

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission
5 September 2022

Report to Cabinet
7 September 2022

Final Report of the Council-owned Neighbourhood Parades Scrutiny Panel

Report of the Chair of the Council-owned Neighbourhood Parades Scrutiny Panel,
Councillor R A Lanzer – **OSC/303**

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report sets out the considerations and subsequent recommendations of the Council-owned Neighbourhood Parades Scrutiny Panel (*the Panel*) which operated between December 2020 and July 2022.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

To consider the report and decide what comments, if any, it wishes to submit to the Cabinet.

- 2.2. To the Cabinet:

The Cabinet is recommended to agree the recommendations set out in section 15 of this report.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1. The 19 recommendations reflect the objectives set out in the scoping framework. The main aims of the Panel were to examine the various roles of Crawley Borough Council's neighbourhood shopping parades, explore how effectively these were being discharged, and to consider any improvements that could be made.
- 3.2. The recommendations are consciously framed with a whole Council approach, noting that contributions can be made by various departments beyond that responsible for the Property Strategy, and by partner organisations.

4. Background

- 4.1. In March 2020, a [scrutiny suggestion form](#) proposing a review of the Council's neighbourhood shopping parades was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission (OSC). The OSC requested that it be provided with a report giving detailed information on the matters raised within the form. The report was to be

considered at the next meeting of the OSC, which would serve as a scoping meeting and allow the OSC to decide whether a Scrutiny Panel was required.

- 4.2. In June 2020 the OSC received report [FIN/499](#). The report set out detailed information about the way the parades are run, with a focus on examining the effectiveness of the Council's [Property Strategy](#) (2004). (NB all information included in report FIN/499 was correct at time of publication – some figures and details may have since changed). The OSC discussed the report and concluded that there was value in establishing a Scrutiny Panel to further review the matter.
- 4.3. The membership of the Panel at its first meeting was Cllrs Lanzer (Chair), Ayling, Lunnon, and Peck. Several changes were made to the membership throughout. Cllr Mwangale became a member in December 2020 and Cllr S Mullins in May 2021. In May 2022, following the election, Cllrs Lunnon and S Mullins ceased to be members while Cllrs K Khan and Rana were appointed – giving a membership of Cllrs Lanzer (Chair), Ayling, K Khan, Mwangale, Peck, and Rana at the Panel's conclusion.
- 4.4. The Panel was supported by key officers: Karen Hayes, Head of Corporate Finance; Sue Bader, Asset Manager; and Richard Gammie, Commercial Asset Manager. The officers contributed valuable information and expertise when requested by the Panel.
- 4.5. The Panel experienced many unforeseen hurdles through its duration. These included changes to the membership of the Panel, the retirement of key officers from the Council, national Coronavirus lockdowns and changes to local restrictions/tiers, elections/by-elections and pre-election periods of sensitivity, cancellations of meeting appearances by witnesses, changing availability of tenants, communication delays with external partners, and staff sickness. Each of these issues caused delays to the Panel's proceedings and some led to postponements or cancellations of meetings.
- 4.6. Nonetheless, the Panel met several times over its duration and considered a range of relevant information and evidence.

5. Information Sources and Evidence Considered

- 5.1. The [Scoping Framework](#) was agreed at the first meeting of the Panel. This set out a number of objectives across a range of topics and proposed various witnesses to be invited to give evidence to the Panel.
- 5.2. Over its duration, the Panel investigated a range of subjects and consulted witnesses and experts. The key sources of information are listed as headings below, under which is a summary of the evidence provided by each source, and the discussions had by the Panel in light of that evidence.

