

Housing & Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel Agenda

Place

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Wellington Street, Woolwich
SE18 6PW

Date

Monday, 06 September 2021

Time

7:00 PM

This meeting is open to the press and public and they are entitled to take photographs, film or record the proceedings.

Councillors

Clive Mardner (Chair)	Labour
Bill Freeman	Labour
Mick Hayes	Labour
Leo Fletcher	Labour
Averil Lekau	Labour
Dominic Mbang	Labour
Pat Slattery	Labour
Spencer Drury	Conservative

Tenant Representatives

Helen Ryan
Johnson Oyedeji

Members are reminded that officer contacts are shown at the end of each report and they are welcome to raise questions in advance with the appropriate officer. This does not prevent further questioning at the meeting.

If you require further information about this meeting please contact the Corporate Governance Officer:
Clare Chapman
Telephone: 020 8921 3988
Email: corporate-governance@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Agenda

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
To receive apologies from Members of the Committee.
- 2 Urgent business**
The Chair to announce any items of urgent business circulated separately from the main agenda.
- 3 Declarations of Interest**
Members to declare any personal and financial interests in items on the agenda. Attention is drawn to the Council's Constitution, the Council's Code of Conduct and associated advice.
- 4 Minutes**
Members are requested to confirm as an accurate record the Minutes of the meeting held on 1st July 2021.
- 5 Actions Monitoring Report**
Members are requested to confirm that the actions requested at previous meetings of the Panel have been completed.
- 6 Update on Housing Support for Domestic Abuse Survivors**
To note the report on housing support given to victims of domestic abuse.
- 7 Organisations that provide support and advice to vulnerable groups.**
To note the verbal updates from organisations that provide support and advice to vulnerable groups.
- 8 Commissioning of Future Reports**
To note the work items that are scheduled to be presented to the meeting of the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel taking place on 14th October 2021.

Date of Issue
Thursday, 26
August 2021

Debbie Warren
Chief Executive

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HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL	
TITLE Declarations of Interests	ITEM NO 3
CHIEF OFFICER Chief Executive	

I. Decisions Required

The Panel is requested to:

- I.1 Note the list of Councillors' memberships (as Council appointed representatives) on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies.
- I.2 Request that Members orally declare any personal or financial interests, including those detailed, in specific items listed on the agenda as they relate to matters under discussion.

2. Members' Interests

- 2.1 Appended to this report is a list of the outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies that each member of Council has been appointed to by the Council or the Leader. The list does not include bodies with which a Member is involved in a personal or private capacity.

Personal interests

- 2.2 A Member has a personal interest where any business is likely to affect:
 - (a) them, or
 - (b) a relevant person or a relevant body (where the Member is aware that they have the interest);

more than a majority of those in the ward you represent.

A **relevant person** is defined as the member's spouse or civil partner, a person who they are living with as husband and wife or as civil partners, or a person with whom they have a close association.¹

¹ See the guidance in Annex I of the Code of Conduct

A **relevant body** is defined as (a) any organisation, school governing body or outside committee or trust which they have been appointed to by the Royal Borough or by the Leader, or (b) any other voluntary organisation, school governing body or commercial organisation where you are a management committee member, school governor, trustee or director.

- 2.3 Members must declare the existence and nature of any personal interest at the start of the meeting, or when the interest becomes apparent. Members must say which item their interest relates to.
- 2.4 A Member who has a personal interest may stay, speak and vote, except where the business:
- (a) affects the financial position of the Member or any person or body described in paragraph 2.2 above, or
 - (b) relates to an interest that would be affected financially or relates to the determining to any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the Member or any person or body described in paragraph 2.2 above

Financial Interests

- 2.5 A Member has a financial interest where any business relates to or is likely to affect an interest set out in paragraph 18 of the Code of Conduct, and which is the Member's interest or the interest of a person described in paragraph 2.2(a) above.
- 2.6 Members must declare the existence and nature of any financial interest at the start of the meeting, or when the interest becomes apparent. Members must say which item their interest relates to.
- 2.7 A Member who has a financial interest must leave the meeting, but may attend to make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the business, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, and provided they leave the meeting immediately after doing so. The Member must not participate in the discussion nor the vote.

General

- 2.8 The Code also requires Members to declare interests in relation to relevant bodies for six months after ceasing from being a member and take the appropriate action in relation to financial interests.

Background Papers

Agenda and Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council – 19th May 2021.

Report Author: Raymond Bruce-Cathline, Scrutiny Officer
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Councillor	Organisation	Role	Governorship
Drury	Eltham United Charities	Member	
Fletcher, L	Blackheath Joint Working Party	Member	
	Greenwich Blue Coat Foundation	Member	
Freeman	-		
Hayes	Greenwich Pensioners' Forum	Member	
Lekau	Environmental Protection UK	Member	
Mardner	-		Abbey Wood Nursery School
	-		St Pauls Academy
Mbang	Greater London Forum for Older People	Member	
	New Charlton Community Centre	Member	
	Overview & Scrutiny Joint Health Committee	Deputy	
	Town Twinning Association Executive Committee	Deputy	
	Walpole Estate Management Board	Member	
Slattery	Greenwich Charities of William Hatcliffe and the Misses Smith	Member	
	Greenwich Leisure Ltd	Member	

ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH
HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 1ST JULY 2021 AT 7:00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Members:

Councillor Clive Mardner (Chair), Councillors Pat Slattery, Dominic Mbang, Averil Lekau, Bill Freeman and Spencer Drury.

Tenant Representatives

Johnson Oyedeji

Officers

Director of Housing and Safer Communities, Assistant Director of Housing, Head of Repairs, Head of Customer Experience, Tenancy Services Support Manager, Community Participation Coordinator, Community Participation and Diversity Officer, Scrutiny Officer.

Others in attendance

Councillor Anthony Okereke (Cabinet Member for Housing)

The Chair made introductions and advised that the meeting was being held under emergency regulations and that some of the Council's procedures have been amended accordingly.

**Item
No.**

1 Apologies for Absence.

Apologies received for Cllr Mick Hayes, Cllr Leo Fletcher, Helen Ryan and Nilavra Mukerji.

2 Urgent Business.

There was no urgent business.

ITEM NO: 4

3 Declaration of Interest.

Resolved –

That the list of Councillors' memberships as Council appointed representatives on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies be noted.

4 Housing Voids Report.

The Director of Housing and Safer Communities introduced the report stating that there had been a steady improvement on voids turnaround despite the effected of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Head of Repairs summarised the report stating that post the first lockdown risk assessments were put in place and works were taking longer than usual because certain operatives had to wait for up to 3 days after a previous operative had gone in. He stated that after coming out of lockdown in the 4th of July 2021 another risk assessment took place which allowed for more efficient work.

The Head of Repairs stated that just before coming out of lockdown in July pre-works was 116 days and that was because of the effects of Covid-19 and the lockdown. He however revealed that after changes to processes pre-works were down to 4 days. He added that works time in June 2020 was 76 days but currently an average of 27 days on turnaround on a void, with post-works being 28 days but currently 4 days.

The Head of Customer Experience provided a summary stating that customer satisfaction was at 91 percent which indicated that majority of residents were satisfied with their homes. She highlighted that the dissatisfaction expressed by many residents were mainly cosmetic and not an issue of quality.

In response to questions from the Panel, the Director of Housing and Safer Communities and Head of Housing Repairs stated that the averages although high in certain areas were steadily on track to reaching optimal numbers. They explained that the high averages were because of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic but emphasised that emergency repair services were active during the period.

The Panel agreed to have the Cabinet Member for Housing circulate the Repairs Task Group Dashboard to the Panel in October.

Action: Cabinet

Member for Housing

The Panel agreed to nominate a member to join the Feedback Review.

Action: Chair

The Panel

Resolved -

That the Housing Voids Report be noted.

5 Update on new structure of Housing Panels and Resident Engagement.

The Assistant Director of Housing and the Tenancy Services Support Manager took the Panel through a presentation which highlighted the background and purpose of engagement within the borough, the traditional engagement approaches in place and the new engagement approach.

The Assistant Director for Housing stated that, the cycle of engagement involved listening to resident (using channels including walkabouts, repairs/caretaking surgeries, meeting and surveys), followed by acting on the feedback, recording actions and forwarding to relevant teams and lastly updating residents on what is being done using clear communication methods.

Regarding the traditional engagement approach, the Assistant Director of Housing stated that there are 9 Local Housing Panels which were set up in 2000/2001 to mirror a local neighbourhood office structure which no longer exists. He stated the average cost of running each Local Housing Panel to be £1,045.

The Tenancy Services Support Manager revealed that the new engagement approach was centred around four key areas namely the YourVIEW Membership, Digital Listening Campaigns, New Style Formal Estate Walkabouts and Housing Champions.

Shedding light on the four key areas, the Tenancy Services Support Manager explained the YourVIEW Membership as an online platform where tenants and leaseholders can help shape and improve housing services by taking part in engagement events online and in person, being made aware of the latest engagement events and training available as well as being part of a pool of residents who want to make a difference.

The Tenancy Services Support Manager emphasised that the Covid-19 restrictions had fast tracked the development of digital engagement having held a series of Zoom meetings in Summer 2020 with the Cabinet Member of Housing, Councillor Anthony Okereke. She stated that the Digital Listening Campaign (DLC) provided an opportunity to test out alternative formats to the Local Housing Panels and to engage with the under-reached and under-represented residents including younger residents, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) residents and residents in Temporary Accommodation.

The Tenancy Services Support Manager explained the New Style Formal Estate Walkabouts as an engagement approach that employs both face-to-face and digital channels like Zoom.

Lastly, she stated that the Housing Champions engagement approach fits in with the Housing Strategy Strand 3 (support for people with specific needs) and Strand 5 (building a resilient and vibrant community). The Tenancy Services Support Manager revealed that there would be three levels of engagement in Champion Roles namely; Broadcaster (to attend induction training and share information with friends, family and neighbours), Active Engager (to take a lead in areas of local interest e.g. estate walkabouts, local meetings and community gardens or tenants / residents association, etc) and Ultimo (to represent tenant and leaseholder views, help with engagement and “task and finish” groups to co-design services, etc).

In response to questions from the Panel, the Assistant Director for Housing and the Tenancy Services Support Manager stated that the new engagement approach has made it possible to reach diverse groups. They informed the Panel that the Leaseholder Working Group had a good membership and active participation.

The Panel

Resolved -

That the update on new structure of Housing Panels and Resident Engagement be noted.

6 Cabinet Member Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing updated the Panel on the 5-year Housing and Homelessness Strategy. He revealed an in-depth consultation platform has been created which will be complemented by a variety of events covering the principles in the strategy. He explained that feedback from the consultation will be analysed and used to strengthen the Housing and Homelessness Strategy as well as inform new initiatives.

The Cabinet Member for Housing informed the Panel about how successful the Leaseholder Working Group has been and stated that over the next few years there will be significant investment going into the Council's estates. He stated that the Repairs Task Group which was setup keeps a keen eye on repairs and added that customer service was also being looked at. The Cabinet Member for Housing expressed his thanks to the team and applauded them for their dedication.

The Panel

Resolved -

That the Cabinet Member Update be noted.

7 Commissioning of Future Reports

The Panel noted the work items that were scheduled to be presented to the meeting of the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel taking place on 6th September 2021.

The Panel

Resolved -

That the commissioned future reports be noted.

The meeting closed at 9:21pm.

HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL		DATE 06/07/2021
TITLE Actions Monitoring Report		ITEM NO 5
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Communities and Environment		CABINET MEMBER

1. **Purpose of the Report**

The Panel is requested to:

- 1.1 Confirm that the actions requested at previous meetings of the Panel have been completed.

2. **Follow up action points**

- 2.1 During the course of a report on the agenda the Panel may for example -
- raise a question which cannot be answered at that particular point;
 - request additional information that is not available at that moment;
 - make a suggestion for a future version of that report.
- 2.2 Subsequent to each meeting an Action Sheet is generated and sent to the relevant Directorates/Officers for them to supply a response. The response is expected to be received before the next meeting. Those actions which relate to future reports will of course be dealt with at the future date of that report.

3. **Responses**

- 3.1 Responses are usually circulated to Members by email. At that point Members could raise any additional queries they might have as a result of that response with the relevant Officer.
- 3.2 The Action Sheet will indicate whether or not an action has been completed. If Members are satisfied that it has been completed then it will be removed from the Sheet.

