

Scrutiny

ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024



HOUSING
TRANSPORT
SAFEGUARDING
RISK
VITALITY
ROAD ACCIDENTS

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Introduction from the 2023-24 Scrutiny Chairs

Scrutiny & Overview Committee Chair, Councillor Rowenna Davis

Scrutiny is proud of its role in improving the governance and accountability of this Council. Over the last year, we have led listening events and visits, drawing on the views of residents and community groups to strengthen our questioning of those in power, and to make recommendations that put residents first. From financial support with council tax to violence against women and girls, from homelessness to fly-tipping, our cross-party members have made a difference.



Whilst we have seen the Council make real progress in terms of its governance and internal financial management, our chief concern continues to be the long-term financial future of this local authority. At present, the Council is still set to spend 17p out of every £1 on debt interest payments, leaving too little for the services our residents desperately need. Scrutiny will continue to push those in power for a big answer to this big problem, as well as the wider transformation of this Council, to better serve its residents.

Children & Young People Sub-Committee Chair, Councillor Richard Chatterjee

The 2023-2024 year, as in other recent years, has faced the ever-pervasive constraint of the Council's financial circumstances, exacerbated by continual growth in demand and complexity of need. The Sub-Committee has sought to co-ordinate and reflect the Scrutiny & Overview Committee's structured questions, especially in relation to finance, and has also continued to try and further its aim to include the voice of the children into its work.



A theme that has been reflected in several topics is how they serve the needs of looked-after children. We have continued our interest in the Health Visiting service, Maintained Nursery Schools and Family Hubs and their roll-out and how they will deliver aspirations.

There have been many useful insights from the Sub-Committee and particularly the co-opted members (representatives of the Teachers Union, the Catholic Diocese and Governors).

I would like to thank all the members of the sub-committee and the officers who have supported us this past year, both within the Council, the NHS and other services such as the police, and of the other group representatives which have attended and assisted the Sub-Committee.

Health & Social Care Sub-Committee Chair, Councillor Eunice O'Dame

During the 2023-24 period, the Health & Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee meticulously examined critical aspects of adult social care and health services. Our focus included budget scrutiny, staffing costs, and the development of alternatives to traditional care. Additionally, we delved into service pathways, assessed strengths and weaknesses, and prepared for a Local Government Association Peer Challenge. As they navigated financial performance, they emphasised involving residents in digital solutions. Uncertainties remain for the forthcoming year, shaping the future of adult social care and health services must be pivotal in Croydon.



The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee Chair has also closely collaborated with the Joint Overview Health Scrutiny Committee to provide feedback on proposed changes to a highly specialised children's cancer treatment service reconfiguration. These changes have the potential to significantly extend travel times for children and their parents, coupled with additional cost implications to the families. Our focus was on thoroughly considering the perspectives and needs of Croydon residents, aiming to minimise any adverse impact resulting from the proposed changes. As a matter of importance, the Sub-Committee referred this matter to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee, recommending the proposal for the service reconfiguration be referred to the Secretary of State for Health to review the decision.

Homes Sub-Committee Chair, Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel

TBC



Streets & Environment Sub-Committee Chair, Councillor Ria Patel

I've been proud to chair the Streets & Environment Scrutiny Sub-Committee for nearly two years. Having a Green Party Chair for this committee is fitting and it would be good practice to see all scrutiny committees chaired by opposition parties so that the Council is not marking its own homework.

Having raised that the Air Quality Action Plan and Flood Risk Management Strategy were both out-of-date, it was good to scrutinise these new documents this year. However, whilst we have seen progress on these plans, given that we are living through a climate crisis which is getting worse, it is very disappointing that the review of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan has been continuously pushed back, and is still yet to be heard, especially as Croydon Council declared a climate emergency in 2019.

Thank you to all the officers working hard in this directorate, and to my fellow councillors, and Vice Chair, Councillor Louis Carserides, for their effective scrutiny and work to improve the governance and accountability of Croydon Council in this portfolio. There is a lot of work left to be done.



Scrutiny & Overview Committee

Scrutiny's role is to hold to account the Mayor, the Council, its officers and partners. It has the right to ask for information, ask questions and make recommendations for change. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee directs the performance of all overview and scrutiny functions at the Council, including the development of procedures governing the operation of both the Committee and its Sub-Committees. It also has responsibility for scrutinising crime and disorder matters. The Committee will consider any call-in of Cabinet decisions other than those relating to education matters, which are heard by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee. The following is a snapshot of some of our proudest achievements of work covered by the Scrutiny & Overview Committee during 2023-24.

23/24 MEMBERSHIP

Rowenna Davis (C),
Richard Chatterjee (VC),
Leila Ben-Hassel (DC)
Jade Appleton (until Dec 23),
Sue Bennett (from Dec 23),
Simon Fox,
Eunice O'Dame

Budget Scrutiny

The Budget Scrutiny process in 2023-24 had two main strands, firstly monitoring the in-year delivery of the 2023-24 budget and secondly scrutinising the development of the 2024-25 budget. In preparation for the Budget Scrutiny process, Committee members received training on best practices for budget scrutiny and risk management, which enhanced their ability to scrutinise financial performance and strategies effectively. The Committee commended the early provision of budget information throughout the process, as it allowed for more effective scrutiny compared to the year before.

The Scrutiny & Overview Committee has focused on monitoring the delivery of the in-year budget throughout 2023-2024, reviewing the latest financial performance reports at each meeting. This approach allowed the Committee to identify key areas of risk and reassure itself that there is effective management of the Council's budget. Where concerns were raised, such as the overspend within the Housing service budget relating to additional work required to clear the backlog of repairs or the increasing demand for homelessness services, the Committee were also able to refer these to the relevant sub-committee for further, in-depth scrutiny.

On October 24 2023, the Committee considered the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) report, which included savings proposals for 2024-25. Despite recognising improvements in the Council's financial governance and monitoring processes, the Committee concluded that its long-term sustainability and independence remained at risk due to the unresolved historic debt burden. The Committee accepted that a solution agreeable to both the Council and the Government needed to be identified if this issue was going to be fully resolved. The Committee's subsequent review of the Capital Programme & Capital Strategy 2023-29 on January 16 2024, echoed similar concerns about the unsustainability of the annual capitalisation required to balance the General Fund budget.

