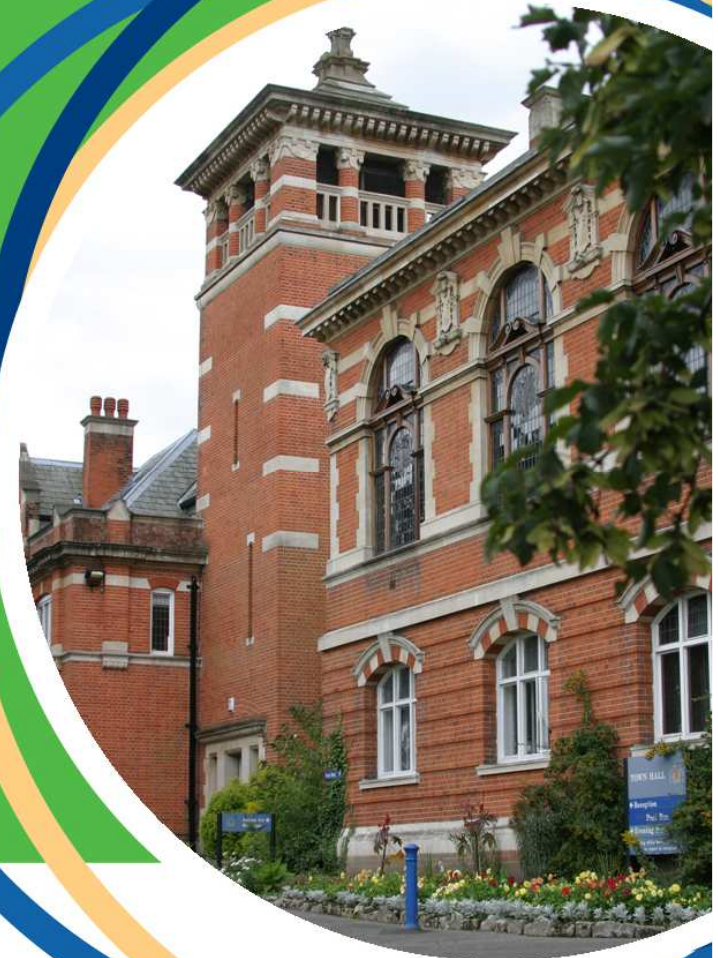


# People

## Portfolio Updates



Reigate & Banstead  
BOROUGH COUNCIL  
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# Revenues, Benefits & Fraud

## Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support

- During Q1 and Q2 2020/21, we dealt with 1,147 new applications for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support, compared with 1,194 over the same period in 2019/20.
- During Q1 and Q2 2020/21, we dealt with 24,089 changes in circumstances for benefit claims, compared with 22,478 over the same period in 2019/20.
- Whilst Housing Benefit claims have continued to reduce, since the introduction of Universal Credit (housing costs), since March 2020 we have seen an increase of 6.11% of households claiming Council Tax Support, primarily due to the negative economic impact of the COVID-pandemic and lockdown.
- The Housing Benefit expenditure is forecast at £32m for 2020/21, with government subsidy covering around 99% of this cost. An increase in non-subsidised elements of the scheme, such as high rental supported accommodation, has seen an impact of the subsidy we receive.

# Revenues, Benefits & Fraud (cont)

## COVID-19 Pandemic Pressures and Support

- The Council is responsible for assessing Test & Trace Payments to residents who have been told to self-isolate.
- From September to December, 91 payments of £500 were made to people who lost out on earnings due to self-isolating.
- Additional Council Tax Hardship Funding was received of £754,507, and as at 10/12/20 we had awarded £430,988 to 3,331 households.

## Discretionary Housing Payments

- Discretionary Housing Payments – funding for 2020/21 was £340,034, to assist with rental costs and prevent homelessness. As at 19/12/20, we had paid out 63% of this government funding.

