

## **Opposition Priority Business 27 September 2023 - Provision and Maintenance of Housing by London Borough of Enfield**

The requirement for substantially more and better-quality housing has been an enduring feature of this Council's housing targets for many years. Unfortunately, it is yet again apparent that this administration is playing catchup with the publishing of strategies and information that long since should have been embedded in the daily "business as usual" operational processes.

The current Administration has repeatedly failed to deliver on those housing targets and in ensuring that its existing housing stock is well maintained with its condition properly understood. We are now seeing those failures impacting on our ability to house people; to ensure a good standard for those we house already; and on the ability to properly plan for building maintenance and replacement.

While the problems faced may have been exacerbated by rising costs, global economic shifts, and changes in the rental market, they do not excuse the Administration's failure to act earlier resulting in missed the opportunities to reduce the impact of those challenges. Instead, we have seen the Administration's plans thrown into disarray; with unplanned decommissioning of buildings resulting in lengthening delays for those already waiting on the housing list; rocketing hotel costs for temporary accommodation; and yet more borrowing pushing this dangerously indebted council towards financial disaster. The Administration's spending has for years been built on assumptions on borrowing which we have warned them against.

We note that the Administration's failure to provide local homes has forced it to reverse its "no out of the borough" placement housing policy. Instead driven by its failures it is now placing family's far away from their support networks and children's schools. The Administration is also restarting its Housing Gateway home purchasing programme, which not only fails to deliver any new homes in Enfield, but it also actually reduces house buying availability in the borough, particularly for first time and less affluent buyers.

We also note with concern that the last significant stock survey in 2019 only covered around 25% of housing stock. Working with such out of date stock knowledge leads to the Administration being blindsided by such debacles as the unplanned Shires Estate decommissioning, rather than being able to deal with such challenges as part of a planned replacement programme. It's now becoming clear that the ongoing delays to delivery in Meridian Water have negatively impacted on the viability of the project as a whole. The failure to deliver housing over thirteen years at Meridian Water, despite multi-million pound spends is hugely damaging to the credibility of the Administration and the project.

We therefore propose that this council should:

1. Immediately conduct a full and intensive review of its housing stock, with a strong focus on safety, maintenance, decent homes and

replacement needs. This information should be made publicly available to housing tenants and councillors for scrutiny.

2. Following the full stock review, establish a rolling ongoing programme of stock condition surveys to better track building conditions and allow more informed planning of maintenance and replacement programmes.
3. Prioritise the movement of existing tenants into new properties where the old ones are failing and require replacement. It should expect this to be an ongoing movement as non-traditional builds reach the end of their safe usable lives.
4. Make far clearer its intentions on the use and form of prefabricated modular movable developments. The use of such buildings must not lead to the Administration establishing low quality prefab estates because it has failed to deliver enough good quality permanent homes.
5. Set out where the Administration intends to add additional roof top story extensions to existing council housing, existing tenants deserve clarity.
6. Refocus on brownfield development and estate reprovion to provide the locations of new housing development. We desperately need to see the end of the thirteen years and counting failure to deliver any substantial part of the promised 10,000 homes at Meridian Water.
7. Stop the Housing Gateways purchasing programme and refocus it on commissioning new build homes.
8. Seek additional expert support for its housing development team to get the Administration's house in order and "turn on the taps" for house building in Enfield. The team should be more focused on looking for reprovion opportunities which also provide growth in housing provision.
9. Replace the Housing Cabinet member with someone whose ability might enjoy the confidence of more councillors within the chamber.
10. Expand the role of housing scrutiny to provide more frequent and in-depth examination of housing processes. Greater scrutiny and accountability should ensure that housing is assisted in improving its focus on its objectives; thereby helping to more effectively deliver the good quality homes this borough so desperately needs.