

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY, 29TH NOVEMBER, 2022

**MEMBERS:** Councillors Maria Alexandrou (Chair), Lee Chamberlain (Vice-Chair), Josh Abey, Hivran Dalkaya, Ayten Guzel, Tom O'Halloran and Mustafa Cetinkaya

**Officers:** Joanne Drew (Director of Housing & Regeneration), Eloise Shepherd (Housing Programme Improvement Director), Harriet Potemkin (Head of Policy & Strategy), Amena Matin (Head of Regeneration & Growth), Nnenna Urum-Eke (Head of Development), Stacey Gilmour (Governance Officer)

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

### 1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

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

Apologies were received from Cllrs Sinan Boztas and Nelly Gyosheva. Cllr Mustafa Cetinkaya was substituting for Cllr Gyosheva.

Apologies for lateness were received from Joanne Drew, Director of Housing & Regeneration.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Maria Alexandrou (Chair) and Cllr Mustafa Cetinkaya declared a non-pecuniary interest in both agenda items as they are landlords in the borough.

### 3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2022.

### 4. DRAFT HOUSING & GOOD GROWTH STRATEGY

RECEIVED a presentation on the Draft Housing & Good Growth Strategy.

NOTED

1. Key points of the draft strategy were highlighted by Harriet Potemkin, Head of Policy & Strategy.
2. Information was provided on the desk-based review of the 2020 strategy, environmental pressures, and the proposed ambitions for more and better homes for Enfield.
3. Regarding the housing test for good growth, officers advised that they wanted to retain this in the new strategy as both the council and

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residents are feeling considerable financial pressures and demand for affordable housing continues to rise beyond the resources available to address it. This housing test will help Enfield Council aim for the best possible quality homes within the current challenging climate.

4. Further engagement with stakeholders would take place in January-February 2023 followed by further drafting of the strategy in February-March 2023. The full council decision on the final strategy would then be taken in April 2023.
5. Members were invited to raise questions and comments.
6. In response to Members' questions regarding the impact of environmental pressures on building new homes, officers advised that the construction industry has experienced severe material and labour cost inflationary pressures throughout 2022 and interest rate increases will add further pressure during 2023.
7. Further information was provided on the all-round impact of environmental pressures. People are already suffering from the 'cost of living crisis' which will be exacerbated by energy and food price hikes and interest rate rises affecting the costs of housing. Whilst Enfield council retains its aspiration to reduce the numbers in temporary accommodation and prevent homelessness, demand is increasing substantially while resources reduce alongside accommodation.
8. Officers provided an overview of the council's proposed ambitions for more and better homes for Enfield and reiterated that it is operating in a very challenging and volatile climate for increasing supply. As a result of this, Enfield Council will need to explore all available options to continue to directly deliver Council homes and will need to further strengthen its partnerships with registered providers and developers and enable homes via robust planning, policy, and processes.
9. In response to a question raised on how right to buy receipts will be used going forward, officers advised that additional short-term flexibilities were being asked for including through relaxing the restrictions on combining receipts with other forms of grant funding for new development (e.g. Affordable Homes Programme funding) complete relaxation was ideally required to use resources that come from Enfield housing stock to support new homes or invest in existing stock. However, there is a limit on possible acquisitions and restrictions on how the money can be spent.
10. In response to a question regarding the use of prefabricated houses, Joanne Drew, Director of Housing & Regeneration advised that this was something that had been extensively looked at in the past but following an options appraisal it was deemed not affordable and not a suitable option. However, Joanne agreed to revisit this option to see if there was any new products or models that may now be available.  
**Action: Joanne Drew, Director of Housing & Regeneration**
11. Cllr Guzel raised concerns regarding the high level of evictions taking place in Enfield and felt that one of the priorities of the draft strategy should be to invest more in the private rented sector (PRS). Officers acknowledged this and stated that one of the levers for this is the Housing Gateway.

