

Decisions of the Housing Committee

2 February 2015

Members Present:-

Councillor Tom Davey (Chairman)
Councillor Lisa Rutter (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Val Duschinsky	Councillor Bridget Perry
Councillor Ross Houston	Councillor Shimon Ryde
Councillor Adam Langleben	Councillor Tim Roberts
Councillor Kath McGuirk	

Also in attendance

Apologies for Absence

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2014 be agreed a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

There were none

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Ross Houston declared a non-pecuniary interest relating to agenda item 13 'Commissioning and Delivery of Housing Services and the Management of the Barnet Housing Stock' as he is a council appointed member of the Barnet Group Board of which Barnet Homes is a subsidiary.

Councillor Tim Roberts declared a pecuniary interest relating to agenda item 14 'Fees and Charges: Environmental Health – Private Sector Housing' as he is a joint owner of a privately let property in the borough. It was noted that he had not been one of those members that had sought a special dispensation when a private sector housing report was last considered at council meeting on 15 July 2014.

Councillor Shimon Ryde declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 12 'Approval of Further Changes to Housing Allocations Scheme' as he is a Board Member of a Housing Association.

Councillor Adam Langleben declared a non-pecuniary interest relating to agenda item 14 'Fees and Charges: Environmental Health – Private Sector Housing' as he rents in the private housing sector.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

There were none.

5. ASSISTANCE TO COUNCIL LEASEHOLDERS IN RECEIPT OF MAJOR WORKS BILLS

The Committee agreed to vary the agenda to consider this item first

The Committee noted the published Addendum report which provided updated information, replacing paragraph 1.6 in the report.

Councillor Alison Moore provided an oral representation on this item.

Having considered the report and Addendum report the Committee:

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee approve an amendment to the repayment arrangements for service charges and to the terms of discretionary loans being offered by the council to resident and some non-resident leaseholders across the borough as detailed in paragraph 1.6 (as amended).
2. That officers model the cost of extending the improved terms to apply retrospectively to outstanding capital works bills, and of applying terms on the basis of the cumulative value of capital works bills, and that Councillor Davey and Councillor Houston be authorised to agree an extension of the improved terms following consideration of this data.

6. MEMBERS' ITEM - COUNCILLOR HOUSTON - VIABILITY REPORTS

Following consideration of the Member's item in the name of Councillor Ross Houston Councillor Houston, seconded by Councillor Kath McGuirk, moved the following motion:

That viability reports and independent assessments should be documents which are made publicly available to members of the council and the public as a default position, and this should be a condition where a development is on council land.

The votes were recorded as follows:

In Favour	4
Against	5
Abstain	0

The motion was declared lost.

Immediately following the decision, four members of the Committee supported a referral of the decision to Council. The reasons given for the referral were that this is a matter of public concern in the borough, and that wider issues have been raised as part of an

inquiry in West Hendon, where there is currently a petition of around 75,000 signatures. It was also noted that this matter is being tested in the courts.

RESOLVED – That this matter be referred to Council.

7. MEMBERS' ITEM - COUNCILLOR MCGUIRK - BARNET HOMES MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

The Committee agreed to consider this item at the same time as consideration of agenda item 13 'Commissioning and Delivery of Housing Services and the Management of the Barnet Housing Stock'.

8. MEMBERS' ITEM - COUNCILLOR ROBERTS - MUTUAL HOUSING PROVIDERS

Councillor Tim Roberts agreed that his Member's Item could be noted by the committee.

9. MEMBERS' ITEM - COUNCILLOR LANGLEBEN - BARNET REGENERATION ESTATES

Following consideration of the Member's item in the name of Councillor Adam Langleben the Committee considered the following request:

To ask for the committee to grant all longstanding non-secure tenants on Barnet's regeneration estate flexible tenancies of 5 years.

Upon being put to the vote, the votes were recorded as follows:

In favour	4
Against	5
Abstain	0

The motion was declared lost.

Immediately following the decision, four members of the Committee supported a referral of the decision to Council. The reason given for the referral was that councillors have a duty of care towards this group of people who are caught in unique circumstances, and that all councillors are likely to have a view on this matter.

