

Decisions of the Housing Committee

10 October 2018

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 21 June 2018, be agreed as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

None.

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

Councillor Ross Houston

7 – Housing Strategy

8 – Fire Safety

Non-pecuniary interest
by virtue of being a
Council appointed
Director for Barnet
Group.

Councillor Shimon Ryde

7 – Housing Strategy

8 – Fire Safety

Non-pecuniary interest
by virtue of being a
Council appointed
Director for Barnet
Group.

Councillor Tim Roberts

7 – Housing Strategy

Non-pecuniary interest
by virtue of, together
with his wife being
private landlords of a
single property in the
borough of Barnet.

Councillor Julian Teare

10 – Annual Performance Review of Registered Providers

Non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a tenant of One Housing.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

Jasmin Parsons was given the opportunity to speak for 3 minutes regarding agenda 7 – Housing Strategy. Members of the Committee were then given the opportunity to ask questions.

Jasmin Parsons had also submitted three questions to the Committee, regarding the same item and was afforded the opportunity to ask supplementary questions.

The Deputy Chief Executive clarified issues regarding Board representation and arbitration.

The Chairman reported that the other resident that wished to speak and ask questions, was running late and would be afforded the opportunity to address the Committee when she arrived.

6. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING REFUND CLARIFICATIONS AND NEW FEES FOR 2019/20

The Chairman moved the order of business to bring this item forward.

This report sought to obtain approval for proposed refund clarifications and new fees for 2019/20 to support the Commissioning Business Plan, and delivery of the front-line service within the Private Sector Housing Team in Re.

The Chairman particularly drew attention to the rent repayment order service which would greatly assist residents needing assistance in this area.

RESOLVED that the Housing Committee approve the proposed refund clarifications and new fees for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix A and refer to Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

7. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

8. HOUSING STRATEGY 2019-2024

The Committee 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.

If approved by the Housing Committee, the council would undertake a public consultation on the aims of the draft strategy with key stakeholders including housing associations, developers, tenants and residents. Housing Committee will then be asked to review the responses to the consultation and approve a final version of the Housing Strategy.

Members commented as follows:

Selective Licensing

This was welcomed as very positive – Officers reported that this needed to be data led and estimated that it would be implemented within 12 months. Members could also assist by highlighting areas that needed addressing.

Affordable Housing

Some Members felt that the target figure was too low. Others felt that achievable targets were important and should concur with market assessment and take account of infrastructure as well as take account of the geographical area.

Consultation

Members asked if there would be consultation with other Committee Chairman and it was confirmed that there would be.

Officers outlined the public consultation process and confirmed that there would be consultation with key stakeholders and the Health and Wellbeing Board. Consultation would be fed into the final report.

Borrowing Cap

Members welcomed the lifting of this cap. The Chairman confirmed that more detail would have to be provided before the Council could take this forward. Officers confirmed that more detail should be available to form part of the Housing Revenue report coming to Committee in January 2019.

New Homes Funded by Right to Buy

Officers confirmed that these homes had now been let. Some Members expressed concern about the proposal to use funds from right to buy for shared ownership homes.

3 Year Private Rental Tenancies

Members welcomed this as a positive step.

The Committee voted on the recommendation in the report as follows:

For: 6
Against: 0
Abstained: 4

RESOLVED that

- 1. The proposed Draft Housing Strategy be approved for consultation;**
- 2. The results of the consultation be reported back to this Committee on 1 April 2019 together with Officer recommendations and a revised Strategy, if appropriate.**

ACTION: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

9. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (CONTINUED)

Adanna Oji was given the opportunity to address the Committee for three minutes regarding the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. She had also submitted seven questions and asked some supplementary questions with regard to the appeals and complaints procedure and the difference between emergency and temporary accommodation which were responded to by the Chairman and Officers.

10. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

Officers reported that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was one of the largest changes to housing and homeless legislation in recent times. The Act required the council to carry out a review of homelessness and produce a strategy based upon this evidence base. At its June 2018 meeting the Housing Committee instructed Officers to prepare a draft strategy for consideration. This strategy summarised the findings of the review and sets out the Council's approach to tackling and preventing homelessness and rough sleeping in Barnet over the next five years, from 2019-2024.