The Committee noted a healthier financial situation for the Housing Revenue Account capital budget compared to the General Fund capital budget and supported using reserves instead of borrowing for capital works in 2024-25. Additionally, the four scrutiny Sub-Committees—Children & Young People, Health & Social Care, Streets & Environment, and Homes—each met with their relevant Cabinet Members and Corporate Directors to identify key areas of risk to review at their meetings in January 2024. The conclusions and recommendations from these meetings informed the Committee’s consideration of the final Budget Scrutiny Report at its meeting on 12 February 2024.

At the conclusion of the Budget Scrutiny process, the Committee agreed that, despite significant efforts, it continued to be the case that the Council could not balance its budget without Government approval for further capitalisation. Without addressing the £38 million annual shortfall in the General Fund budget, the long-term sustainability and independence of the Council remained uncertain. The Committee questioned the deliverability of the proposed savings for 2024-25. Although reassurance was provided that they were thought to be achievable, it was accepted that the scale of these savings and the pace of delivery needed would require close monitoring. The Committee were of the view that the removal of the £5 million Economic Demands Pressures Fund from the 2024-25 budget was an increased risk in a volatile economic environment. Although there was acknowledgement that this decision had been based on improved budget modelling, there was concern that there had been unforeseen demands upon the budget in 2023-24 that could have been mitigated by the fund, and its removal decreased the ability of the Council to manage any future unforeseen financial challenges.

The Committee recognised that the scale and pace of the Council's transformation work was not as sufficiently developed as hoped. However, the recent recruitment of a Director of Transformation and the forthcoming Transformation Strategy indicated a growing ambition for change.

The Committee raised concerns about the reduction of the Hardship Fund as not all Members were convinced that everyone who needed it may have heard of it. However, the Committee noted that the reallocation of these funds to the Council Tax Support Scheme instead of it being absorbed into the wider General Fund budget. The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommended increasing awareness of the Hardship Scheme, particularly among groups identified as most affected by the proposed Council Tax increase, according to Equalities Impact Assessments.

The Committee also requested that an updated Appendix L – Financial Risks, was included in the budget papers for Council's consideration, which fully detailed the potential mitigation and quantified risks for 2024-25. Additionally, it was requested that the Audit & Governance Committee should review this Financial Risks document as soon as possible. Finally, for transparency, the Committee recommended that the final budget report to Council included more detailed information to explain the reasons for the further legacy Capitalisation Direction of £9.4 million for 2019-20. These recommendations were accepted by the Executive Mayor in Cabinet.

Equalities Strategy & People & Cultural Strategy

In July 2023, the Scrutiny & Overview Committee had the opportunity to feed into the development of the refreshed Equalities Strategy, reviewing the key principles and areas of focus. The Committee highlighted that previous versions of the Strategy had often lacked tangible targets to judge delivery and emphasised the importance of ensuring the refreshed Equalities Strategy Action Plan had a greater focus on measurable outcomes, using SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant & Time-Bound) targets, which would ensure that progress made with delivery could be easily assessed. It was confirmed by officers that the forthcoming action plan would have a greater focus on SMART targets.

The Scrutiny & Overview Committee made several specific recommendations on the refreshed Equalities Strategy for the consideration of the Executive Mayor. Firstly, that further consideration is given to how the strategy can better reflect the intersectionality between protected characteristics. Secondly, to enhance accountability, the Committee recommended developing a process for regular challenge sessions with officers responsible for specific actions within the strategy as part of its ongoing monitoring.

The Committee agreed with the proposal for a longer-term end date for the strategy but recommended including key review points to allow for adjustments and to ensure the strategy remained dynamic and adaptable to new initiatives or legislation. Lastly, Scrutiny & Overview suggested embedding Equalities Champions within directorates to support and enhance the existing structures and systems aimed at promoting equalities and inclusivity within the Council. These recommendations were agreed and incorporated into the Strategy.

At its meeting on 26 September 2024, the Committee reviewed the action plan that had been created to guide the delivery of the People & Cultural Transformation Strategy, commending the ongoing co-creation approach with staff for both the strategy and its action plan. When the Committee previously reviewed the draft Strategy in January 2023, it had recommended ensuring the action plan had SMART targets. Having reviewed the Action Plan, the Committee concluded that while there were "measures of success" included in the People & Cultural Transformation Strategy Action Plan, these needed to be re-evaluated to ensure they included SMART targets to make monitoring of delivery easier, which was accepted.

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Plan

At its meeting on 26 March 2024, the Committee undertook its annual review of Crime and Disorder matters in the borough. It was decided before the meeting to include a particular focus on the work of the Community Safety Partnership in tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG), with the Committee also given the opportunity to feed into the Mayor's forthcoming Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Plan.

Ahead of its consideration of this item, to improve their understanding of the challenges facing victims and survivors, members of the Committee attended a community meeting hosted by the CVA focussed on this topic, set up dedicated

listening sessions to listen sensitively both to voluntary organisations and another one for survivors. The Committee would like to thank all the individuals and organisations who gave their time to discuss their experiences, which provided an invaluable insight.

From its discussion of the delivery plan, the Committee welcomed the Council's openness to exploring opportunities for transferring funding to community and voluntary sector groups through the commissioning service and external grants and agreed that it would like to return to this commitment at a later date to judge the progress made. The Committee also noted concern that the excellent VAWG services available in both the statutory and third sectors were not well known by the public and agreed that this needed to be addressed. As such, the planned review of the Council's community safety web pages to provide a centralized source of information on support services was welcomed, with a suggestion made to explore the possibility of distributing hard copies of this information for community use.

Additionally, from the feedback received in the sessions prior to the meeting, the Committee raised concerns about the cultural competence of staff, which may in some instances be leading inadvertently to the unequal treatment of victims, particularly those from black and ethnic minority communities. As a result, the Committee recommended the implementation of comprehensive training for statutory partners on the various forms of VAWG, aimed at improving their cultural competence.

The Scrutiny & Overview Committee made several other recommendations for consideration in the final Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Delivery Plan. These include restarting pre-pandemic engagement efforts with local businesses to raise awareness about signs of violence, expanding the provision of Domestic Abuse Champions to community-based champions, and an increased focus on children from families experiencing domestic abuse.

