

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2022**

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT Margaret Greer (Chair), Bektas Ozer (Vice Chair), Maria Alexandrou, Nawshad Ali, Elif Erbil, James Hockney, Mohammad Islam and Andy Milne

ABSENT Michael Rye OBE

STATUTORY CO-OPTES: *1 vacancy (Church of England diocese representative), vacancy (other faiths/denominations representative), vacancy (Catholic diocese representative), Alicia Meniru & 1 vacancy (Parent Governor representative) - Italics Denotes absence*

OFFICERS: Joanne Drew (Acting Executive Director – Place) (Remote), Paul O'Donnell (Acting Director of Investment and Resident Safety) (Remote), Marie Lowe (Secretary)

1

WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Michael Rye, who was substituted by Cllr Andy Milne.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr George Savva, Cabinet Member Social Housing. No other Cabinet representatives were available to attend; however, officers were present at the meeting to answer questions, or written questions could be submitted.

Due to the rail and tube strike, Officers were joining the meeting remotely. This was permissible under current legislation, which allowed for Officers or advisers to do so. Members of the Committee, as decision makers, had to be present in person.

2

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 29 September 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

3

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

4

GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY - IMPACT ON ENFIELD AND FIRE SAFETY

The Acting Executive Director, Place, Joanne Drew, presented the report and summarised the findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry which had concluded that day.

Following the proposal of the Chair, the meeting paused to remember those who had lost their lives in 2017 as a result of the traumatic event in the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Members noted the role the Council played in housing across the Borough and that all the Council's houses were safe. The Council had levels of influence but no control over privately rented accommodation, some areas were a cause of concern. The Council met monthly with the London Fire Brigade (LFS).

In response to concerns raised by Members regarding the existing tower blocks in the Borough with single staircases, which had been a critical issue of the Grenfell Tower fire, Officers advised that all buildings had been assessed on an individual basis, in consultation with the LFS. Those with single staircases would be prioritised in the event of a fire, where fire appliances would be despatched as a matter of priority.

All fire and safety measures, including fire detection and sprinkler systems, were bespoke to each individual building were installed of the highest level.

The Acting Director of Investment and Resident Safety, Paul O'Donnell went on to advise that in some buildings it was possible to retrofit a second staircase or other fire safety measures, including sprinkler systems. Where possible, alternative secondary exit routes were identified, however, the condition of some of Enfield Council's ageing housing stock prevented this. Some residents, when contacted by the Council regarding the retrofit of a sprinkler system, had declined the offer. Not all properties were suitable for retrofitting of the fire prevention, detection, or sprinkler systems. Some residents and/or leaseholders were not always co-operative and allow access to their properties. Vulnerable residents in tall buildings were identified and risk assessments undertaken. Considerable investment would be required for the Council to deliver decent homes.

Members acknowledged that the Council promoted access to building safety information and communicated with residents on major works programmes and proactively raised awareness of fire safety. However, they were of the view that significantly more promotion and interaction with residents was needed to ensure that residents were enabled to make informed decisions regarding the options available to them in terms of the type of retro fitting fire safety measures, including sprinkler systems. The Council must identify the best pathways to reach out, communicate, consult, engage, inform, and empower to enable residents to exercise their options, particularly high-risk residents with individual concerns.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 10.11.2022

Officers, responding to questions from Members, advised that the standard approach in high rise building was to 'Stay Put' which was regularly communicated to residents. Building design facilitated this approach with fire containment, one hour fire doors and safe areas. There had been cultural changes within the industry regarding the importance of fire safety in new and existing buildings which had led to the development of fire safety equipment, record keeping, culpability, together with construction professionals and building design, which had changed the perception and use of tall buildings. Following the cultural shift, it was incumbent on the Council to act and to put in place the necessary steps to mitigate the risks to occupiers of high-rise buildings.

