

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON THURSDAY, 15TH JULY, 2021

MEMBERS: Councillors Anne Brown, Ayten Guzel, Joanne Laban, Glynis Vince and Hass Yusuf

Officers: Joanne Drew, Director of Housing & Regeneration and Susan O'Connell, Governance Officer

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair for this meeting Cllr Hass Yusuf welcomed all attendees to the meeting which was being live streamed.

Apologies had been received from Councillors James Hockney (Substitute Cllr Joanne Laban), Edward Smith (Substitute Cllr Glynis Vince), Ergin Erbil, Margaret Greer, Saray Karakus and Gina Needs.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. INTRODUCTION - PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chair explained that the purpose of this meeting was to look at the work programme and prioritise items for the coming Municipal Year.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on the 11 February 2021.

5. LOCAL PRIORITIES FOR 2021/22

The Chair invited Joanne Drew, Director of Housing & Regeneration to present the Local Priorities for 2020/21 she highlighted the following:

- The remit of the Housing Scrutiny Panel is informed by two strategies agreed by Cabinet.
- Delivering on the Housing and Growth Strategy 2020:
 - More affordable housing – this sits under the remit of the Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Panel.
 - Being proud of and investing in our council homes – this includes the £250m investment in existing stock and cleaner estates.

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- Quality and variety in the private housing sector – many vulnerable residents are living in the private sector, there is a focus to intervene to improve and enable access for residents Enfield Let was mobilised in October 2020, there are plans for Housing Gateway growth, and the landlord licencing the scheme comes into force this September.
- Inclusive placemaking – This sits under the remit of the Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Panel.
- Accessible housing pathways for everyone – this includes; Developing supported housing solutions for people with specialist needs; Rough Sleepers provision; 95 long term homes with support to connect residents into the community and to secure employment and Reardon Court extra care application to Planning Committee.
- Delivering the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020 - Making homelessness something that is rare, brief and non-recurring:
 - A better future for rough sleepers –permanent housing of residents taken in during the pandemic.
 - Homelessness Prevention Board – making homelessness something that is everyone’s responsibility.
 - The new Housing Advisory Service fully mobilised with focus on early help.
 - Prevention activity resulting in lower numbers into Temporary accommodation.

Committee Members raised the following comments and questions:

- The Vice Chair read out a list of items for consideration raised by the Chair Cllr Hockney who had been unable to attend this meeting as follows:
 - Cladding compliance with Building Safety Bill.
 - Temporary accommodation levels and strategy to reduce.
 - Enfield Repairs Direct overview on delivery and recent changes.
 - Housing Gateway and budget underspends.
 - Overview on the new HRA Development programme. (It was confirmed that this is covered by the remit of the Regeneration & Economic Development Scrutiny Panel)
 - New partnership arrangements with Registered providers.
- The Director of Housing & Regeneration was asked to comment on these suggestions. The building safety item is very timely with building legislation enacted with a range of new responsibilities that the council has to prepare for. An overview of the new landscape and how the council is preparing and responding might be helpful to the panel. The temporary accommodation is very relevant, with the pandemic the council will not be able to meet the forecast targets which was part of the remodel. The council has had to take in more than 450 residents into emergency housing and have not been able to move people on from temporary accommodation due to the pandemic. Enfield Repairs Direct was welcomed as an item. Housing Gateway is a vehicle to improve the Councils response to the private rented sector and the challenges that this sector has. Progress could be provided on this.

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There has been an underspend in terms of procuring properties due to market conditions. The council will be launching a new Registered Providers framework towards the end of the year so that the council can have clarity of standards housing management in the borough. This will involve entering into partnership agreements for new sites or regeneration. The Panel could look at the progress made on this.

- Clarification was requested on the process for Care Leavers it was confirmed that the allocations policy was revised last year to prioritise residents with enduring council needs. Care Leavers are a priority, there is a Children's Services Panel that agrees priorities for Care Leavers housing options to ensure suitable options.
- There has been a large staff churn in housing want to ensure that staff are retained. There are been a couple of fundamental restructures one in Council Housing to position it for the new expectations of residents and for the new regulatory environment from the Social Housing white Paper. Alongside the new Housing Management System (ICT system to be introduced in September). In Homelessness the Housing Advisory Service is a completely new service model. Previously, the Homelessness service was focused on statutory rather than prevention and included a large number of agency staff. The new Housing Advisory Service increases the number of roles and seeks to get permanent teams in place. There has been some churn and change in this process.
- Following a query, the Director of Housing & Regeneration agreed to cascade the concern on lack of communication for time sensitive replies when residents have been given an ultimatum and are looking to find their own property in the open market.
- Cllr Brown requested a copy of the Housing Needs Assessment, it was agreed that this would be provided.
- Concern was expressed on the number of people in long term temporary accommodation. The new strategy aims to reduce temporary accommodation from around 3.5k to 500 homes over a 5-year period and uses the temporary accommodation for emergency short term (up to 6 months only). The pandemic has caused difficulties on this.
- In a response to a query as to where members or residents can find out up to date information on what is going on a month to month basis. It was confirmed that the Housing Service does provide quarterly ward member briefings as needed. Officers will look into the possibility of putting progress on the development programme on the council's website.

6. PLANNING THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2021/22

The Chair opened discussions in terms of the work programme. It was suggested that there were two items per meeting.

Following discussions, the process for extra meetings was confirmed.

Members were reminded of Councillor Hockney's suggestions:

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- Cladding Compliance with Building Safety Bill, including an overview of Building Safety- this to be an early item.
- Temporary accommodation levels and strategy to reduce.
- Enfield Repairs Direct overview on progress, delivery and recent changes, the suggested timescale was to look at in the winter.
- Housing Gateway and budget underspends.
- New Partnerships arrangements with Registered providers, the suggested timescale was to take this at the final meeting.

Other items raised by officers with Councillor Hockney were; Estate Management (Meridian Water) Outcome of Resident engagement Consultation, Housing Standards and Social Housing White Paper progress.

Councillor Vince raised the following on behalf of Councillor Smith including; housing repairs, churn of staff in housing, reducing numbers in temporary accommodation and update on new partnership arrangements.

Winter response team was raised this is a new initiative introduced last year and could be included under the repairs item. Deep cleaning under Covid was raised, this could be covered under estate management.

Discussions were held on the most appropriate timings for items.

The following items and timings were agreed:

September's meeting

Building Safety- including cladding compliance with Building Safety Bill
Temporary accommodation levels and strategy to reduce
Churn of staff in Housing

December's meeting

Enfield Repairs Direct- overview on progress, delivery and recent changes
Estate Management, including winter response team

March's meeting

New partner arrangements with Registered providers
Housing Gateway and budget underspends

7. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference were noted.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted.

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified.