



## PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE AGENDA

7.00 pm

Tuesday  
10 March 2026

Council Chamber -  
Town Hall

Members 9: Quorum 4

### COUNCILLORS:

#### Conservative Group ( 3 )

David Taylor (Chairman)  
Ray Best  
Osman Dervish

#### Labour Group ( 1 )

Matthew Stanton (Vice-Chair)

#### Havering Residents' Group ( 4 )

Philippa Crowder  
Laurance Garrard  
Robby Misir  
John Wood

#### East Havering Residents Group ( 0 )

For information about the meeting please contact:  
Taiwo Adeoye 01708 433079  
[taiwo.adeoye@havering.gov.uk](mailto:taiwo.adeoye@havering.gov.uk)

Please would all Members and officers attending ensure they sit in their allocated seats as this will enable correct identification of participants on the meeting webcast.

***Under the Committee Procedure Rules within the Council's Constitution the Chairman of the meeting may exercise the powers conferred upon the Mayor in relation to the conduct of full Council meetings. As such, should any member of the public interrupt proceedings, the Chairman will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chairman will order their removal from the meeting room and may adjourn the meeting while this takes place.***

***Excessive noise and talking should also be kept to a minimum whilst the meeting is in progress in order that the scheduled business may proceed as planned.***

### **Protocol for members of the public wishing to report on meetings of the London Borough of Havering**

Members of the public are entitled to report on meetings of Council, Committees and Cabinet, except in circumstances where the public have been excluded as permitted by law.

Reporting means:-

- filming, photographing or making an audio recording of the proceedings of the meeting;
- using any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later; or
- reporting or providing commentary on proceedings at a meeting, orally or in writing, so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later if the person is not present.

Anyone present at a meeting as it takes place is not permitted to carry out an oral commentary or report. This is to prevent the business of the meeting being disrupted.

Anyone attending a meeting is asked to advise Democratic Services staff on 01708 433076 that they wish to report on the meeting and how they wish to do so. This is to enable employees to guide anyone choosing to report on proceedings to an appropriate place from which to be able to report effectively.

Members of the public are asked to remain seated throughout the meeting as standing up and walking around could distract from the business in hand.

## **What is Overview & Scrutiny?**

Each local authority is required by law to establish an overview and scrutiny function to support and scrutinise the Council's executive arrangements. Each overview and scrutiny sub-committee has its own remit as set out in the terms of reference but they each meet to consider issues of local importance.

The sub-committees have a number of key roles:

1. Providing a critical friend challenge to policy and decision makers.
2. Driving improvement in public services.
3. Holding key local partners to account.
4. Enabling the voice and concerns to the public.

The sub-committees consider issues by receiving information from, and questioning, Cabinet Members, officers and external partners to develop an understanding of proposals, policy and practices. They can then develop recommendations that they believe will improve performance, or as a response to public consultations. These are considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and if approved, submitted for a response to Council, Cabinet and other relevant bodies.

Sub-Committees will often establish Topic Groups to examine specific areas in much greater detail. These groups consist of a number of Members and the review period can last for anything from a few weeks to a year or more to allow the Members to comprehensively examine an issue through interviewing expert witnesses, conducting research or undertaking site visits. Once the topic group has finished its work it will send a report to the Sub-Committee that created it and will often suggest recommendations for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to pass to the Council's Executive.

## **Terms of Reference**

The areas scrutinised by the Committee are:

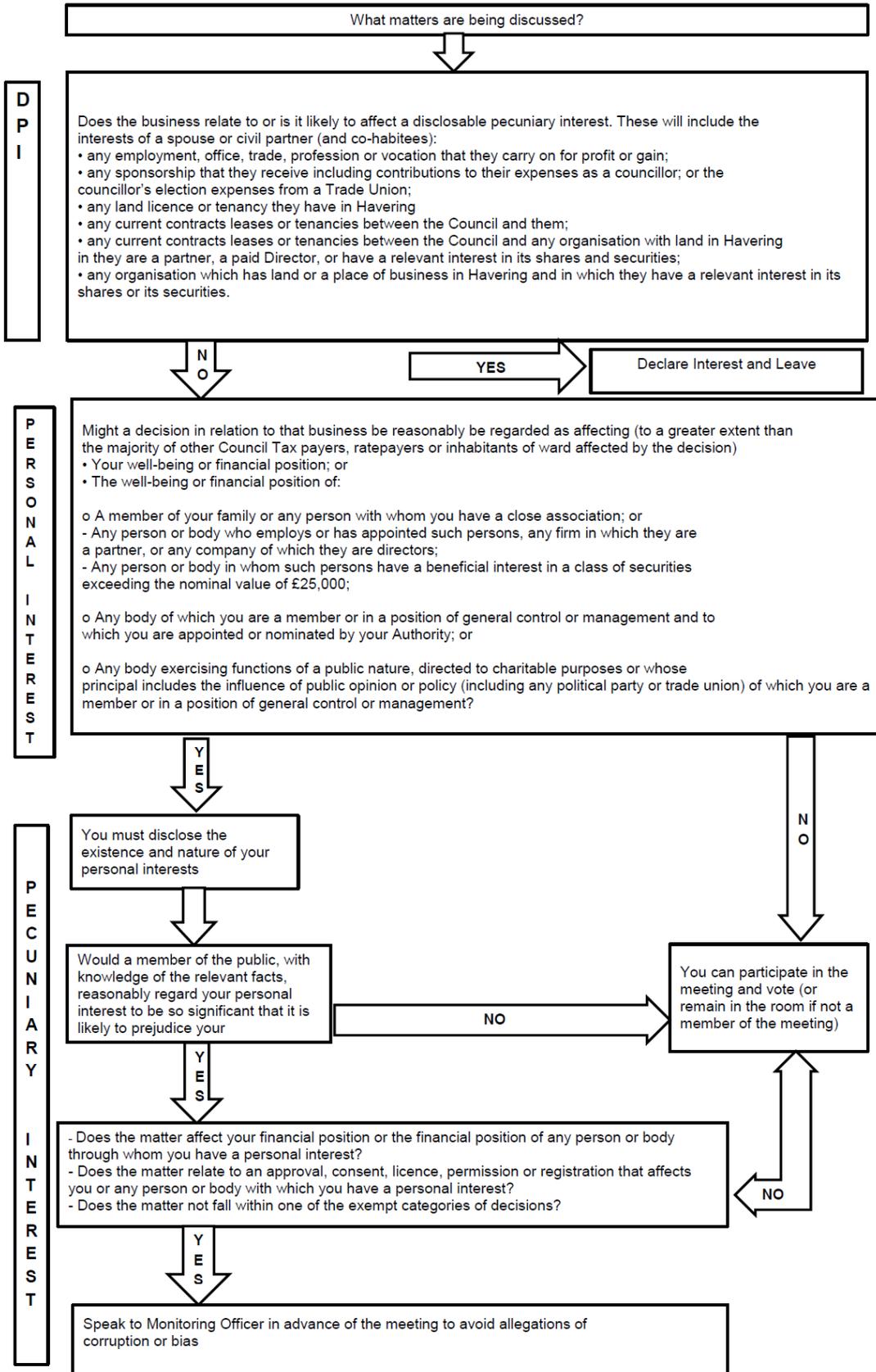
- Housing & Accommodation Services
- Land & Property Services
- Planning
- Building Control
- Business Services
- Inward Investment
- Asset Management
- Property Services
- Facilities Management
- Sports

**Place Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee, 10 March 2026**

- Leisure
- Arts
- Music
- Libraries
- Heritage
- Parks & Open Space
- Highways
- Parking & Traffic
- Waste & Recycling
- Climate Change
- Transport & Infrastructure
- Public Protection & Licensing
- Emergency Planning
- Technical Services

**Place Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee, 10 March 2026**

**DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF**



**Principles of conduct in public office**

In accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, when acting in the capacity of a Member, they are committed to behaving in a manner that is consistent with the following principles to achieve best value for the Borough's residents and to maintain public confidence in the Council.

**SELFLESSNESS:** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

**INTEGRITY:** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

**OBJECTIVITY:** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

**OPENNESS:** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

**HONESTY:** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

**LEADERSHIP:** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

## AGENDA ITEMS

### 1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Receive (if any)

### 2 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Members are invited to disclose any interests in any of the items on the agenda at this point of the meeting. Members may still declare an interest in an item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.

### 3 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman will announce details of the arrangements in case of fire or other events that might require the meeting room or building's evacuation.

### 4 **MINUTES**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and authorise the Chairman to sign them – to follow if available

### 5 **NEW HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME - PROGRESS REPORT** (Pages 9 - 16)

Report attached

### 6 **EMERGENCY TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IN HAVERING AND THE LACK OF SUPPLY** (Pages 17 - 40)

Report and appendices attached

### 7 **VOIDS OVERVIEW** (Pages 41 - 74)

Report and appendix attached

**Zena Smith**  
**Head of Committee and**  
**Election Services**

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|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Briefing for:</b>        | Places OSSC – Chair                                  |
| <b>Title:</b>               | New Housing Allocations Scheme – Progress Report     |
| <b>Purpose of briefing:</b> | Information  |
| <b>Lead Officer:</b>        | Kwabena Obiri, Housing Choice & Applications Manager |
| <b>Date:</b>                | 26 <sup>th</sup> February 2026                       |

## 1. SUMMARY

2. This report provides Overview & Scrutiny with a comprehensive update on the implementation of the revised Housing Allocations Scheme. It outlines the background and purpose of the scheme, the implementation process, the significant surge in demand experienced following go-live, and the current operational position. The report also sets out the actions taken to manage the demand surge, explains the rationale for introducing Working Household Contribution points (Working Community Adjustment), and details the timetable for implementation, monitoring and review.

## 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to:
- 3.2 Note the progress made in implementing the revised Housing Allocations Scheme.
- 3.3 Note the scale of demand following implementation and the current application and assessment position.
- 3.4 Note the actions taken to manage the demand surge and improve throughput.
- 3.5 Note the introduction and planned implementation of the Working Household Contribution points.
- 3.6 Comment on the proposed timetable and monitoring arrangements.

## 4. Background and Purpose of the Scheme

5. The Housing Allocations Scheme (2024) represents a comprehensive revision of the Council's previous 2021 scheme. It was developed to ensure that social housing is allocated fairly, transparently and in compliance with statutory requirements under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996. The revised scheme replaces a band-based framework with a points-based system, enabling housing

need to be weighted more clearly and consistently.

6. Demand for social housing in the borough continues to significantly exceed supply. Only a limited number of social housing properties become available each year, requiring a robust and defensible framework to ensure that homes are allocated to households in the greatest need. The revised scheme was therefore designed to improve clarity, support effective use of limited housing stock, and align allocations more closely with assessed housing need.

## **7. Challenges Arising During Implementation – Pre Go-Live Delivery Delays and Demand Surge**

### **8. Policy Readiness Following Cabinet Approval**

9. The revised Housing Allocations Scheme was formally approved by Cabinet in May 2024. At that point, the policy itself was complete, legally reviewed, and ready for implementation. The primary dependency for go live was the reconfiguration of the Council's housing IT systems to support the new points based framework and the associated online application process.
10. Following Cabinet approval of the revised Housing Allocations Scheme in May 2024, the Council set a clear and timebound expectation that the scheme would be implemented within six months, reflecting standard delivery timelines for a policy led system reconfiguration of this nature.
11. This placed the intended go live target in November 2024.
12. This expectation is evidenced in early project documentation and correspondence, which consistently framed the post Cabinet period as an implementation phase rather than a policy development phase. Internal planning assumed that system build, configuration, testing and controlled transition could be achieved between May and November 2024, subject to contractor delivery performance.
13. From the Council's perspective, therefore:
  - 12.1 May 2024 – Policy approved, complete and implementation ready
  - 12.2 June–November 2024 – System delivery, testing and transition window
  - 12.3 November 2024 – Target month for go live.
14. This target was not met, due to delivery failures by the Council's systems contractor rather than any delay in policy readiness or internal decision making.

## **15. Early Risk Identification and Contractor Concerns**

16. From the outset of project mobilisation in early 2024, the Council identified material risks associated with delivery by Capita. These risks were formally recorded in the project risk and issues logs and included concerns regarding:
- 16.1. The contractor's ability to commit appropriately skilled and stable resources
  - 16.2. High turnover and lack of continuity within Capita's delivery teams
  - 16.3. Risks relating to the quality and completeness of system configuration
  - 16.4. The Council also explicitly raised concerns regarding the assignment of a specific Capita project officer, based on previous delivery failures on comparable system implementations. Despite these concerns being raised at an early stage, the contractor proceeded with the assignment.

## **17. Senior Management Direction on Transitioning Existing Applicants**

18. Senior officers explored options to transition existing applicants without requiring reapplication. Capita advised this was not achievable within the system design and timescales, and that a full reapplication approach was required to ensure data integrity and legal compliance.
19. By October 2024, correspondence shows that the Council had consumed a significant proportion of contracted consultancy days while still lacking a stable or testable system configuration. Senior officers explicitly questioned how the project could be nearing completion when tangible outputs remained limited.
20. Subsequent contractor staff departures, replanning exercises and revised delivery schedules further pushed implementation beyond the original November 2024 target and into 2025, ultimately necessitating the full reapplication approach that senior management had sought to avoid.