## Homeless statistics end of Q2 (2019/20 Q2 in brackets)

- Approaches – 538 (537)
- Full assessment of need – 237 (264)
- Owed a ‘Prevention duty’ - 137 (181)
- Owed a ‘Relief duty’ – 103 (77)
- Positive Outcomes – 173 (170)
- Main duty Decisions – 29 (59)
- Main duty Acceptances – 26 (43)
- Average number in B&B – Q1:44 (23), Q2:28 (19)

# Rough sleepers / Those Close To Rough Sleeping

- Bring everyone in' – closure of winter night shelter.
- Town Hall closed to most staff.
- 68 singles accommodated between 1 March and 30 June.
- Welfare calls & weekly Covid reports to Public Health.
- 8 self contained cabins procured for self isolation.
- £148k grant secured from MHCLG in September 2020, part fund :
  - 13 emergency accommodation beds secured until 31 March 2021
  - Overnight security for above property
  - 12 month Tenancy Sustainment post dedicated to single clients
  - Landlord incentives & Furniture
- Increased partnership working with Mental Health, Substance Misuse Teams, SCC, Public Health, Adult Social Care.

# Housing Register (end of Q2) (2019/20 Q2 in brackets)

- 112 Nominations (158)
- 942 households on Register (853)
- At 31 Dec 2020 1103
- New Home Choice system goes live in March providing a better customer experience for applicants applying for properties.
- Rosebery Housing recently acquired 21 affordable rented flats in Horley which RBBC will receive 100% nomination rights.
- A trickle of new social rented homes become available on Westvale

## Challenges now and ongoing *(no particular order)*

- Further lockdowns and instructions to accommodate all.
- Continued unprecedented increase in the number of households joining the waiting list for social rented housing as the fall out from the Pandemic unravels.
- Shortage of rented homes that are affordable (social and private sectors).
- Increasing number of households affected by the benefit cap making private rented unaffordable (usual way out of the cap is by working, very difficult in current job market).
- Potential backlog of evictions building up in the private sector.
- Lack of supported housing for homeless single people with complex needs.

# Housing Delivery Strategy

- On site building 25 homes (flats & houses) in Pitwood Park Tadworth. 14 units for market sale and 11 houses for shared ownership. Due to be completed in summer 2021.
- On site building 32 flats on Cromwell Road. Originally to be sold at market rate and shared equity, now RBBC will offer 50% at market rent & 50% at LHA rate (sub market affordable level).
- In discussion with Homes England with regards to a funding gap for 4 one bed units in Horley to be offered to low paid single workers / close to work.
- Project Team assembled to begin the feasibility and design work of a 40 plus unit build on the High Street car park site Horley.
- Report expected at March Executive regarding plans for a supported housing scheme for complex needs singles.



# Raven Housing Trust - Customers

- Over 1000 calls vulnerable customers during lockdown 1, a further 150 (risk based) in lockdown 2.
- Introduced £100k Hardship Fund – supporting foodbanks and individual customers.
- 1500 residents now claiming Universal Credit (UC). Normal increase rate 12-15 per week. During Lockdown increased by 30-40 per week.
- 121 direct payments to Raven due to high arrears or vulnerability.
- Average UC debt continues to reduce - £501 average debt per case November 2020, from £583 October 2020. NHF report national average C£600.
- Reduction in court action due to pandemic = small number of very high arrears cases with little engagement from customers. Highest case over £8k.

# Raven Housing Trust - Development

## Activity in Reigate and Banstead Area

- In the process of handing over the 50 market sales homes at Burrstone Gardens, Merstham (to generate cross subsidy to support the building of more affordable homes).
- R&B is our focus for new affordable housing delivery which will include regeneration – Chavecroft redevelopment to provide 23 new social rented homes (subject to grant), further sites at feasibility stage.
- Seeking to acquire more land in the borough, currently buying Merstham library for affordable delivery.
- Raven to work closely with RBBC to identify more sites and opportunities.
- With the target of net zero carbon by 2050 we will also be investing significantly in our existing homes (+£100m).

# Intervention: Family Support Programme

- Seen increased complexities within families. Including increased prevalence of:
  - Cohabiting Separation
  - Mental health issues
- Wait times have been approximately 25% longer than this time last year.
- Changed approach to increased use of virtual contact to ensure the team can continue to support families.
- Staff team have continued to successfully rise to the challenges posed by COVID-19 and the needs of families. We welcomed 3 new staff to increase the number of residents who can benefit.

# Intervention: Refugee Resettlement

- All new arrivals are currently suspended by the Home Office (from March 2020) due to travel restrictions as a result of the pandemic.
- Continuing to support 10 households (20 adults and 15 children) around the Borough.
- 7 households are working part or full time.
- Most volunteering activities have been suspended.
- All children are receiving education in school or nursery.
- Adults in 8 households are receiving formal English teaching at college.

