

Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission

Monday 21 November 2022

7.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1
2QH

Supplemental Agenda No.1

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5.	Fire Commander Interview- London Borough of Southwark To receive a report and interview Verona Clark, Borough Commander for the Southwark Fire Brigade on key Fire Safety Issues listed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key fire safety issues across the borough.• Support efforts to enhance fire safety, as scrutiny commission members, and also as ward councillors.• Updates since last year on figures of buildings in the borough with known safety issues relating to cladding, and/or measures in place to counter potential serious safety hazards.• Updates since last year on the impact of Covid on the service and its effect on response times and/or broader service levels.	1 - 5

Contact

Amit Alva on email: amit.alva@southwark.gov.uk

Date: 17 November 2022

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fire safety risks posed by empty homes in the borough and mitigating them.• Additional areas/information for the commission to note and/or review.• The comparison of Bonfire night, fireworks incidents attended this year compared to last few years.	
6.	Cabinet Member Interview - Councillor Darren Merrill, Cabinet Member for Council homes and homelessness Interview with Councillor Darren Merrill including a holistic overview of key strategies and projects under the Cabinet member portfolio for Council Homes and Homelessness. Including the following topics but not limited to <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing repairs service including the contact centre service, multiple failures, repeated calls, contractors and an update on the new strategy in development. <i>(Report in Main Agenda pack)</i>• Leaseholder Charges, Value for Money (VFM) for charges and transparency of accounts supported by asset management team.• Empty homes	6 - 17
7.	Housing Allocation Statistics and Overcrowding report To note the report on Housing Allocations Statistics and Overcrowding from Cheryl Russell, Director of Resident Services, Housing and Modernisation and Karen Shaw, Head of Housing Solutions.	18 - 23



London Fire Brigade Southwark Borough

Housing and Community Safety
Scrutiny Commission

Borough Commander Verona Clarke

OFFICIAL – Sensitive: Commercial
November 2022

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2 Introduction to Southwark Borough

The LFB London Borough of Southwark covers the areas of Peckham, Old Kent Road and Dockhead Fire Stations, however, to assist the council with mutual work surrounding boroughs -Lambeth, Lewisham and City who also have Southwark residents/properties in their borough, the Southwark Borough BC will take the lead on the response for these if need be.

Southwark borough is a densely populated borough with key infrastructure and risks attached (the Shard, Borough Market, London Bridge as well as multiple High Rise buildings). The Fire Brigade actively engage and work in these high risk areas to drive forward fire safety messaging with the private and domestic communities. Crews have lists on an Operational Risk Data Base and score key risk properties and then conduct visits/checks on these properties as per their score matrix.

3 Questions Submitted by Panel and response

3.1 A general update on the key fire safety issues across the borough:

- E-Bike storage- incorrect, poor loading shops and domestic
- Businesses can but are not using the fire risk assessments available to them
- White goods still causing issues, residents can check appliances online for recalls
- Increase in enforcements at Shops with Dwellings (poor ventilation, sleeping areas)

3.2 What can we do to support efforts to enhance fire safety, both in our capacity as scrutiny commission members, and as ward councillors?

- Promote Home Fire Safety visits (<https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/book-a-home-fire-safety-visit/>)
- Encourage responsible heating sources (electric, open heaters are not advisable)
- Encourage safe smoking (smoke outside, extinguish smoking material correctly)
- Encourage responsible charging means – certified brand led mobile phone chargers and lithium battery chargers, recent fires have been started by cheaper counterfeit models.

3.3 Can the borough commander provide any update since last year on any the figures on buildings in the borough with known safety issues relating to cladding, and/or on what measures the Fire Brigade have in place to ensure they do not pose a serious safety hazard?

- Regular meetings with the council Fire Safety leads
- Regular joint visits with the council Fire Safety department and LFB Fire Safety team
- Peckham, Dockhead and Old Kent Road conduct a minimum of 12 visits a week to High Rise buildings and commercial premises to check on the Fire Safety conditions of these building. These are reported back to the LFB data sites and any issues found get reported to Fire Safety teams in LFB HQ and the local council.

