

## **Decisions of the Housing Committee**

14 January 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 27 November 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

### **2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS**

None.

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

Councillor Houston (appointed Director for Barnet Group):

Agenda item 7 – Housing Performance Report;

Agenda Item 10 – Fire Safety;

Agenda Item 11 – Housing Revenue Account;

Agenda Item 12 – Annual Review of Council Dwelling Rents etc;

Agenda item 13 – Housing Delivery Plan.

Councillor Ryde (appointed Director for Barnet Group):

Agenda item 7 – Housing Performance Report;

Agenda Item 10 – Fire Safety;

Agenda Item 11 – Housing Revenue Account;

Agenda Item 12 – Annual Review of Council Dwelling Rents etc;

Agenda item 13 – Housing 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 2 2018/19 HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT**

This report provided an update on the Theme Committee priorities in the Corporate Plan 2018/19 Addendum for Quarter 2 (Q2) 2018/19, including budget forecasts for revenue and capital, progress on activities, performance of key indicators and any high level risks.

Members commented/asked questions as follows:

Homelessness preventions: the Chairman reported that this would look better in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter and that despite the burdensome introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, preventions were overall being maintained at the same level as previously.

- Officers reported that they were confident that targets would be met in terms of affordable housing delivery.
- Members commented on the initiative in Burnt Oak being very positive.
- Members were concerned about the impact of Universal Credit on rent arrears. Officers from Barnet Homes replied that rent arrears were decreasing and that prevention was essential. However, Universal Credit could still have an impact if rolled out as previously envisaged.
- There were some concerns about issues with planning consent, but this was improving.
- There were concerns about the number of people in temporary accommodation. Officers replied that several measures were being taken in this area and it was the number one priority for Barnet Homes.
- Members expressed some concerns about shops under flats in relation to safety. Officers gave an update on this.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

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## **8. PRIVATE SECTOR ENFORCEMENT PROPOSALS**

Following on from the publication of the draft Housing Strategy, this paper set out proposals for expanding the existing approach taken by Barnet Council in relation to supporting responsible tenants and making sure that landlords provided safe accommodation.

The Chairman commented that this would lead to stricter licensing controls, tougher enforcement, more advice to tenants and landlords and more focus on data.

Members made the following comments/raised questions:

- Funding. Officers explained how this would be funded and monitored closely to ensure ongoing income generation.
- Members stressed the ongoing need to support the staffing requirements in this area.
- The Chairman gave an assurance that regular updates would be submitted to the Committee.
- Officers outlined how selective licensing worked.

**RESOLVED** that it be unanimously agreed to:

- **Approve reinvestment of income obtained through Financial Penalty Notices (FPNs) into increasing the amount and type of work undertaken by the Private Sector Housing Team;**
- **Subject to contractual agreement approve the creation of two additional posts for 23 months to undertake housing enforcement and HMO licensing activities;**
- **Subject to contractual agreement approve the creation of an additional post for up to 23 months to investigate the viability of Selective Licensing in Barnet;**
- **Delegate responsibility to approve additional staffing funded through FPN income to the Deputy Chief Executive.**

#### **9. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING NEW FEE FOR 2019/20**

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

It was unanimously agreed that:

**RESOLVED** that the Committee approve the new fee for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix A and refer the fee to Policy and Resources Committee to note.

#### **10. FIRE SAFETY - PROGRESS UPDATE**

This report provided an overview of progress with the council's response to the Grenfell Tower fire disaster, including replacement of cladding on council tower blocks at Granville Road, and improvements to fire safety in other council blocks.

In addition, the council had completed a review of private sector tower blocks in the borough and identified those with cladding, and sought information from owners in respect of action that they are taking to address this.

The Chairman stated that the Authority was making good on its promise to move beyond statutory requirements and towards best practice with a major programme of works.

Barnet Homes Officers outlined works in more detail regarding sprinklers etc.

Members raised issues/asked questions as follows:

- The importance of tracking those blocks owned by private landlords. Officers reported that the outcome of a tribunal for one privately owned block was being awaited. Officers also reported that new powers were being made available to Councils in this area.
- The Chairman clarified the additional measures referred to in the report with regard to leaseholders.
- Officers from Barnet Homes gave an update on Willow House.

