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## **HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL**

**Thursday, 15th April, 2021 at 7.00 pm**  
**This will be a virtual meeting**

### **Membership:**

Councillors : Elif Erbil (Chair), Hass Yusuf (Vice Chair), Margaret Greer, Guner Aydin, Susan Erbil, Saray Karakus, Edward Smith and Alessandro Georgiou

### **AGENDA – PART 1**

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members of the Council are invited to identify any disclosable pecuniary, other pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests relevant to the items on the agenda.

**3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2021 (Pages 1 - 4)**

To receive and agree the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2021.

**4. THE ROLE OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS (Pages 5 - 8)**

To receive a report from Joanne Drew, Director of Housing and Regeneration.

**5. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21 (Pages 9 - 10)**

To note the work programme.

**6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The dates of future meetings will be confirmed at Annual Council on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON THURSDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY, 2021**

**MEMBERS:** Councillors Guner Aydin, Elif Erbil, Alessandro Georgiou, Margaret Greer, Saray Karakus, Edward Smith and Hass Yusuf (Vice Chair)

**Officers:** Joanne Drew, Director of Housing and Regeneration, Richard Sorensen, Head of The Housing Advisory Service, Susan O'Connell, Governance and Scrutiny Officer, Andy Ellis, Governance and Scrutiny Officer.

### **8. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair, Cllr Elif Erbil welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Susan Erbil and Cllr Gina Needs, Cabinet Member for Social Housing.

### **9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

### **10. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 DECEMBER 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December were agreed.

#### Matters Arising

It was confirmed that the review of the Customer Voice is progressing, with a report due to go to Cabinet in May.

### **11. HOUSING ADVISORY SERVICE AND ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

Joanne Drew introduced the item and Richard Sorensen took Members through the presentation.

1) It was noted that Cabinet had agreed a range of measures to support people who are at risk of homelessness or who have become homeless. Early intervention prevention has been key and the aim is to reduce the number of residents in temporary accommodation for long periods.

2) To support this work, the new structure within the Housing Department is now being recruited to. The Housing Advisory Service is in its early stages.

3) The new service aims to enabling everyone to access a stable, secure and decent home regardless of tenure.

**HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL - 11.2.2021**

- 4) A breakdown in the number of homes in the borough, highlighted that of the total 125,370 homes, 8% are local authority homes, 7% are registered provider homes and 27% are private rented homes.
- 5) 5,500 homes are used as temporary accommodation.
- 6) There are currently, 3100 homeless households in Enfield, in addition to 157 older people waiting for sheltered housing. In a good year, the Council has approximately 350 properties to let. As a result of the pandemic, far less people are moving, therefore the number of vacant properties available is significantly reduced.
- 7) The main points of the former housing allocations policy were explained. The new policy will not involve quotes but will be points driven, allowing greater transparency. A local connections criteria will be introduced and there will be more collaborative working between Social Services and Health Services.
- 8) Communications to date have included newsletters to Temporary Accommodation tenants, the website has been updated, 2000 enquires have been generated and PSL tenants have been contacted.
- 9) Under the new allocations policy, high priority will be given to those with health or social care needs, in addition to those who may be downsizing. Medium priority will go to those in overcrowded or temporary accommodation. A lower priority will be given to those who's situation will improve over time.
- 10) Greater priority will be given to disabled people, families with sick or disabled children, people transferring and homeless households moving to the private rented sector.
- 11) Less priority will be received by households with no other needs or no local connection.
- 12) The new scheme aims to reduce the period of time a family may be housed in temporary accommodation. There is a points incentive to be a successful tenant in the private rented sector which wasn't available under the old scheme. The points available are increased by 10% annually for private rented sector tenants.
- 13) Tenants who have been in temporary accommodation since November 2012 (pre- localism) will be allocated 750 points if they move in to the private rented sector and will be allowed to bid for properties. For those tenants remaining in council temporary accommodation, they will receive 650 points but will not be permitted to bid for properties. They will receive one direct offer of suitable accommodation. In reality, there are some families who have been in temporary accommodation for over a decade and the most helpful approach is for them to enter the private rented sector.
- 14) The governance of the new scheme was detailed, including a number of panels, for example, the Strategic Housing Allocations Board, under a 'One Council' approach.
- 15) In summarising the key issues, it was noted that a lot of tenants would need to move to the private rented sector and people who remain in temporary accommodation will have reduced choices.
- 16) The pandemic resulted in a ban on evictions, however, as lockdown measures are eased, there will be a backlog of evictions which are likely to be evident towards the end of March.

## HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL - 11.2.2021

The Chair thanks Joanne and Richard for their presentation and asked Members for any comments or questions.

17) It was noted that the presentation included more information on the Allocations Policy than originally circulated to Members.

18) Following a question relating to evictions it was reiterated that with a hold on evictions coming to an end, a backlog in the court process is likely to result in many tenants becoming homeless in the coming months.

19) Local Housing Allowance rates are based on rents and limited by legislation but a question was asked whether this would improve the position of tenants. It was noted that some families may benefit but some single tenants may not as a result of the this combined with the benefit cap.

20) It was confirmed that the model for eviction rates can be identified by using financial data attained via council tax, a view of the housing market in Enfield and the number of border-line evictions. What is less difficult to predicted is the effect of a long period of lockdown on people's physical and emotional health.

21) The main criteria for measuring success was identified as ensuring everyone has access to a safe and secure home. The balance of the housing market has to change between temporary accommodation and the private rented sector.

22) The Housing Gateway has out-performed its business plan and is able to offer secure tenancies and supports financially challenged families who face barriers to housing.

23) In response to a question relating to modelling factors which are outside of the Council's control, it was noted that there are limits as to what can be modelled, for example, a year ago we would not have considered the vast impact of the pandemic. We do have in place contingency plans to deal with worst case scenarios.

24) Camden Council devised this scheme 10 years ago and it has had a dramatic, positive effect, although they have a very different housing market. We have adapted the scheme to meet our needs in Enfield.

25) Quality of accommodation is an issue that is being approached.

The aim is to reduce the number of families in temporary accommodation to under 500, with nobody spending more than 6 months in this sector.

26) It was confirmed that rates for temporary accommodation are twice the market rate and it wasn't uncommon for a family to be in temporary accommodation for 14-15 years.

27) Families for who English is a second language are offered translation services via the Language Shop and all letters contain advice on how to have letters translated.

28) Enfield has 136 4-bedroom properties, with hundreds of large families requiring this size of property. As the Council doesn't have the stock, we need to be honest with families in this position and the private rented sector needs to be the focus.

29) In response to a question relating to referrals from other London Boroughs, it was confirmed that Enfield has joined a coalition with 20 other boroughs to work to reduce the level of price inflation that existed previously. In addition, a higher-level review of temporary accommodation is being carried out across London.

## **HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL - 11.2.2021**

30) It was suggested that a summary of the new scheme could be provided in bullet point format, to allow Councillors to share the information with residents.

The Chair summarised the discussion and thanked officers for their presentation.

### **12. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21**

The work programme was noted and the following items were confirmed for the next meeting of the panel.

- Responsive Repairs – to include an update on cladding issues, following recent Government announcements.
- The Role of Housing Associations.

### **13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The date of the next meeting was noted as 15 April 2021.

## **Housing Scrutiny Panel**

### **Registered Providers -**

#### **The role of Housing Associations in Enfield**

#### **What is a Registered Provider?**

Registered Providers (RPs) are owners of affordable rented homes. There are three types of registered provider:

- Local authorities
- Private Registered Providers (often called Housing associations)
- For Profit Registered Providers (private companies providing affordable homes)

All RPs are regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing. The regulator sets out standards for the sector which RPs are expected to meet. The Neighbourhood and Community Standard sets out how RPs are expected to support local authorities:

“Registered providers, having taken account of their presence and impact within the areas where they own properties, shall:

(a) identify and publish the roles they are able to play within the areas where they have properties

(b) co-operate with local partnership arrangements and strategic housing functions of local authorities where they are able to assist them in achieving their objectives”

#### **Which RPs work in Enfield?**

There are 39 RPs working in Enfield with c.9931 homes. The largest landlords are:

- L&Q (2,022)
- MTV (1,974)
- Origin (974)
- Christian Action (849)

Catalyst and North London Muslim Housing are actively increasing their presence in Enfield and there are a number of RPs looking to enter the market. These include Optivo and some For Profit RPs including Grainger.

#### **How are RP homes let?**

Enfield Council runs a common housing register. This means that all social rented homes in the borough are advertised through our choice-based lettings system. RPs should ensure that 75% of their letting are made through the housing register and 100% of new build properties.

This should mean that around 230 RP properties are let each year through the housing register. In practice only around 130 properties become available.

#### **How do we influence RPs?**

The Council's Tenancy Strategy, which is being reviewed this year and subject to the statutory consultation process will be considered by Cabinet in October 2021 sets out our expectations of RPs across a range of different areas including the type and length of tenancy, lettings, and rent levels. The strategy also sets out how we expect RPs to support tenants experiencing domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, and their approach to demoted tenancies and evictions.