## **21. Delivery Failures and Escalation (Mid 2024 to Late 2024)**

22. Although the policy had been approved in May 2024, progress on system delivery during the subsequent months was minimal. This period was characterised by:
- 22.1. Repeated delays in agreeing Statements of Work and delivery schedules
  - 22.2. Poor availability of assigned Capita consultants
  - 22.3. Cancellation and rescheduling of agreed development sessions at short notice
23. The formal project kick off did not take place until August 2024, significantly later than originally anticipated. Even following kick off, delivery momentum remained limited, with planned development activity repeatedly deferred due to contractor availability constraints.
24. By late October 2024, it became evident that the project was not being delivered effectively. Senior officers escalated concerns with Capita, highlighting the lack of

tangible outputs despite a significant number of consultancy days being charged. As a result, senior management intervention was required. The below illustrates the expected delivery target against actual delivery:

## 25. Delivery Timetable – Council Targets vs Actual Outcomes

26. The table below clarifies the Council’s intended milestones against actual delivery outcomes.

| Period       | Council Expectation                       | Actual Position  | Target Met |
|--------------|---|------------------|------------|
| May 2024     | Cabinet approval – scheme ready for build | Policy complete  | Yes        |
| Jun–Aug 2024 | System build mobilisation                 | Minimal progress | No         |
| Sep–Dec 2024 | Core system configuration                 | Repeated delays  | No         |
| Nov –2024    | Original Go Live Date                     | Scrapped         | No         |

## 27. Senior Management Intervention and Project Restart

28. In February 2025, following sustained delivery failures, Capita’s assigned project officer and project manager both left the project.

29. As a result, project activity did not transition immediately into a recovery phase. Instead, the project entered a period of uncertainty during March 2025, during which planned meetings were cancelled, delivery momentum was lost, and no substantive progress was made.

30. Only following further escalation and board-level engagement in late April 2025 did Capita, operating as MRI Software, re-mobilise a replacement project team and re-establish delivery governance. From that point onwards, delivery activity gradually resumed under tighter Council oversight.

## 31. Replacement of Project Team and Recovery of Delivery

32. Following the project restart, a new project team was mobilised under MRI Software. Delivery plans were rebase-lined, governance strengthened, and confidence in delivery gradually improved. The Council maintained daily delivery meetings during this period to tightly control scope, sequencing, and risk, ensuring that delivery issues were surfaced and addressed in real time.

## 33. Implementation Process

34. The revised Housing Allocations Scheme was implemented with a formal go-live date of 24 September 2025. Implementation required significant system, process and communication changes, including configuration of the points-based framework within the housing IT system, introduction of a new online application process, and a requirement for all existing applicants to reapply under the new rules.

The scheme went live as planned, with transitional arrangements in place to protect existing applicants during the initial period.

### 35. Challenges Arising During Implementation – Demand Surge and Current Position

36. A key challenge following implementation was the scale and immediacy of the surge in housing applications, which significantly exceeded historic norms.

| Period   | Applications Received | Relative Change |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Previous scheme – 12-month monthly average           | c. 270                | Baseline        |
| New scheme – partial first month (from 24 Sept 2025) | 642                   | +138%           |
| New scheme – first full month (October 2025)         | 1,152                 | +326%           |

37. As at 24 February 2026, application volumes remain high, although throughput has improved following targeted mitigation measures. The current operational position is summarised below.

| Measure   | Position |
|---|----------|
| Total applications received since go-live (24 September 2025) | 3,464    |
| Applications assessed (all outcomes)                          | 1,682    |
| Applications currently live on the Housing Register           | 1,099    |

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Applications awaiting assessment or verification | 1,782 |
|--|-------|

**38. Actions Taken to Address the Demand Surge**

39. To address the unprecedented demand and stabilise performance, a series of mitigation measures were implemented. These included deploying additional staffing capacity through overtime and cross-service support, streamlining assessment and verification processes, and prioritising high-need cases.

Assessment capacity was increased to up to 17 assessors during the January and February and this reduced high priority applications (70 points and above) have now been assessed and are actively bidding for properties. The remaining 1782 applications are expected to achieve an award of 0-69 points which in this current climate will not secure a family sized general needs property.

**40. Working Household Contribution (Working Community Adjustment)**

41. Early monitoring of the points-based scheme identified that some working households previously recognised under the former banding system risked being unintentionally disadvantaged. This was particularly evident for long-standing applicants whose waiting time was overtaken by applicants awarded homelessness-related time points following recent duty decisions.

42. In response, a Working Household Contribution (Working Community Adjustment) has been developed. This introduces an additional points uplift for eligible households where at least one adult is in sustained paid employment. The adjustment applies to Housing Register applicants and Existing Social Housing Tenants, but does not apply to Accepted Homeless Households, who already receive statutory priority.

The adjustment is designed to be targeted, proportionate and legally robust, ensuring that working households are not disadvantaged by the transition while maintaining compliance with reasonable preference requirements.

**43. Timetable and Next Steps**

| Activity   | Timescale         |
|--|-------------------|
| Allocations Scheme go-live                       | 24 September 2025 |
| Completion of high-priority assessments          | January 2026      |
| Implementation of Working Household Contribution | March 2026        |

|  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Completion of low-priority assessments | April 2026                    |
| Ongoing monitoring and reporting       | Continuous                    |
| Formal scheme review                   | 12 months post-implementation |

#### **44. Implications and Risks**

No unbudgeted financial pressures have arisen. Legal compliance and equalities impacts continue to be monitored, with mitigation introduced where unintended impacts have been identified

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## PLACES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Subject Heading:</b>                   | Emergency Temporary Accommodation in Havering and the lack of supply |
| <b>ELT Lead:</b>                          | Patrick Odling-Smee – Director Living Well                           |
| <b>Report Author and contact details:</b> | Darren Alexander, Assistant Director Housing Demand                  |
| <b>Policy context:</b>                    | Temporary Accommodation  |

### SUMMARY

1. Havering Council continues to experience structural pressure on its temporary accommodation (TA) system driven by sustained homelessness demand, collapse of the private rented sector, and accelerating costs in hotel and nightly charged accommodation-.
2. As at February 2026, TA costs now represent the single largest growing risk to the Housing General Fund, with combined families and singles TA forecast overspends exceeding £1.18m in 2025/26, despite active mitigations.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

3. That Members note and comment on the contents of the report.

### REPORT DETAIL

**4. Temporary Accommodation in Havering – the current position**

5. Havering’s use of hotel and nightly charged accommodation continues to exert severe pressure on revenue budgets. Current monitoring shows: - charged accommodation continues to exert severe pressure on revenue budgets. Current monitoring shows:

**6. Homeless families TA (FY25/26):**

- a. Revised budget: £5.165m
- b. Forecast: £5.86m
- c. Forecast overspend: £0.683m

**7. Homeless singles TA (FY25/26):**

- a. Original budget: £1.636m
- b. Forecast: £1.796m
- c. Forecast overspend: £159.9k

8. This pressure is structural, not operational, and is driven by:

9. Continued inflow into homelessness

10. Insufficient supply of lower cost TA

11. Reliance on hotels and nightly lets as last resort accommodation

**12. Temporary Accommodation Supply – Current Mix**

13. **Table 1.** Number of households directly placed into emergency accommodation including hotels and nightly paid accommodation

|                      | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total Placements     | 16      | 106     | 125     | 388     | 491     | 455     |
| % increase from 2019 | n/a     | 563%    | 681%    | 2,325%  | 2,969%  | 2,744%  |

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**14. What is Driving the Supply Shock for Havering?**

**15. Private Sector Lease (PSL) Decline**

16. The long term erosion of PSL supply remains the single largest supply side risk. The borough has lost over 400 PSL properties since 2019/20, with the steepest losses in 2 and 3 bed family homes.

**17. Table 2. PSL stock by bedroom size**

| PSL stock (Bed size) | Number of units 2019-20 | Number of 2025-26 | Total loss of units | Percentage loss |
|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| - 1 bed              | 208                     | 90                | 118                 | 56%             |
| - 2 bed              | 341                     | 158               | 183                 | 53%             |
| - 3 bed              | 241                     | 129               | 112                 | 46%             |
| - 4 bed              | 50                      | 30                | 20                  | 20%             |
| Total                | 840                     | 407               | 433                 | 51%             |

**18. Hand backs – Private Sector Lease Properties (PSLs)**

19. **Hand backs** are temporary accommodation units (PSL) that leave the Council’s supply, typically following the expiry of a Private Sector Lease or a landlord decision to withdraw a property, reducing available lower-cost TA and increasing reliance on higher-cost emergency provision.

20. In Havering’s context, hand backs most commonly occur where:

- a. Private Sector Lease (PSL) agreements expire, or
- b. Landlords choose to exit leasing arrangements, often due to affordability pressures, changing market conditions, or alternative use of the property.

21. As at early 2026:

- a. Hand backs are outpacing new TA acquisitions, and
- b. Expired leases and landlord exits remain the dominant drivers,
- c. Delays in securing onward accommodation mean that hand backs increase the risk of litigation with landlords and reliance on hotels and nightly charged accommodation

**22. Homelessness Demand**

23. Homeless approaches for two years remained consistently above 290 per month, more than 70% higher than pre-COVID norms, with the three dominant drivers unchanged:

- a. Family and friends exclusion
- b. Private rented sector eviction
- c. Domestic abuse

24. The number of homeless approaches each year has consistently peaked above 270 since 2020.

**Table 3. Number of approaches since 2019-20**

|         | Number of approaches annually | Average approaches per month | Percentage increase since 2019-20 |
|---------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2019-20 | 2032                          | 169                          | n/a                               |
| 2020-21 | 2536                          | 211                          | 25%                               |
| 2021-22 | 3137                          | 261                          | 54%                               |
| 2022-23 | 3517                          | 293                          | 73%                               |
| 2023-24 | 3552                          | 296                          | 75%                               |
| 2024-25 | 3429                          | 286                          | 69%                               |
| 2025-26 | 2843*                         | 284*                         | 68%                               |

\*To date

**25. Table 4: The three top main reasons for homelessness**

|                    | Domestic Abuse | Private Rented Eviction | Family Friends Exclusion | Total |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| 2020-21            | 226            | 390                     | 871                      | 1487  |
| 2021-22            | 254            | 622                     | 780                      | 1656  |
| 2022/23            | 247            | 696                     | 712                      | 1655  |
| 2023/24            | 319            | 847                     | 938                      | 2104  |
| 2024/25            | 353            | 946                     | 1093                     | 2392  |
| Average % of total | 15%            | 38%                     | 48%                      |       |

26. Table 5: illustrates the spend on rent deposits for private rented properties as part of our Find Your Own initiative



|                             | Apr 24 to Mar 25 | Apr 23 to Mar 24 | Apr 22 to Mar 23 | Apr 21 to Mar 22 | Apr 20 to Mar 21 | Apr 19 to Mar 20 |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Find your Own               | 306              | 137              | 150              | 221              | 322              | 240              |
| Budget                      | £425,000         | £425,000         | £425,000         | £425,000         | £425,000         | £425,000         |
| Find your own expenditure   | £969,844         | £403,834         | £389,813         | £514,466         | £834,094         | £640,524         |
| Average spend per Household | £3,169           | £2,948           | £2,599           | £2,328           | £2,590           | £2,669           |

27. Temporary accommodation supply

28. We have a range of mitigations to provide additional supply to temporary accommodation many of the initiatives have already secured approval at cabinet and are being mobilised others are still in negotiation. We have currently in the process of securing a supply of 1056 units and anticipate this will be sufficient properties to exit out of high cost accommodation for a few years.

29. These include the following initiatives

- a. Private equity finance
- b. Office to residential conversions
- c. Pension fund property investments
- d. New development opportunities for temporary accommodation.