5. **Appendices**

Appendix A – Actions Monitoring information sheet

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ACTIONS MONITORING FOR HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL 2021/22

Meeting Date – 1st July 2021				
Item No and Title	Action	Lead	Status	Outcome
6: Housing Voids Reports	The Panel agreed to nominate a member to join the Feedback Review.	Chair	Pending	
	The Panel agreed to have the Cabinet Member for Housing circulate the Repairs Task Group Dashboard to the Panel in October.	Cabinet Member for Housing	Pending	

HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL	DATE 06/09/2021
TITLE Update on Housing Support for Domestic Abuse Survivors	ITEM NO 6
CHIEF OFFICER Director for Housing & Safer Communities	CABINET MEMBER Cabinet Member for Housing

1. **Decision required**

This report makes the following recommendations to the decision-maker:

- 1.1 To note the update provided by this report in respect to the Royal Borough of Greenwich's (RBG) provision of Housing Support to Survivors of Domestic Abuse

2. **Links to the Royal Greenwich high level objectives**

- 2.1 This report relates to the Council's agreed high level objectives as follows:

- A Healthier Greenwich
- A Safer Greenwich

3. **Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 3.1 This report has been produced to update the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel on RBG's current and future offer of Housing Support to Domestic Abuse survivors within the borough.

- 3.2 The report will provide information regarding the numbers of Domestic Abuse cases recorded within the borough, and how various teams within Housing Services are responding to the current need for support for survivors. It will also highlight recent changes to legislation which will impact on the way Housing services are delivered, as well as recent

initiatives which have been introduced or are currently being progressed to deliver a more effective and integrated offer of support.

3.3 The Panel are asked to note the contents of the report in support of their scrutiny of Housing and Anti-Poverty within RBG.

3.4 The report will refer to Domestic Abuse as “DA” throughout.

4. **Introduction and Background**

4.1 In 2017/18, Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG) was ranked 3rd highest for domestic offences in London, therefore it was vital that we targeted the prevailing issues and provided adequate support to survivors. National research on Homelessness at the time had shown that 40% of all homeless women stated Domestic Abuse was a contributing factor to becoming homeless. However, when the council carried out its own DA Needs Assessment in 2018, and examined the data at a local level for people presenting at the council, there was a significant disparity between our recorded numbers, and those recorded on a national level.

4.2 This disparity indicated that people did not feel confident in reporting DA, or that DA was not being identified or recognised, at this first point of contact. Based on this estimated data, we can assume that many survivors had not received the service that they really needed, risks were not being properly considered, specialist support may not have been offered and appropriate housing options explored such as refuge and temporary accommodation placements.

4.3 In response, the council set out to improve the response to survivors of Domestic Abuse who present at the front office for housing support, as well as ensuring that they are recognised and provided support at the time that they need it, including those with complex needs, who may require input from specialist services.

4.4 In 2019, the government tabled the initial draft of the Domestic Abuse Bill in Parliament, and local authorities became aware that there would be significant changes to the way housing services would be delivered to DA survivors. This pending change made it imperative for us to ensure that we were fully prepared to provide relevant services to survivors of DA and were fully compliant with the new legislation.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into effect on 29th April 2021 and brought with it a significant change in the way that DA applicants if homeless are now automatically deemed to be in priority need, without the requirement for the vulnerability test. This will lead to an increase demand for resources such as temporary accommodation, and additional support services.

- 4.5 Survivors can access housing support via our Housing Inclusion (Homelessness) Service either in person at The Woolwich Centre, or by telephone or email. An out-of-hours emergency service is also available 24/7, for residents who require urgent assistance outside of normal office hours.

Council tenants can approach their Tenancy Officer for support, and a referral can then be passed through to our Temporary Accommodation Team if it is not safe for them to remain in their current property.

Referrals for Housing support can also be made by external agencies, such as Police, Ambulance Service, Hospitals, GPs, Support Groups, Schools and Early Years provisions, DWP, Foodbanks, Community & Faith Groups, and Advocacy Agencies.

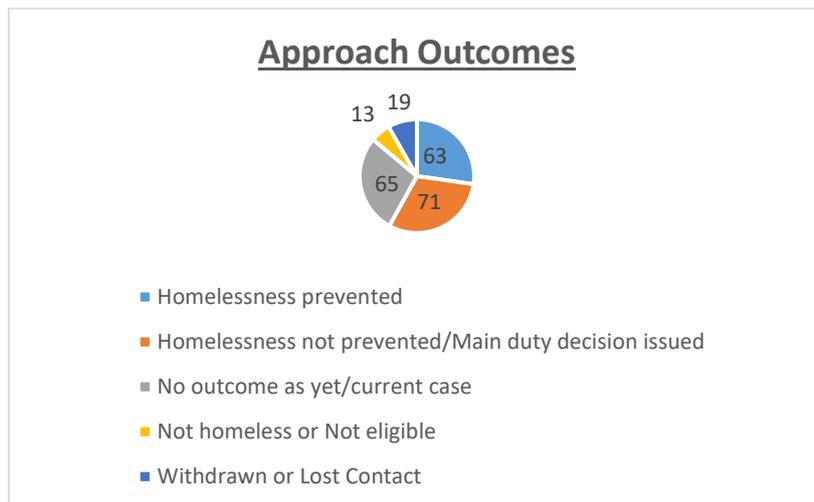
5. Recent Data

- 5.1 The table below shows the number of approaches for assistance via our Housing Inclusion (Homelessness) Service, for the year 2020/21, and for Quarter 1 of 2021/22.

Domestic Abuse Approaches 2020-21 and 2021-22					
Years	Approach Date	F	M	Grand Total	
2020	Apr	5	1	6	
	May	10	2	12	
	Jun	19	4	23	
	Jul	6	1	7	
	Aug	16	4	20	
	Sep	14	1	15	
	Oct	9		9	
	Nov	14	2	16	
	Dec	11	1	12	
	2020 Total		104	16	120
	2021	Jan	17	2	19
		Feb	16		16
Mar		11	2	13	
Apr		15	3	18	
May		13	1	14	
Jun		16	3	19	
Jul		11	1	12	
2021 Total		99	12	111	
Grand Total		203	28	231	

5.2 The figures above show a 25% increase in approaches where DA is cited as a primary or secondary reason for homelessness, during the first quarter of this current year, when compared to the first quarter of the previous year. This shows that the demand on services is steadily increasing, and may continue to rise, now the Act has been passed, as DA survivors may feel more reassured that they will be supported with a priority status when approaching the local authority for assistance with housing. It may also be interpreted that improvements have been made in the way that survivors are assessed, and supported, and as a result, they are able to disclose the DA at a much earlier stage than was previously seen.

5.3 The chart below shows the outcomes for all DA approaches between April 2020 and August 2021



5.4 A positive homelessness prevention is achieved where a survivor has been supported to move into alternative, suitable and settled accommodation, within 56 days of their initial approach for assistance, and directly from their existing accommodation. This period of time is referred to as the Prevention duty stage. During this period the survivor will be placed onto the Council’s housing register under the Reasonable Preference policy, and will be able to bid for social housing properties with both a priority and a general banding. They will also be advised on searching for properties in the Private Rented Sector, and how the Council’s HACTRAC scheme may be able to assist with funding to secure accommodation through this route.

If they are unable to remain in their usual accommodation, and need to be placed into temporary accommodation, or a refuge placement, they will be placed into the Relief Duty stage, and if suitable, settled accommodation can be secured for them within 56 days of this period commencing, then this will also count as a positive prevention of homelessness.

Where it has not been possible to secure alternative accommodation in either the Prevention or the Relief stage, and the prescribed period of time has passed, then the Housing Officer will issue a decision on their homelessness. This is referred to as the Main Duty. If they are accepted as homeless, then they will continue to be able to bid on the Choice Based Lettings system, as well as continue to look for Private Rented properties.

- 5.5 Unfortunately it is sometimes the case that a survivor will withdraw their application, and perhaps remain in a relationship, or living with the perpetrator, as we know that it can take several attempts for a survivor to successfully leave their situation. In cases such as this, or where contact with the survivor may have been lost, the Housing Officer will take steps to ensure that any other professionals who may be involved are made aware, make any safeguarding referrals which are necessary, or request a police welfare check, where there is an immediate and urgent concern for a survivor's safety. All these measures are carried out whilst being mindful not to place the survivor in any greater risk of harm.
- 5.6 Within Tenancy services, as at August 2021, there are currently 78 RBG council tenants who have disclosed that they are a survivor of DA, and who are being supported, either to remain in their home (with additional safety measures, and where it is deemed that the risks are adequately managed), or who have been moved into temporary accommodation elsewhere.

6. **The Current Offer**

- 6.1 All staff are supported to build the relevant skills, knowledge and confidence to identify domestic abuse and safeguarding concerns and follow internal and local procedures (i.e. safeguarding training, domestic abuse training). Staff are made aware of the DA policies and procedures,

and these are available to view on the intranet. Managers support staff through supervision sessions, debriefing support, training, self-care strategies and HR policies.

