

# **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY, 26TH SEPTEMBER, 2023**

**MEMBERS:** Councillors Kate Anolue (Chair), Josh Abey (Vice Chair), Nicki Adeleke, Lee Chamberlain, Adrian Grumi, Tom O'Halloran and Eylem Yuruk

**Officers:** Joanne Drew, (Strategic Director of Housing and Regeneration), Duane Dyer, (Housing Improvement Programme Director) and Petra Stephenson (Governance Officer)

**Also Attending:** Councillor George Savva, MBE (Cabinet Member for Social Housing)

## **1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Nelly Gyosheva who was substituted by Cllr Bedekova.

Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Adeleke and Cllr Josh Abey.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Bedekova declared an Interest as a Landlord in Enfield.

## **3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

With an amendment to record the correct spelling of Cllr O'Halloran at Minute number 4.15, the minutes of the meeting held on 22 march 2023 were agreed.

## **4. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

Cllr Savva delivered a brief overview of the situation within temporary accommodation as a direct result of the current economic climate which could culminate in a worst-case scenario £20 million forecast overspend by the end of the year.

A new approach to temporary accommodation has been adopted by Enfield Council in response to continued high demand and the extreme departure of Landlords from the rented sector. The approach seeks to reduce the use of temporary accommodation, such as hotels.

## HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL - 26.9.2023

Alternative ways of providing accommodation include areas outside of London by offering incentive payments for landlords purchasing properties in Luton and Milton Keynes through Housing Gateway Ltd and encouraging people to find their own home using the "Find Your Own Home Scheme".

RECEIVED the report from Joanne Drew, Strategy Director and Duane Dyer, Housing Improvement Programme Director which provided a progress update on the new approach including the offer policy and allocation of homes and challenges.

Members were invited to raise questions and comments.

Questions focused predominately on the implications of moving to a one offer policy, reasons for refusing a property, cost savings if any of moving to a one offer policy, moving costs and housing supply.

During questioning from the panel, officers confirmed that since the policy change most placements are still in London. Those who have moved further afield do so on a voluntary basis – people who identified that they were happy to move out of London. i.e. Watford to be closer to family.

Grounds for rejecting housing offers are often "not reasonable". The council would still be fulfilling its statutory duty to homeless people if it made one offer of housing instead of two. Changing the policy to one offer could save the council more than £12,000 per household.

Regarding the housing supply, traditional procurement is moving to under our own control; modular schemes would be one of the schemes under consideration to boost the supply of temporary accommodation.

During discussions the following was recommended:

- Joanne Drew agreed to provide members with a graph/spreadsheet detailing the numbers of households currently in temporary accommodation and demand.
- In relation to the associated graphs provided in points 6 & 7 of the report, figures are to be circulated to the panel for years prior to 2022 to see comparisons over the last decade. It was noted that the pandemic fundamentally changed the figures as people were not being evicted during that period. The figures will represent the positive impact of this.
- Data analysis is to be provided to the panel on refusals and cessation of duties in relation to the two-offer policy. How many households have had the duty discharged for refusing an offer? How many people refuse one offer verses those who refuse two offers? How many households have been affected by refusing an offer?

**Action:** Joanne Drew

## HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL - 26.9.2023

Enfield strives to align its policies with those of neighbouring boroughs to relieve some of the burden. 85% of London Boroughs operate a one offer policy. A decisive approach is necessary as a safe home and reduced occupation of hotel accommodation is the priority.

During discussions, Joanne acknowledged that although we had anticipated a shift in landlord behaviour and the HGL acquisitions programme was part of mitigating this, there was no anticipating the stark and dramatic rise in interest rates which was a further reason that resulted in a rapid exodus of private Landlords, in fact the pace has been unprecedented across London and all boroughs had been significantly affected. The reduction in rental accommodation – particularly for those on low incomes – was likely to be a “long-term change”.

In summary the Chair commented on how demoralising the current situation is especially for those in temporary accommodation.

The Chair expressed gratitude to the Homeless team for all their hard work and support during this crisis.

**Recommendation:** Joanne suggested that the two-offer policy could be an area for input from members as the crisis unfolds.

### 5. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 12 December 23

Wednesday 21 February 23

A further date is TBC. The Chair will liaise with the Governance team and send some dates to consider.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.