- Generally there is a very good working relationship with the council on High Rise cladded buildings, the numbers fluctuate with LFB intervention however the council are very quick to respond to our requests for updates/visits.
- Simultaneous Evac Buildings:
95 not ACM Simultaneous Evacuation buildings
9 ACM Simultaneous Evacuation Buildings
- We have around 240 residential High rise buildings (over 18m)

3.4 Can the borough commander provide an update since last year on the impact of Covid on the service and whether it has significantly affected response times or broader service levels?

- LFB Southwark current have the best response times across the brigade and meet the target times of 6mins/8mins comfortably.
- Service levels have improved with the addition of the 64m aerial ladder platform based at Old Kent Road Fire Station.
- Covid halted a lot of community work however all vulnerable Home Fire Safety visits were carried out. Crews are now doing a minimum of 132 HFSV's a month to residents (11 per watch, per station). Crews also are holding open days, events at station and in the local community (Marie Curie House event, Dockhead Open Day, Spooktacular)

3.5 Can the borough commander provide any particular information on any fire safety risks posed by empty homes in the borough, and what can be done to mitigate these?

- We don't have any data around empty homes in the borough causing any issues however broadly speaking if they were covered by an alarm system that would cause the local community to be aware of any issues should one occur who can then contact the LFB or Council.
- Please note empty homes will be treated as "non persons reported" therefore changes the risk assessment for operational staff attending incidents.

3.6 Any additional areas/information you want to the share with the committee.

- The borough is working closely with the local communities in offering community rooms for meetings (free of charge) and events to spread Fire, Road, water safety message across the borough.
- Each station also takes part in charitable work whether its food banks, collecting clothes for children, toys, coffee mornings ect
- There has been an increase in Arson Proof Letter (APL) boxes (+5) / Fire Retardant bedding (FRB) (+8) across the borough, this is a cost the LFB meets.

2021

APL – 10

FRB – 8

2022

APL – 15

FRB – 16

- The borough are very good at responding to Shut in lift offenses

3.7 The comparison of Bonfire night fireworks incidents attended this year compared to last few years.

- LFB and the council have a great relationship and work together to plan fire safety messaging in advance of key dates (ie bonfire night).
- There were no significant Bonfire night issues in the borough this year.
- Due to better legislation the Fire Safety team do not engage as much with shops selling fireworks or have reported issues
- Planned larger events have driven down the incident reports

Please note however the LFB are not always called to issues as a lot of Firework usage is classed as anti-social behaviour and my policing colleagues would be better placed to respond on any reports this way.

4 Southwark Borough Management Team Contact Details

Borough Commander: Southwark

Verona Clarke

verona.clarke@london-fire.gov.uk

Station Commander: Old Kent Road and Peckham

Gary Deacon

gary.deacon@london-fire.gov.uk

Station Commander: Dockhead

Mark Bristow

mark.bristow@london-fire.gov.uk

The Deputy Assistant Commissioner for the South East is DAC Andy Pennick and he can be contacted through his staff officer Daniel Capon (daniel.capon@london-fire.gov.uk)

LEASEHOLDER ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHWARK

About the Current Contracts



- ❑ Partnering Contracts procured in 2010 for 5 years plus 5 years and additional 2 year extension issued in 2020.
 - Area 1: Borough & Bankside – Breyer Group
 - Area 2: Bermondsey & Rotherhithe – Wates
 - Area 3: Camberwell & Peckham – Apollo/Keepmoat/Engie/Equans
 - Area 4: Nunhead, Peckham Rye & Dulwich – Elkins Construction
 - Area 5: Borough Wide Street Properties – Saltash Construction
- ❑ Framework with 16 contractors (in 4 lots) established in 2016 to deliver primarily in Areas 1 & 2 due to the failure of the partnering contractors in these areas. See appendix
- ❑ The Term Partnering Contracts ended in June 2022 but orders raised under the contract continue well into 2023
- ❑ The Framework ended in January 2022 but contracts "called off" continue to deliver works
- ❑ Contracts have successfully delivered "Warm, Dry & Safe" and "Quality Homes Investment Programme" under a collaborative approach
- ❑ Framework (North) costs are more up to date, however partnering benefits from long term price harmonization and greater buying power due to length of commitment.