6. Neighbourhood Parade Policies at Other Local Authorities

- 6.1. One component of the Panel's initial investigations was to examine shopping parade policies at councils of a similar ilk to Crawley Borough Council, and also recent shopping parade reviews by other local authorities, with emphasis on Slough Borough Council, Knowsley Borough Council, Dacorum Borough Council, and Lewisham Council. The consideration of these policies/reviews sparked discussion on several topics, set out below.
- 6.2. Use classes – the Panel heard that Crawley Borough Council's unit leases included clauses to allocate the unit's specific use. This allowed the Council as landlord to

monitor and have some control over the balance of trades on the parades. It was heard that when offers were made on a vacant unit, the Council considered all offers but also aimed to select a suitable use. It was recognised that more traditional uses were popular with shoppers and the parades should reflect this – but this needed to be balanced with the necessity of achieving market rent rate. Control mechanisms had altered with the Use Class Order Changes 2020 which had introduced a new Class E (Commercial, Business and Service), which brought together seven A, B and D use classes. This meant that the change of use of a building within the broad Class E did not require planning permission. The Council retained its control over off-licences through its Licensing function and its general powers as a landlord.

- 6.3. Maintenance responsibilities – clarity was sought about which party had responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of a unit. This was outlined within each lease agreement; most of the responsibilities for building upkeep fell to the tenant.
- 6.4. Responsible retail – the Panel discussed businesses' impact on residents and agreed that, ideally, shops would be responsible retailers which bore in mind environmental impact, encouraged healthy eating, and discouraged unhealthy habits e.g. gambling or sunbeds. However concerns were raised about the Council putting constraints on local businesses and having too much control over the make up of the parades, especially following the periods of difficult trading conditions since March 2020,.
- 6.5. Residential units – some leases included rental of the space on the first floor above the unit. The usage was up to the tenant – the space could be residential, be sub-let, or used for storage. It was noted that offering shop units without the first-floor accommodation and instead letting this space could expose a risk with respect to Right To Buy, and make the units a less attractive proposition in the longer term.
- 6.6. The Panel devised recommendations (a) and (b) in light of this information.

7. Business and Economic Development

- 7.1. The Panel queried whether the Council offered business advice or support to parade shop tenants. It was confirmed that the Business and Economic Development team were not frequently approached by tenants, but did offer signposting to those starting their own business (which encompassed those opening businesses on the parades) about business rates, planning and licensing, and commercial property availability. Support could also be given on grant schemes.
- 7.2. The Economic Regeneration Manager confirmed that the team could support further provision of advice to shop tenants if this was so requested. The Panel agreed that the direct provision of advice by the Council may be a conflict of interest, so any advice would need to be in the form of signposting to other organisations or agencies, which would in turn provide useful support.
- 7.3. The Panel devised recommendation (c) in light of this information.

8. Community Services

- 8.1. The Head of Community Services was invited to give the Panel an overview of crime and safety at the neighbourhood parades. It was heard that there was not a widespread problem of crime at the parades, but rather specific areas of recurrent anti-social behaviour. The Council worked with Sussex Police and the West Sussex Joint Action Group to respond to this and used various enforcement powers,

including those under the alcohol consumption Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), to control the issue.

- 8.2. It was emphasised that reporting was a key element of public safety – shop tenants and the public were encouraged to always report crime or anti-social behaviour and there were various methods for doing so, e.g. via Sussex Police, the Council's Community Wardens, or the Council's website or contact centre.
- 8.3. The Panel discussed CCTV at the parades. The Head of Community Services agreed that it was a useful tool but was of significant cost. Panel members recognised the cost implications but considered it important to request that Sussex Police (in collaboration with Neighbourhood Services Patch Officers and parade tenants) be asked to assess CCTV provision, including the cameras' placement and lines of sight, modernisation, effectiveness, and ease of monitoring with a view to improving these. It was heard that the Safer Crawley Partnership had recently purchased a mobile CCTV and ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) camera for use throughout the town. The Panel discussed potential links with the Safer Crawley Partnership and also suggested the installation of more signage warning the public about the presence of CCTV. It was hoped that any action taken would work as a deterrent, encourage the reporting of crime, and assist in identifying suspects.
- 8.4. The Panel devised recommendation (d) in light of this information.

9. Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development

- 9.1. Councillor Peter Smith, the Cabinet Member with portfolio responsibility for the neighbourhood parades (at the time), was invited to share information and opinions with the Panel. It was highlighted that rent from the parades made up a significant portion of the Council's income this needed to be balanced with a need to maintain affordable rates for shop tenants. The Panel was reminded that any changes to rental rates needed to be carefully considered in light of any financial implications.
- 9.2. The Panel was asked to keep in mind that the parades have been proven to have high community value (especially throughout the Coronavirus pandemic) and therefore any recommendations should continue to benefit residents into the future.

10. Public Consultation

- 10.1. It was decided that a consultation would be key to the Panel's work – garnering public opinion would highlight matters of interest and bring the Panel's focus to the issues that mattered most to the community. An online survey was to be created in order to be Covid-safe and reach as many people as possible. Panel members agreed to two sets of questions – one set for residents, and a further set for shop tenants (who would also receive the residents' questions).
- 10.2. The consultation ran between 13 May and 11 June 2021. The shop tenant section received [23 responses](#) and the resident section received [364 responses](#), which the Panel considered to be very positive. Key points raised by the Panel in its discussion of the responses are set out below.
- 10.3. Business support – 96% of respondents to the shop tenants section stated they did not receive support or advice from the Council; the Panel agreed that action should be taken to provide this.

- 10.4. Rent review process – a range of comments were made by shop tenants regarding rent reviews and Panel members noted the negative points made. Discussion was had on the frequency, transparency, and method of calculation of rent reviews. The Panel sought further information from officers to clarify the process.
- 10.5. Maintenance responsibilities – 74% of shop tenants believed that the maintenance responsibilities for their unit were not well-balanced between themselves and the Council. Many comments were made stating that repairs needed to be undertaken by tenants and this was costly and difficult – however this was essentially a stated misunderstanding of tenant obligations. Officers confirmed that all units' leases allocate responsibility for full repairs to the tenant, however in practice, the Council had been exceeding its maintenance obligations, e.g. the cost of communal cleaning could be recovered from tenants. The Council also paid for lighting and its replacement. The Panel noted that it was important to recall the multi-million pound neighbourhood parades improvement programme which had been accelerated in response to the economic downturn in 2008.
- 10.6. Communication with the Council – shop tenants were significantly in favour of having more opportunities to feed back to the Council about the running of the parades, responding positively to the Panel's idea of sending out regular questionnaires.
- 10.7. Community safety – one of the key areas highlighted in the public section of the consultation was that residents felt unsafe at the neighbourhood parades, particularly in the evening. 50% of respondents had experienced anti-social behaviour at the parades in the past year and the majority of these had not reported the incident(s) at the time. The Panel raised concerns about both community safety and the lack of reporting, and discussed options for improvement. It was noted that a Public Spaces Protection Order, renewed in 2020, prohibited the consumption of alcohol across the town where that consumption contributed to, linked to or was associated with disorder, nuisance, or annoyance to members of the public. It was hoped that this enabled Sussex Police and the Council to address community safety issues in a robust manner, with the Panel recognising that this could always be improved.
- 10.8. Trade types – the Panel expressed support for the views given via the consultation that the parades would benefit from a wider range of businesses, including traditional trades such as greengrocers. The Panel discussed possible incentives for encouraging a range of uses at the parades.
- 10.9. Streetscene – feedback on the tidiness of the parades was mixed, with mentions of graffiti, litter, and fly tipping. It was noted that the wider permanent streetscene at the parades may feel dated and so contribute to a feeling of untidiness. The Panel sought further information from the Council's Neighbourhood Services team.
- 10.10. The Panel agreed that the consultation had been very insightful and had produced a significant number of valuable responses from tenants and residents alike. It sought to bear these in mind at future meetings and when considering options for change.
- 10.11. The Panel devised recommendations (e), (f), (g), (h), (i), and (j) in light of this information.