30. Table 6: Is a temporary accommodation pipeline planned to meet the existing volume of demand

| <b>Action/Mitigation</b>               | <b>Number of units</b> | <b>Delivery Timeframe</b> |
|--|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Property Purchasing Scheme (Chalkhill) | 130                    | October 27                |
| Family Welcome Centre                  | 74                     | May 26                    |
| Eastgate House                         | 34                     | February 27               |
| Chesham House                          | 55                     | February 27               |
| Modular Units (18)<br>Waterloo Estate  | 18                     | April 26                  |
| Modular Units                          | 30                     | TBC                       |
| Inspired Solutions                     | 71                     | First tranche late 2029   |



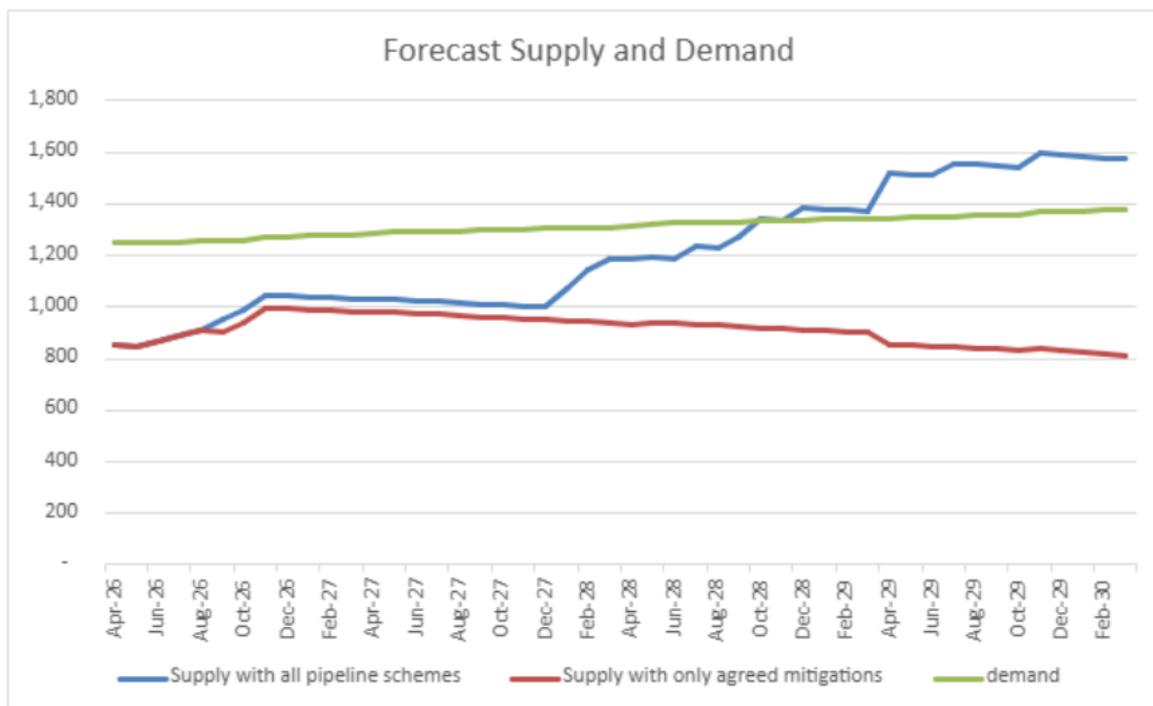
### 31. Cost of Temporary Accommodation

### 32. Current Financial Risk Position (Updated)

- 33. Combined TA gross spend now exceeds £14m per annum
- 34. Hotels and nightly lets remain the largest marginal cost driver
- 35. Only ~33% of hotel/nightly cost is recoverable through HB subsidy

### 36. If We Do Nothing vs With a Pipeline (UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS)

37. The Graph illustrates the risk of to the council of not taking action. The green line shows the projected demand for Temporary Accommodation over the period which is anticipated to continue to grow. The red line represents the supply of properties if only the currently agreed mitigations are delivered; under this scenario, supply declines in later years as Private Sector Leased properties are handed back and other schemes come to an end, alongside the potential decanting of TAGEN properties. The blue line shows the position if all pipeline schemes were to materialise. In this scenario, supply is expected to exceed demand, creating a point at which properties could be repurposed for other Council housing needs. All figures shown are based on forecast data and therefore subject to change.



38. Updated modelling confirms:

39. Without intervention, nightly-charged accommodation would exceed 900 households within three years
40. With the full delivery of the approved and proposed pipeline, demand can be stabilised and reversed

## IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

### **Financial implications and risks:**

None associated with this report

### **Legal implications and risks:**

None associated with this report

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

There are no human resources or risks from this report.

### **Equalities implications and risks:**

None associated with this report

### **Environmental and Climate Change Implications and Risks:**

None associated with this report

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – TA limited Assurance Audit Committee  
Appendix 2 – Housing Demand Audit Report and Summary

## Appendix 1 Housing Association Stock Numbers in Havering 2025



Regulator of  
Social Housing

[Return to Area Summary](#)

[To change area return to Area Summary](#)

**Havering**

Number of PRPs operating and LARPs present in area  
(PRPs who do not own stock are excluded)

33

### Social stock in Havering by provider 2025

|   |       | Number of additional LAs PRP operates in | Total Social Stock (unweighted) | % Total Social Stock in area | % of LARP/PRPs total Social Stock | General needs self-contained units (unweighted) | % General needs self-contained units in area | % of LARP/PRPs total general needs self-contained stock | General needs bedspaces (unweighted) | % General needs bedspaces in area | % of LARP/PRPs total general needs bedspaces stock | Supported housing/ housing for older people units (unweighted) | % Supported housing/ housing for older people units in area | % of LARP/PRPs total supported housing/ housing for older people stock | Low cost home ownership (LARPs and large PRPs only - unweighted) |
|---|-------|--|---------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| <b>All units:</b>                         |       |  | <b>15,274</b>                   | <b>100%</b>                  |                                   | <b>12,235</b>                                   | <b>100%</b>                                  |   | <b>290</b>                           | <b>100%</b>                       |  | <b>1,444</b>   | <b>100%</b>   |  | <b>1,305</b>   |
| 1 London Borough of Havering Council      | LARP  | -  | 9,147                           | 59.9%                        | 105.8%                            | 8,178   | 66.8%  | 105.7%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 753  | 52.1%   | 108.8%   | 216  |
| 2 Dominion Homes Limited                  | Large | 44                                       | 41                              | 0.3%                         | 0.3%                              | 14  | 0.1%   | 0.2%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | 27   |
| 3 Anchor Hanover Group                    | Large | 244                                      | 207                             | 1.4%                         | 0.6%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 207  | 14.3%   | 0.6%   | -  |
| 4 Bespoke Supportive Tenancies Ltd        | Large | 90                                       | 4                               | 0.0%                         | 0.3%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 4  | 0.3%  | 0.3%   | -  |
| 5 Melwood Housing Trust Limited           | Small | 1  | 29                              | 0.2%                         | 17.0%                             | 29  | 0.2%   | 17.7%   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | -  |
| 6 Westpoint Soho                          | Small | 15                                       | 12                              | 0.1%                         | 3.4%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 12   | 0.8%  | 5.3%   | -  |
| 7 Clarion Housing Association Limited     | Large | 150                                      | 684                             | 4.5%                         | 0.6%                              | 544   | 4.4%   | 0.6%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 14   | 1.0%  | 0.2%   | 126  |
| 8 Cromwood Housing Ltd                    | Small | 20                                       | 32                              | 0.2%                         | 9.3%                              | 32  | 0.3%   | 10.2%   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | -  |
| 9 Encircle Housing                        | Small | 53                                       | 11                              | 0.1%                         | 1.8%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 11   | 0.8%  | 1.8%   | -  |
| 10 Estuary Housing Association Limited    | Large | 17                                       | 579                             | 3.8%                         | 13.5%                             | 430   | 3.5%   | 12.1%   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 8  | 0.6%  | 4.9%   | 141  |
| 11 Golden Lane Housing Limited            | Large | 199                                      | 1                               | 0.0%                         | 0.0%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 1  | 0.1%  | 0.0%   | -  |
| 12 Habinteg Housing Association Limited   | Large | 77                                       | 2                               | 0.0%                         | 0.1%                              | 1   | 0.0%   | 0.0%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 1  | 0.1%  | 0.1%   | -  |
| 13 Hastoe Housing Association Limited     | Large | 62                                       | 117                             | 0.8%                         | 2.3%                              | 117   | 1.0%   | 2.7%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | -  |
| 14 Home Group Limited                     | Large | 171                                      | 44                              | 0.3%                         | 0.1%                              | 22  | 0.2%   | 0.1%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | 22   |
| 15 Housing 21                             | Large | 210                                      | 113                             | 0.7%                         | 0.5%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 108  | 7.5%  | 0.5%   | 5  |
| 16 Local Space                            | Large | 18                                       | 129                             | 0.8%                         | 7.7%                              | 129   | 1.1%   | 7.9%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | -  |
| 17 London & Quadrant Housing Trust        | Large | 137                                      | 1,954                           | 12.8%                        | 2.2%                              | 1,210   | 9.9%   | 1.8%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 226  | 15.7%   | 3.0%   | 518  |
| 18 Look Ahead Care and Support Limited    | Large | 21                                       | 15                              | 0.1%                         | 1.5%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 15   | 1.0%  | 1.5%   | -  |
| 19 Major Housing Association Limited      | Small | 4  | 1                               | 0.0%                         | 1.4%                              | 1   | 0.0%   | 1.4%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | -  |
| 20 Metropolitan Housing Trust Limited     | Large | 114                                      | 20                              | 0.1%                         | 0.0%                              | 16  | 0.1%   | 0.1%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | 4  |
| 21 Moat Homes Limited                     | Large | 90                                       | 2                               | 0.0%                         | 0.0%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | 2  |
| 22 Newlon Housing Trust                   | Large | 10                                       | 2                               | 0.0%                         | 0.0%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | 2  |
| 23 Notting Hill Genesis                   | Large | 54                                       | 352                             | 2.3%                         | 0.8%                              | 348   | 2.8%   | 1.0%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | 4  |
| 24 Notting Hill Home Ownership Limited    | Large | 67                                       | 26                              | 0.2%                         | 0.5%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | 26   |
| 25 Orbit Group Limited                    | Large | 80                                       | 42                              | 0.3%                         | 0.7%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | 42   |
| 26 Peabody Trust                          | Large | 80                                       | 159                             | 1.0%                         | 0.2%                              | 141   | 1.2%   | 0.2%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | 18   |
| 27 Southern Housing                       | Large | 106                                      | 10                              | 0.1%                         | 0.0%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | 10   |
| 28 Swan Housing Association Limited       | Large | 21                                       | 879                             | 5.8%                         | 10.3%                             | 523   | 4.3%   | 7.3%  | 290                                  | 100.0%                            | 43.0%  | 19   | 1.3%  | 5.5%   | 47   |
| 29 The Guinness Partnership Limited       | Large | 150                                      | 401                             | 2.6%                         | 0.6%                              | 400   | 3.3%   | 0.8%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | 1  |
| 30 The Riverside Group Limited            | Large | 149                                      | 220                             | 1.4%                         | 0.3%                              | 82  | 0.7%   | 0.2%  | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 44   | 3.0%  | 0.4%   | 94   |
| 31 Trinity Housing Association Limited    | Small | 35                                       | 17                              | 0.1%                         | 4.2%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 17   | 1.2%  | 4.2%   | -  |
| 32 Westmoreland Supported Housing Limited | Small | 71                                       | 4                               | 0.0%                         | 0.4%                              | -   | -  | -   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | 4  | 0.3%  | 0.4%   | -  |
| 33 YMCA Thames Gateway                    | Small | 5  | 18                              | 0.1%                         | 5.6%                              | 18  | 0.1%   | 29.5%   | -                                    | -                                 | -  | -  | -   | -  | -  |

**Limited Assurance Reports Introduction**

This report provides the Audit Committee with an overview of the limited assurance internal audit reviews that have been completed since the Committee last met. It summarises the key findings, the assurance ratings provided, and the management actions that have been agreed to strengthen the control environment. The purpose of this report is to support the Committee in its oversight responsibilities by highlighting areas where improvement is required and ensuring that progress is monitored.

A summary of the limited assurance audit reports issued during this period are set out below. Further detail on each audit is provided in the sections that follow.

**Temporary Accommodation Additional Overspend Follow Up**

The follow-up confirmed that although some progress has been made, most notably through the introduction of the ARA system and improvements to data quality and role clarity, key weaknesses remain, particularly in data management, forecasting, and supplier arrangements. Reporting functions, end-to-end procedures, and formal agreements for nightly lets are still incomplete, meaning the overall assurance rating remains Limited. Whilst three of the twelve high-risk recommendations have been fully implemented, most recommendations remain in progress and are not expected to be completed until mid-2026. Significant work is still required to finalise service budgeting processes, clarify Finance and service responsibilities, and formalise supplier documentation, before risks can be fully mitigated.

**Final Internal Audit Follow Up Report – Temporary Accommodation Additional Overspend**

**Background**

In May 2025, Internal Audit issued a memo outlining the key findings relating to the overspend within the 2024/25 Temporary Accommodation budget. The review identified significant weaknesses across three core areas:

- Data Management and Data Protection
- Budgeting and Forecasting
- Suppliers, Contracts and Rates

To address the issues and associated risks highlighted in that review, a formal Improvement Action Plan was developed. This plan sets out the required actions for both the service and the Finance Team to strengthen controls, enhance oversight, and improve overall governance.

This follow-up report provides an update on the progress made to date in implementing the agreed actions and highlights any areas where further work remains outstanding. At this stage, the overall audit opinion remains Limited. While some progress has been made, a significant amount of work is still required to fully deliver the expected improvements and ensure that the key risks identified are effectively mitigated.

