

Decisions of the Housing Committee

1 April 2019

Members Present:-

Councillor Gabriel Rozenberg (Chairman)

Councillor Shimon Ryde (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Daniel Thomas

Councillor Laithe Jajeh

Councillor Julian Teare

Councillor Thomas Smith

Councillor Paul Edwards

Councillor Ross Houston

Councillor Ammar Naqvi

Councillor Tim Roberts

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2019, be approved as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

None.

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

Councillor	Interest
Ryde	Declared an NPI as appointed Director for Barnet Group regarding the following: Item 7 – Quarter 3; Item 8 – Housing Strategy; Item 9 – Homelessness; Item 10 – Barnet Homes Delivery Plan.
Houston	Declared an NPI as appointed Director for Barnet Group regarding the following: Item 7 – Quarter 3; Item 8 – Housing Strategy; Item 9 – Homelessness; Item 10 – Barnet Homes Delivery Plan.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

7. QUARTER 3 2018/19 HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT

This report provided an update on the Theme Committee priorities in the Corporate Plan 2018/19 Addendum for **Quarter 3 (Q3) 2018/19**, including budget forecasts for revenue and capital, progress on activities, performance of key indicators and any high level risks.

The Chairman was pleased to announce that Barnet had secured a Government Grant to reduce homelessness in the Borough and that the Team in Barnet had worked very hard to secure the funds.

Members welcomed the positivity of the performance indicators and specifically welcomed the performance on fire safety.

Some concerns were expressed about the changes to the Council Tax Support Grant and it was noted that this would be the subject to a report back to Policy and Resources Committee.

Officers from Barnet Homes briefed the Committee on the Capital Budget performance.

RESOLVED that the financial, performance and risk information for Q3 2018/19 be noted.

8. HOUSING STRATEGY

It was noted that the Council had developed a new draft Housing Strategy to take account of major changes in the housing sector and wider demographic and economic changes, including rising housing costs, a shift in tenure from owner occupation to private renting, the impact of the Grenfell Tower fire disaster and legislative changes. The draft Housing Strategy was approved for public consultation by Housing Committee on 10 October 2018. The consultation had now been completed and a revised draft was submitted for the Housing Committee's consideration at appendix 1, along with a summary of the consultation outcomes at appendix 2.

The Chairman pointed out some of the key points to the Committee.

Councillor Edwards moved the following amendments:

That the Housing Committee approves the revised draft Housing Strategy attached at Appendix 1 with the following amendments:

- 1. The Housing Strategy should refer to the London Plan target for affordable homes which should be set at 50% across all developments, recognising the Mayor's position on viability (seconded by Councillor Naqvi):**

For (the amendment)	4
Against (the amendment)	6

Abstained	0
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2. That LB Barnet should be developing new Council homes at a maximum rent of 50% of market rates. The 65% policy should be scrapped (seconded by Councillor Houston):

For (the amendment)	4
Against (the amendment)	6
Abstained	0

3. That LB Barnet should build an evidence based case for a borough wide private landlord licensing scheme to submit to the Secretary of State for approval (seconded by Councillor Roberts):

For (the amendment)	4
Against (the amendment)	6
Abstained	0

4. That the Housing Strategy should explicitly link to its impact on other relevant Council policies (seconded by Councillor Naqvi):

For (the amendment)	4
Against (the amendment)	6
Abstained	0

The Committee voted on the original recommendation in the report:

That the Housing Committee approves the draft Housing Strategy attached to the report at appendix 1.

For	6
Against	4
Abstained	0

RESOLVED that the draft Housing Strategy attached to the report at appendix 1 be approved.

9. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

This report stated that the Council had developed a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to take account of major changes in the housing sector and legislative changes, including the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was approved for public consultation by Housing Committee on 10 October 2018. The consultation had now been completed and a revised draft was attached for the Housing Committee's consideration at appendix 1, along with a summary of the consultation outcomes at appendix 2.

The Chairman expressed concern that only 51% of consultees felt that the Council worked well with partner organisations and pointed out that the Council had started to work with the Homelessness Forum to redress this.

Councillor Teare suggested the introduction of Training Flats, similar to the scheme for rough sleepers. This was welcomed by the Committee and Officers agreed to take this on board.

Concerns were raised about the 5 year rule, which often prevented people from qualifying for Council housing.

Concerns were also raised about private short-term tenancies and it was noted that the Council had responded to Government consultation regarding this.

Councillor Houston felt that the aim to reduce the number of households in Temporary Accommodation by a third should be increased to two thirds.

It was pointed out that Council Officers worked in tandem with Barnet Homes on this target, which was already a challenge.

Councillor Smith raised concerns about people falling into debt and asked what action was being taken to assist people.

In response to Councillor Smith, Officers reported that they were working closely with Council Tax colleagues on the general issue of debt, to try and assist people and that reports would be submitted to Policy and Resources Committee. The Revenue and Benefits Team would also be working closely with the Welfare Reform Team. The Deputy Chief Executive agreed to email Councillor Smith with more details regarding debts.

Councillor Naqvi asked if the grant, awarded to the Council for homelessness was ringfenced.

Officers replied that the Council had to develop an action plan for this expenditure, which would have to be signed off by the relevant Government Department.

Members also raised concerns about the Discharge of Duty, with regard to refusing a property and if there was an appeal process. Consequently, Officers confirmed that there was an appeal process.

Prior to voting on the substantive recommendation in the report, Councillor Houston moved that that the following on page 128 of the agenda:

“Our overall aim is to reduce the number of households in Temporary Accommodation by a third from 2,579 in 2018 to 1,750 by 2024” be amended to read:

“Our overall aim is to reduce the number of households in Temporary Accommodation by two thirds from 2,579 in 2018 to 860 by 2024”

A Vote was taken as follows:

For (Councillor Houston’s motion)	4
Against (Councillor Houston’s motion)	6
Abstained	0

The motion was lost.

The Committee voted on the on the recommendation in the report to approve the revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy at appendix 1 of the report:

For	6
Against	0
Abstained	4

RESOLVED that the revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy at appendix 1 of the report be approved.

10. BARNET HOMES DELIVERY PLAN 2019/20

It was noted that The Barnet Homes management agreement with the Council required the development of an annual delivery plan which outlined the required outcomes and targets for each service year of the agreement.

The Barnet Homes 2019/20 delivery plan at appendix 1 provided information as to the outcomes achieved in 2018/19 against each of the Housing Committee's priorities as at quarter 3 2018/19, along with setting out the commitments, challenges, risks and key performance measures and targets for the 2019/20 year.

The Chairman welcomed the many positives regarding targets and other Members of the Committee echoed this view.

The Chairman also spoke about Fire Safety targets, noting that a Briefing Note had been sent to Members of the Committee earlier today and that a fuller update report would be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

The Chairman also asked Barnet Homes to update the Committee on how they were managing to resource the fire safety measurements, whilst continuing to resource other parts of the service.

Finally, Councillor Houston commented how managing to carry out the cladding work, within budget, was really positive.

The Committee voted on the recommendation in the report to approve the Barnet Homes 2018/19 Delivery Plan, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report:

For	6
Against	0
Abstained	4

RESOLVED that the Barnet Homes 2018/19 Delivery Plan, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

11. COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that the final items on the Work Programme for 2018/19 had been reported to this meeting.

A work Programme for 2019/20 would be formulated and submitted to the next meeting of this Committee.

12. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

13. VOTE OF THANKS TO CHAIRMAN

As this was the last meeting of the Committee for 2018/19, Councillor Ryde thanked the Chairman for his conduct of the Committee during the past year.

The meeting finished at 8.28pm