11. Neighbourhood Services

- 11.1. In order to gain a whole picture of the neighbourhood parades, it was agreed that staff who visit on a daily basis should be invited to contribute to the Panel. The

Council's Neighbourhood Services Manager and a Patch Manager described in detail the issues encountered at the parades and showed photographs.

- 11.2. The main issues fell under two broad categories – streetscene (e.g. litter, unkempt landscaping, loose paving, graffiti, and damaged benches/bins etc) and anti-social behaviour (e.g. street drinking, fly tipping). Problems were observed on a daily basis.
- 11.3. Streetscene – the removal of litter and graffiti was time-consuming and there was a lack of resources and working capacity to do so. More permanent issues such as damaged street furniture would be costly to repair/replace and was not covered by the current Neighbourhood Services budget. Some issues could be improved through public education, but the overall appearance and maintenance of the parades would be best improved through more staff capacity/time spent working on the parades and the provision of new facilities. The Neighbourhood Services team suggested that up to three new members of staff and/or more funding would be of significant benefit. Two temporary staff members – financed by the Government's Covid-19 'Welcome Back' fund – had undertaken deep cleaning in the town centre in 2021, which demonstrated the potential success of increased staffing.
- 11.4. Anti-social behaviour – fly tipping was a significant issue at the parades. It was noted that West Sussex County Council's 'Let's SCRAP Fly Tipping' scheme was being implemented and it was hoped that this would crack down on the issue. The Council's Environmental Crime Officer also undertook work to prevent fly tipping but their position was Contain Outbreak Management Fund funded and was thus fixed-term. Action was taken against culprits and penalties sought wherever possible, but this was not without difficulty. The Panel also discussed that the consultation highlighted anti-social behaviour at the parades. It was heard that Community Wardens were contracted to work until 21:00 so were limited in their response; out-of-hours enforcement could therefore be improved. The Panel noted that tackling issues such as street drinking would improve public safety and also encourage trade for the parade shops, but would involve notable costs.
- 11.5. The Panel agreed that the photos of fly tipping shown by Neighbourhood Services were impactful and that these should be shared with residents as a deterrent. An article was therefore published in the [Spring 2022 issue](#) of Crawley Live magazine.
- 11.6. The Commercial Asset Manager highlighted that the Asset team kept a small budget for minor works at the parades (e.g. removal of small areas of graffiti, replacing bulbs, etc). Ward councillors should contact the team if any minor problems were reported by residents – the budget did not cover significant or long-term works.
- 11.7. The Panel agreed that it was key that the parades remained as community assets – they were meeting places for residents and long-standing neighbourhood hubs – and the issues discussed were detrimental to this. The Panel praised the various teams for their contributions to the upkeep of the parades and recognised that there were significant pressures on staffing and resources, which prevented the teams from undertaking both time-consuming 'everyday' tasks and significant long-term work. It was considered worthwhile to request that the Cabinet investigates this.
- 11.8. The Panel devised recommendations (k), (l), and (m) in light of this information.

12. Parade Shop Tenants

- 12.1. As part of the consultation (parade tenant section) 14 of 23 respondents (61%) stated they were interested in attending a meeting of the Panel to share their views. This

was considered a key element of the consultation process, so those 14 tenants were contacted with an invitation. Nine confirmed that they would like to attend. Tenants of the Ifield, Furnace Green, Southgate, and Tilgate parades addressed the Panel. The following matters made up the main points of discussion at the session.