- 6.2 Domestic abuse checklist is used across the organisation when dealing with disclosures, and staff are aware that safeguarding needs to be considered, and relevant referrals made to Children's or Adult's Services where needed.
- 6.3 Staff across the organisation demonstrate an understanding that not all survivors access services equally due to experiencing additional barriers. This is incorporated in training and wider publicity campaigns. Staff understand that an individual may be more comfortable disclosing to someone with similar protected characteristics to themselves and this is accommodated wherever possible.
- 6.4 Staff across the organisation demonstrate a clear understanding of how to ensure safe disclosures, and work to create an enabling environment to encourage such disclosures. They take into consideration factors such as customer literacy, understanding of the English language, and providing interpreters and information in other languages, as required.
- 6.5 Staff are confident to provide advice and support with housing options and interventions specific to domestic abuse. Examples include:
 - Support to locate refuge placements, and financial assistance with travel when required.
 - Offer of Temporary Accommodation and support if the survivor has no alternative, safe accommodation available. Areas of risk, and location of support network will always be considered when sourcing a suitable placement.
 - Sanctuary Scheme – where appropriate and in line with risk assessment. Greenwich Domestic Violence and Abuse Services (GDVA) runs the Sanctuary Scheme, which helps survivors to remain in their own homes by installing additional security. The scheme can change locks, provide window alarms, fireproof letterboxes, and personal alarms etc. Specific security measures are assessed on a case by case basis.
 - Management transfers/reciprocal schemes -for existing council and social housing tenants.
 - Dual housing benefit/discretionary housing benefit – to assist with additional costs due to refuge or temporary accommodation placements.

- Financial assistance with arrears and relocation costs.
 - Advice regarding injunctions, non-molestation orders, and referrals to specialist support agencies, such as HER centre, REFUGE, local VAWG provision etc. (more detail provided below)
- 6.6 Designated officers from Housing Inclusion as well as Tenancy Services attend regular MARAC meetings (multi-agency risk assessment), to share relevant information, and pick up on households that need housing support.
- 6.7 RBG currently commissions five refuges within the borough which provide a total of 30 placements for survivors, as well as 26 bed-spaces for children. Included in this figure are 4 placements which are designated for women with complex needs, and which can offer the intensive support needed. The refuges are managed by Housing 4 Women, in partnership with GDVA. Over recent years, to address the rising levels of DA cases being picked up, the council has committed to increased funding in this area, including £540,000 towards refuge placements and floating support. A further £340,000 is allocated for additional support and intervention services, including the HER Centre, GDVA/Housing 4 Women, and the Metropolitan Police DV Intervention Team. Based on combined services, RBG estimates that support is provided to an estimated 900 survivors at an average cost of £980 per woman per year, although they will all have different levels of need, so the individual cost per intervention varies considerably.
- 6.8 Within Housing Inclusion, there is a designated officer who provides a link between the Refuges and the Housing service, manages the incoming referrals, and provides a single point of contact for Refuge staff to liaise with.
- 6.9 The RBG Domestic Abuse Strategy is committed to tackling DA by ensuring an enhanced response to survivors of DA who present to the council, wherever they come from and whatever their needs or background. This includes those who present at Greenwich housing from other boroughs or areas of the country; those who come to Greenwich refuges from other boroughs or areas of the country; and those who need to move out of the borough by ensuring they are linked with local support and services.

- 6 .10 Within Housing Inclusion, there are plans to recruit a specific Domestic Abuse Coordinator, as an additional resource, to specialize in such cases, and who can provide a high-quality support service for vulnerable clients, who may have quite complex needs, as well as being a designated point of contact for partner agencies. This will be progressed if funding can be obtained from central government, or if other relevant funding streams become available.
- 6 .9 Housing will ensure that perpetrators of DA are referred to the new Perpetrator Service for rehabilitation where appropriate. RBG Community Safety Team has introduced a Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Group (DAPG) to support MARAC processes and employed 2 perpetrator workers who can be tasked to directly engage and work with perpetrators.

7. **Partnership Working**

- 7 .1 The Safer Greenwich Partnership's Violence Against Women and Girls strategy, (VAWG) incorporates DA and aims to encourage survivors of DA to ask for help, and to make sure that they are safeguarded from harm and supported, whatever their situation and wherever they present from.
- 7 .2 The council work closely in partnership with the HER Centre, a local women's charity based in Greenwich, which provides services to women and girls in Greenwich and Lewisham, and aims to engage, enable and empower women to move away from abuse, and to move forward with their lives. An efficient 2-way referral process exists between the HER centre and the Council, which aims to provide a holistic advice and support service to DA survivors seeking assistance.
- 7 .3 As part of our partnership with the HER Centre, an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) has been commissioned to work full-time alongside the Council's Housing Inclusion Service and is able to support and advise staff directly with casework. The IDVA is able to work with all survivors, including those with complex needs, due to; alcohol or drug problems, mental health conditions, or those with no recourse to public funds due to their immigration status. The IDVA is partly co-located within the Housing Service, to provide a seamless, joint working provision for DA Survivors.