Additionally, the Committee recommended creating a document outlining available support and services for VAWG victims for distribution within local communities. The importance of holding perpetrators accountable was particularly important and as such recommended that the Delivery Plan explicitly address VAWG as a 'male problem,' advocating for increased engagement with male community leaders. The potential partnership with Crystal Palace Football Club for a VAWG campaign was also proposed.

Finally, to ensure accountability, the Committee recommended the inclusion of key performance indicators in the Mayor's Business Plan Performance reports to ensure there was clear visibility of delivery and to provide a measure of the effectiveness of the Delivery Plan. A response from the Mayor to these recommendations is due to at the Cabinet meeting on 24 July 2024.

Children & Young People Sub-Committee

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee scrutinises key issues affecting children and young people in the borough as well as the services provided by the Council and its partners. It has the power to scrutinise the functions of the Council as a Local Education Authority.

Some highlights of items considered by the Children and Young People Sub-Committee in 2023-24 can be found below. Members also received the Early Help, Children's Social Care and Education Dashboard each meeting to ensure that they were reassured about the performance of the Children, Young People and Education Directorate across a number of different areas, as well as Antenatal and Health Visiting Key Performance Indicators.

Health Visiting

The Sub-Committee continued its focus on Health Visiting provision in Croydon at its meetings in June 2023 and March 2024. Members looked at the significant challenges facing the Health Visiting service, notably high national and local vacancy rates impacting service delivery. The Sub-Committee heard about efforts underway to improve service efficiency through initiatives like 'One Front Door' and flexible working conditions for practitioners. The Sub-Committee recommended establishing a working group to explore recruitment and retention incentives and possible housing support for staff. In the summer of 2023, the Sub-Committee met with frontline Health Visitors to discuss their experiences and to gain a greater understanding of the challenges facing staff delivering services.

At the March 2024 meeting, the Sub-Committee commended the priority given to service improvement by the Chief Executive of Croydon Health Services and Chief Nurse of Croydon Health Services and stated that they were keen to see this trend continue. Members were positive about improvements to New Birth Visits and 6-8 Week Checks and were encouraged to hear that the service was now looking at how to increase performance for 12 month and 2-2.5 year mandated checks.

Maintained Nursery Schools

The Sub-Committee received the June 2023 Cabinet Report outlining the position in relation to Croydon's Maintained Nursery Schools (MNS) and options for future provision. Financial sustainability and declining birth rates were key issues discussed

23/24 MEMBERSHIP

Richard Chatterjee (C),
Maddie Henson (VC),
Tamar Barrett
Mark Johnson,
Holly Ramsey,
Manju Shahul-Hameed,
Catherine Wilson,
Josephine Copeland (Non-voting Teacher
representative),
Elaine Jones (Voting Catholic Diocese
Representative),
Paul O'Donnell (Voting Parent Governor)

as well as the launch of the consultation process to explore alternative operating models. Concerns about the impact on SEND provision and parental choice were highlighted and the Sub-Committee emphasized the importance of considering feedback from families and stakeholders to ensure provision supported children's education effectively while addressing the financial challenges of the Council. The outcome of the MNS consultation is due to be considered by Scrutiny & Overview in 24/25.

Youth Justice Plan 23/24 and Youth Safety Delivery Plan

In October 2023, the Sub-Committee discussed the Youth Justice Plan and the Youth Safety Delivery Plan. The discussions highlighted the unique vulnerabilities of the female cohort in the justice system, the factors contributing to youth violence, and the importance of engaging families in prevention and intervention. The Youth Safety Delivery Plan, approved in September 2023, aimed to reduce serious youth violence and involvement in the criminal justice system, improve residents' safety, and enhance collaboration across the partnership and community. The Sub-Committee decided to include the Youth Justice Plan in the 24/25 Work Programme, emphasizing the need for greater parental and carer involvement in the plan's development.

Budget Scrutiny Challenge

In January 2024, the Sub-Committee considered the 2024/25 CYPE budget proposals, focusing on the Children's Social Care staffing budget realignment and the review of Children Looked After Placements. The Sub-Committee expressed optimism about the proposed CYPE Strategic Transformation Partner and the potential increase of in-house provision through a new Children's Home. Members were reassured that officers and the Cabinet Member had recognised that holding a 7% vacancy would present an unacceptable risk in Children's Social Care, and that this saving would not be included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Sub-Committee remained committed to ensuring that financial decisions would not compromise the welfare of children and young people in Croydon.

Health & Social Care Sub-Committee

The Health & Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee scrutinises key issues affecting health and social care in the borough as well as the services provided by the Council and its partners.

Some highlights of items considered by the Health & Social Care Sub-Committee in 2023-24 can be found below.

Adult Social Care & Health Transformation Programme

In October 2023, the Sub-Committee reviewed the budget and savings process for Adult Social Care and Health, focusing on the forecasted overspend for working-age adults in Croydon. Members noted that while staffing costs were underspent, this could hinder service delivery. Members noted that the Council's recruitment of new social workers and implementation of financial measures, such as the "care cubed" funding matrix, aimed to ensure value for money and control service provider pricing, and that the development of alternatives to traditional care was underway.

The Sub-Committee acknowledged the higher demand and cost per capita for working-age adults, with the Council expecting reductions through better support and collaboration with other departments. Members were concerned about the workload for newly qualified social workers, however, they were assured that there were actions in place to manage the workload.

Deep-dive exercises to improve service pathways, particularly for autism and neurodiversity, were discussed. The Sub-Committee also reviewed an internal assessment for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to identify strengths and weaknesses, with preparations for a Local Government Association Peer Challenge in November 2023. The Sub-Committee remained committed to managing financial performance without compromising the quality of Adult Social Care and Health services in Croydon.

Budget Scrutiny Challenge

In January 2024, the Sub-Committee reviewed the Adult Social Care and Health Directorate's financial performance and transformation progress for the 2023/2024 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the upcoming 2024-2027 MTFS. Members noted that the quality of data collection had improved, and that the Directorate was meeting its savings objectives despite inflation and increasing demand for services. The Sub-Committee expressed concern over the budget

23/24 MEMBERSHIP

Eunice O'Dame (C),
Robert Ward (VC),
Adele Benson,
Patsy Cummings,
Sherwan Chowdhury,
Holly Ramsey,
Gordon Kay (Non-Voting, Healthwatch
Croydon),
Yusuf Osman (Non-Voting, Croydon Adult
Social Services User Panel)

increase from £129.8m to £141m due to the transfer of a team from the Housing Directorate, emphasising the need for supervision and accountability.