- 12.2. Rent reviews – several shop tenants voiced strong concerns that the current rent review process was unclear and unfair. Increases to rents were considered extreme and rising costs were a problem for some tenants, and it was felt that rental rates did not reflect how much the Council and residents seemed to value small businesses operating on the parades. A suggestion was made that a unit's rent could be linked to its financial turnover and the Panel discussed the pros and cons of this.
- 12.3. Insurance arrangements – some tenants stated that it was not clear how to find details or claim on their insurance policy following damage to their unit. Tenants had experienced delays and poor communication with insurance companies. It was explained to the Panel that the Council arranged buildings insurance on behalf of tenants via a three-yearly tender process to find the most suitable provider, with the cost of the premium falling to the tenant. Tenants were also responsible for contents insurance. The Panel agreed that lease details such as these should be clarified.
- 12.4. Communication – tenants raised concerns about the lack of negotiation with the Council and communication with the Council's executive particularly when discussing rent reviews and lease clauses. The Panel discussed the importance of open communication between the Council and tenants, and suggested that communication styles should be examined, refined, and improved. It was agreed that, in light of this, tenants were welcome to continue to share their views at future Panel meetings.
- 12.5. It was highlighted that the Panel's scope was to examine the bigger picture at the parades rather than focusing on the rent review/lease renewal processes. However the Panel was sympathetic to tenants facing financial challenges, particularly in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic. Tenants requested that the Panel continue to have careful and informed discussions on all relevant matters.
- 12.6. The Panel devised recommendations (n) and (o) in light of this information.

13. Graves Jenkins

- 13.1. The Panel requested that a Director of Graves Jenkins, the Council's letting agency for neighbourhood parade units, be invited to attend a witness session to share their expertise from an independent viewpoint. A detailed description of the rent review process was requested and other elements of the letting process were summarised.
- 13.2. The Panel was informed that there was high demand for parade units; there had been few vacancies or lease sales; and more traditional shop uses were increasing. These were considered to be positive signifiers of the situation at the parades.
- 13.3. A wide-ranging and detailed conversation was held with the witness. The Panel discussed rental rates and was informed that basing rent on market rates was the most common approach nationally. The current upward-only rent review process and other options were also discussed. It was heard that rental rates could be based on annual RPI/CPI, which would avoid the need for rent reviews, but this was not considered to be as accurate a reflection of rental rates. Alternatively, rents could be charged based on the business's turnover which relied on businesses providing their accounts to the landlord. A further alternative was for a tenant to sign a shorter lease (e.g. 5 years) however it was highlighted that lease renewals were normally more

costly than rent reviews. It was agreed that the evidence pointed to the current rent review process as being more straightforward than other options.

- 13.4. The rent review and lease assignment process was seen to have attracted considerable public and media interest, as happened periodically. This report does not contain any recommendation for change to the fundamental rent review and lease assignment process as the Panel was not satisfied that it had received evidence to justify any major reform. However, a number of the recommendations in this report are designed to assist with the implementation of the rent review process for tenants, Council taxpayers and the Council; these were informed by consultation and witness feedback received.
- 13.5. In reaching this conclusion, the Panel was mindful of the financial importance of parade unit rental income to the provision of Council services, amounting to some £3.0m in 2019/20 (around 20% of the revenue budget).
- 13.6. It was considered that the rent review process based on a five-year period using the zoning method described by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors was appropriate for use by the Council in seeking a market rent for the use taken on by a tenant. This was considered to have advantages over the RPI method and any approach based upon turnover, as noted in paragraph 13.3. A further suggestion for more frequent/annual rent reviews was not considered to be viable as this would eliminate what was effectively a five-year rent freeze and would be more costly to implement. This would likely lead to a continuous process as it would be rare for a rent review to conclude smoothly in sufficient time before the next one was due.
- 13.7. The Panel felt that in order to better support tenants through the rent review process, more could be done to ensure they were informed about the process and the likely increase that would be due at each review. It was agreed that any information that could be given in advance may help to reduce both stress and financial burden on tenants and prepare them for upcoming rent reviews.
- 13.8. The Panel devised recommendation (p) in light of this information.