Apex is the asset management software suite used by Southwark Council to store key stock condition data about its housing stock. This data is used for short, medium and long-term planning purposes to address the borough's investment needs.

Asset Management uses Apex to maintain an accurate record of the condition of its housing stock, and to facilitate the complex analysis required for a best-value approach to strategic planning.

The Apex asset register stores information about the key building elements of Southwark's housing stock including:

Age

Quantity

Current condition

Estimated 'remaining life' for all core building components

∞

About the Current Contracts



Key priorities:

Quality kitchen and bathroom guarantee

Maintain decency

Deliver a cyclical planned maintenance and decoration programme

Bring the building components of all properties to a 'tolerable' fire safety risk level

Estimated spend of £800m over 8-10 years

Not included:

Works to hard surfaces such as estate paving, estate roads and boundary walls and individual/estate fences

Estate drains

District heating; lifts, water tanks and entry phones

Block ducting works, except in communal areas where they are identified as necessary through the fire risk assessment

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MAJOR WORKS QHIP - ROLE OF CONSULTANTS.

LBS utilises consultants on the major works programme to:

- ☐ Provide independent advice on specialist elements of work which go beyond the councils expertise.
- ☐ Develop feasibilities which are robust including:
 - Development of design.
 - Value engineering.
 - S20 assistance.
- ☐ Manage the contractors on the councils behalf in terms of:
 - Assessment of contractors valuations and certification.
 - Quality of works.
 - Maintaining programme.

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MAJOR WORKS- COST CONTROL

LBS utilises consultants on the major works programme to:

- ☐ Scrutiny panels
 - Process introduced to scrutinise costs and drive VFM.
- ☐ Partnering contactors meeting
 - All contractors attend.
 - Buying exercise. Eg Kitchen harmonisation.
- ☐ World events and cost increases:
 - Covid.
 - Global inflation.

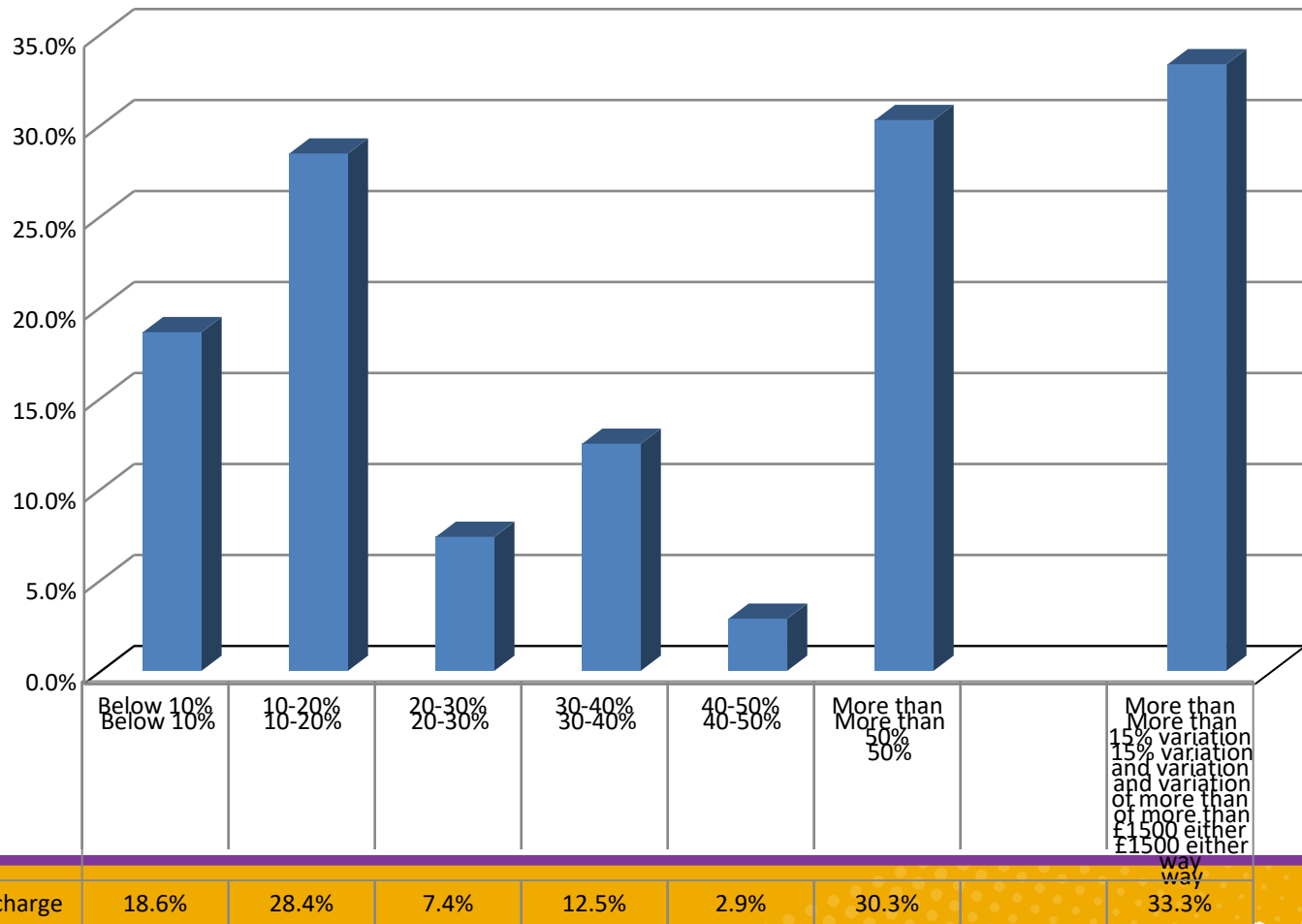
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Estimated spend profile: 2016/17 – 2025/26

Type of Works	1	2	3	4-5	6-7	8-10	Total
External & Communal Maintenance (Estates)	£ 18,280,498	£ 15,170,830	£ 22,114,935	£ 76,591,585	£ 96,978,513	£ 174,341,359	£ 403,477,720
Kitchens & Bathrooms (Estates)	£ 5,653,064	£ 4,275,440	£ 6,760,680	£ 27,318,837	£ 31,861,144	£ 41,541,682	£ 117,410,847
Street properties (All works inc. K&B)	£ 9,109,359	£ 14,688,858	£ 6,186,803	£ 6,439,226	£ 38,125,337	£ 34,621,028	£ 109,170,611
Engineering	£ 12,240,000	£ 12,480,000	£ 12,720,000	£ 26,160,000	£ 27,120,000	£ 42,480,000	£ 133,200,000
Fire Risk Assessment	£ 3,060,000	£ 3,120,000	£ 3,180,000	£ 6,540,000	£ 6,780,000	£ 10,620,000	£ 33,300,000
Total	£ 48,342,922	£49,735,128	£ 50,962,417	£ 143,049,648	£ 200,864,994	£303,604,069	£ 796,559,178

Leaseholder bill variation (QHIP)

Sample: 489 properties



About the New Contracts



- ❑ Procurement Process underway to procure new contracts to replace the previous Partnering Contracts in the same contract areas:
 - Area 1: Borough & Bankside
 - Area 2: Bermondsey & Rotherhithe
 - Area 3: Camberwell & Peckham
 - Area 4: Nunhead, Peckham Rye & Dulwich
- ❑ Pre-qualification is complete, with tenders due to be issued in early 2023
- ❑ Similar approach to before (using a collaborative approach) based on successful delivery and the team knowledge in how the contracts are delivered
- ❑ Main focus of delivery on the new contracts is on “Building Safety”, post Grenfell
- ❑ Street Properties will be procured separately, at a later date

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Appppendix A: Who we deliver it with?

- Contractors Framework;
- Lot 1 & 2 extended to Feb 2022
- Lot 1 < Contracts under £3.5m
- Lot 2 > Contracts over £3.5m
- Lot 3 - District Mains, Boilers and Internal Works – ended 15th Feb 2021
- Lot 4 - Communal and Internal Electrics

Appendix B: Who we deliver it with?

- Contractors Framework;
- Lot 1 < Contracts under £3.5m
- A&E Elkins Ltd
- Architectural Decorators Ltd
- Niblock (Builders) Limited
- Saltash Enterprises Ltd
- Standage & Co Ltd
- Thomas Sinden Ltd

Appendix C: Who we deliver it with?

- Contractors Framework;
- Lot 2 > Contracts over £3.5m
- Axis Europe Plc
- Durkan Ltd
- Engie
- Mears Limited
- Mulalley & Co Ltd

Item No. 7	Classification: Open	Date: 15 th November 2022	Meeting Name: Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission
Report title:		Overcrowding and housing allocations	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Karen Shaw Head of Housing Solutions	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Darren Merrill, Cabinet Member for Council Homes and Homelessness	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. Note the content of the briefing and the actions taken to understand and respond to levels of overcrowding in the borough.

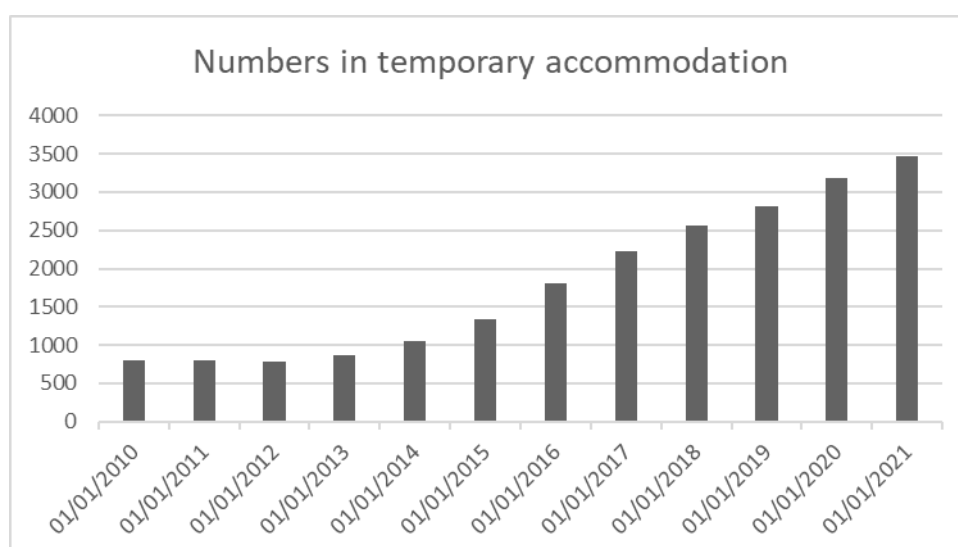
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Southwark has significant levels of housing need in the borough. This may include where households have no stable home or where the accommodation they occupy is unsuitable for their needs. There are two key ways in which these levels of need are seen by the Housing Service – through applications to the authority as homeless or at risk of homelessness and through applications to join the housing register.
3. Overcrowding is one of the areas of housing need that is observed in both the homelessness and housing register pathways.
4. This report describes current levels of known housing need as captured through the housing register and homelessness and illustrates the place of overcrowding within that need. It also updates on activity to respond to overcrowding.