**Temporary Accommodation Improvement Action Plan**

| Recommendations  | Progress Update  |
|--|--|
| 1.1 Review the data from the Temporary Accommodation spreadsheet for accuracy before transfer to ARA | Data from the Temporary Accommodation spreadsheet has been entered into the Jigsaw Accommodation module (ARA) and checked for accuracy and completeness. A full reconciliation of individuals and addresses was undertaken to ensure accuracy and remove duplication, and rates have been verified. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b> |
| 1.2 Implement the Housing Management system ARA  | The Jigsaw Accommodation module ARA went live in October 2025. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b>  |
| 1.3 Populate ARA with accommodation and people data  | Accommodation and people data has been entered into ARA, and procedures supporting data entry have been developed and approved. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b>   |

## Appendix 2 – Limited Assurance Reports

| Recommendations |  | Progress Update  |
|-----------------|--|--|
| 1.4             | Decommission the Temporary Accommodation spreadsheet   | <p>The spreadsheet remains in use as a compensating control until assurance is obtained that all data has been accurately migrated to the new system and validation checks confirm compliance with documented procedures. While the service is keen to decommission the spreadsheet at the earliest opportunity, Finance has indicated a preference to retain it until they are satisfied that these assurances have been fully met.</p> <p>The spreadsheet remains available; however, it is retained solely as a parallel control during the transition to the new system. It is not utilised by the service for the management of people or property. On this basis, the action is assessed as complete and is now considered closed.</p> <p><b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b></p> |
| 1.5             | Finalise the Housing Benefit interface   | <p>MRI is the supplier of the Jigsaw system. Phase 1 testing has been completed. During testing, it was identified that the automated interface did not include the 'number of bedrooms' field. In response, MRI implemented an alternative interface solution, and a single manual intervention step has been introduced to address this gap.</p> <p>A project request has been raised to automate the full process, and a procedure guide has been produced and approved. Phase 2 testing, intended to achieve full automation, remains dependent on MRI and internal IT resource availability. Current timelines indicate that this phase is expected to be completed by April 2026.</p> <p><b>Planned Completion Date: Partially complete –April 2026</b></p>                            |
| 2.2             | Assess and define the management information necessary for effective strategic and operational control     | <p>The transition from the Temporary Accommodation spreadsheet to ARA has enabled system-generated reporting. Although completion has been delayed due to system implementation, reporting training is complete and work continues to build and refine reports for business needs.</p> <p>A breakdown of management information expectations, detailing the required categories and associated data fields, has now been documented and agreed. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b></p>   |
| 2.2             | Evaluate ARA's reporting functionality to ensure it aligns with the necessary management information needs | <p>Although the expectations for management information requirements have been fully defined, further work is needed to identify, build, and configure the reports within ARA to generate this information in the required format. This includes ongoing development activity to ensure reporting outputs meet the agreed categories and detailed information specifications.</p> <p>In the interim, reporting is underway and the service are exploring the use of tools to enable management information in ARA to interface with Power BI, which will further strengthen access to reliable service-delivery information and enhance the overall quality, accessibility, and consistency of performance reporting. <b>Planned Completion Date: June 2026</b></p>                          |

## Appendix 2 – Limited Assurance Reports

| Recommendations |  | Progress Update  |
|-----------------|--|--|
| 2.3             | Define roles and responsibilities for reporting functions  | A document has been produced that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities across the Temporary Accommodation service, including Rents, Placements, and related functions. This ensures staff understand their operational duties and where accountability sits within the service.<br><b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b>  |
| 3.1             | Define roles and responsibilities:<br>- Data Management<br>- Financial Management<br>- Property Management<br>- People Management        | This is addressed in section 2.3 above. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b>   |
| 4.1             | Develop comprehensive set of procedures to address all aspects of the process including the transition of cases from ARA to Open Housing | Procedures covering key system activities such as updating the accommodation database and setting up rent accounts within ARA, have been documented and approved.<br><br>However, these procedures primarily focus on system-based tasks and do not yet provide full coverage of end-to-end processes, including activities that take place outside the system.<br><br>As the service has transitioned away from off-system working practices, system-based procedures have been developed as a priority. Work will continue to review and update off-system procedures to ensure alignment and to identify any gaps requiring further procedural development. <b>Planned Completion Date: June 2026</b> |
| 4.2             | Agree acceptable placement standards for inclusion to documented procedures.   | Work is underway to ensure the Placement policy guidance adequate reflects acceptable standards for placements. <b>Planned Completion Date: March 2026</b>   |
| 5.1             | Robust use and monitoring of the existing spreadsheet (until decommissioned)   | The original spreadsheet remains in place as a compensating control during the transition to ARA, pending assurance that all data has been accurately migrated and validated against documented procedures. While Finance has requested its retention until these assurances are met, the spreadsheet is no longer used by the service for managing people or property and serves only as a parallel control. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b>   |
| 5.2             | Staff training on the use of the Housing Management system ARA.  | Training completed by staff in July 2025 for data entry into the system. Reporting training was completed by MRI and system user guides have been provided to support staff. Jigsaw also offers help guide videos. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b>  |

| Recommendations |   | Progress Update   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| 6.1             | Assess and define the management information necessary for effective budget management  | This is addressed in section 2.1 above. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b>  |
| 6.2             | Look for an effective tool to assist Budget Managers in managing the budget. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Smartview excel add in from PBCS</li> <li>- Actuals and Budget report</li> <li>- Management budget dashboard</li> </ul> | ARA is fully functioning and can support budget management via PBCS. Work is now underway to develop the management information and this will also feed into the budget management and forecasting process. Couple this with the work that will be done by Finance (Council wide) after the Finance restructure is complete. <b>Planned Completion Date: July 2026</b>  |
| 6.3             | Updated and reconcile forecasts using the new system  | <p>Forecasts are currently prepared by the Finance Business Partner using data provided by the service, applying forecast assumptions and trend analysis. These forecasts are ultimately approved by the Assistant Director of Housing Demand.</p> <p>This is a complex service area that involves analysing large volumes of data through formulae, spreadsheets, and reconciliations. To improve understanding of the factors driving forecasts, the service needs to play a more active role in their production. Moving forward, the service and the Finance Business Partner will continue to work collaboratively, leveraging newly available system data to enhance the forecasting process and increase the service’s involvement. The Service Level Agreement to be implemented post Finance Review will also confirm responsibilities for budget management processes. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b></p> |
| 6.4             | Training for Budget Managers (including generating reports)   | ARA is fully operational and supports budget management through PBCS. Work is progressing on improved management information to strengthen budgeting and forecasting. Organisation-wide training will be delivered after the Finance restructure, with interim support offered by the Finance team and experienced system users. <b>Planned Completion Date: July 2026</b>  |
| 6.5             | Build dedicated time into work schedules to support proactive budget monitoring and control.  | The Finance Business Partner assigned to this service spends a significant proportion of their part-time hours each month supporting budget management and retains full responsibility for forecasting. Although the cycle is monthly, the work involved is substantial and already forms a core part of their role. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b>   |

| Recommendations |   | Progress Update   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| 7.1             | <p>Define and document the scope of responsibilities and accountabilities of both services and Finance in relation to budget management in a self-service model including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reconciliation of the system (ARA and Open Housing) against the general ledger; and</li> <li>- Failure to promote forecasts within PBCS.</li> </ul> | <p>Service Level Agreement to be implemented post Finance Review. <b>Planned Completion Date: July 2026</b></p>   |
| 7.2             | <p>Integrate the documented roles into relevant procedures, policies or service level agreements – This is reliant on wholesale programme for the Finance Offer and Budget Holder Responsibility Definition.</p>  | <p>Service Level Agreement to be implemented post Finance Review. <b>Planned Completion Date: July 2026</b></p>   |
| 7.3             | <p>For high complex budgets review the capacity of resources available to meet sharp deadlines</p>  | <p>Action has been taken to understand the needs of the service and temporary resource identified for Housing Demand, however this will be addressed across the wider organisation as part of the Finance Review. <b>Planned Completion Date: July 2026</b></p> |
| 8.1             | <p>Review the intranet guidance and procedures to ensure it is up to date, accurate and accessible</p>  | <p>A review has been undertaken, and improvements have been identified. Action will be taken to strengthen the guidance and procedures once the Finance Review has been completed. <b>Planned Completion Date: July 2026</b></p>                                |

## Appendix 2 – Limited Assurance Reports

| Recommendations |  | Progress Update   |
|-----------------|--|---|
| 9.1             | Include budget management (including but separate to PBCS) as part of essential training requirements for all existing staff and as part of the on boarding of new starters  | The Council is currently planning to deliver a program of training across the organisation This will be delivered following a Finance restructure. Staff who have immediate needs are offered support by finance and experienced system user colleagues. <b>Planned Completion Date: July 2026</b>  |
| 9.2             | Provision of comprehensive, mandatory and ongoing training   | The Council is currently planning to deliver a program of training across the organisation This will be delivered following a Finance restructure. Staff who have immediate needs are offered support by finance and experienced system user colleagues. <b>Planned Completion Date: July 2026</b>  |
| 9.3             | Issue a formal reminder to staff that comprehensive training materials and guidance on budget management and use of PBCS is available via Fusion. Encourage all relevant personnel to review these resources to ensure consistency, accuracy, and compliance in budgeting practices. | An email was issued to all PBCS budget holders which included links to materials. Finance have partnered to deliver PO training courses. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b>   |
| 10.1            | Review of existing rates within the Temporary Accommodation spreadsheet to ensure accuracy   | All rates have now been reviewed and verified (see 1.1 above). <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b>   |
| 10.2            | Record all negotiations with suppliers and formalise agreements  | <p>A PIN Form in Teams is used to record details of nightly rates, which the Placements Team then enters into ARA. However, there is no formal document outlining the agreed Terms and Conditions for the use of nightly lets. This gap exposes the Council to potential liability risks.</p> <p>As part of implementing this action, the service should review the current arrangements for nightly lets, considering the Council’s risk exposure in the absence of agreed Terms and Conditions.</p> <p><b>Planned Completion Date: March 2026</b></p> |

## Appendix 2 – Limited Assurance Reports

| Recommendations |  | Progress Update   |
|-----------------|--|---|
| 10.3            | Robust recording and monitoring of all rates within the system   | Work is underway to audit and upload relevant documents and agreements into the accommodation section of the system. An audit monitoring period is in place to ensure data is clean and accurate, and this will continue until sufficient assurance is achieved to confirm compliance with expectations. Reports generated from ARA are being used to support the monitoring of data accuracy. <b>Planned Completion Date: April 2026</b> |
| 11.1            | Develop a comprehensive set of procedures to address all aspects of service delivery including the recording and formalising negotiation practices | See 4.1 above. <b>Planned Completion Date: June 2026</b>  |
| 11.2            | Produce a pro forma to ensure all necessary information is being collected and recorded consistently   | See 10.2 above. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b>  |
| 12              | Staff to be robustly trained in on boarding properties and their rates   | Staff have completed negotiation testing, and step-by-step guidance has been developed to ensure clarity of expectations. <b>Planned Completion Date: Complete</b>  |

## **Housing Demand – Unforecast Spend Q4 2024/25**

### **Summary Briefing**

*Housing Demand Audit Report Summary 16.01.26*

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#### **1. Background & Financial Impact**

During the final quarter of 2024/25, the Housing Demand budget experienced a significant and unexpected rise in spending.

The yearend forecast increased from £2.2m to £3.6m, before later being reduced to £3.3m through emergency mitigation actions.

This unplanned increase of £1.4m was mainly due to hotel and nightly let accommodation costs, which rose sharply and unexpectedly.

The underlying reason for the jump was that our forecasting tools and systems were not able to keep pace with real time changes, leading to a gap between expected versus actual spending.

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#### **2. Key Drivers of the Overspend**

##### **a. Market Forces**

External pressures — including global conflicts, increased migration, and the impact of the energy and cost of living crises — caused:

- higher homelessness rates
- reduced availability of affordable private rented homes
- rapidly rising accommodation costs

The Council was not yet operating in the nightly paid market, and had no families in hotels, but demand surged suddenly and sharply.

Homeless approaches doubled, and the ICT system simply could not handle the volume of emergency placements.

##### **b. System & ICT Issues**

Our core housing system, Open Housing, was not suitable for managing emergency or nightly paid accommodation.

This forced teams to rely on manual processes and multiple spreadsheets, which created:

- data quality issues
- forecasting risks
- limited management oversight
- difficulties capturing and sharing accurate information

##### **c. Legal Pressures**

The Council is legally required to house homeless families, including new priority groups such as victims of domestic abuse.

Households had to be placed in chain hotels, moving every two weeks, creating high volume and administrative pressure.

These pressures meant the Council was often working reactively, rather than proactively.

#### **d. Spreadsheet Dependency (off system)**

Teams were forced to rely on temporary spreadsheets, which were never designed to forecast budgets, track rents, or monitor invoices.

This created gaps in understanding the true financial position.

It also meant the Housing Demand team carried the burden of operating a system they were not resourced or trained to manage.

#### **e. Operational Challenges**

Placements and invoices being recorded manually made it easy for:

- invoices to arrive late
  - spending to fall into the wrong month
  - forecasts to become inaccurate
  - discrepancies to grow between expected and actual costs
- 

### **3. Breakdown of the £1.4m Unforecast Discrepancy**

Internal audit identified the specific causes:

- **Void:** £0.396m
- **Multiple room use:** £0.252m
- **Breakfasts:** £0.038m
- **October rate discounts not applied:** £0.103m
- **Rough sleepers / SWEP:** £0.015m
- **Under accrual from previous years:** £0.146m
- **Other forecasting errors:** incorrect formulas, rate issues, timing issues, etc.

A loss of experienced finance staff with proprietary knowledge of Housing Demand also increased risk.

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### **4. Accommodation Strategy & Procurement**

The Council began transitioning from high cost, poor quality chain hotels to block-booked hotels and self-contained nightly lets to improve stability and living conditions.

These options, while sometimes more expensive per night, provide:

- safer and more suitable spaces for families
- cooking facilities
- reduced upheaval
- improved wellbeing outcomes

However, reliance on spreadsheets meant costs were sometimes captured late or in inaccurate periods.

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## **5. Financials & Rate Negotiations**

In 2024, the Council procured 209 properties for temporary accommodation. Through renegotiated rates, spending reduced from £5.97m to £5.4m (projected). However, mismatches between Housing Supply forecasts and Finance's reporting created variances of up to £800k, caused by timing issues, rate changes, and procurement volume shifts.

## **6. Quality & Compliance**

All temporary accommodation is now subject to compliance checks, including:

- safety assessments
- ownership verification

Complaint levels are now low, showing improved quality and oversight.

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## **7. Actions Taken Following the Audit**

### **7.1. New Housing Rents System (ARA)**

The old system was no longer fit for purpose, so the Council procured the ARA Module of MRI Homelessness/Jigsaw in December 2024, with a go live date of June 2025.

Data from spreadsheets has been uploaded, and cleansing work completed to ensure it is accurate.

Parallel running will continue until at least February 2026 to ensure reliability before fully shutting down the old processes.

### **7.2. Strengthened Financial Controls**

The Council reviewed and reduced assumptions for:

- repairs
- maintenance
- legal fees
- removal services
- bad debt provisions

It also removed unfilled posts from the forecast and reviewed Housing Benefit entitlement using more accurate data.

### **7.3. Operational Improvements**

Key improvements include:

- removing a single point of failure in payment processing
- issuing additional transaction cards
- improving placement and invoice tracking
- auditing documents and clarifying reporting roles across teams

### **7.4. Procurement & Accommodation Strategy**

The move away from chain hotels towards block-booked hotels and nightly lets supports family wellbeing and stabilises supply.

Premier Lux is the only remaining block-booked hotels, retained for cost and quality reasons with other providers supplied as a on-demand provision.

The **East London Partnership** introduced standardised caps for nightly rates to maintain consistency and control cost pressures.:

- 1 bed: £45
- 2 bed: £65
- 3 bed: £85
- 4 bed: £100

However, boroughs continue to outbid each other with incentives as high as £10,000 to secure a property.

### **7.5. Compliance & Quality Assurance**

Regular compliance checks ensure good standards, and complaint levels remain low — particularly important for families and vulnerable residents.

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### **7.8. Outcomes Achieved**

- **Improved Data Quality and Forecasting**

New systems and data cleansing work have significantly improved forecast accuracy.

- **Reduced Financial Risk**

Renegotiated rates, new income streams, and tighter controls have reduced projected spend and closed reporting gaps.

- **Stronger Operational Resilience**

Better payment processes and integrated systems have reduced risks and improved reliability.

- **Better Compliance and Service Quality**

Accommodation now meets statutory requirements and provides better outcomes for families.

- **Continuous Improvement**

Further enhancements are underway, particularly around cost reduction, procurement efficiency, and regional collaboration.

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## PLACES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

10 March 2026

**Subject Heading:**

Voids Overview

**ELT Lead:**

Neil Stubbings  
Strategic Director of Place

**Report Author and contact details:**

Ian Saxby  
Assistant Director of  
Housing Property & Assets  
ian.saxby@havering.gov.uk

**Policy context:**

This report provides an overview of the voids process, answers a number of members' questions and provides details of current and historical performance

### SUMMARY

This report provides the Places Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee with benchmarking analysis of our voids, lettings and allocations performance in comparison with sector peers assessing each team's operational effectiveness that influences the overall Key to Key performance.

The report provides insight into the total number of voids processed the categorisation and trends on individual service performance.

The Chair and the Vice Chair of the Places Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee have asked for an update on Voids Performance. They have also asked for the report to include in the context of the above, the current compliance with Awaabs Law.

Details of our current void's performance are included within this report.

In addition to this, the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Places Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee have asked a number of questions in relation to voids, which have been responded to in **Appendix A** of this report.

It should be noted that this report is for information only. No decision is required.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Note the report

## REPORT DETAIL

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides Cabinet with benchmarking analysis of our voids, lettings and allocations performance in comparison with sector peers assessing each team's operational effectiveness that influences the overall Key-to-Key performance.
- 1.2 The report provides insight into the total number of voids processed the categorisation and trends on individual service performance.
- 1.3 This report provides information to the Places OSSC in relation to the Council's voids process and performance.

### 2. Overview

- 2.1 A total of 620 properties and 354 garages have been processed during the current 2025/26 financial year as voids as of February 2026.

Void categories are defined as:

- V1 – Minor Works: 11 days – under £3.5k.
- V2 – Major Works: 19 days – £3.5k–£16.5k.
- V3 – Long-Term Voids: 70 days – over £16.5k.

All garages are raised as voids but not recorded within performance analysis of V1, V2 or V3.

### 3. General Needs & TMO Voids

- 3.1 A total of 229 General Needs & TMO voids have been completed as of February 2026.

### 3.2 Void Categories

| Category             | Number of Properties |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| V1 – Minor Works     | 34                   |
| V2 – Major Works     | 157                  |
| V3 – Long-Term Voids | 38                   |

### 3.3 Average Void repair and key to key times (General needs & TMO's)

| Month      | V1           | V2           | V3           | Key to Key   |
|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| April      | 12.25        | 13.57        | -            | 47.41        |
| May        | 10.20        | 16.33        | -            | 42.18        |
| June       | 12.67        | 22.28        | 32.80        | 48.03        |
| July       | 10.50        | 20.88        | 45.80        | 46.21        |
| August     | 9.60         | 20.40        | 45.80        | 51.96        |
| September  | 12.00        | 35.83        | 56.38        | 58.56        |
| October    | 26.00        | 28.11        | 71.00        | 66.03        |
| November   | 18.00        | 29.38        | 35.67        | 62.43        |
| December   | 12.00        | 29.64        | 46.71        | 60.32        |
| January    | 11.00        | 26.21        | 67.50        | 64.11        |
| <b>YTD</b> | <b>12.14</b> | <b>24.77</b> | <b>49.75</b> | <b>53.85</b> |

### 3.4 Trends

3.5 69% of voids fall within the categorisation of V2, 157 out of 229 raised.

3.6 The narrow gap of roughly 4 days between completing works and final letting illustrated in the 49.75 average works days and the 53.85 keys-to-keys time demonstrates the effective partnership between service areas voids, rehousing and allocations.

3.7 The reshaped rehousing team is consistently performing at a high level. Scheduling viewings and sign-up with minimal administrative delay co-ordinating completed works and verifying offers and sign-ups effectively.

## 4. Sheltered Voids

4.1 A total of 46 Sheltered voids have been completed year to date.

4.2 All Sheltered voids are classified as **V2**, as full redecoration is required due to the needs of senior residents. The associated costs are incorporated within the basket rate under the terms of the voids contract.

4.3 Average Void repair and key to key times (Sheltered)

| Month      | V1          | V2           | V3       | Key to Key   |
|------------|-------------|--------------|----------|--------------|
| April      | -           | 6.00         | -        | 37.50        |
| May        | 6.00        | 12.00        | -        | 45.00        |
| June       | -           | 10.33        | -        | 42.00        |
| July       | 6.00        | 11.33        | -        | 58.80        |
| August     | 10.75       | 20.00        | -        | 26.67        |
| September  | 12.00       | 13.00        | -        | 50.00        |
| October    | -           | 18.80        | -        | 86.67        |
| November   | -           | 12.80        | -        | 35.00        |
| December   | -           | 14.80        | -        | 89.67        |
| January    | -           | 11.50        | -        | 45.00        |
| <b>YTD</b> | <b>9.57</b> | <b>13.83</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>52.19</b> |

4.4 Trends

- 4.5 The year-to-date void works performance figures of 13.83 days demonstrates strong performance for a service where every property requires full decoration.
- 4.6 There is a gap of roughly 38 days between repair completion and final letting, the lettings are not completed by the rehousing team but by the sheltered scheme managers. The delays highlight a gap between verification viewings and sign-ups and the need for better coordination.
- 4.7 Sheltered properties can also be harder to let impacting on the overall key-to-key time

**5. Hostel Voids**

5.1 A total of 115 Hostel voids have been completed as of February 2026.

**5.2 Void Categories**

| Category             | Number of Properties |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| V1 – Minor Works     | 99                   |
| V2 – Major Works     | 16                   |
| V3 – Long-Term Voids | 0                    |

### 5.3 Average Void repair and key to key times (Hostels)

| Month      | V1           | V2           | V3       | Key to Key   |
|------------|--------------|--------------|----------|--------------|
| April      | 10.13        | 16.00        | -        | 27.25        |
| May        | 11.44        | -            | -        | 33.20        |
| June       | 10.92        | 18.00        | -        | 24.67        |
| July       | 9.77         | 16.33        | -        | 29.54        |
| August     | 9.60         | 40.00        | -        | 38.71        |
| September  | 9.60         | -            | -        | 37.08        |
| October    | 10.00        | 26.00        | -        | 26.33        |
| November   | 9.00         | 36.00        | -        | 26.00        |
| December   | 10.33        | 15.00        | -        | 58.00        |
| January    | 8.78         | 18.00        | -        | 29.09        |
| <b>YTD</b> | <b>10.06</b> | <b>20.92</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>32.79</b> |

### 5.4 Trends

5.5 A high proportion (86%) of hostel voids fall within the V1 category, indicating minor works are typically required. These units are predominantly bedsits or single rooms.

5.6 Hostel voids are not included within the void basket rate as the values in works are lower. Works to Hostels are undertaken using agreed tendered schedule of rates codes by the area voids surveyor.

5.7 Independent living properties now used as Hostel accommodation affect K.P.I times due to compliance processes required – Gas/Electrical safety checks.

## 6. Buyback Properties

6.1 A total of 95 Buyback voids have been completed as of February 2026.

### 6.2 Void Categories

| Category             | Number of Properties |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| V1 – Minor Works     | 0                    |
| V2 – Major Works     | 43                   |
| V3 – Long-Term Voids | 52                   |

### 6.3 Intended Use Breakdown

| Funding / Use Category        | Number | Rent Level      |
|-------------------------------|--------|-----------------|
| Chaps Funded – Social Housing | 79     | Social rent     |
| LAHF2 Funded – Social Housing | 7      | Affordable rent |
| Refugee Use                   | 2      | Affordable rent |
| TMO Use                       | 4      | Social rent     |
| Tagen Use                     | 3      | Affordable rent |

### 6.4 Average Void repair and key to key times (Buy Backs)

| Month      | V1 | V2           | V3           | Key to Key |
|------------|----|--------------|--------------|------------|
| April      | -  | 10.00        | -            |            |
| May        | -  | 19.25        | 21.00        |            |
| June       | -  | 27.67        | 47.33        |            |
| July       | -  | 23.80        | 40.80        |            |
| August     | -  | 33.25        | 68.67        |            |
| September  | -  | -            | 58.50        |            |
| October    | -  | 24.00        | 56.25        |            |
| November   | -  | 28.00        | 46.10        |            |
| December   | -  | 19.40        | 35.00        |            |
| January    | -  | -            | 45.60        |            |
| <b>YTD</b> | -  | <b>23.79</b> | <b>49.05</b> |            |

### 6.5 Trends

6.6 Over half of buybacks (55%) fall within V3, indicating extensive works and long turnaround timelines. Properties bought on the open market generally require more extensive work to comply with all housing regulation and legislation in terms of Havering’s lettable standard.

## 7. Tagen Voids

7.1 A total of 51 Tagen voids have been completed as of February 2026.

### 7.2 Void Categories

| Category             | Number of Properties |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| V1 – Minor Works     | 0                    |
| V2 – Major Works     | 51                   |
| V3 – Long-Term Voids | 0                    |

7.4 Average Void repair and key to key times (Tagen)

| Month      | V1          | V2           | V3           | Key to Key   |
|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| April      | -           | 8.50         | -            | 30.50        |
| May        | -           | 18.50        | -            | 56.00        |
| June       | 5.00        | 22.00        | -            | 33.00        |
| July       | 7.00        | 31.00        | 67.00        | 34.00        |
| August     | -           | 13.75        | -            | 54.75        |
| September  | 6.00        | 14.50        | -            | 66.00        |
| October    | -           | 17.50        | -            | 20.00        |
| November   | -           | 22.75        | -            | 36.00        |
| December   | -           | 29.00        | -            | 48.17        |
| January    | 8.00        | -            | 132.00       | 151.00       |
| <b>YTD</b> | <b>6.67</b> | <b>18.47</b> | <b>99.50</b> | <b>48.83</b> |

8. PSH Properties

8.1 A total of 58 PSH voids have been completed as of February 2026.

8.2 Void Categories

| Category         | Number of Properties |
|------------------|----------------------|
| V1 – Minor Works | 14                   |
| V2 – Major Works | 44                   |

8.3 Average Void repair and key to key times (Buy Backs)

| Month      | V1          | V2           | V3           | Key to Key   |
|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| April      | 9.67        | 13.00        | -            | 46.17        |
| May        | -           | 22.40        | -            | 36.42        |
| June       | 11.00       | 21.60        | -            | 31.20        |
| July       | -           | 21.50        | -            | 53.60        |
| August     | 7.00        | 27.00        | -            | 45.56        |
| September  | 10.00       | 21.00        | -            | 46.80        |
| October    | 12.00       | 12.00        | -            | 91.00        |
| November   | -           | 38.40        | -            | 48.86        |
| December   | 7.00        | 38.50        | -            | 35.25        |
| January    | 8.00        | 16.00        | 50.50        | 100.75       |
| <b>YTD</b> | <b>9.60</b> | <b>24.10</b> | <b>50.50</b> | <b>48.31</b> |

## 9. Handback Properties with Voids Works

9.1 A total of 58 PSH voids have been completed as of February 2026.

### 9.2 Void Categories

| Category         | Number of Properties |
|------------------|----------------------|
| V1 – Minor Works | 18                   |
| V2 – Major Works | 8                    |

## 10. Total Summary Across All Property Types

| Category                                  | Total Properties |
|---|------------------|
| Total properties with void works received | 620              |
| Total garages with void works             | 352              |

## 11. Performance Management of voids works

11.1 On-going robust key performance indicator (KPI) monitoring of the voids workflow has resulted in the service consistently delivering strong top-quartile performance when benchmarked against London peers.

11.2 KPI performance is vigorously monitored weekly by the voids manager ensuring any delays are identified and resolved promptly, KPI performance is then subject to an additional layer of monthly scrutiny by the (place) strategic leadership team ensuring ongoing operational performance oversight.

## 12. Performance Management of Rehousing Team (Lettings).

12.1 On-going robust key performance indicator (KPI) monitoring for the rehousing team has been a key contributing factor in delivering the documented and on-going top quartile key-to-key performance.

12.2 The team performance is managed by the Re-Housing and Terminations Manager against a challenging KPI Target: 5 working days once works are completed and a usable offer is received.

12.3 The team are currently achieving an impressive 3.57 day average from April 2025- to date demonstrating consistent best in class delivery.

### 13. Awaabs Law

- 13.1 Awaab's Law intersects with "voids" primarily as a strategic window for landlords to ensure compliance before a new tenant moves in.
- 13.2 While the law's strict timeframes are triggered by reports from active tenancies, the void period is a critical opportunity for landlords to proactively identify and remove hazards such as damp and mould in line our current void policy.
- 13.3 All completed void works are fully compliant with Awaab's Law and meet the LBH lettable standard. Mechanical extractor fans have been tested to confirm full functionality, and new fans have been installed where required.
- 13.4 Performance data, supported by the accompanying operational narrative, provides a strong and reassuring picture of how effectively the service is responding to damp and mould cases in alignment with the requirements of Awaab's Law. This can be evidenced and demonstrated manually on a case-by-case basis.
- 13.5 Across both monthly and live work-in-progress datasets, the service consistently achieves high on-time completion rates, with multiple KPI categories performing at 96–99% compliance.
- 13.6 The introduction of specialist damp and mould repair codes, along with resident notification letters, represents a significant step forward in the service area. Work is ongoing to align the IT system with Awaab's Law definitions to enable system-generated reporting in accordance with Housemark reporting criteria.
- 13.7 None of our London peers have published performance data to date relating to Awaab's Law.
- 13.8 Below is our current performance data relating to Damp and Mould

#### Monthly KPI (completed January 2026)

| Type               | Late     | On Time    | Total      | % Compliant |
|--------------------|----------|------------|------------|-------------|
| 10 days            | 2        | 155        | 157        | 99%         |
| 120 Calendar days  | 5        | 127        | 132        | 96%         |
| 60 Working Days    | 1        | 12         | 13         | 92%         |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>294</b> | <b>302</b> | <b>97%</b>  |

#### Cumulative KPI (October 2025 to January 2026)

| Type               | Late      | On Time    | Total      | % Compliant |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------|
| 10 days            | 6         | 448        | 454        | 99%         |
| 120 Calendar days  | 8         | 267        | 275        | 97%         |
| 60 Working Days    | 4         | 29         | 33         | 88%         |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>744</b> | <b>762</b> | <b>98%</b>  |

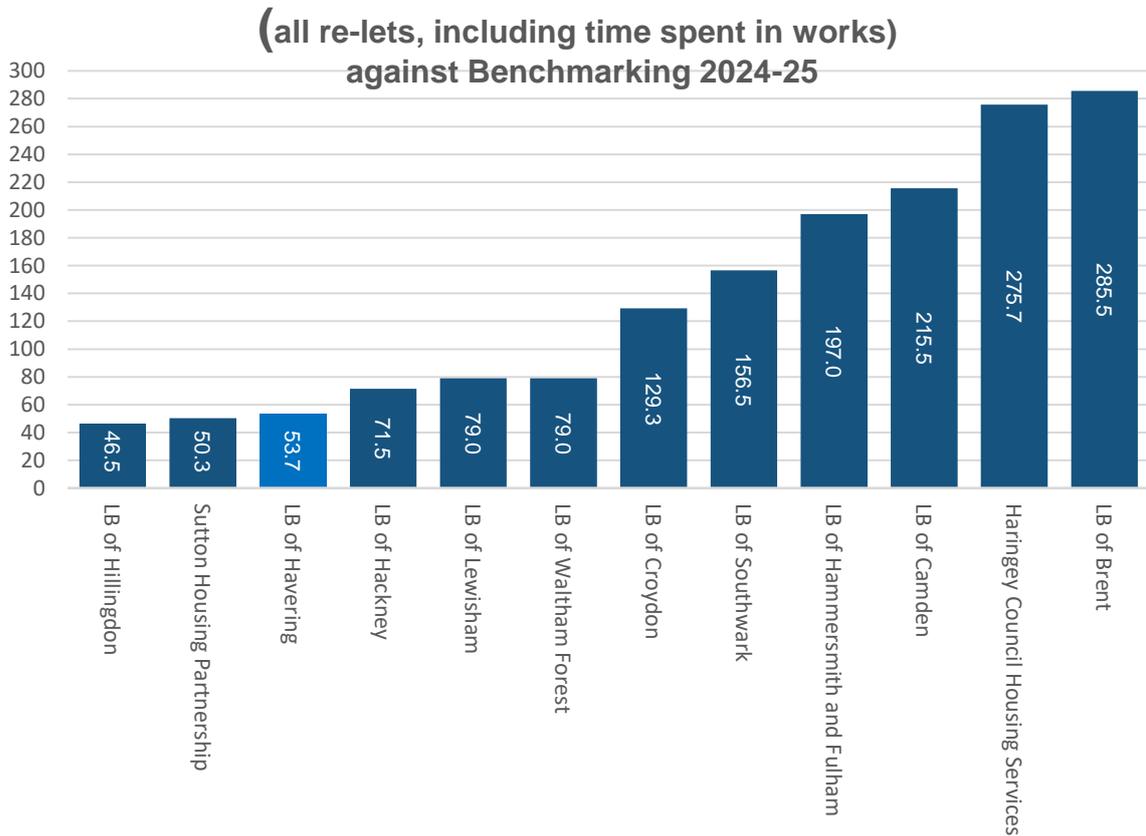
## 14. Conclusion

14.1 The London Borough of Havering's void performance when benchmarking against our London peers in 2024/2025 fiscal period was not only top quartile performance, but also significantly outperforming top quartile performance.

14.2 The Graph below showing HRA re-lets cumulative data from April 2025 to January 26, against 2024-25 Housemark performance data. (2025-2026 not yet available).

14.3 Benchmarking indicates that Havering has both the processes and structure in place to sustain top quartile performance into 2025/26, subject to forthcoming data.

14.4 This outlines a continued and sustained performance level from the service which is striving for continuous improvement.



## BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

## IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

**Financial implications and risks:** None for this report.

**Legal implications and risks:** None for this report.

**Human Resources implications and risks:** None for this report.

**Equalities implications and risks:** None for this report.

## APPENDICIES

**Appendix A** - Chair and the Vice Chair Questions and Answers.

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## Introduction

The Chair and the Vice Chair of the Places Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee have posed a number of questions to officers, which have been responded to below.

### Question 1

#### **Pre-Void (4 Weeks' Notice Period)**

Explain what currently happens from the moment a tenant gives notice, including how quickly a pre-void inspection is arranged and what checks or surveys take place before key return.

Set out plainly what *could* be done during the notice period but currently isn't: early scoping, provisional void categorisation, early asbestos checks, contractor scheduling, OT triage, pre-advertising, early shortlisting, affordability checks, rent account creation, sign-up pack preparation and provisional viewings.

Be honest about what prevents earlier activity — policies, risk interpretation, IT limitations, capacity, contractor restrictions or organisational silos.

### Management Response to Question 1

When a tenant submits an Online Housing Contact Form to give four weeks' notice, the following typically occurs:

**Notification:** The Re-housing and Terminations team notifies the Voids & Lettings service to begin planning.

**Pre-Exit Inspection:** An Empty Homes Inspector visits the property during the notice period to check its condition, identifying any damage or fixtures that must remain.

**Recharge Identification:** Tenants are informed of potential recharges for damage or left-behind items, encouraging them to clear the property before the Monday 12 noon key return deadline.

**Safety Surveys:** The Council may arrange an asbestos survey during this period to avoid delays once the property is empty.

**Key Return Preparation:** Tenants are notified that a key safe may be fitted outside for the final key handover.

Havering Council's current void performance is significantly stronger than the London average, though it still has room to reach the highest benchmarks through more aggressive pre-void activity. Havering has substantially improved its "key-to-key" turnaround time from 80.2 days in 2020/21 to a current average of 53.7 days.

| Metric            | Havering Council<br>(Current)                     | Housemark London Top<br>Quartile |
|-------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Average Void Days | 53.7 Days   | 66.3 Days                        |
| Performance Gap   | <i>Outperforming by ~11 Target Benchmark days</i> |                                  |

The council moved to a "Day One" model, which eliminated a previously cumbersome 5–10 day delay between receiving keys and raising works orders. All tasks are now bundled into a single "primary void basket rate" works order raised immediately upon vacant possession.

Improved coordination with maintenance partners like Mears has been credited for the faster key-to-key results.

While not fully utilized for all "Notice Period" tasks, the council has begun implementing pre-exit inspections specifically to identify resident recharges (damages), which reduces the volume of work needed once the property is empty.

Havering remains "far from complacent" regarding these figures. Officers have been tasked with investigating the feasibility of further reducing this time by specifically focusing on the period between completion of works and the new tenant move-in.

## **Question 2**

### **Void Types, Costs and Timelines**

Provide a breakdown for the past 12–24 months showing V1/V2/V3 proportions for every bedroom size, including average cost and time taken.

Include General Needs, PSA, Hostels and any specialist stock.

Include recharge amounts billed and recovered.

### **Management Response to Question 2**

Details are included within the main body of the report.

### Question 3

#### Contractor (Mears) Performance

We need a clear picture of how the repairs contractor is performing.

Provide:

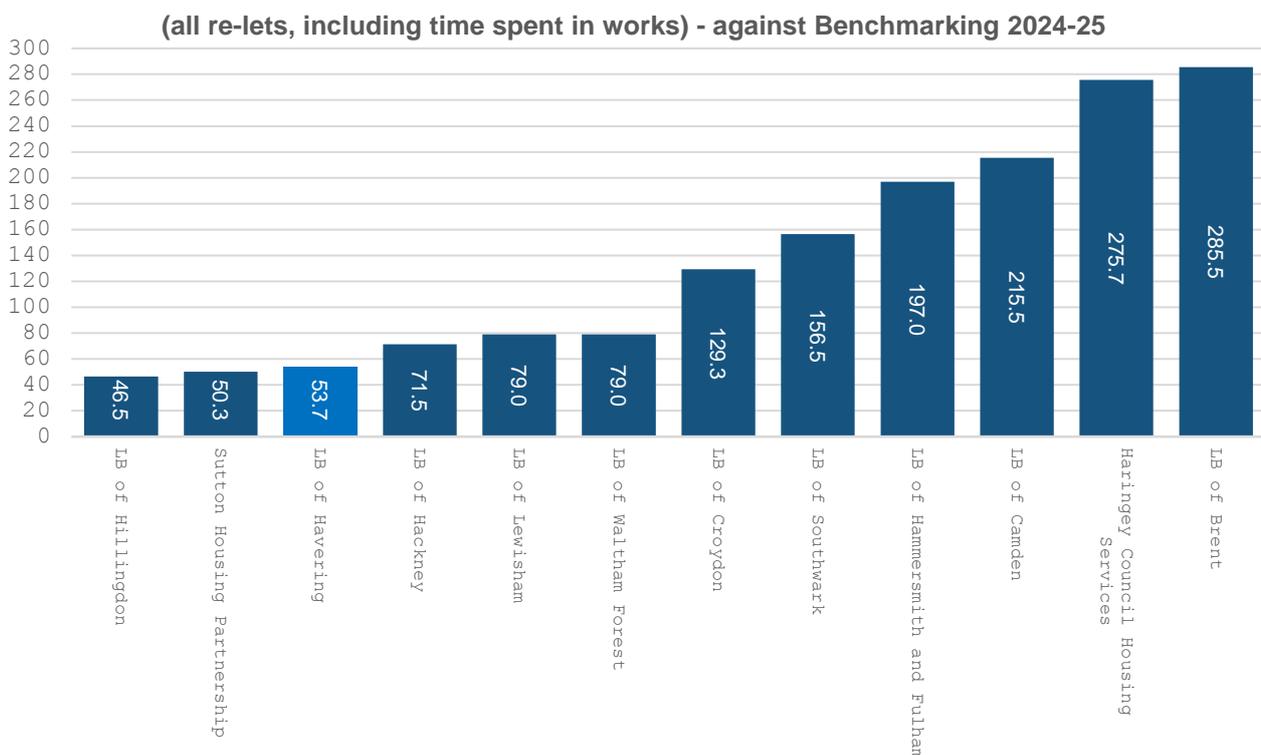
- Performance against contract KPIs for void turnaround.
- On-time vs late completions for V1, V2 and V3.
- Any penalties or deductions issued.
- Frequency and impact of properties being returned late or failing QA.
- How often compliance checks (gas, electrical, fire, water) are delayed due to contractor issues.
- Whether the client team is challenging underperformance robustly enough.

### Management Response to Question 3

The London Borough of Havering’s void performance when benchmarking against our London peers in 2024/2025 fiscal period was not only top quartile performance, but also significantly outperforming top quartile performance.

The Graph below showing HRA re-lets cumulative data from April 2025 to January 26, against 2024-25 Housemark performance data. (2025-2026 not yet available). Benchmarking indicates that Havering has both the processes and structure in place to sustain top quartile performance into 2025/26, subject to forthcoming data.

This outlines a continued and sustained performance level from a services that is striving for continued improvements.



## **Question 4**

### **Variation Orders**

Provide the total number of VOs, the percentage of voids they affect, their average cost, the reasons, how many days they add, and the breakdown by void category and bedroom size.

## **Management Response to Question 4**

So far, this financial year we have received a total of 620 properties with void works and 352 garages with void works.

Havering classifies all void properties as V1, V2, or V3, with the priority level determined by the overall value of works required. All tasks are issued under a single works order, enabling the full scope of the job to be performance-managed efficiently and consistently, including capital work.

Our void surveyors have access to the Council's asset management system, which provides background information on the property. However, the surveyor's primary responsibility is to carry out a comprehensive on-site inspection and determine the exact works needed to ensure the property meets Havering's Lettable Standard before re-let. The final scope of works is based on this professional survey assessment rather than on system data alone.

All variation must be reviewed and approved by a Havering surveyor before it is instructed. At present, we are not forecasting any overspend on the voids budget, as financial control measures are in place and being actively monitored.

## Question 5

### Capital Works

Where voids require kitchens, bathrooms, rewiring, roofs, windows or structural works, provide:

- The number of voids triggered by major capital interventions.
- Added time and added cost.
- How often capital needs are only discovered after the void is created.
- Whether earlier identification (pre-void) is feasible.

## Management Response to Question 5

In the London Borough of Havering, "major works" (V3 voids) are defined by cost and complexity, typically involving significant structural or system renewals. A void property is classified as V3 (Major Capital) if the estimated cost of repairs exceeds £16,500. Common triggers for this classification include:

- Full Kitchen & Bathroom Replacement: Installation of new units, worktops, sinks, and specialized floorings.
- Total Rewiring: Replacing the electrical system and installing new fuse boards and smoke/heat detectors.
- Structural Remediation: Addressing major defects such as brickwork failure, damp proofing, or collapsed floors/ceilings.
- External Enveloping: Major roof replacements, chimney stack repairs, or window and door frame renewals.

Havering utilizes a mix of long-term partnership contracts and specific project tenders to manage these works.

## Question 6

### Cleaning, Waste Removal and Access Issues

Set out:

- How long cleaning actually takes.
- Delays caused by bulky waste, abandoned items, fly-tipping or pest issues.
- Cases where gaining access delayed inspection or repair.
- Any safeguarding, hoarding or complex cases that slow down turnaround — and how often they occur.

## Management Response to Question 6

Voids are categorised by the scale of work required:

- Minor Repairs (V1 - Under £3,500):
- Standard Repairs (V2 - £3,500 to £16,500)
- Major Works (V3 - Over £16,500)

Residents are expected to clear all items before moving. If items remain, the council's contractor is required to remove fly-tipped or abandoned waste.

The updated Pre-Exit process now incorporates recharges, ensuring accountability for damage, unauthorised alterations, or clearance requirements. This process applies to Standard Terminations, Transfers via CBL, Direct Offer moves. There are some exceptions to this. These are:

- Deceased tenants (due to new legal restrictions).
- Tenants with known vulnerabilities, where a proportionate approach is required

The pre-exit visit and recharge assessment support the service in improving property condition at hand back and reducing avoidable void works.

The council now uses the 4-week notice period to conduct "pre-exit surveys," identifying required repairs early to prevent access delays after the keys are returned.

Where there are Complex Cases (Hoarding & Safeguarding), these cases are classified as "complex" and often fall into the V3 category (70+ days).

On average, the council manages approximately 80 voids at any one time. While specific percentages for hoarding are not publicly cited, these cases contribute to the tail of properties that exceed the 66-day London average.

For vulnerable tenants who cannot clear their own items, the Havering Housing Service may appoint a contractor to assist, though this adds logistical complexity to the handover.

## **Question 7**

### **Full Key-to-Key Timeline**

Provide a detailed breakdown of where days accumulate across the entire process: inspection, scoping, repairs, compliance, handover to Allocations, viewings and sign-up. Include data on properties that sit “completed but unallocated” and for how long.

### **Management Response to Question 7**

Details are included within the main body of the report.

## Question 8

### IT System Workflow and Data Issues

Explain how accurately system statuses reflect the true position of a void. Identify any delays caused by manual updates, poor data visibility between teams, or system limitations that force sequential working.

Clarify whether Mears and the Council operate in real time or with lag.

## Management Response to Question 8

Havering Council has significantly modernised its IT workflows for managing void properties, moving from a manual, "cumbersome" process to an integrated digital system. While the Council and its primary contractor, Mears, now operate with high levels of system integration.

System statuses in Havering now provide a more accurate reflection of a property's true position than in previous years due to streamlined workflows. This includes:

- The Council has eliminated a 5–10 working day "pre-void" period. Previously, multiple tasks were required before raising a works order; now, a primary "void basket rate" order is raised and processed on the very first day of notification.
- The integration of the Council's Open Housing management system with Mears' MCM system provides "complete visibility." Staff can now interrogate all jobs, including viewing before, during, and after photos, and approving variations in a more auditable way.
- This digital streamlining contributed to a reduction in "keys-to-key" turnaround times from an average of 80.2 days in 2020/21 to 53.7 days in 2024/25.
- To further improve efficiency, the Council is implementing a "pre-exit process." This identifies resident recharges during the four-week notice period, though it still relies on a sequential flow.

As of early 2026, the London Borough of Havering is undergoing a major transition to sovereign IT services, decoupling its shared infrastructure from Newham (oneSource) to establish its own independent cloud based environment.

Following the "M365 split", Havering now operates its own independent Microsoft cloud environment. This includes standard tools such as Teams, Outlook, SharePoint, PowerBI, and Viva Engage.

Havering currently uses Open Housing as its primary IT system for dealing with housing related matters. This system is currently being re-procured and it is anticipated that this will result in further improvements going forward.

## Question 9

### Allocations KPIs and Performance

Set out the KPIs Allocations is measured against, current performance, and where delays occur inside the team.

If KPIs are routinely missed, explain why.

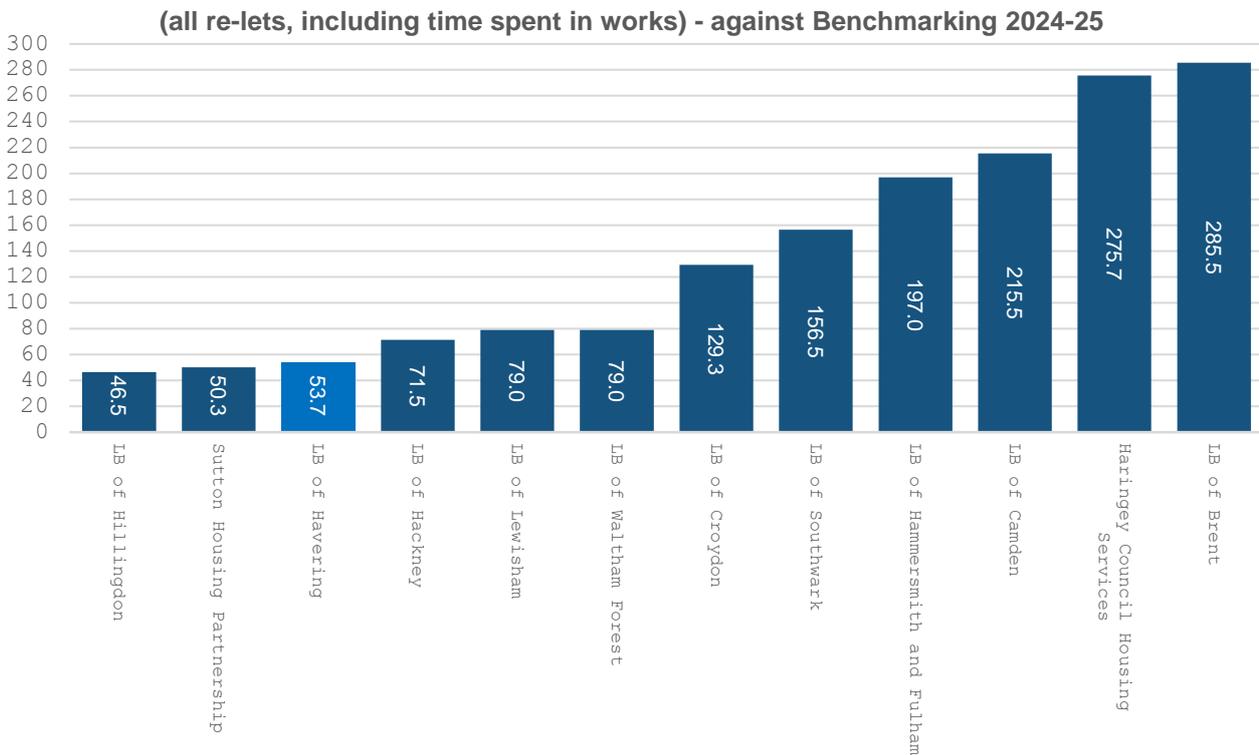
If there are no meaningful KPIs, explain the gap.

## Management Response to Question 9

The London Borough of Havering’s void performance when benchmarking against our London peers in 2024/2025 fiscal period was not only top quartile performance, but also significantly outperforming top quartile performance.

The Graph below showing HRA re-lets cumulative data from April 2025 to January 26, against 2024-25 Housemark performance data. (2025-2026 not yet available). Benchmarking indicates that Havering has both the processes and structure in place to sustain top quartile performance into 2025/26, subject to forthcoming data.

This outlines a continued and sustained performance level from a services that is striving for continued improvements.



## Question 10

### Refusals

Clarify how refusal reasons are gathered and whether the data is reliable.

Explain what happens after a refusal — whether the property goes to the next bidder or is re-advertised — and how long each scenario adds to turnaround.

Provide data on repeated refusals, refusals of adapted homes and how many properties are re-advertised each year due to unsuccessful offers.

## Management Response to Question 10

Allocations focuses on the advertisement, shortlist and nomination of void properties to eligible bidders on the housing register via the Council's Choice Based Lettings system, ELLC Choice Homes.

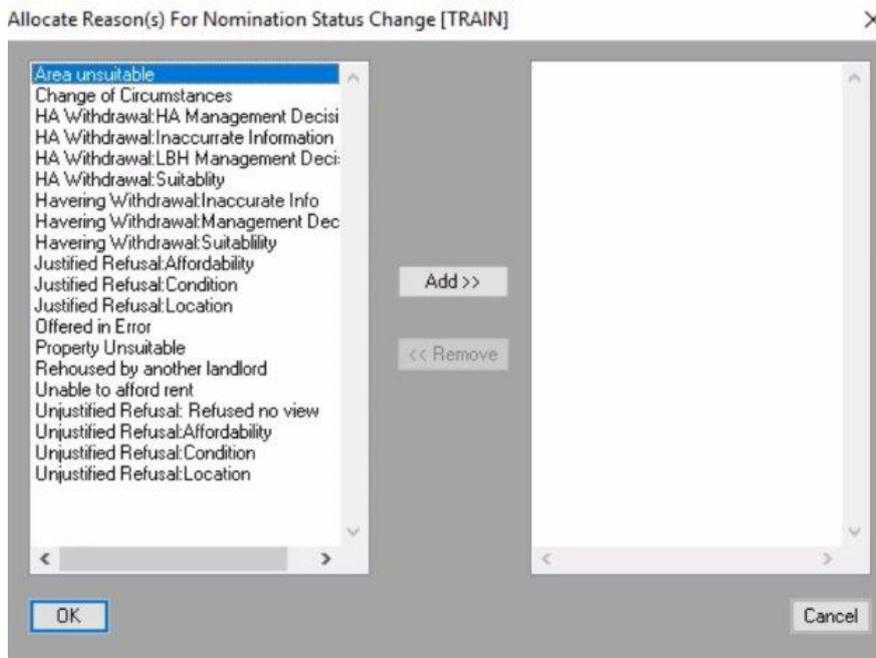
### KPI's & Performance

Based upon group KPI's Allocations does not have a specified end-to-end KPI comparing offer to ready to let date. Rather performance is indirectly monitored through:

- Void KPI's – trends in high turnaround properties – deep dive into bottlenecks
- Housing Performance Scorecards – utilising localised KPIs to identify trends
- Internal Service Standards/Process – Understanding agreed service standard and adherence to set targets.

### Refusals

Refusals are recorded via the Council's housing systems through manual input identifying refusal reasons. Refusal are managed through a number of set parameters as shown below:



Data from refusal is recorded as “Declined” as is evident within reporting mechanism related to void offers.

When an applicant refuses a property, allocations will provide the next available nominee from bidding shortlist with an attached offer letter. Turnaround for such requests is 48 hours

In 24/25 the Council recorded 19 declined properties the below table details the breakdown in bed size:

| Bedroom | Total |
|---------|-------|
| 1 bed   | 12    |
| 2 bed   | 4     |
| 3 bed   | 3     |
| Total   | 19    |

## Question 11

### 360° Tours and Virtual Viewings

Provide a clear assessment of whether virtual viewings could replace most physical viewings and by how much this would reduce void days.

Set out a practical approach using template interior walkthroughs for common layouts, combined with a measured floor plan and a short external photo set of the street and garden (including notes on sheds, ponds or items intended for removal).

Highlight which property types or applicant groups would still require physical viewings and why.

### Management Response to Question 11

The London Borough of Havering currently undertakes video 360° surveys on the completion of all voids. This is primarily to ensure that we have an accurate record of the property at handover stage. This can also be useful if there is a dispute regarding the condition of the property following the tenant moving in. It is also understood that there were certain technical limitations with the allocations software that may prevent this without significant further investment.

Although offering prospective tenants 360° Tours and Virtual Viewings could be useful, it is unlikely to completely eliminate physical viewings. Also, despite the efficiency of digital tours, certain groups and property types require an in-person visit to ensure suitability and safety. These groups include:

- Occupational Therapy (OT) Requirements: Applicants with physical disabilities must test "transfer spaces" (e.g., turning circles for wheelchairs or height of kitchen counters) that a camera lens can distort.
- Vulnerable Adults/Elderly: Those with low digital literacy or those moving from supported housing may need the emotional reassurance of a physical visit to reduce "tenancy failure" risks.
- Large Families: To ensure that the "flow" of a crowded household is manageable in the space.
- Extensively Adapted Homes: Properties with lifts, wet rooms, or specialist hoists.
- Properties with Significant Defects: If a property has a known "quirk" (e.g., a very low ceiling or steep communal stairs), a physical viewing manages expectations and prevents future complaints.

**Question 12****Move-In Incentives (Paint Packs, Decoration Vouchers)**

Explain how these incentives are used, whether they speed up or delay turnaround, and whether a standard approach could avoid certain cosmetic works and shorten void times. Quantify the likely days saved.

**Management Response to Question 12**

The London Borough of Havering's Lettable Standard does not require every void property to undergo full redecoration. Instead, a proportionate and needs-based approach is applied. The void surveyor assesses both: the condition of the property, and the needs and circumstances of the incoming resident, to determine whether internal decoration is necessary.

Where a property does not receive redecoration as part of the void works, residents are provided with decoration vouchers. The current allowance is:

£125.00 for one-bedroom property plus £25.00 for each additional bedroom thereafter.

This approach ensures value for money while still supporting residents to make the property their home.

## Question 13

### OT Involvement and Delays

Provide clear data on the impact OT has on void timelines.

We need:

- Average turnaround for voids requiring OT input vs those that don't.
- Where delays occur (assessment, panel approval, contractor capacity).
- Whether notifying OT at the notice stage is viable.
- Whether a dedicated OT for voids would be cost-effective.
- Whether embedding OT within Voids/Repairs would prevent sequential delays.
- Data on adapted properties: refusals, inappropriate bidding and repeat assessments.

Also assess whether maintaining a separate adapted property register would reduce delays and improve matching.

## Management Response to Question 13

Occupational Therapist Involvement and Delays.

OT Voids are not measured separately from standard voids. They are measured in the overall turnaround with detail on long-term adaptation.

Delays on OT voids occur through:

- Late engagement: OT often notified after the void is created, not at notice stage.
- Sequential working: assessment → approval → design → specialist works.
- Specialist contractor capacity sits outside standard void programmes.

Delays in OT Void could be reduced through:

- Early OT notification at notice stage for known adapted stock.
- Dedicated OT resource for Allocations to reduce repeat assessments and rework.
- Direct allocation to most in-need cases – allows early identification of suitable adapted and adaptable stock
- Closer integration of OT with Voids/Repairs to prevent stop-start workflows.
- Adapted property register (for matching, not segregation) to improve first-time offers.

## Question 14

### Temporary Accommodation and Customer Impact

Explain how void delays increase Temporary Accommodation stays.

Provide data on:

- Extra days households remain in TA due to void delays.
- Cost impact of those delays.
- Any disproportionate impact on vulnerable applicants.
- How many offers the average applicant receives before accepting a property.

## Management Response to Question 14

Void delays and the time a Council home remains empty between tenancies does have an impact in prolonging stays in Temporary Accommodation (TA) by preventing households from moving into permanent housing.

Havering has significantly improved its efficiency in returning empty homes to use, which helps mitigate the duration of TA stays.

The council has reduced "key-to-key" turnaround times from an average of 80.2 days in 2020/21 to 53.7 days in 2024/25. This reduction of roughly 25 days per property represents nearly a month of TA time saved for each household transitioning to permanent housing.

Havering is currently outperforming the London council peer group average of 66.27 days.

Relying on temporary solutions due to a lack of available permanent stock is a driver of Havering Council's financial pressure. The average cost for emergency TA has risen to £81 per night (approximately £2,430 per month).

Stays in commercial hotels are more expensive, with averages previously reaching roughly £94.82 per night.

Delays in TA stays disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, including victims of Domestic Abuse. Havering has seen a significant increase in domestic abuse cases requiring emergency placement. Extended stays in TA often mean living in "nightly-let" accommodation or hotels, which lacks the stability required for health and education.

## Management Response to Question 15

### Stock Condition and Planned Maintenance

Explain how the condition of the stock influences void repair times.

Set out whether the asset management backlog or lack of planned maintenance is increasing the number of V2/V3 voids.

## Management Response to Question 15

The condition of housing stock directly dictates void repair times through a cost-based classification system, where more significant deterioration leads to higher repair costs and longer turnaround periods.

For the 2024/25 fiscal period, Havering has outperformed its London peers with an average end-to-end "keys-to-key" turnaround time of 53.7 days, compared to a top-quartile benchmark of 66.27 days.

Havering categorises void properties (unoccupied homes requiring repairs) into three main types based on the estimated cost of works. The extent of repairs needed, driven by the property's condition, determines the target timeframe for completion:

Voids are categorised by the scale of work required:

- Minor Repairs (V1 – 11 days).
- Standard Repairs (V2 – 19 days).
- Major Works (V3 70 days).

Properties in poor condition require more extensive "baskets of works" to meet the Council's "ready to let" standard, which ensures compliance with the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS), including gas and electrical safety.

Havering Council has a social housing non-decency rate of 3.5% for the 2024/25 period. This performance is significantly better than both the London median and many of its peers.

The median non-decency rate for London housing providers is 7.05%. Havering's 3.5% rate places it in Quartile 1 (top 25%) of performing London boroughs for this metric. Some London boroughs in the bottom quartile (Quartile 3) have non-decency rates as high as 18.23%.

Havering maintains high safety standards, reporting 100% compliance for fire risk assessments, legionella assessments, and communal lift checks.

Overall tenant satisfaction in 2025/26 was recorded at 70.8%, which would place it among the top five London boroughs.

## Question 16

### Team Structure and Accountability (Voids, Allocations, OT)

Provide an honest assessment of the impact of splitting Voids/Repairs (Places) and Allocations/OT (People).

If the structure leads to handover delays, misaligned priorities or accountability gaps, say so plainly.

Assess the feasibility and expected benefits of:

- Bringing Voids, Allocations and OT together as one team.
- Co-locating the three teams in one office.
- Placing all three areas under a single Director with unified KPIs.

If integration *wouldn't* help, explain why — with evidence.

## Management Response to Question 16

The teams are working well together and have made significant improvements to voids performance which has resulted in Havering Council's current void performance being significantly stronger than the London average, though it still has room to reach the highest benchmarks through more aggressive pre-void activity. Havering has substantially improved its "key-to-key" turnaround time from 80.2 days in 2020/21 to a current average of 53.7 days

The current structure has clear lines of demarcation. In addition to this monthly void monitoring meetings take place between the teams to ensure that performance is regularly reviewed and improvements made, where appropriate.

## Question 17

### Parallel Working

Identify all stages that are currently done sequentially but could be run in parallel. Explain what would need to change and the realistic time savings for each.

## Management Response to Question 17

Havering Council has already implemented significant "parallel working" strategies to streamline its housing void process, which has significantly reduced the average key-to-key turnaround time. By eliminating sequential pre-void tasks and consolidating them into a single work order issued on day one, the Council has achieved a top-quartile performance in London.

The following stages have been identified as historical bottlenecks where sequential tasks were consolidated into parallel or streamlined workflows:

□

| Stage                        | Historic Sequential Approach   | New Parallel/Streamlined Approach  | Requirements for Change  | Realistic Time Savings   |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Pre-Void Notification</b> | Multiple administrative tasks required <i>before</i> raising a works order (e.g., separate inspections and approvals). | All tasks streamlined into a primary void basket rate works order raised on Day 1.                           | Centralisation of the void order process and adoption of "basket rates" for standard works.    | 5 to 10 working days saved per void.                           |
| <b>Notice Period Utility</b> | Termination of tenancy was recorded, but work only began after keys were returned.                                     | Implementation of a pre-exit survey by the re-housing and terminations team during the 4-week notice period. | Early notification from tenants and a proactive survey team to identify recharges before exit. | Potential reduction in post-exit repair time by up to 4 weeks. |
| <b>Statutory Compliance</b>  | Asbestos surveys, EICRs, and heating checks were often handled by separate teams or contractors sequentially.          | Contractor (Mears) now manages all aspects of statutory checks and heating works simultaneously.             | Contractual changes to give a single provider end-to-end responsibility for compliance.        | Reduced "handoffs" and delays between specialized trades.      |

|                           |  |   |  |  |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| <b>Lettable Standards</b> | Repairs and safety checks were often completed before checking against "ready to let" standards. | Defined <b>lettable standards</b> integrated into the Day 1 works order, including HHSRS, gas, and electrical requirements. | Clear, pre-defined standards shared across all maintenance teams to prevent re-work. | Integrated into the Day 1 order process. |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|--|

**Proposed and Ongoing Parallel Enhancements**

To further reduce the current 53-day average, the Council is exploring or implementing these additional parallel steps:

- **Parallel Application Processing:** Under the new Housing Allocations Scheme (launched September 2024/25), the Council allows residents to bid for housing using current bandings while their new applications are being processed under the points-based system. This prevents a "blackout" period where allocations would normally pause for administrative reassessment.
- **Early Resource Allocation:** The introduction of the advanced notice period (pre-exit process) allows for the "pre-organisation and allocation of the correct resources" before the property actually becomes empty. This ensures contractors are scheduled to begin on the day of vacancy rather than waiting for an initial post-void inspection.

**Realistic Time Savings**

By moving from a sequential "inspect, then order, then repair" model to a "pre-survey, Day 1 order" model, Havering has already cut 27 days from its total turnaround time compared to 2020/21 performance. The current focus on reducing "handoffs" through a single contractor (Mears) is designed to minimize additional days lost during the repair phase.

## Question 18

### Overall Improvement Options

We need clear, practical proposals — immediate actions, medium-term operational changes and longer-term structural changes — with the expected reduction in key-to-key days for each.

## Management Response to Question 18

Havering Council has already significantly improved its void turnaround times and is among the best in London. The following proposals outline the current and planned improvements across three tiers to further reduce these timelines.

### Current Improvements

- All pre-void tasks have been consolidated into a single "primary void works order" raised on Day 1.
- Re-housing teams now conduct surveys before a tenant moves out to identify necessary recharges and required works.
- Recently launched to gather immediate feedback on void quality, aiming to reduce "right first time" failures.

### Medium-Term Operational Changes

- Implementing detailed tracking of the "completion to re-let" phase and breaking down turnaround times by property type (e.g., General Needs vs. Hostels).

### Longer-Term Structural Changes

- The new housing allocation scheme launched in September 2025. This points-based system prioritises residents with a 4-out-of-6-year local connection, aiming for faster, more transparent matching of tenants to vacant units.

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