- 7.4 Survivors can be referred to the Homefinder Revive Project, with whom we have a joint working partnership, for support to find suitable accommodation. The Revive project focuses on relocating domestic abuse survivors to permanent social housing in a new and safe environment in a different part of the country. The REVIVE project will further enhance the survivor-centric case management services designed to help find homes for survivors of domestic abuse.
- 7.5 In order to support DA survivors, the council also work closely with a range of external agencies including:
- Beresford Project, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
 - DePaul UK
 - Foodbanks
 - Housing for Women
 - Lewisham & Greenwich NHS Trust
 - London Ambulance Service
 - London Probation CRC and National Probation Service
 - Metropolitan Police
 - Nia project
 - Oxleas Community Health Service
 - Oxleas Mental Health Trust
 - Rape Crisis Centre
 - Registered Social Landlords
 - Solace women's Aid
 - Thames Reach
 - Survivor Support

8. **Key Outcomes**

- 8.1 In March 2021, the borough was awarded the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation, in recognition of the high standard of advice and support provided to residents and service users. As part of the preparation for the assessment process, the council's Housing Department reviewed, adjusted and implemented some new methods of working, to ensure that the Council is able to provide a holistic and efficient service, to survivors of DA, via some of our key areas, such as Housing Inclusion and Tenancy Services, and that we sustain effective, appropriate and compassionate responses to DA survivors.

8.2 During the COVID pandemic, the Council was faced with several challenges around service delivery, particularly in the front facing Customer Access Team, and Assessment teams. Housing Services quickly adapted to a new way of mostly remote working, with residents being assessed over the phone, and quickly referred on to the relevant services which they needed. A skeleton staff presence in the Woolwich Centre was also operational throughout the entire lockdown, with Housing Inclusion officers present in the back office to assist with emergency and complex cases. As soon as was practically possible, a counter service was open to the public, for emergency homeless cases, while remote assessments continue as the standard way of working with homeless applicants.

8.3 At the end of the year 2020/21, through a survey given to all clients who had been provided a service from local refuge services, the following data was obtained.

- 85% of the service users said that they had felt an improved confidence in managing their financial affairs.
- 100% of school aged children in refuge services were registered for school.
- 98% of school aged children in refuge services were registered with doctors.
- 89% of the service users said that they had felt satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received.

9. **Main Challenges Ahead**

9.1 Automatic priority need for DA survivors, is likely to increase the demand for Temporary Accommodation, which is an already overstretched resource. There will be an increased challenge to procure suitable properties to be used as Temporary or Emergency Accommodation, as well as additional Private Rented Sector properties, for applicants to move on to, as settled accommodation.

- 9.2 Increased approaches have already been evident in Q1 of this year, prior to the DA Act being introduced, and it is yet unclear what additional impact the Act could have on this figure.
- 9.3 We have started to see some Non-Priority decisions, issued earlier in the year, being overturned at review, in light of the introduction of the DA Act, and these could continue to be overturned, which will impact on the council's performance figures for reviews.

10. Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Legal including Human Rights Act	The purpose of this report is to update the Panel in respect of the Councils provision of housing support to survivors of domestic abuse. As such, there are no legal implications arising directly from the report.	<i>Azuka Onuorah</i> <i>Head of Legal Services</i> <i>23rd August 2021</i>
Finance and other resources	This report has been produced to update the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel on the Royal Borough of Greenwich's current and future offer of Housing Support to domestic abuse survivors within the borough. The update does not introduce any new financial implications arising directly from the report.	Akosua Boachie Accountancy Business Change Manager 23 rd August 2021.
Equalities	This report reviews and monitors the Royal Borough of Greenwich's (RBG) provision of Housing Support to Survivors of Domestic Abuse. As such, there are no new Equalities	Claire Tugwell – Performance, Policy & Development Manager, Housing

	implications arising directly from the report.	Inclusion Service 23 rd August 2021.
Climate change	This report reviews and monitors the performance of the Housing Inclusion Service in 2020-21. No formal decision will be taken and as such will have a remote or low impact on the Greenwich Carbon Neutral Plan agreed by Cabinet on 18 November 2020.	Claire Tugwell – Performance, Policy & Development Manager, Housing Inclusion Service 23 rd August 2021.