Housing need and overcrowding in Southwark

5. The number of households in housing need in Southwark can be described by considering the number of households who are being assisted because they are homeless or at risk of homelessness and by reflecting on the broader numbers on the housing register.
6. There are currently 3,607 households in temporary accommodation provided by Southwark. This number has been relatively stable during 2022/23 but table 1 below illustrates that over the last 10 years it has grown dramatically.

Table1:



7. The numbers of households approaching as homeless or at risk of homelessness reached a peak in 2020/21 when 3,883 households approached. This reduced in 2021/22 to 2,855. In 2022/23 current trends suggest approximately 2,500 homeless approaches by year end with an average monthly approach of 200 new households.
8. Those approaching as homeless largely do so because they have lost available accommodation either as a result of being excluded by family or friends or being evicted from the private rented sector. There are however a portion of households who approach because their current accommodation is unreasonable to continue to occupy. Legally this is a high threshold and so it is a smaller group than those who have lost their home. Amongst this group are a small number who are extremely overcrowded and as result can no longer remain in their current home.
9. A better picture of levels of overcrowding however is seen when viewing the profile of households on the council's housing register. There are two categories of overcrowding recognised on the register – overcrowding (band 3) and statutory overcrowded households in band 1 with the highest priority.
10. Table 2 below shows the number of households on the register broken down by band and bed size. This illustrates the high overall numbers on the register and the range of bed sizes required.

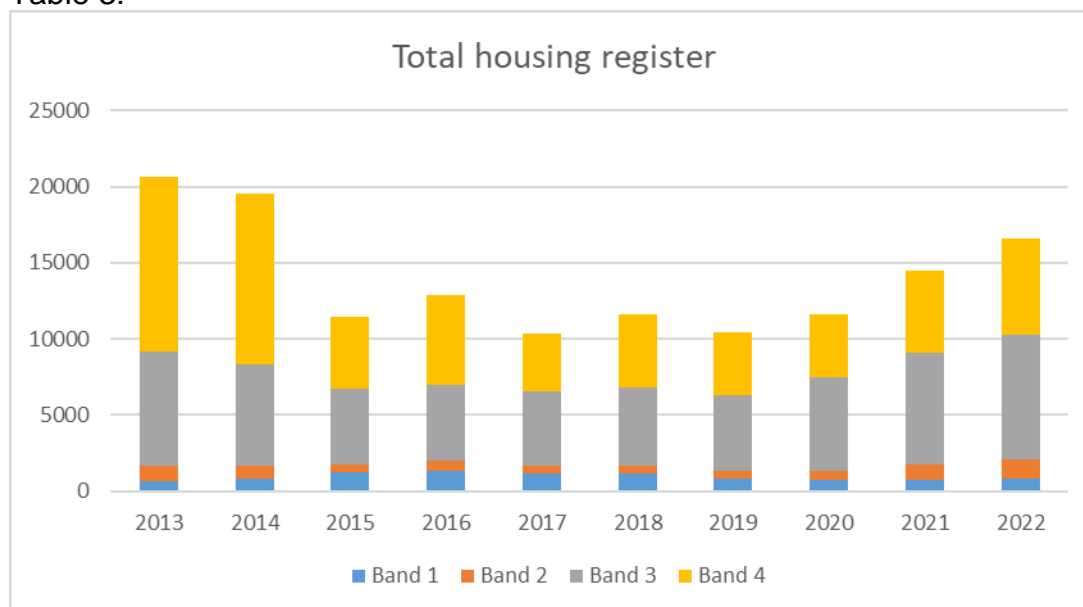
Table 2:

BED NEED	TOTAL BAND 1	TOTAL BAND 2	TOTAL BAND 3	TOTAL BAND 4	BAND TBC	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS
1	346	422	2337	5368	26	8499
2	280	202	2849	977	64	4372
3	123	275	2046	441	19	2904

4	58	177	729	153	6	1123
5	16	42	213	41	1	313
6	9	8	32	9	0	58
7	3	0	14	2	0	19
8	0	0	2	0	0	2
TBC	1	3	35	3	0	42
TOTAL	836	1129	8257	6994	116	17332

