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**AGENDA FOR THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee are summoned to a meeting on **5 March 2015 at 7.30 pm.**

**John Lynch**  
**Head of Democratic Services**

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Despatched : 25 February 2015

Membership 2014/15

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan (Chair)  
Councillor Jenny Kay (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Raphael Andrews  
Councillor Kat Fletcher  
Councillor Aysegul Erdogan  
Councillor Flora Williamson  
Councillor Alex Diner  
Councillor Una O'Halloran  
Rose Marie MacDonald PFI Managed  
Tenants  
Jim Rooke Directly Managed Tenants

Substitute Members

Councillor Mouna Hamitouche MBE  
Councillor Jilani Chowdhury  
Councillor Alice Perry  
Councillor Gary Heather  
Councillor Olly Parker  
Councillor Michelline Safi Ngongo

**Quorum: is 4 Councillors**



## A. Formal Matters

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1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declaration of Substitute Members
3. Declarations of Interests

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest\*** in an item of business:

- if it is not yet on the council's register, you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent;
- you may **choose** to declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest that is already in the register in the interests of openness and transparency.

In both the above cases, you **must** leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If you have a **personal** interest in an item of business **and** you intend to speak or vote on the item you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent but you **may** participate in the discussion and vote on the item.

**\*(a) Employment, etc** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

**(b) Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of your expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of your election; including from a trade union.

**(c) Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between you or your partner (or a body in which one of you has a beneficial interest) and the council.

**(d) Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.

**(e) Licences**- Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.

**(f) Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which you or your partner have a beneficial interest.

**(g) Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

This applies to **all** members present at the meeting.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting
5. Chair's Report
6. Order of Business
7. Public Questions

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<b>B.</b>	<b>Scrutiny Items</b>	<b>Page</b>
8.	Registered Social Providers - Circle Anglia Presentation	
9.	Estate Services Management - Witness Evidence	7 - 18
10.	Scaffolding Scrutiny Review - Notes of Site Visit and Witness Evidence	19 - 20
11.	Private Rented Sector Scrutiny Review - 12 Month Report Back	21 - 32

**C. Urgent Non Exempt Matters**

Any non- exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgently by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

**D. Exclusion of Public and Press**

To consider whether, in view of the nature of the remaining items on the agenda, any of them are likely to involve the disclosure of exempt or confidential information within the terms of the Access to Information Procedure rules in the Constitution and if so, whether to exclude the Public and Press during discussion thereof.

12. Exempt Reports ( if any )

The next meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee will be on 16 April 2015

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# Agenda Item 4

London Borough of Islington

## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 26 January 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at on 26 January 2015 at 7.30 pm.

**Present: Councillors:** O'Sullivan, Kay, Diner, O'Halloran, Andrews, Fletcher, Williamson, Erdogan, Rose Marie McDonald and Jim Rooke

**Also Present: Councillors:** Hamitouche, Doolan and Murray

**Councillor Michael O'Sullivan in the Chair**

**46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)**  
Councillor Kay (for lateness)

**47 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)**  
None

**48 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item 3)**  
Councillors Andrews, O'Sullivan, O'Halloran declared an interest as they were Members of the GMB Trade Union and Councillor Doolan declared an interest that his wife was a caretaker in relation to agenda item B10

**49 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)**  
**RESOLVED:**  
That subject to the following amendment to minute 41 – bullet point 5 of the addition of the words – and provision made for estates, especially larger estates, where there was no TRA, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 December be confirmed and the Chair be authorised to sign them

**50 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)**  
The Chair stated that the order of business would be as per the agenda

**51 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item )**  
The Chair outlined the procedure for dealing with Public questions and filming and recording of meetings

**52 CHAIRS REPORT (Item 5)**  
Welcome to new Members/Protocol for co-opted Members

The Chair welcomed Rose Marie MacDonald and Jim Rooke, the newly co-opted Members of the Committee to the meeting and that a protocol had been laid round in this regard.

Scaffolding site visit

The Chair stated that a visit to 4 sites in the borough had been arranged for 12 February in connection with the scrutiny review on scaffolding and that details would be circulated to Members in the near future.