The Acting Executive Director, Place reassured Members that this approach was inherent within the Council structure and throughout the organisation. The Council's emergency control centre held details of vulnerable residents together with all risks which had been identified and mapped. The Council operated an emergency planning system which set out policies and procedures for establishing an emergency control centre, decanting high risk buildings to reception centres. Exercises were held to review how the joint services responded to incidents. One of the main failings found by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry was the deployment of resources on the ground to respond to the incident to assist residents in a joined up, cohesive way to provide a range of support.

The Committee, following a suggestion from the Chair, concurred that, subject to the agreement of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its work planning meeting in June 2023, the Grenfell Tower Inquiry report, or when published be listed on the work programme for November/December 2023 for scrutiny.

Action

Members expressed the view that this approach and the involvement of residents should be incorporated into the building safety engagement strategy. The LFS considered Enfield Borough Council to a high performing Council compared to other Local Authorities. The Council currently engaged highly qualified, competent, and experienced professionals, directly or as third-party consultants. There had been considerable advances in product quality to ensure materials were not combustible. There was ongoing work in the industry to regarding the quality specification. The materials used by the Council were on the assured product list.

Councillor James Hockney proposed, seconded by Councillor Bektas Ozer, that the Council ensured that residents were made fully aware of the availability and options regarding fire safety in tower blocks during any construction or remedial works undertaken and that this be fully communicated to residents. On being put to the vote this was unanimous. It was **AGREED** that:

1. The report of officers on the impact of the Grenfell Tower inquiry on Enfield and fire safety be noted; and

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 10.11.2022

2. The Council ensured that residents were made fully aware of the availability and options regarding fire safety in tower blocks during any construction or remedial works undertaken and that this be fully communicated to residents. **Action**

5 SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATION

The Committee received a detailed presentation from the Acting Executive Director, Place which detailed the regulatory changes arising from the Social Housing (Regulation) which aimed to facilitate a new, proactive approach to regulating social housing landlords.

Following a request from a Member, the Acting Executive Director, Place advised that once the final appraisal of housing stock which was up to standard had been carried out a decision to dispose could then be taken. All options were considered, and a realistic view taken on the value of investment verses disposal. Progress had been made with regards to the number of properties in a good state of repair, however more accurate data was required to provide detailed stock knowledge for Enfield Council to assess the number of decent homes in the Borough. Current housing stock in Enfield, much of which was difficult to manage was not fit for purpose and old. The infrastructure of some buildings was life expired, asbestos, and corroded iron work was present in many buildings. The replacement of kitchens and bathrooms triggered additional work. Progress on providing decent homes had regressed due to the Arms-Length Management Organisation (ALMO) had focused on replacing doors and window frames, which residents preferred, rather than the external fabric of the building. As a result, there was a backlog in bring Enfield's housing stock to the decent homes standard. However, it was important not to prolong the life of a building which had expired. Significant investment would be required to improve the housing stock in Enfield.

The Acting Executive Director, Place undertook to provide the figures for the disposal of stock from the Assess Management Strategy. **Action**

AGREED that the presentation on the regulatory changes arising from the Social Housing (Regulation) be noted.

6 2022-23 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

AGREED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme be noted with the addition of Grenfell Tower Inquiry – report publication for November/December 2023, subject to the agreement off the Committee at the work planning meeting. **Action**

7 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 10.11.2022

NOTED that:

1. A call-in meeting to consider the key decision KD 5512 - Adjustments to existing permanent Quieter Neighbourhood Projects was scheduled on **Thursday 24 November 2022** at 7.00pm at the Civic Centre.
2. Subject to confirmation, a call-in meeting to consider key decisions KD 5546 Changes to Controlled Parking Zone Permit Charges and KD 5357 Meridian Water Security Budget Extension will be held on **Thursday, 15 December 2022 at the Civic Centre.**
3. The next business meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Budget Scrutiny - was scheduled to take place on **Monday, 16 January 2023** at 7pm at the Civic Centre.
4. The meeting scheduled on **Tuesday, 31 January 2023** would now be a business meeting to discuss the draft Council Plan 2023-26.

This page is intentionally left blank