# Intervention: Money Support Team

- Referrals are 83% higher than last at this point last year - particularly between June & November. Due to redundancy/loss of employment, anxiety/depression, loss of family members.
- 37 households currently waiting for support.
- 2 full time and 1 redeployed staff members.
- Length of intervention has increased to 15 weeks due to:
  - Not meeting face-to-face prologues support time.
  - Increased waiting lists at surrounding services.
  - Complexity of support needs.
- Over £37,500 in debts cleared, including £3,000 in Council Tax and over £11,000 of underpayments recovered.

## Leisure: GLL and RBBC Activities

- Extremely challenging operating environment for GLL
  - All centres closed for around 5 months
  - Limited opening hours with staggered start to activities
  - Poor customer confidence in the sector
  - Significant financial challenges
- Worked closely with GLL to support their operational delivery
- No RBBC-led leisure activities ran in 2020 except for a trial of some online activities in October half term
  - Staff redeployed to Customer Support Centre and Welfare response

## Leisure: Harlequin Theatre

- Very difficult year with no live theatre on stage since March 2020.
  - 125 show & events and 44 pantomime performances cancelled
  - The building was used as the Community Support Centre, and as the home for Strikey Stork in December.
- The cinema was open for 19 weeks, over which time 50 films were screened
- The Café was relaunched with a new menu & excellent feedback
  - over 100 free meals were provided to children in October half term.
- Social media used to connect with customers and promote the venue
  - ‘Live from Lockdown’ performing arts competition – Live gala show in 2021
  - Advent Calendar with famous and community faces
  - ‘Throwback Thursday’ connecting people to snippets of the venue’s past
  - Promotion of offer from national arts organisations
- Work undertaken to assess historical budgets to aid formulation of business plan which will be finalised for 2021/22

# Community Support Centre

- The Harlequin Theatre became home to the Council's Community Support Centre during the initial lockdown.
- From the Centre we:
  - Provided 2,089 individual food parcels to vulnerable residents
  - Cooked and delivered 7,379 hot meals to elderly residents
  - Collected and delivered 397 prescriptions to people who couldn't get to the pharmacy
  - Delivered 48,364 individual items to food banks in the borough to allow them to continue supporting those in need.
- Staff from the theatre were joined by officers from Leisure, Intervention teams, Community Development, Community Centres, Parking and others to successfully implement this ambitious project.



# Covid Welfare Calls & Visits

In March we stood up a phone based Covid welfare response service, at peak times involving redeployed staff from across the Council.

	March – December	Of this, data relating to 2 <sup>nd</sup> wave
Responding to inbound requests for help	2,129	150
Calls to clinically extremely vulnerable residents	4,861	563
Outbound calls to other vulnerable residents	3,855	101
Volunteer befriending calls made	622	140
<b>Total calls</b>	<b>11,467</b>	<b>954</b>
Total volunteers making befriending calls	27	22 (Incl some who also volunteered in wave 1)
Welfare visits*	130	37

*\* A welfare visit is undertaken when a vulnerable resident repeatedly does not respond to phone calls.*

# Covid Welfare: Food & Prescription Support

- Since August Community Partnerships has taken the lead in our Covid emergency food response. We work closely with the food banks, providing strategic, practical and financial support to assist them in managing the ever growing need for their services.
- Our Community Development Team has established food clubs in Woodhatch, Horley and Merstham, supporting those in food poverty to be able to afford fresh food to prepare healthy meals.
- We have coordinated work of partners to provide school holiday meals to families eligible for free school meals.
- Where no alternatives are available, we support residents with emergency food packs or prescription collection

<b>Numbers supported since start of 2<sup>nd</sup> lockdown</b>	
Number of emergency food packs distributed	33
Residents supported with prescription delivery advice	54
Residents supported with emergency prescription collection	6
Referrals made to food bank partners (due to food poverty or requirement to isolate)	81

## Community Champions

In response to a request by colleagues in SCC Public Health, our Community Development Team has identified a network of Community “Covid” Champions. These are local residents who are closely engaged in their communities and are therefore able to help disseminate public health messages relating to the pandemic. This assists in ensuring accurate information is circulating in our communities and counters misinformation.