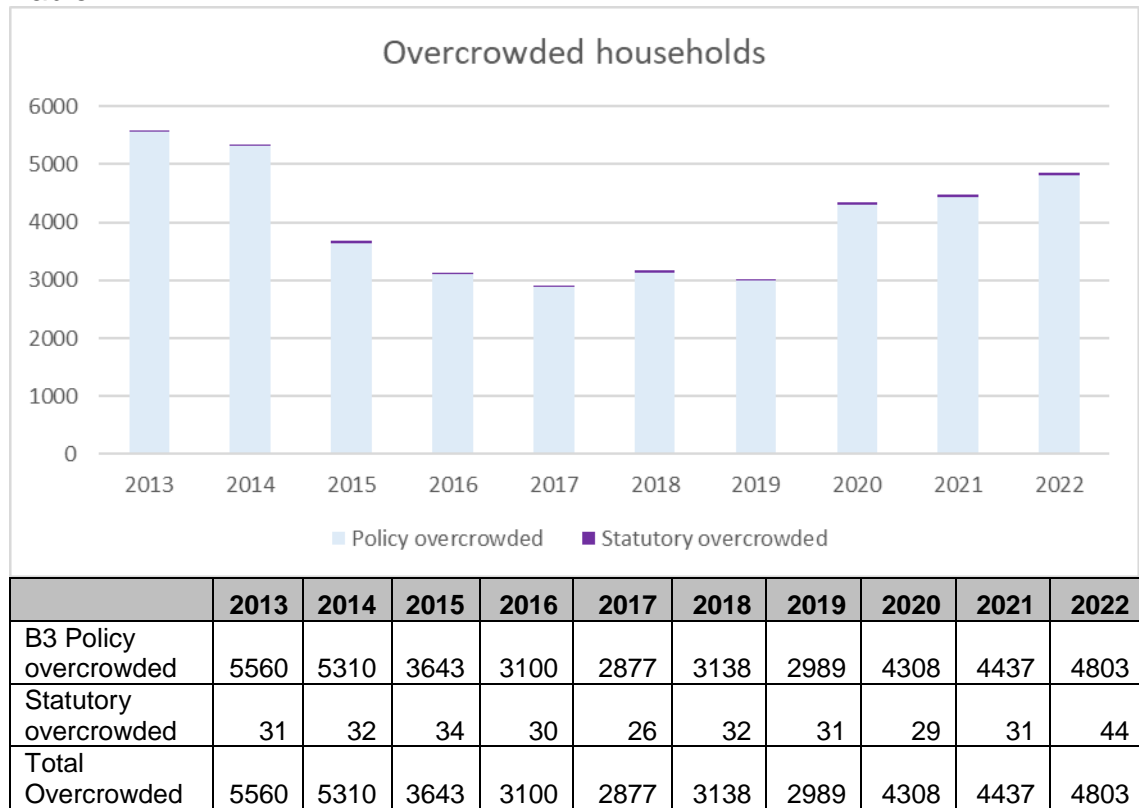
11. The number of households on the housing register who are currently overcrowded is 4,807. Of these 69 meet the criteria for statutory overcrowding and the remainder are in band 3 with moderate overcrowding.
12. Over time the number on the register have fluctuated and the levels of overcrowding can also be seen to fluctuate. Table 3 and 4 below show the changes in those on the register by band over time and the changes over time in terms of overcrowding. Both are a snapshot position at the start of each financial year. The drops seen on the register in 2014/15 are the impact of a major applications review.