It was unanimously agreed that:

#### **RESOLVED that**

1. **That the committee notes the progress to date with high priority fire safety works including the positive progress in completion of replacing the cladding at Granville Road.**
2. **That the committee agrees a revised programme of fire safety works for council dwellings as set out in Appendix 1, to include:**
  - **Installation of sprinkler systems in high rise blocks with 10 or more floors and more than one stairwell**
  - **Installation of sprinklers to sheltered housing blocks and hostels**
  - **Replacement of composite fire doors**
  - **Works to low and medium rise blocks**
3. **That the Committee agrees that, subject to approval by Policy and Resources Committee, an additional £16.9m is allocated from the council's Housing Revenue Account to meet the full cost of the revised programme in 2. Above. This is in addition to the amount of £30m previously agreed, bringing the total amount to £51.9m, noting that £5m of the total will be in the form of government grant for the recladding of Granville Road High Rise Blocks.**
4. **That the Committee agrees that as set out in paragraph 1.4 of the report, where a leaseholder is not required to agree to the installation of a sprinkler and interlinked alarm system in their flat under the terms of their lease, that the installation will be offered at nil cost, with no requirement to pay annual maintenance charges for the first five years following installation. After five years the annual maintenance charges would be phased in over five years in 20% increments.**

#### **11. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUSINESS PLAN**

This report provided an update of the 30-year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan taking into account the removal of the HRA debt cap by the government on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018, and the opportunities that this provides increase the supply of affordable housing in Barnet. The plan had also been updated to reflect progress since 2017 and to take account of the need for extra investment in fire safety measures.

It was also noted that with reference to 4.2 on page 73 of the agenda, that proposals would be submitted to ARG Committee in March, and not January as stated in the report.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee approve the draft Housing Revenue Account Business Plan as attached in Appendix 1.

**For: 6  
Against: 0  
Abstained: 4**

2. That the Committee approve the proposal to enter into an agreement with the Greater London Authority on Right-to-Buy receipts as attached at Appendix 2.

**For: 10  
Against: 0  
Abstained: 0**

**12. ANNUAL REVIEW OF COUNCIL DWELLING RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES AND TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION RENTS IN OUTER LONDON LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE AREAS FOR 2019/20**

The Committee received the report and addendum which detailed a replacement to Section 1.12 to 1.20 in respect of service charges and garages of the original report.

The report sought approval of proposed changes to council dwelling rents and service charges including temporary accommodation rents to take effect from April 2019.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee approve the proposed rent decrease in line with Government policy for existing Council tenants as set out in paragraph 1.6 to take effect from 1 April 2019;

**For: 10  
Against: 0  
Abstained:0**

2. That the Committee approves the proposed rent increases for temporary accommodation to the relevant outer London Local Housing Allowance rates as set out in paragraph 1.8 to take effect from 1 April 2019;

**For: 6  
Against: 0  
Abstained 4**

3. That the Committee approves the proposed service charges and garage rents as set out in paragraph 1.12 to take effect from 1 April 2019;

**For: 10**  
**Against: 0**  
**Abstained: 0**

4. That the Committee approve the new charge for Fire Safety sprinkler systems as set out in paragraph 1.20 and that these are reported to Policy and Resources Committee for noting.

**For: 10**  
**Against: 0**  
**Abstained: 0**

### **13. HOUSING DELIVERY PLAN 2019/20**

The development of the council's Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had been aligned to cover the next five years (2019-2024). A business planning paper was taken to Housing Committee on 10 October 2018 which set out these documents in draft, alongside the priorities for this Committee over the next five years (Appendix A). This included corporate priorities that the Committee was responsible for, as well as Committee specific priorities.

This paper set out an annual Delivery Plan for 2019/20 which showed specific actions for how the priorities for this Committee will be delivered over the next year, and how progress and performance will be measured. It also identified any risks to delivery. The plan would be refreshed on an annual basis. The committee would receive a performance report each quarter updating on progress, performance and risk against the priorities.

A final Corporate Plan and MTFS for 2019-2024 would go to Full Council on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019 for approval.

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the report put some "flesh on the bone" of the already agreed way forward. She highlighted that references to "foster carers" in the report should be read as including providers of supported lodgings.

Members welcomed the emphasis in the Plan of the importance of meeting the housing needs of care leavers, foster carers and providers of supported lodgings, which was an important element of the council's corporate parenting role.

**RESOLVED that the Committee approve the Delivery Plan 2019/20 as set out in Appendix B.**

**For: 6**  
**Against: 0**  
**Abstained: 4**

### **14. COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED that the Work Programme be noted.**

**15. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**

None.

The meeting finished at 8.27pm