Questions were raised about the impact of asylum seekers and refugees on adult social care and health, the risk of care providers exiting the market, and the increasing cost of care packages. The Council assured members that systems like the “care cubed” funding matrix were in place to ensure value for money, and that regular reviews of care packages were conducted. Members also expressed their concerns about the influence of housing on adult social care and health, staff shortages. Members of the Sub-Committees acknowledged the benefits of the implementation of digital innovations and artificial intelligence (AI), yet they expressed their concerns about potential risks associated.

The Sub-Committee discussed the importance of involving residents in developing digital solutions and the impact of inflation on the transformation program. They sought reassurance that the transformation program would not be hindered by staff shortages and that resources would be reallocated as necessary. The Sub-Committee concluded that, while there was assurance in the ongoing delivery of the in-year budget, there were still uncertainties in the forthcoming year's budget.

Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee collaborated closely with Executive Members to provide detailed feedback to the Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding proposed changes to the very specialised children's cancer treatment service reconfiguration. The proposed changes could result in considerably longer travel times for children and their parents. The Sub-Committee's efforts were focused on ensuring that the perspectives and needs of Croydon residents were thoroughly considered, and the negative impact of the changes was as little as possible. This cooperative approach aimed to guarantee that the most suitable and effective solution for the local community was selected, prioritising the health and well-being of Croydon's children. The Sub-Committee reached to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee to refer this service reconfiguration to the Secretary of State for Health as a matter of importance.

Homes Sub-Committee

The Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee scrutinises key issues affecting housing in the borough as well as the services provided by the Council and its partners.

Some highlights of items considered by the Health & Social Care Sub-Committee in 2023-24 can be found below.

23/24 MEMBERSHIP

Leila Ben-Hassel (C),
Adele Benson (VC),
Sue Bennett,
Claire Bonham,
Danielle Denton,
Kola Agboola,
Ellily Ponnuthurai

Housing Strategy

The Sub-Committee considered a report on the development of a Housing Strategy, focusing on the strategic objectives. Members expressed optimism about the extensive Vision & Mission sessions held with residents, tenants, leaseholders, and staff, which informed the five key priorities and 14 objectives in Croydon's Housing Strategy. Reassurances were given that the Housing Strategy was developed to complement the Local Plan, with input from Planning colleagues to address the need for increased social housing supply through partnerships with housing associations.

The Sub-Committee was reassured that a forum with housing associations was being established to address the supply of affordable housing stock. Members emphasised the importance of aligning the priorities with residents' needs, with ongoing engagement to adapt the Strategy accordingly. It was noted that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, Asset Management Strategy, and Housing Strategy were being closely coordinated to enhance resident outcomes.

Specific concerns were addressed regarding provision for residents fleeing domestic violence. The Head of Homelessness & Assessments explained the integration of domestic abuse considerations within the Homelessness Strategy and the forthcoming Allocation Scheme. Training for staff to identify domestic violence and improved data capture for funding access were highlighted as priorities.

Addressing anti-social behaviour (ASB) was also a key focus. The Sub-Committee was informed of the Service Level Agreement with the ASB team and the quarterly review of ASB reports and perceptions. Immediate satisfaction surveys following ASB case closures were part of the strategy to ensure residents felt safe reporting incidents.

The Sub-Committee remained committed to ensuring that the Housing Strategy was robust, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of Croydon residents, with a strong emphasis on continuous stakeholder engagement and strategic alignment across Council objectives.

Homelessness Strategy

The Sub-Committee reviewed the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029. Concerns were raised about the recent service restructure and its effectiveness. Officers assured that the new structure was the correct approach, despite significant challenges and the need for substantial time and effort. They highlighted external issues, such as increasing homelessness, and explained that starting from a poor baseline meant a long-term improvement journey.

Additional concerns included the strategy's implementation pace, the impact of migration due to lower rents, and cooperation with landlords. The Sub-Committee questioned officer training and efforts to reduce reliance on temporary accommodation. Recommendations included reviewing the homelessness service structure, fast-tracking prevention workstreams, learning from high-performing authorities, and introducing safety checks for private sector tenants. They also suggested establishing a contact point for the charity sector and promoting good practice among housing associations.

Budget Scrutiny Challenge

The Sub-Committee reviewed the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Housing General Fund budgets for 2024-25. The Sub-Committee discussed various aspects of the budget, including the management of the forecasted overspend in 2023-24 to address repair backlogs, the influence of survey responses on the 2024-25 budget, and the impending review informed by the stock condition survey results.

The Sub-Committee expressed concerns about the pace and achievability of savings and the increasing costs of temporary accommodation. Officers outlined strategies for managing these costs, including improving demand management and supporting residents in temporary accommodation. They also addressed the challenges and potential solutions for reducing reliance on commercial hotels.

The Sub-Committee made several recommendations and requests for follow-up actions. These included a request for an updated staffing structure, confirmation of the dynamic purchasing system's go-live date, a progress update on Sycamore House, and data on families in commercial hotels and hostels. Members also sought information on how the Housing Service promoted its 'open-door' policy for people in housing need.

In conclusion, the Sub-Committee acknowledged the progress made by the Housing Service in stabilising operations and governance. However, they identified key risks due to unanalysed data, particularly from stock condition surveys, which could impact budget delivery and capital investment needs. The Sub-Committee expressed cautious optimism about the Housing Service's understanding of pressures and priorities but could not provide full reassurance on the 2024-25 budget without complete data validation. The Sub-Committee looked forward to further reviewing the HRA Business Plan and demand management transformation later in 2024-25.

Streets & Environment Sub-Committee

The Streets and Environment Scrutiny Sub-Committee has a broad remit. It investigates services and issues relating to public and private transport, Croydon's highways, waste management and environmental issues. In all its work, the Sub-Committee seeks to promote sustainability and to promote the health and wellbeing of Croydon's residents.