### *Tenancies*

RPs are expected to issue lifetime tenancies wherever possible and to have a process in place to move tenants on existing fixed-term tenancies to lifetime tenancies.

### *Evictions*

Enfield Council expects Registered Providers to have robust support systems in place to support tenants who are at risk of eviction address concerns and sustain their tenancies. Evictions should be sought only as a last resort once all other avenues have been exhausted without success.

### *Domestic Abuse*

All RPs are expected to have robust policies and procedures in place to assist tenants in remaining safe and secure in their homes. Management transfers may be offered if the tenant needs to move urgently including for reasons of violence, harassment, intimidation, or threats of violence likely to be carried out.

In addition, we run an RP Forum including an Operational Sub-Group. This meets monthly to discuss joint working arrangements and how RPs can help the Council to deliver our objectives.

### **Why should we work with RPs?**

There is a limit to how much the Council can borrow to develop new homes. By working with RPs we can increase the supply of new homes in the borough as they are able to access private finance. RPs also have specialist development staff that we can use in the design and delivery of new housing.

RPs are also able to access grant funding streams. Meridian Water is a good example of this. The Council will own at least 25% of the affordable housing developed with the balance being managed by RPs.

### **Partnership working**

We are in the process of developing our partnership arrangements with RPs as agreed by Cabinet in 2020. Two projects are underway:

#### *Charter for Better Housing Outcomes*

This will be a joint agreement between the Council and RPs. It will translate the Council's Good Growth Strategy into measured outcomes and promote Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These will seek to improve the Council's understanding of management standards and operating practices, including

nominations, allocations, tenant engagement, community development, promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion and safeguarding for residents

### *Framework arrangements*

As previously identified the Council cannot fund and deliver all development opportunities in the Borough. A key focus of the RP Framework will be selecting affordable housing providers for development opportunities. An Affordable Housing Framework means that only those who have satisfied the Council's objectives and financial tests will be enabled to own, develop and manage homes in the Borough. .

The opportunities to put through the Framework are still under development through the following work:

1. A review of existing council housing stock and what we might classify as "obsolete" – a term coined by the GLA and against which there is to be a future funding programme
2. A review of the Joyce and Snells regeneration scheme for potential opportunities
3. A review of General Fund/public sector land holdings we might want to run through the framework
4. Development of a Regeneration Strategy which will identify broader opportunities and funding streams

The Affordable Housing Provider Framework also offers the council a panel of experts in development in the sector who can be called upon to add development capacity to the team, for policy development, design expertise and structuring multi-phased development. This market intelligence will create added value and enable new housing to be designed and appropriate for a range of needs

### **Housing Advisory Group Feedback**

This report was presented to the Housing Advisory Group on 1 April. The HAG welcomed the intention to develop a Charter as this would enable the Council to hold RPs to account for wider service delivery.

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# HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21

| WORK   | Lead Officer               | 3 September 2020-<br>Planning Session | 1 December 2020         | 11 February 2021       | 15 April 2021       |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Date papers to be with Governance and Scrutiny Team</b>   |                            | <b>n/a</b>                            | <b>20 November 2020</b> | <b>1 February 2021</b> | <b>6 April 2021</b> |
| <b>Specific Topics</b>                                       |                            |                                       |                         |                        |                     |
| Local Priorities 2020-21                                     | Sarah Cary/Joanne Drew     | Presentation                          |                         |                        |                     |
| Building Safety and Capital Works                            | Sarah Cary/Joanne Drew     |                                       | Report                  |                        |                     |
| Housing White Paper  | Sarah Cary/<br>Joanne Drew |                                       | Report                  |                        |                     |
| Housing Advice Service/ Temporary Accommodation/Homelessness | Sarah Cary/Joanne Drew     |                                       |                         | Report                 |                     |
| Responsive Repairs   | Sarah Cary/Joanne Drew     |                                       |                         |                        | Report              |
| Allocations Policy   | Sarah Cary/Joanne Drew     |                                       |                         | Report                 |                     |
| The Role of Housing Associations                             | Sarah Cary/Joanne Drew     |                                       |                         |                        | Report              |
| <b>Work Programme</b>  |                            |                                       |                         |                        |                     |
| Setting the Housing Scrutiny Work Programme 2020-21          | Andy Ellis                 | Agree Work Programme                  |                         |                        |                     |

# HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21

| WORK  | Lead Officer | 3 September 2020-<br>Planning Session | 1 December 2020  | 11 February 2021 | 15 April 2021 |
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|   |              |                                       |                  |                  |               |