

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY, 12TH DECEMBER, 2023

MEMBERS: Councillors Kate Anolue, Josh Abey, Adrian Grumi, Nelly Gyosheva, Tom O'Halloran, Eylem Yuruk, Edward Smith and Nia Stevens

Officers:

Joanne Drew (Strategic Director of Housing and Regeneration) and Amena Matin (Head of Regeneration and Growth)

Also Attending: Chatinder Bal (Director of Land at MTVH) Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Caliskan and Ergin Erbil.

Apologies were also received from Cllr Lee Chamberlin and Cllr Nicki Adeleke who were substituted by Cllr Edward Smith and Cllr Nia Stevens respectively.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 26 September 2023.

4. HOUSING SUPPLY UPDATE

Joanne Drew (Strategic Director of Housing and Regeneration), Amena Matin (Head of Regeneration and Growth) and Chatinder Bal (Director of Land at MTVH) presented this item.

Joanne Drew introduced Chatinder Bal who provided a verbal presentation as one of Enfield's preferred partners. MTVH (Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing) have been working closely with LBE on a number of development initiatives and housing management.

Chatinder Bal provided an insight into what housing associations are currently doing to keep housing supply going, stating that it is economically challenging at every turn.

HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL - 12.12.2023

Enfield is a key borough with approximately 5000 homes locally. The cost to maintain the estates, the cost of reinvestment, decarbonisation, and fire safety has put an undue burden on the market and the capability to deliver more; meaning the ability to grow the asset base has become profound.

The cost of repairing homes has to be funded by rents received.

The mini budget added further pressure on the capacity for reinvestment and new developments. The energy crisis, construction prices and insolvencies resulted in even more capacity lost, which is unprecedented.

Policy issues in relation to future developments meant that several frameworks needed to be reworked adding further costs, delays and challenges.

Regeneration is key, as is improving the quality of homes provided and providing more homes. Long-term partnerships and relationships are also important.

Working in conjunction with Enfield Council allows for investment and reinvestment and can collectively work on new schemes knowing there is longevity.

Members questions focused on how demand could be met, increasing supply, assisting with building new homes with the current constraints and challenges, and customer service.

In answer to questions:

1. Chatindar Bal provided assurance that MTVH envisage continuing to work with Enfield and developing new stock, just not at the size and propensity anticipated previously.

2. Improving communication with residents who have complaints and/or issues is fundamental. Joanne Drew and Chatindar Bal informed the committee that members can contact senior housing association personnel who will unlock the problem. It is not an ideal solution, but a quick escalation process does help.

Amena Matin added that there is a Housing Operations meeting attended by all housing associations who own stock in the borough, shared by the council and housing management team which is a good forum to raise issues or escalate issues.

3. In terms of working together, it is imperative that housing associations and Enfield support each other. The challenges are vast, but a good working relationship is essential to the partnership. Developing better communication, understanding longer-term aspirations, thinking collectively at an early stage and generally being more collaborative.

HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL - 12.12.2023

Reciprocally, access to relevant members to escalate blockages and move forward.

Amena Matin explained that there were procurement challenges establishing a working relationship initially. An affordable housing framework was setup to streamline the procurement and create an environment for a better working partnership.

LBE were very clear as to who they wanted to work with; landlords who already worked in the borough, who had stock, ambition and are aligned to the council's priorities. MTVH are part of that framework.

4. In response to questions on meeting demand, Chatindar stated that there are no solutions currently, but the challenge of meeting supplier needs is cyclical in nature. Certainty in rent setting, long term commitment and clarity on packages would help.

Joanne Drew added that from a council perspective the key message is that the GLA require more grant funding. There needs to be a relaxation on right to buy receipts as they are restrictive, long-term settlements and extended grant programmes that are 10 years rather than 5 years; initiatives that need a national response.

5. MTVH are part of G15 which is a collaboration between the larger housing providers in London, sharing good practices particularly on the customer side. MTVH has introduced a digital platform and self-service for residents. A centralised service to provide localised support.

6. Members pointed out the frustration of a digitalised and centralised service within a multi - culturally diverse borough when there is no telephone number.

Housing Supply Update.

RECEIVED the report of Joanne Drew (Strategic Director of Housing and Regeneration)

Amena Matin (Head of Regeneration and Growth) gave a verbal update outlining progress to date.

1. Cllr Smith suggested that a breakdown between various sectors who deliver housing would be beneficial in future.

2. Regarding the feasibility of the council having a large development that delivers, officers acknowledged that conditions and circumstance were very different now to when the bid for the programme was made. With undue pressure on the housing accounts a proposal will be submitted to Council next year to increase rents.

Enfield Council remain committed to the GLA programme to deliver 3500 homes, but delivery may be over a longer period of time. In order to keep

HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL - 12.12.2023

delivery at pace Enfield Council are looking at how it can do more work in partnership with Housing Associations. The aim would be to take on the delivery of some of the schemes whilst prioritising LBE schemes, as well as improving existing homes and stocks.

Joyce and Snells regeneration programme remains the top priority, as they can deliver substantially more homes and address stock quality which reduces the councils expenditure and exposure.

3. In response to further questions on specific actions that the council has taken to support smaller builders and developers to utilise the smaller sites, officers reiterated that in the last year, three sites have been put through the small sites portal, and highlighted the successful partnership with “Naked House” who supported the council with a number of sites. Sometimes development is better done by small companies. It is about bringing the right solutions to the right sites, and SME’s do it better as they also have access to other funding.

4. The council predominately deliver 100% affordable housing within the 3000 new home target. Across the borough the planning position is 50% set by the Local Plan. It is a hard target with challenges but it exemplifies why external funding and external subsidies are required to achieve the target, throughout London.

5. Developers now prefer forward funding arrangements. Build to rent and social rent as they receive a subsidy and it provides a steady income all the way through the development, whereas with sales the developer has to wait until the end for funds.

6. To encourage new providers to build new homes, there are regular forums with housing associations, developers, and landowners. A streamlined effective planning system is very helpful, they want backing to get planning permissions, offer to buy or forward fund.

A funding pot would help to release and build more homes.

7. Officers confirmed that the buffer is a catch-up plus 20% on top of the target.

8. In response to questions from the Chair and Members about funding from the GLA, officers clarified that there is funding available but the way it is administered is very rigid and is not flexible enough for what London requires. Fifty organisations can all apply for the same pot of money therefore not every scheme is successful in receiving funds. The GLA have a funding shortfall of billions to deliver the growth that London needs.

9. Enfield has the fifth highest allocation of funds from the GLA due to having a good track record as a local authority for delivering all the targets and GLA contracts over the past few years (which has been done by finding sites and replacing sites).

HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL - 12.12.2023

10. Joanne Drew closed the questions highlighting that Enfield Council has an inbuilt drive to deliver as that is what the council is here for.

The Chair thanked the officers for their reports and congratulated them on the good job being done by Housing in challenging times.

The Chair also thanked the Members for their contributions and wished all a Merry Christmas.

5. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates of future meetings were noted as follows:

Wednesday 21st February 2024

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

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.