14. Other matters

- 14.1. The Panel considered a number of other matters as part of its work, including (but not limited to) the following.
- 14.2. At the request of the Panel, the Head of Corporate Finance offered regular updates on the levels of arrears owed by shop tenants. The total arrears were into the hundreds of thousands (this had been exacerbated by the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic). Most tenants worked well with the Council to manage their finances; a significant portion of the arrears was owed by a small number of tenants. It was also heard that the Council had implemented payment plans with tenants in order to recover arrears, which had been successful as the total amount owed had begun to decrease. Legislation implemented during the pandemic had restricted the measures that the Council as landlord could take to recover owed funds – this legislation was due to fall away in September 2022 and would allow the Council to begin to recoup arrears more effectively. The Panel sympathised with those whose businesses had been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic and hoped that the business grants offered over recent years had helped to mitigate losses. It was agreed, however, that it was unacceptable for some tenants to continue to owe such significant amounts as this led to financial and reputational problems for both tenant and landlord. The

Panel agreed that action should be taken to retrieve substantial arrears which were essentially a cost to Council taxpayers.

- 14.3. The Panel devised recommendation (q) in light of this information.
- 14.4. Promotion and advertisement of the parades was considered a key element of encouraging residents to shop at local businesses. The Panel enquired as to whether this was undertaken by the Council, and in response, it was heard that in 2021 the Communications team had approached shop tenants asking to include their details on two new webpages – one on the Council's [website](#) specifically about the parade shops, listing contact details and opening hours – and another, the ['It's Local' business directory](#) which allowed users to search for details of any listed businesses in Crawley. At the Panel's request, these sites were publicised via the Council's social media and via the Councillors' Information Bulletin. It was agreed that these were beneficial for both shoppers and tenants, and the Panel discussed options for offering businesses further publicity in the future via Crawley Live magazine.
- 14.5. The Panel devised recommendations (r) and (s) in light of this information.
- 14.6. Panel members considered a suggestion that Milligan Ltd, a retail development company, be asked to review the Council's neighbourhood parades policies. Milligan had used its expertise to advise other local authorities on similar matters. The Panel agreed to contact Milligan and after a lengthy chain of communication, a quote for the review was obtained. Panel members discussed this and determined, following advice from officers, that there was not sufficient funding to undertake the review.
- 14.7. Throughout the course of the Panel, regular updates were provided about the Covid-19 business grants available to local businesses. The grants were generally not restricted for specific purposes – there were guidelines for their use but it was a tenant's choice as to how to spend the money. Grants were received by tenants in arrears and those without arrears. It was also noted that fortunately some 75% of parade businesses were able to remain open during the Coronavirus lockdowns and the grants were available regardless of this. Grant uptake had been high – as of August 2022 a total of £2,056,000 had been paid out to parade shop tenants by the Council since March 2020. Information about the grants was sent via email, mailshots, and direct conversation with the Council's Finance team. At the request of the Panel, further reminders were sent directly to tenants. The Panel also contacted Crawley councillors to ask them to distribute reminders to residents and tenants.
- 14.8. The Panel discussed the occupancy rate of neighbourhood parade units. The number of vacant units was consistently very low – there were usually only a few vacant units at any given time and sometimes these were undergoing repairs before being put on the market. It was also noted that interest in renting a unit was high; this had positive implications. Interested parties were asked to contact the Council/Graves Jenkins to be added to a waiting list – who would then be contacted when a unit suitable for their proposed use is placed on the market.
- 14.9. When discussing business advice provision, the Panel noted that the seven West Sussex borough and district councils had recently collaborated on a new project, the West Sussex Retail Training and Support Programme 2021/22, to offer support and advice to independent businesses. The [Retail Hub](#) included pre-recorded training sessions, live events, resources, and skills modules to improve a business's offer. The service was free until 2024. The Panel agreed that the Hub could be a very useful tool for parade businesses and, following discussion at a Panel meeting, shop tenants were contacted directly to inform them of the services on offer. The Panel

also asked councillors to publicise the Hub to their ward residents to encourage as many people as possible to utilise the resources.