Table 3:



	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Band 1	685	855	1276	1321	1123	1161	851	720	777	868
Band 2	964	850	520	704	555	549	472	581	959	1233
Band 3	7519	6634	4906	4997	4903	5143	4976	6228	7387	8151
Band 4	11507	11195	4709	5828	3738	4724	4159	4054	5321	6342
Total	20675	19534	11411	12850	10319	11577	10458	11583	14444	16594

Table 4:



13. This shows levels of overcrowding have appeared to rise markedly since the beginning of the covid 19 pandemic, or perhaps more accurately, the numbers of overcrowded households who have decided to register for a social housing move have risen.
14. There are of course higher levels of overcrowding in the wider community which are not seen in these statistics because some overcrowded households do not or cannot join the housing register (for example those subject to immigration controls). The scale of this overcrowding may come out in the census statistics once these are released.
15. The 2011 census showed that 39% of households with dependent children living in the private rented sector were overcrowded by at least one bedroom. Based on analysis in a 2019 report on housing conditions this could be as many as 16,770 homes.
16. Cost of living issues and the broader housing crisis are likely to also impact on this issue. The availability of homes at the more affordable end of the private sector has shrink significantly in the last 2 years and reports show that the homes available are up to 17% more expensive. In this context it is likely some households on benefits or low incomes will rent smaller homes that they can afford within local housing allowance levels and this will contribute to rising overcrowding levels.

Responding to overcrowding

17. The Commission received a report in October which illustrated the work taking place within the council to address the issues of empty homes in the private sector and work to reduce the number of council void homes, significantly those requiring major works.
18. The efforts to reduce empty properties in the borough will make some contribution to meeting overall housing need and this will make a small contribution to reducing the numbers experiencing overcrowding.
19. Within the council housing stock there is focused work underway through the Rightsizing Action Plan. This aims to address levels of under occupation in the council stock and by association support the response to overcrowding. The action focusses on a number of areas illustrated below:
 - **Moves through the housing register** – currently under-occupying and applicants on the Housing Register are awarded the highest priority Band 1 as an incentive for them to give up large properties and they have to bid for properties of their preferred choice. Successful bids are based on the date they have registered. Significant individual support is required to assist under occupiers to bid. There are currently over 400 under occupying tenants registered for a move.
 - **Identifying under occupiers** - There are more under-occupiers in the stock who are not registered for housing and who may be reluctant to consider a move. They may however also be struggling with bills and the layout of larger homes as they get older. Work is underway to identify these residents and through the resident services area teams and through a variety of publicity and campaigns.
 - **Mobility options** available include Housing Moves, the Pan London mobility scheme which support tenants of London boroughs to move to another home in a different borough, Seaside and Country Homes and mutual exchange options such as Homeswapper and House Exchange.
 - **Home Purchase Grant Scheme** -This scheme is aimed at Southwark Council tenants who would like to vacate their tenanted properties and purchase a private property on the open market. Eligible and successful applicants get financial assistance in the form of a cash grant. The amount of the grant is based on the number of bedrooms within the property and additional funds may be given if it has any desirable features. The council can also pay for moving costs up to £3,000.
 - **Smart Moves Scheme** – This is the Council's under occupation scheme that supports residents to downsize. Residents have band 1 priority on the housing register. In addition, the council offers £1,000 for every bedroom a resident gives up when they move. Other support is offered for households to move.

20. The number of social housing lets has declined year on year. In 2021 only 839 council and housing association homes were let through the register. Table 5 below shows the breakdown by bedsize.

Table 5:

Studio	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	6 bed	Total
49	297	295	149	41	4	1	839

21. This number of lets is inadequate to meet the demand for social housing from those on the housing register and the position has worsened over recent years, despite the contribution that the council's commitments to building new homes is making. Table 6 below shows the number of social housing lets over time.

Table 6:

Year	Supply let
2021	835
2020	853
2019	1,043
2018	1,462
2017	1,603
2016	1,410
2015	1,684

22. Covid 19 undoubtedly impacted on the number of social homes that were relet and delayed some new build schemes, however it is unlikely any significant increase in social lets will be seen in 2022.
23. Alternative responses, beyond the provision of a social home will be necessary to address this challenge. This might include measures to alleviate the impacts of overcrowding as well as looking alternative housing solutions, though this is challenging in the current market.