If approved by the Housing Committee, the council would undertake a public consultation on the aims of the draft strategy with key stakeholders including housing associations, community and voluntary sector, tenants and residents. Housing Committee will then be asked to review the responses to the consultation and approve a final version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

At the request of the Chairman, Officers further elaborated on the role of the Homelessness Forum and the cooperation between partners. The whole purpose was about being proactive and preventing homelessness in the first place.

It was also noted that the final strategy would be submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Members raised the following issues:

Corporate Parenting

Members asked for some details about the support being given to care leavers with regard to supporting them into independent living, such as assistance with a rent deposit and information being more readily available.

It was explained that Barnet Homes were working closely with Onwards and Upwards and also the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.

Officers also explained that care leavers were given Band 2 priority, offered support on money management and sustaining a tenancy. There were also supported lodging schemes, supported accommodation schemes and Council Tax support.

With regards to rental deposit, there was discretionary payment assistance and charitable support.

Appeals Process

Members felt that if a resident was unhappy with a decision, the appeal and complaints process needed to be as clear as possible.

It was pointed out that people could still take an offer of accommodation whilst an appeal was ongoing.

Homelessness

Members sought clarification about services available.

Officers pointed out that the Homelessness Strategy and the Forum would assist to ensure services available were well disseminated. However, further suggestions were always welcome.

Officers also pointed out that services such as the Council, GP's etc had a duty to refer people that were already homeless or at risk of homelessness. Such cases should be referred to:

dutytorefer@barnet.gov.uk

Finally, Officers explained that Council departments worked collectively, with the emphasis now on prevention of homelessness.

One Offer Policy

Members asked where clear advice was available in terms of the one offer policy.

Officers replied that there was a 48hr period after offer for a resident to highlight any issues with the offer informally with Barnet Homes and if valid, these would be addressed outside the formal process for appeal.

There wasn't an independent advice service, but the Authority strived to offer clear advice.

Rough Sleepers

Members asked for an update regarding rough sleepers.

Officers replied that rough sleepers often had the most complex needs and there was assistance available, such as supported accommodation and assistance with helping them back to work. It was vital not to rush things and to offer the right accommodation and support plan.

Finally, it was noted that Barnet had recently secured funding for a Rough Sleeper Coordinator and three support officers.

The Committee voted unanimously to agree the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED that

- 1. The proposed draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy be approved for public consultation;**
- 2. The results of the consultation, be reported back to Housing Committee on 1 April 2019, together with Officer recommendations and a revised strategy, if appropriate.**

ACTION: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

11. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF REGISTERED PROVIDERS (RPS)

Officers informed the Committee that Registered Providers (RPs) were key partners for the Council in delivering on the Housing Strategy goal of increasing the housing supply, including affordable housing. As the providers of accommodation for 8500 households in the borough, Registered Providers also have a key part to play in assisting tenants affected by welfare reforms, providing training and employment opportunities, improving health and wellbeing and providing effective neighbourhood management. The Council had completed an Annual Performance Review of the major Registered Providers operating in the borough to obtain a view on how RPs are performing.

Members asked about some of the higher level of arrears amongst some of the providers and Officers explained the reasons behind this.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

12. QUARTER 1 2018/19 HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT

This report provided an update on the Theme Committee priorities in the Corporate Plan 2018/19 Addendum for **Quarter 1 (Q1) 2018/19**, including budget forecasts for revenue and capital, progress on activities, performance of key indicators and any high level risks.

Members asked why the cost of temporary accommodation was going up and were informed that there was a reduced supply of more affordable units, driving costs up.

Members also asked about the reduction in empty properties being brought back into residential use and were informed that not as many properties were reported.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the financial, performance and risk information for Quarter 1 2018/19. (unanimously agreed)

13. COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee Forward Work Programme, was noted subject to the 21 March date being deleted and replaced with 1 April.

It was also noted that an additional meeting of the Committee was being held on 27 November at 6.30pm to sign off the Corporate Plan priorities.

14. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

The meeting finished at 8.53pm