The Chair added that it was proposed to invite the Chair of the Islington Leaseholders Association, Dr. Brian Potter to the next meeting of the Committee to give his views and also a representative of the Half Moon co-operative.

Circle 33

The Chair stated that unfortunately Circle 33 were not able to be present that evening but hopefully would be able to attend the next meeting of the Committee. He added that there had been recent articles in the Housing press relating to Circle 33 and he would arrange for them to be circulated to Committee Members.

**53**      **REGISTERED SOCIAL PROVIDERS - PRESENTATION (Item 7)**

The Chair stated that Circle 33 were unable to attend the meeting that evening and hopefully they would be attending the next meeting of the Committee on 2 March

**54**      **IN HOUSE REPAIRS SERVICE - PRESENTATION (Item 8)**

Matt West, Head of Repairs and Maintenance, was present and laid round a presentation, copy interleaved.

During the presentation the following main points were made –

- The in house Gas repairs went live in June 2014 and the in house repairs service in August 2014
- There were 50,000 works orders per year and 200 plus staff had been transferred under TUPE arrangements
- There are 30 specialist and overspill contractors
- The stores has been established and stock catalogues are being developed
- Performance data is starting to be available but at present needs validating
- The benefits of an in house service include the service being more customer centred, multiskilling, a training centre, materials supply, direct control and digital integration
- Current challenges include – IT systems, reporting, productivity, the roofing supply chain where a new tender process was being prepared and call volumes
- Current challenges – recruitment, 24/7 cover, managing installation contractors, developing staff competence, incentive/bonus scheme, online appointment booking
- Current work in progress – reorganisation, local employment and apprenticeships, fleet and management review, new IT systems, and reviewing contract arrangements
- Concern was expressed that Members still could not see performance data in order to ascertain whether repairs were being carried out effectively. It was stated that the new system would be able to identify cases repairs that had not been dealt with satisfactorily and repairs outstanding for a long time
- In response to a question it was stated that appointment slots were being looked at to make them more realistic and convenient for tenants and there was a Repairs Reference Group set up that would be discussing such issues with residents
- In order to offer the repairs service to leaseholders and RSL's etc. it would be necessary to ensure an efficient and reliable service was in place and appointments offered to fit in with customers lifestyles
- A Member stated that it was important that different parts of the Council worked together as when she had recently moved into a flat it had taken 4 days from her getting the keys to having her gas connected. The Head of Repairs and Maintenance stated that this should not have taken as long as this and if details were supplied to him he would investigate, however wherever possible services were integrated

## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 26 January 2015

- It was noted that the repairs service would continue to be a regular agenda item to ensure the Committee could ensure the service was working as effectively as possible
- A Member raised the issue of outstanding estate repairs and stated that there was a need for data to be available together with other KPI's
- In response to a question it was stated that the repairs service was 100% customer focused and that the focus was on developing this not just only for tenants but also leaseholders
- It was stated that in order to develop services for disabled residents and to understand their needs better discussion should be held with the Disability Panel
- Members were informed that one of the benefits of an 'in house' repairs service was access to the Council's IT systems and that this would enable them to access any tenants special requirements and the translation and sign language services
- In response to a question it was stated that staff transferring under TUPE arrangements from Kiers appeared to be pleased to have done so and there were regular meetings with the Trade Unions. With regard to multiskilling there may be possibilities of achieving savings efficiencies from this in the future
- Reference was made to the system to obtain stores from Travis Perkins and it was stated that orders were being assessed to ensure that stores were in stock when required and there was a quarterly review of the stores catalogue
- In response to a question as to whether consideration had been given to a scooter delivery for parts it was stated that a driver at present did deliver spares if required, however this could be considered in the future. In addition, there will always be occasions where there will be problems with getting some spares however once the joinery shop was operational this would also deal with glazing repairs
- It was stated that whilst housing information was fairly well integrated there was a need to analyse future repair jobs in order to ascertain and build up knowledge of parts that are regularly required. An analysis of kitchen furniture would be the next task to be undertaken
- A Member enquired whether operatives were supposed to take their rubbish away with them after completion of a repair as this did not appear to be the case in all repairs. It was stated that rubbish/discarded materials should be taken however if he was supplied with details he would investigate this
- In response to a question it was stated that it was important to get the IT system to meet the requirements that were needed and that the system requirements were still being designed