23/24 MEMBERSHIP

Ria Patel (C)
Louis Carserides (VC),
Danielle Denton,
Gayle Gander,
Stella Nabukeera,
Ellily Ponnuthurai,
Nikhil Sherine Thampi

Some highlights of items considered by the considered by the Streets & Environment Sub-Committee in 2023-24 can be found below. Members also received the Financial Performance Monitoring report from the most recent Cabinet meeting to ensure that they were reassured about the delivery of the Sustainable Communities, Regeneration and Economic Recovery Directorate budget.

Parking

In July 2023, the Sub-Committee considered the draft Parking Policy and Action Plan, which was subsequently approved at Cabinet in July 2023. Members raised concerns about resources and heard that the Council had allocated £200,000 for this, with external resources brought in for specialist tasks. The policy's success would be measured through a detailed Action Plan developed post-consultation. The Sub-Committee heard that communication with residents about changes was planned through various channels, including workshops, website publications, and social media. The policy was expected to deliver £250,000 in efficiencies under the Transformation Programme. The Sub-Committee recommended targeted communications, an improved parking map, a Task Group for engaging with disabled residents and follow-up communications for reported parking enforcement actions. The Sub-Committee was encouraged that the Council would continue to explore options for emissions-based parking tariffs.

In April 2024, the Sub-Committee considered a report which provided the proposed Parking Charge Amendments for 2024-25, considered at Cabinet in March 2024. Members heard that the proposed amendments would incentivise residents to use less polluting vehicles through parking discounts, while also considering the impact on business footfall and environmental sustainability. The Sub-Committee recommended further investigation into the effects of increased residential parking permit prices on social tenants and the feasibility of offering a concession, as well as the development of Key Performance Indicators to monitor the impact of the proposed charges on district centre businesses.

Air Quality Action Plan 2024-29

The Sub-Committee looked at the initial proposals of the Air Quality Action Plan 2024-29 in November 2023, followed by an in-depth look at the full draft Plan in April 2024. Members discussed the proposed measures to improve air quality, including monitoring PM2.5 emissions, expanding the Electric Vehicle charging point network, and the possibility of expanding 'Smoke Control Zones'. The role of Biodiversity Net Gain and Urban Greening in the AQAP was emphasized, and the integration of air quality initiatives in the Local Plan was recommended.

Local Plan Review, Local Development Scheme and Infrastructure Funding Statement

In November 2023, the Sub-Committee considered an update on the proposed changes to the Local Plan 2018 and the publication of the Local Plan Review for a second consultation. Members noted that the Review focussed on areas such as the Croydon Area Remodelling Scheme (CARS), Brighton Main Line Upgrade, and the alignment of local masterplans. The Sub-Committee highlighted that engagement with partners, including residents and developers, would be key to realising the Plan's ambitions. The Sub-Committee discussed the 'Green Grid', a network of parks and green spaces across the borough. The Sub-Committee acknowledged the shift to a 'character over density' policy approach to house building and the adoption of a tall buildings policy. The inclusion of the Green Grid and Local Green Spaces in the Local Plan Review was welcomed, with a recommendation for explicit reference to Blue Corridors in the final document.

In January 2024, Sub-Committee considered a report which provided an update on the progress of projects set out in the Council approved Local Development Scheme (LDS) together with a summary of the 2022/23 Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS). Members raised queries about the increase in complaints around residential extensions, the process of reviewing Conservation Areas Appraisal Management Plans (CAAMPs), and the implications of delays to the Local Development Scheme (LDS). As a follow-up, the Sub-Committee requested information on unspent funding for certain projects and suggested ways to engage residents on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spending in the borough.

Appendix A

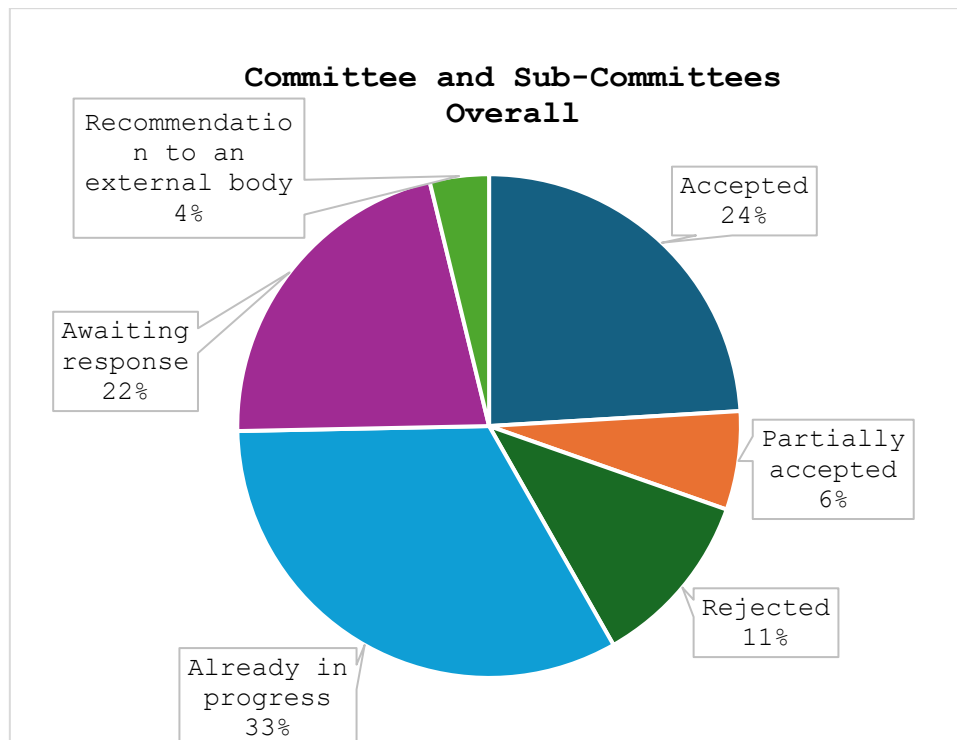
Considered period: May 2023 – May 2024

Overall

Table 1: Summary of past recommendations for the Committee and all Sub-Committees

Status	Overall
Accepted	19
Partially accepted	5
Rejected	9
Already in progress	26
Awaiting response	17
Recommendation to an external body	3
Total	79
Percentage of recommendations accepted	24%
Percentage of recommendations of partially accepted	6%
Percentage of recommendations rejected	11%
Percentage of recommendations already in progress	33%
Percentage of recommendations awaiting response	22%
Percentage of recommendations to external bodies	4%