15. Recommendations of the Panel

15.1. The Panel's recommendations are as follows:

- a) Maintain a list of essential/traditional and desirable parade uses to allow consideration of lower offers for essential/traditional trades, subject to still obtaining a market rent for the use decided upon.
- b) Request that the Asset Team consults with ward councillors on all new lease assignments and changes of tenant to Council-owned neighbourhood parades (subject to compliance with legal constraints/timings, namely those set out in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1988). Where one or more ward councillors raise objections to the proposal(s), the matter will be referred to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder for a decision (this will require a change to the Sub-Delegation Scheme).
- c) Engage the Business and Economic Development Team to signpost all parade tenants to business and training support, advice, and resources (e.g. the West Sussex Retail Hub) at the beginning of and throughout their tenancy.
- d) Seek to influence a review of the neighbourhood parade CCTV coverage and assess any blind spots, including through representations to the Safer Crawley Partnership.
- e) Prepare and send an annual questionnaire to parade shop tenants.
- f) Convene an annual Parade Tenants' Forum, overseen by the Leader of the Council, to include the feedback from the annual questionnaire.
- g) Subject the lease agreement to an external test of the language used (e.g. Crystal Mark accreditation) and produce a summary version in plain language, accompanying while not substituting for the legal content of the main lease.
- h) Seek to influence the relevant authorities to enhance the arrangements of a zero-tolerance policy on alcohol consumption at the parades and seek to secure increased patrols from Sussex Police/PCSOs.
- i) Provide tenants with updates on the mechanisms for crime and anti-social behaviour reporting.
- j) Consider a capital resource allocation to assess a further round of neighbourhood parade improvements, to maintain the benefits delivered by the previous programme.
- k) Raise awareness amongst ward councillors of the Asset Team's small budget allocated for improvement works on the neighbourhood parades.
- l) Consider allocating increased resources to the Neighbourhood Services Team to offer an enhanced inspection/cleaning regime on the neighbourhood parades.

- m) Consider allocating increased resources to the Community Wardens Team to facilitate a longer patrol pattern that gives increased priority to the neighbourhood parades.
- n) Engage the Communications Team to witness a sample of rent negotiation dialogues (subject to individual tenant agreement) to facilitate commentary on the effectiveness and style of these engagements.
- o) Ensure that lease assignment dialogues specifically test and record in signed-off notes mutual understanding of the rent review process and council/tenant maintenance obligations.
- p) Ensure officers work with tenants to prepare for the potential amount of rent increases arising from their next five-year review, without prejudice to the actual proposition arising from that review.
- q) Request that the Asset Team pro-actively prevent the build-up of unacceptably high tenant debt in the interests of the tenants and council taxpayers, to include the realistic consideration of an early termination of tenancy in preference to allowing an increasing debt with no prospect of repayment.
- r) Maintain a web presence of all neighbourhood parade shops which wish to be represented, with this forming part of the offer of a new lease assignment.
- s) Use Crawley Live to provide a mention to all new parade lease assignments and tenants (subject to full compliance with the terms of their lease).

16. Implications

- 16.1. Financial: recommendations (j), (l) and (m) request the consideration of allocations of resources/capital to certain teams within the Council. Other recommendations may have less significant financial implications in terms of administrative costs or staff time. These will need to be considered by the Cabinet in the context of the budget and advice should be sought from the Finance team, given the financial pressures on the General Fund. The economic outlook may continue to be depressed in the public sector, having a significant effect on demand-led expenditure budgets.
- 16.2. Legal: the Council must comply with all relevant legislation when acting in its role as landlord, including (but not limited to): the Landlord & Tenant Acts 1927, 1954, and 1988, and the Local Government Act 1972.
- 16.3. Environmental: due regard must be had for the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan when considering and implementing the Panel's recommendations.

17. Background Papers

- 17.1. [Meeting agendas & minutes - Council-owned Neighbourhood Parades Scrutiny Panel](#)

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