RESOLVED – that this matter be referred to Council.

10. EMPTY PROPERTY TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOLLOW UP

Following consideration of the report, the Committee

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee note the follow up action taken in relation to the recommendations from Cabinet in relation to long term empty properties.
2. That the Committee note that the funding of empty property work is dependent on external funding and as such proactive work to tackle empty properties is at risk when the funding ceases.

3. That senior officers be requested to lobby central government to continue funding the empty property work
4. That officers come back to the committee with proposals once the funding runs out.

11. ANNUAL REVIEW OF COUNCIL DWELLING RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES FOR 2015/16

The Committee noted that the paragraphs stated in the recommendations section of the report as 1.6 and 1.7 should have been listed as paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6. The Committee considered the report.

The Committee;

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee approve the proposed rent increase of Consumer Prices Index (CPI) plus 1% for council dwellings as set out in paragraph 1.5 and to recommend for adoption by Policy and Resources Committee so as to take effect from 1 April 2015.
2. That the Committee approve the proposed increase in service charges as set out in paragraph 1.6, and to recommend for adoption by Policy and Resources Committee so as to take effect from 1 April 2015.

12. REVIEW OF REGULATION OF HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

Having considered the report the Committee

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee note:
 - a) The results of the evidence gathering exercise completed to date and that further evidence will be gathered.
 - b) The role that Additional Licensing could play in improving the current approach to HMO enforcement.
 - c) That a borough wide Additional Licensing scheme could complement the introduction of an Article 4 Direction under the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 in controlling the condition of existing houses in multiple occupation.
2. That the Committee authorise the Commissioning Director – Growth and Development:
 - a. To carry out a public consultation on the introduction of an Additional Licensing Scheme based on the proposals outlined in section 1.11 of this report, over a minimum 10 week period.

- b. That in the event that the borough wide consultation indicates that an area based scheme would be a more appropriate approach, a further public consultation exercise be undertaken in relation to an area based scheme.
- c. To bring a further report to a future meeting of the Housing Committee, for the Committee to consider the findings of the public consultation(s) together with details of an evidence base, so that the Committee can determine whether an Additional Licensing Scheme (borough wide or area based) should be adopted in Barnet.

13. APPROVAL OF FURTHER CHANGES TO HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME

The Committee considered the report.

RESOLVED – That the report be amended to delete the word ‘severe’ from the second to last bullet point in paragraph 3.9 of Appendix 2.

The Committee then voted on the report as amended, and the votes were recorded as follows:

In Favour	5
Against	0
Abstain	4

RESOLVED

That the Committee approve the proposed revisions to the Council’s Housing Allocations Scheme.

14. COMMISSIONING AND DELIVERY OF HOUSING SERVICES AND THE MANAGEMENT OF THE BARNET HOUSING STOCK

The Committee considered the report and the related Members item raised by Councillor McGuirk. The Committee noted in particular the proposed timetable for the review of the Barnet Homes Management Agreement, and emphasised the importance of the review findings being available for consideration by the Committee in June 2015 with a view to the new Management Agreement commencing from October 2015. In light of this timetable, Cllr McGuirk agreed to withdraw her Members Item.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Committee approve the extension of the Management Agreement with Barnet Homes for a further year from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, subject to approval by the Social Housing Regulator, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State.
- 2. That the Committee approve the development with Barnet Homes of a refreshed Delivery Plan for Housing Management and Housing Options Services for 2015/16, to be submitted for Housing Committee approval in April 2015.

3. That the Committee approve the approach adopted to review housing services, as set out in section 6, and receive a further report at a future meeting on the preferred option(s) for future delivery.

15. FEES AND CHARGES: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH - PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

Councillor Tim Roberts left the room during consideration and voting on this item.

RESOLVED

That the Committee recommend the fees and charges set out in Appendix A to this report to be presented to Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

16. COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme. Amendments were agreed to the programme to:

- Move the Housing Strategy item to the first possible meeting of the committee in June/ July of the next municipal year; and
- Add an item to the agenda for 27 April 2015 to report back a summary of feedback following consultation on the Housing Strategy

17. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were none.

The meeting finished at 8.40 pm