This work started late in 2020 and will play a key role in the coming months as we navigate the challenges of the new strain of the virus and support the rapid roll out of the national vaccination programme. Our intention is to retain the Community Champions post-Covid as a valuable partner forum to assist in engaging with a diverse cross-section of our communities.

## Managing Volunteers

We have recruited and managed volunteers to support our Covid response since the first lockdown, with volunteers making befriending calls, and supporting collection and food deliveries.

# Community Development

Each Community Development Worker has led regular highly valued Covid welfare response locality meetings, between them covering the whole borough.

Covid has severely curtailed the team's business as usual work because:

- Their roles entail a lot of face to face work in communities, including events, which has not been possible for most of the year
- Their skill sets make them particularly valuable to supporting the Covid welfare response

Despite Covid, the team has successfully:

- Fundraised, or supported partner fundraising, amounting to over £150k
- Played a key role in a population health management pilot in Redhill, working closely with GPs to support individuals' wider needs, thereby reducing the impact of potential ill-health. This is a positive step change in frontline collaboration with health partners.
- Continued to progress a range of project work in their communities, responding to local needs and priorities.
- Continued to support individuals in their communities, e.g. with accessing

**Reigate & Banstead** hardship funding

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# Community Centres

Pre-Covid Plan	Covid Impact
<p>In source on 1/4/20 with smooth transition</p> <p>Consultation and engagement on transformation plan ahead of autumn Executive decision</p>	<p>Centres closed by previous operator in mid March</p> <p>Centres partially reopened in the summer but service offer fluctuated in line with changing Covid restrictions</p> <p>Zoom based service offer developed to reduce isolation of members</p> <p>Consultation and engagement delayed till early 2021 with Executive decision delayed until summer 2021 (Timescales subject to potential further Covid impacts)</p> <p>Centres closed since move to tier 4 in December with the exception of podiatry services (Woodhatch, Banstead) and use of Banstead by Age Concern Banstead</p>

# Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Support

Pre-Covid Plan	Covid Impact
Continue implementation of actions from the 2019 VCS review	Reprioritisation with some areas paused (e.g. launch of RBBC employee volunteering), reduced (e.g. in kind support as currently unable to offer free use of meeting rooms) and others adapted (e.g. greater rigour in monitoring of the impact of our financial support, adapted as achievable outcomes have changed due to Covid)
Deliver small and medium grants funding programmes	Delivered as key business as usual work. £33k of small grants allocated. Medium grants decisions for 2021/22 pending.
Regular liaison with Voluntary Action Reigate & Banstead (VARB)	Part-time secondment of staff to support VARB in the spring / summer to bolster their capacity and diversify their skills (e.g. communications) in the early months of the pandemic
Periodic communication with VCS partners	Much more regular direct communication providing Covid updates (infection rates, restrictions, service impacts, support available). Second wave planning session in September attended by over 40 partners – instrumental to the strength of our 2 <sup>nd</sup> wave response

# Community Safety (Full review at Feb O&S)

Pre-Covid	Covid Impact
Planned change from East Surrey Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to Reigate & Banstead CSP early in 2020	Change delayed by external factors linked to Covid until the autumn. First R&BCSP meeting held in December.
Decision on the future of CCTV planned for the spring	Decision delayed due to Covid workload. Decision reached at Dec 2020 Executive
Steady Anti-Social Behaviour rates averaging 4 per month	Case numbers spiked to 60 cases between April & July but then stabilised to 7 in August
A 5 <sup>th</sup> Domestic Homicide Review was identified	A 6 <sup>th</sup> and possibly a 7 <sup>th</sup> DHR have been identified
Regular meetings of highly valued “Get Connected” partnership forum to combat serious youth violence	Forum initially paused but has now resumed virtually
Implementation of Prevent (counter-terrorism) self-assessment actions	Delivered early in 2020

## Working in partnership to support residents

- Issued circa £15,000 of taxi vouchers to isolated elderly residents with poor mobility and on a low income
- Lead an employment and skills partnership forum aimed at supporting residents towards or into employment
- Lead an older people's forum bringing together agencies from across the voluntary sector to support older residents
- Facilitate digital inclusion initiatives aimed at older isolated residents, residents with disabilities, and families in need of greater access to technology to support remote learning
- Providing £20k of funding to alleviate fuel poverty amongst our most vulnerable residents as a pilot project during the winter of 2020/21