Chart 1: Past recommendations for the Committee and all Sub-Committees



Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Table 2: Summary of past recommendations for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Status	Overall
Accepted	6
Partially accepted	4
Rejected	5
Already in progress	10
Awaiting response	5
Recommendation to an external body	1
Total	31
Percentage of recommendations accepted	19%
Percentage of recommendations of partially accepted	13%
Percentage of recommendations rejected	16%
Percentage of recommendations already in progress	32%
Percentage of recommendations awaiting response	16%

Children & Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Table 3: Summary of past recommendations for the Children & Young People Sub-Committee

Status	Overall
Accepted	0
Partially accepted	1
Rejected	0
Already in progress	1
Awaiting response	1
Recommendation to an external body	2
Total	5
Percentage of recommendations accepted	0%
Percentage of recommendations of partially accepted	20%
Percentage of recommendations rejected	0%
Percentage of recommendations already in progress	20%
Percentage of recommendations awaiting response	20%
Percentage of recommendations to external bodies	40%

Health & Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee

There were no recommendations made by the Sub-Committee in the considered period.

Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Table 4: Summary of past recommendations for the Homes Care Sub-Committee

Status	Overall
Accepted	9
Partially accepted	0
Rejected	3
Already in progress	10
Awaiting response	6
Total	28
Percentage of recommendations accepted	32%
Percentage of recommendations of partially accepted	0%
Percentage of recommendations rejected	11%
Percentage of recommendations already in progress	36%
Percentage of recommendations awaiting response	21%

Street & Environment Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Table 5: Summary of past recommendations for the Streets & Environment Sub-Committee

Status	Overall
Accepted	4
Partially accepted	0
Rejected	1
Already in progress	5
Awaiting response	5
Total	15
Percentage of recommendations accepted	27%
Percentage of recommendations of partially accepted	0%
Percentage of recommendations rejected	7%
Percentage of recommendations already in progress	33%
Percentage of recommendations awaiting response	33%

List of all recommendations

Scrutiny and Overview Committee		
Meeting Date	Recommendation	Status
22/05/23	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommended that, given the precarious nature of the Council's finances, the process for publishing monthly Financial Performance Monitoring reports is sped up, with the aim of achieving a maximum turnaround of eight weeks to finalise checks and go through the sign-off process before publication.	Rejected
22/05/23	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that the process of adding assets to the disposal list should, as a minimum, include notifying ward councillors and where those assets are in use or occupied, there should be active engagement with ward councillors, and where appropriate the local community, to understand and manage the local implications of the sale.	Rejected
22/05/23	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that any users of assets are notified as soon as possible after they have been agreed for disposal by the Mayor, to allay any anxiety about the uncertainty on the future of their service and to give them the opportunity to present any business case that may be in the long term financial and public interests of the Council.	Rejected
25/07/23	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee would like to recommend that the letters sent to residents regarding Council Tax arrears are reviewed to ensure they include information about the potential availability of support schemes, such as the Council Tax Hardship Scheme.	Accepted
25/07/23	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that there is further consideration given to how the refreshed Equalities Strategy can reflect the intersectionality between protected characteristics.	Partially Accepted
25/07/23	In order to improve accountability for the delivery of the Equalities Strategy, the Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that a process for holding regular challenge sessions with those officers responsible for specific actions/workstreams within the Strategy is developed as part of the ongoing monitoring of delivery.	Already in Progress
25/07/23	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee agreed with the proposal of the Cabinet Member and Officers, that given its scope, the Equalities Strategy should have a longer term end date, but recommends that: - a) key review points are built into the Strategy at appropriate intervals to allow for adjustments and the opportunity to refocus as needed. b) it is sufficiently dynamic to take account of any new initiatives or legislation that may arise over its lifespan	Already in Progress

25/07/23	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that consideration is given to embedding Equalities Champions within directorates to complement existing structures and systems within the Council aimed at promoting equalities and inclusivity.	Already in Progress
25/07/23	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that the Mayor publishes the feedback received from the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities on the Council's bid for Levelling-Up funding.	Accepted
26/09/23	The Committee recommends more performance indicators to measure the vitality of the town centre be included, such as footfall, the number of empty units and business rates.	Already in Progress
26/09/23	Given the substantial transformation within the service, the Committee would recommend that additional performance indicators related to Housing are added to the Performance Report to monitor improvement for key areas, particularly void turnaround times.	Already in Progress
26/09/23	Given the increasing demand upon services within the Adult Social Care directorate, the Committee would recommend the inclusion of performance indicators to track the waiting times for residents to access services with the highest demand.	Accepted
26/09/23	The Committee recommends that each of the "measures of success" in the action plan be re-evaluated so that they all contain a SMART target that is easy to monitor.	Accepted
21/11/23	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that with the reintroduction of council tax enforcement, a meeting should be arranged with local advocacy organisations, such as the CAB and the South West London Law Centre, after a few months of operation to review the processes to ensure that the available support is reaching those who need it most.	Already in Progress
21/11/23	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that future iterations of the budget consultation are subject to independent review before publication.	Accepted
21/11/23	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that existing tenants should be made aware of an asset being identified for potential disposal before any report identifying assets is published.	Already in Progress
21/11/23	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that local councillors are informed, prior to publication, that an asset in their ward will be listed for disposal.	Rejected
16/01/24	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that organisations including the LGA or London Councils are approached to review whether there is any currently untapped external funding sources available to the Council for capital projects, to provide reassurance that every avenue for inward funding was being explored.	Already in Progress
17/01/24	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that the potential business case for either extending the existing Growth Zone or establishing a new Growth Zone are explored, which would give Croydon the change to keep a higher proportion of any new business rates generated as a result, rather than passing them to central government.	Rejected