11. **Report Appendices**

None

12. **Background Papers**

None

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HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL	DATE 06/09/2021
TITLE Organisations that provide support and advice to vulnerable groups.	ITEM NO 7
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Communities & Environment	CABINET MEMBER Housing

I. **Purpose of the Report**

The Panel is requested:

- I.1 To note the verbal updates from the following organisations that provide support and advice to vulnerable groups:
- Her Centre
 - Greenwich Housing Rights
 - METRO
 - METRO GAVS

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HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL	DATE 06/09/2021
TITLE Commissioning of Future Reports	ITEM NO 8
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Communities & Environment	CABINET MEMBER

1. **Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to note the work items that are scheduled to be presented to the meeting of the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel taking place on 14th October 2021.
- 1.2 The Panel is asked to consider the scope of forthcoming reports and specify any detailed requirements.

2. **Background**

- 2.1 This report advises the Panel of items scheduled for its consideration for the municipal year 2021-2022.

3. **Report**

- 3.1 The Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel is scheduled to receive the following reports at its meeting on 14th October 2021:

14th October 2021 (Meeting 3)	
Item	Scope/Theme
Housing Contract Variations.	To receive a report on the Housing Contract Variations
Stock Condition Survey	To receive a report on the current housing stock and the quality of living conditions for tenants.
Reports from organisations that provide support and advice to vulnerable groups.	To note the reports from organisations that provide support and advice to vulnerable groups.
Commissioning of Future Reports.	To agree the scope of reports for next Meeting.

- 3.2 The Panel is asked to consider the items outlined above, to determine any specific requirements, prior to those reports being commissioned. This will ensure that its lines of enquiry are addressed, information provided is relevant and appropriate, and scrutiny practice is well directed and effective.

Appendix

Appendix B – Housing and Anti-Poverty Meeting Schedule – 2021/22

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**Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel
Draft Meeting Schedule 2021/2022**

<p>Meeting 1 Thursday 1st July 2021</p> <p>OCCURED</p>	<p>Voids turnaround</p> <p>Update on new structure of Housing Panels and Resident Engagement</p> <p>Cabinet Member Update</p>
<p>Meeting 2 6th September 2021</p> <p>SCHEDULED</p>	<p>Reports from organisations that provide support and advice to vulnerable groups - Her Centre, Greenwich Housing Rights, METRO, METROGAVS.</p> <p>Housing Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse – Victims of domestic abuse are funded by HB but those with nil recourse were not entitled to a space. Core rent was also not funded. The Panel was concerned that victims are not being adequately supported or protected and requested that this be looked at in more detail.</p>
<p>Meeting 3 14th October 2021</p>	<p>Housing Contract Variations</p> <p>Stock Condition Survey – report on the current housing stock and the quality of living conditions for tenants.</p> <p>Reports from organisations that provide support and advice to vulnerable groups - GRIP</p>
<p>Meeting 4 25th November 2021</p>	<p>Housing Revenue Account Expenditure</p>

	<p>Housing Repairs Scrutiny Review Update – response to covid-19.</p>
<p>Meeting 5 27th January 2022</p>	<p>Annual meeting with registered providers of social housing</p> <p>Registered Landlords - PA Housing’s management of the Connaught Estate and Hyde Housing – the Cabinet member and Scrutiny Chair expressed concern about PA and Hyde Housing’s approach to managing the estate and requested that representatives from PA Housing and Hyde be invited to a future meeting of HAP.</p> <p>Meridian Home Start (MHS) – annual report on the progress of the development of MHS as a community benefit society and performance in providing homes at affordable rents</p>
<p>Meeting 6 10th March 2022</p>	<p>RBG’s Housing Obligations to Ex-prisoners – the Panel was advised at a meeting in September 2019 that the Housing Inclusion and Support Service was obligated to provide temporary accommodation for prisoners until they had established a five-year local connection. The Panel did not consider this to be cost effective and further information was requested.</p> <p>Social Mobility Delivery Action Plan – report on support given to vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Sheltered Housing Update</p> <p>Cabinet Member Update</p>

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