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12. Cllr Savva (Cabinet Member, Social Housing) asked what engagement is taking place with residents who have concerns regarding repairs/mould in their homes. Officers advised that this issue is being addressed by reviewing the material on Enfield Council's website which provides information on how residents can deal with mould in their tenures, training is also taking place for staff that go into residents' homes so that they can identify and deal with any problems they find. A leaflet is also being produced which will be sent to tenants by way of an e-newsletter.
13. Further discussions took place and members raised the following questions to which officers agreed to look into and provide a response as soon as possible.
  - (i) Amount of specialised housing for older people?
  - (ii) How many people are in need of specialised housing?
  - (iii) What gaps are there in the specialised housing market and how are these gaps being addressed?
  - (iv) How many council houses have been retrofitted so far and how has this been funded?
  - (v) What are the housing targets over the next three years?

**Action: Officers**

**Post meeting note: Responses to the above questions have now been circulated to Members of the Housing Scrutiny Panel.**

Members extended thanks to officers for the detailed and informative update.

### 5. DELIVERY OF SOCIABLE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

RECEIVED a presentation from Nnenna Urum-Eke, Head of Development.

NOTED

1. Key points of the presentation were highlighted which included progress to date and the implications of the current environment.
2. With regards to the Joyce and Snells Programme Cllr Chamberlain commented on the successful ballot in December 2021 and asked what had contributed to the high turnout rate of 85%. Officers advised that this had been one of the strongest residents' ballot results in London. Engagement had gone far and beyond a housing solution to a better quality of life and better neighbourhoods.
3. Cllr Halloran asked what the next completion date on Meridian Water was and how many properties would be completed in the next calendar year. Officers to clarify and feedback accordingly. **Action: Officers**
4. Cllr Halloran asked if Enfield Council were on track to meet the pledge of 3500 new homes as detailed in the current Administration's manifesto. Officers advised that to date, 1000 homes had been secured for delivery. Moving forward, funding, planning and the ability to enter into viable contracts all needed to come together to allow delivery of this target.

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5. In response to a question regarding more similar housing to Reardon Court, Officers advised that there is ongoing joint working between the Adult Social Care, Council Housing and the Place Regeneration and Development teams to bring forward specialist housing schemes similar to Reardon Court in future development proposals.
6. Members asked for a breakdown on the % of Affordable Housing on Bury Street West, Electric Quarter, Newstead House and Gatward Green. Officers to clarify and circulate the information to Members following the meeting. **Action: Officers**
7. Members also sought clarification on the breakdown of family housing of the 242 council owned properties on Meridian Water Phase 1. Officers to clarify and circulate the information to Members following the meeting. **Action: Officers**
8. Members raised concerns regarding the decision to accept only single staircases on Joyce and Snells as they felt this could present a safety issue. Officers would clarify this and provide a detailed response to Members following the meeting. **Action: Officers.**
9. Cllr Alexandrou (Chair) asked what action/progress has been made on the 3000 empty privately-owned homes and how many have been brought back into use over the last three years. Officers to clarify and circulate a response to Members. **Action: Officers**
10. Members requested an explanation on the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process. Officers to circulate an explanation following the meeting. **Action: Officers**
11. Further discussions took place on the economic forecasts affecting the housing market and the Council's response to these. This included greater focus on acquisitions to underwrite continued delivery, reducing exposure to inflation volatility and mitigating risk on Right To Buy (RTB) spend. A range of delivery options were also being explored for future delivery across all programmes.
12. With regards to influencing the conditions of supply lobbying was taking place for increased grant on shared ownership, grant funding for life expired stock, flexibility to use RTB receipts alongside grant to address viability gaps as well as additional funding to address inflationary pressures for the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF).
13. Cllr Savva (Cabinet Member, Social Housing) suggested to the Chair that a cross party letter be sent to lobby Central Government on the above issues. The Chair agreed to discuss this further outside of the meeting. **Action: Chair, Cllr Savva & Officers**

The Chair thanked Officers for their informative update.

**Post meeting note: Responses to the above questions have now been circulated to Members of the Housing Scrutiny Panel.**

### 6. **WORK PROGRAMME 2022/2023**

NOTED the Housing Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23.

### 7. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

## **HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL - 29.11.2022**

NOTED the dates of future meetings as follows:

Wednesday 22 March 2023.

This meeting will commence at 7:00pm and will be held in the Conference Room at the Civic Centre.

The meeting ended at 8:40pm.