18/01/24	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that a method for publishing further information on agreed contract variations is explored through the procurement reporting process.	Already in Progress
26/03/24	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that the Council uses its existing networks and resources to raise awareness of the Safer Neighbourhood Board and its meetings.	Accepted
26/03/24	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that the Council through its role as a statutory partner uses its influence to ensure that the partnership has a clear focus on delivering tangible public outcomes for residents, rather than inputs and processes from officers.	Already in Progress
26/03/24	Given the crime statistics indicate there is a high rate of reoffending within the borough, the Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that work is undertaken to benchmark against reoffending rates in other areas and to engage with boroughs with low reoffending rates to establish whether there is any best practice that could be used in Croydon.	Partially Accepted
26/03/24	The Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that the possibility of identifying and promoting libraries and schools as safe spaces is explored.	Partially Accepted
26/03/24	<p>As the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Plan was still being developed, the Scrutiny & Overview Committee recommends that the following areas are included in the final plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To restart the pre-pandemic workstream providing targeted engagement about the signs of violence against women and girls with local businesses, such as barber shops, hairdressers, and those businesses in the nighttime economy. • The provision of new Domestic Abuse Champions across the statutory partners was welcomed and as such the scope of this should be expanded to identifying and training potential community based champions. • The Delivery Plan needs to include a focus on children coming from families experiencing domestic abuse. Even if they are not experiencing the abuse directly, they will suffer fallout if it's happening between others in the home. • There needed to be training provided for all statutory partners on the many different forms of violence against women and girls, and to improve the cultural competence of those supporting victims. • That document is created to set out the support and services available for victims of violence against women and girls, that can be distributed within local communities. • The Delivery Plan needs to have a proper emphasis on perpetrators and how to hold them to account. • There needs to be clear focus in the Delivery Plan that Violence Against Women and Girls is a 'male problem' and as such there needed to be increased engagement with male community leaders about the issues involved. • The possibility of partnering with Crystal Palace Football Club on a campaign to tackle violence against women and girls should be explored. • There should be key performance indicators included in the Mayor's Business Plan Performance reports that would measure the performance of the Delivery Plan. 	Partially Accepted

26/03/24	The Committee recommends that the Police review the data provided for Neighbourhood Panel meetings to ensure that it clearly outlined the number of cases linked to domestic violence and the wider umbrella of offences related to violence against women and girls. In doing so, it would help raise community awareness of the scale of the crimes linked to violence against women and girls.	Recommendation to an external body
22/04/2024	The Committee recommends that there is a systematic approach to engagement with the community and voluntary sector on the Transformation Plan, throughout its delivery, to ensure that opportunities for partnership working with the sector are identified at an early stage.	Awaiting response
22/04/2024	The Committee was encouraged by the confirmation that the Council had been engaging with the community and voluntary sector to develop commissioning opportunities and would recommend that this engagement is expanded to include other co-design opportunities, where appropriate.	Awaiting response
22/04/2024	While it was recognised that the Council needed to complete due process before making publicly available a list of the assets available for Community Asset Transfer, the Committee would recommend that every effort is taken to ensure that this list is made available to organisations from the community and voluntary sector as soon as possible.	Awaiting response
22/04/2024	Whilst it may be challenging, the Committee recommends that the executive explore ways to measure how progress made in improving the Council's relationship with the voluntary sector can be recorded and assessed in partnership with those voluntary organisations, including the possibility of targets where appropriate.	Awaiting response
22/04/2024	Although it was acknowledged that the meaningful proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy was already being allocated within communities by the Council, given that other boroughs had schemes that allowed community and voluntary sector organisations to bid for funding from this pot, the Committee would recommend that further work is undertaken to establish whether a similar system would be suitable for Croydon.	Awaiting response

Children & Young People Sub-Committee		
Meeting Date	Recommendation	Status
27/06/23	The Sub-Committee were of the view that a working group should be established to look at all possible incentives available to improve retention and recruitment in the Health Visiting service.	Recommendation to an external body
27/06/23	The Sub-Committee recommended that all available options to assist staff with housing, where this presented a barrier to recruitment and retention, were investigated.	Recommendation to an external body
27/06/23	The Sub-Committee recommended that the narrative on future versions of the report looked to identify where indicators were linked or interdependent, to provide Members with a fuller understanding.	Partially Accepted

10/10/23	The Sub-Committee commended the inclusion of parents and carers in delivering prevention and intervention work in the Youth Justice Service, but recommended that there should be greater involvement of parents and carers in the development of the next Youth Justice Plan for 24/25.	Already in Progress
19/03/24	The Sub-Committee requested that the Council work with Croydon Health Services to explore what possible incentives it could provide to aid in recruitment and retention for public nursing in the borough.	Awaiting response

Health & Social Care Sub-Committee		
Meeting Date	Recommendation	Status
No recommendation made by the Sub-Committee in the considered period.		

Homes Sub-Committee		
Meeting Date	Recommendation	Status
24/7/2023	The Sub-Committee recommended that, for future updates on the Housing Transformation Plan, a full list of all the projects under each workstream be provided as well as additional detail mapping out the customer journey.	Rejected
24/7/2023	The Sub-Committee recommended that each of the Responsive Repair Contractors develop a dedicated team that specialised in helping vulnerable tenants with their repairs, and that sub-contractors were not used for these jobs	Rejected
24/7/2023	The Sub-Committee recommended that there was additional qualitative monitoring of the contracts for the initial periods of commencement, to identify and address and cultural issues as early as possible.	Already in Progress
24/7/2023	The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council have some oversight of the training being provided to staff of each of the new contractors, and that the Council has the ability to monitor training attendance to ensure it is completed by all contractor staff.	Already in Progress
24/7/2023	The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council ensures that the NEC system is used to identify where repeated calls are being logged for the same repair to ensure that the department is not reliant on individual officers proactively identifying issues.	Already in Progress
24/7/2023	The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council undertake a 'Mystery Shopping' exercise on the out-of-hours responsive repairs service to provide reassurance of service quality, and to identify and mitigate any issues.	Already in Progress
24/7/2023	The Sub-Committee recommended that the Housing department deliver training on Domestic Violence to all frontline staff.	Accepted

24/7/2023	The Sub-Committee recommended that the final Housing Strategy addresses the Council's relationship with the Housing association and Registered Social Landlord sector in Croydon.	Already in Progress
23/10/23	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that Housing Strategy includes details of how the Council will improve the availability of priority housing for domestic abuse victims and residents from other vulnerable backgrounds. Staff should be trained to detect and tackle abuse-related issues.	Accepted
23/10/23	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that the following areas should be explored for inclusion in the Housing Strategy and accompanying delivery plan: (i) a simplified downsizing process; (ii) how to utilise underused garages; (iii) green energy grants; (iv) tackling licencing problems with houses in multiple occupations; (v) overcrowding; (vi) cooperation with Education division to ensure that children placed in temporary accommodations are not excluded from education.	Accepted
23/10/23	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that the Housing Strategy should include more detail on the following areas: (i) energy efficiency; (ii) actions to tackle antisocial behaviour, (iii) mental health.	Accepted
23/10/23	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that, given the shortage of available housing in the borough, the Housing Strategy needs to provide strategic direction on how the supply of available housing in the Borough will be increased, and supported by a delivery plan providing tangible outcomes.	Accepted
23/10/23	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that the Residents' Complaint Process is reviewed to ensure it provides efficient resolutions to resident complaints.	Accepted
23/10/23	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that the delivery plan being developed to accompany the Housing Strategy must include clear time lines for delivery and SMART objectives, outline any interdependencies and indicate the key risks to deliver and how they will be mitigated.	Accepted
23/10/23	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that ward councillors are informed when there is a planned resident engagement event within their constituency.	Accepted
23/10/23	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that there is further engagement with residents on the benefits of the stock survey, including work with the contractor, using the social values aspects of their contract.	Already in Progress
29/01/24	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that the Council's reporting on void turnaround times is brought into line with other local authorities and rather than using one overall figure for all voids, these are split to differentiate between the turnaround time for lettable voids and major voids.	Awaiting response
29/01/24	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that as part of the work to heat map repairs, that any homes with no repairs recorded for a significant period are also reviewed to understand why this may be the case, to ensure there are no unreported repairs that may cause more serious property damage if left unaddressed.	Awaiting response

16/04/24	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that a review of the new housing homelessness service structure is conducted to provide reassurance that it is meeting its intended outcomes and where these are not being achieved, that an action plan is developed to address failings as a priority.	Accepted
16/04/24	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that prevention workstreams within the Homelessness Strategy Delivery Plan are brought forward, including hospital engagement.	Already in Progress
16/04/24	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that the Council identifies best practice on how to build more effective working relations with private sector landlords to maintain tenancies where possible.	Already in Progress
16/04/24	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that the Council introduces a gas, electrical and EPC document check for private sector tenants claiming housing benefits.	Rejected
16/04/24	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that the Council establish a designated point of contact for charity and voluntary sector for housing and homelessness-related matters.	Already in Progress
16/04/24	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that the Council takes a more proactive role in facilitating good practice amongst housing associations established in the borough e.g. on nomination rights and organising estate walkabouts with tenants and local Councillors.	Already in Progress
16/04/24	Although the Homes Sub-Committee recognised there had been significant work undertaken to improve the culture of the work force within the Housing Service, there was concern about whether this extended to staff employed by contractors and subcontractors and would recommend that monitoring whether housing contractors/sub-contractors' culture meet the Council's expected standards, be included in the scope of the Housing Culture Change Transformation Programme.	Awaiting response
16/04/24	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that the Council encourage their contractors to take part in the Chartered Institute of Housing campaign 'It's not okay' which aims to tackle stigma in social housing.	Awaiting response
16/04/24	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that the possibility of including a section on culture in the procurement process, be explored.	Awaiting response
16/04/24	The Homes Sub-Committee recommends that non-financial staff rewards/benefits are explored to improve staff morale and attract people to the workforce.	Awaiting response

Streets & Environment Sub-Committee		
Meeting Date	Recommendation	Status
07/11/23	The Sub-Committee recommended that 'Letter Drops', or similar targeted communications, on Parking Policy were undertaken for District Centres that had not already been engaged, or who were not actively being engaged through Business Improvement Districts before any changes to the Parking Policy are enacted.	Already in Progress

07/11/23	The Sub-Committee recommended that an improved parking map was developed for the Council website, which included Controlled Parking Zones and Restricted Parking Areas.	Accepted
07/11/23	The Sub-Committee recommended that a Task Group was established for engaging with disabled residents and disabled-led organisations (such as Transport for All) on parking policy, to ensure that disabled parking bays were best placed on the road for users and that roads and footways were accessible, to tie in with the Policy three - 'Supporting our Disabled Residents'.	Already in Progress
07/11/23	The Sub-Committee requested that the Council should provide follow up communication to residents who reported parking for enforcement action through the parking hotline or 'Love Clean Streets' app.	Accepted
07/11/23	The Sub-Committee recommended that there was comprehensive communications with residents should areas transition from parking meters to cashless parking, including a full publicity campaign and video walk-through.	Already in Progress
07/11/23	The Sub-Committee recommended that the Flood Risk Register be published on the Council's website to ensure that this was transparent and accessible to residents.	Rejected
07/11/23	The Sub-Committee recommended the implementation of a publicly accessible Geographic Information System (GIS) for Croydon.	Accepted
07/11/23	The Sub-Committee recommended that the expertise of an arborist be used to feed into the Strategy, and that more thought should be put into how Blue and Green corridors can be expanded, alongside other nature based solutions, to provide additional flood prevention measures using any available grant funding available to the Council.	Accepted
07/11/23	The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council implement a year-round publicity campaign on flood prevention, as it felt that beginning this in the winter was too late to be as effective as possible.	Already in Progress
30/01/24	The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council consider ways to engage residents to determine their views on where they would like to see Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spent in the borough, and for stronger communication with residents around CIL schemes such as the 'On Street Secure Cycle Hangers'.	Already in Progress
02/04/24	The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council undertake further work to understand the impact of increased residential parking permit prices for social tenants and the feasibility of providing a discount to these residents in the final scheme.	Awaiting response
02/04/24	The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council develop specific Key Performance Indicators to monitor the footfall impact of the proposed charges on businesses in district centres.	Awaiting response
02/04/24	The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council further consider the roles that Biodiversity Net Gain and Urban Greening could have as part of the Air Quality Action Plan 2024-29.	Awaiting response
02/04/24	The Sub-Committee recommended that officers work with the Planning department to see what conditions around air quality could be developed for use with future developments.	Awaiting response
02/04/24	The Sub-Committee recommended that officers consider what air quality initiatives could be embedded in the Local Plan around specific construction techniques, which could promote better air quality.	Awaiting response