbeing, mental health and financial health.
- Actively encourage and support those who are, or who may face challenges with their mental health by suggesting the various offers in place or highlighting external agencies for them to draw upon
- Carry on providing a range of wellbeing initiatives to suit the requirements of the workforce

9. Background Papers.

None

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Agenda Item 7

OSC/310

Appointments 2023-2024

The Commission is asked to ratify the following appointments, which were submitted at Annual Council on 26 May 2023:

West Sussex Joint Scrutiny Steering Group (JSSG).

To confirm the JSSG representative - Must be Chair of OSC.

Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC).

To confirm the HASC representative – Must be a Member of OSC.

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