### **RESOLVED:**

That regular reports on the progress of the 'in house repairs' service be submitted to the Committee and Members be informed of performance information as soon as possible

The Committee thanked Matt West for his presentation

**55**

### **EXECUTIVE MEMBER HOUSING PRESENTATION (Item 9)**

Councillor James Murray, Executive Member Housing and Development, was present and made a presentation to the Committee, copy interleaved, during which the following main points were made –

- It was noted that the availability of numbers of 4 BR and 5 BR properties was decreasing and under occupation moves were also decreasing
- Across North London there are almost 12,000 households in TA and Islington has 959 the second lowest number behind Camden
- Nightly booked is the most expensive TA and causes overspends since it costs the Council more than it is able to recoup in rent. The overspend for 2014/15 is likely to be £2m. The plan is to reduce the number of households in nightly booked TA to

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reduce this overspend and every week between 10 and 20 households to be booked in so substantially more than that have to be moved out

- In 2014/15 to date the numbers reduced in nightly booked temporary accommodation from 527 to 477. A reduction of at least 150 is planned during 2015/16
- There are around 18,000 households on the housing register, of which 4,200 are Council tenants registered for a transfer
- For 2014/15 it is projected there will be 1,300 lets a 20% drop in available properties
- The social lettings agency will be launched in 2015 to offer a fair deal to private renters and also a service to landlords
- Responsive repairs, gas and voids services have now been brought back in house and are located at offices in Brewery Road and Northway House for gas and there are a number of challenges that are being looked at
- 99.7% of rents due for 2014/15 have been collected and the LBI collection rate is lower than Partners (PFI) collection rate
- Average re-let time for voids for LBI is 19 days and for PFI is 24.3 days
- Concern has been raised by Members and Residents about PFI performance, especially around lifecycle repairs and a number of actions were being taken to address these concerns
- Islington remains committed to delivering affordable new homes to its residents and between 2015-2019 plans to deliver 2000 new units and as part of this the Council is planning on developing 500 new units of housing similar to the development at Vaudeville Court
- A Member enquired how many points were required for a next generation tenant to get a property and it was stated that this was dependent on a number of factors but without new generation points being applied these people would not be able to be rehoused
- In response to a question it was stated that a review of allocations policy would shortly be taking place, however if new generation points were increased this would be at the expense of other people in need not being rehoused as there was only a limited amount of properties available
- It was stated that in relation to the social lettings agency that the Council did have a small lettings agency at the moment called Islington Residential so the Council did have limited experience in this regard. However it is not proposed to grow the business too quickly as it was important to get it right and build it up gradually over the next few years
- Concern was expressed at some of the data provided by PFI regarding their performance and it was stated that the data was currently being assessed by an independent expert appointed by PFI
- Councillor Murray stated that the Council were buying properties using current Right to Buy receipts using these for temporary accommodation in the short term and in the long term returning them to Council housing. An allocation of £6m had been made to purchase 20 properties
- It was stated that with regard to consultation that this was dependent on the type of development and the TRA was involved as soon as possible and proposals discussed with them and tenants were involved as soon as possible
- In response to a question Councillor Murray informed Members that he would provide details of how much rent arrears were written off in the previous year
- Reference was made to recent reports with regard to PFI relating to communal repairs, voids and leaseholder satisfaction and it was stated that these should be circulated to Members of the Committee
- A Member enquired as to the current position on overcrowding and it was stated that the figure had reduced however some people were not moving because of the



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uncertainty over rents. There was an expected drop in the number of properties to let of 20%, and in particular in relation to 4BR and 5 BR properties

- The Chair stated that if there were any further questions from Members these should be forwarded to Councillor Murray

### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That once the data on PFI performance, referred to above, has been analysed details be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee
- (b) That the Executive Member Housing and Development be requested to provide details of how much rent arrears were written off in the previous year
- (c) That the recent reports with regard to PFI relating to communal repairs, voids and leaseholder satisfaction be circulated to Members of the Committee
- (d) That any further questions on the presentation be forwarded to the Executive Member Housing and Development for consideration

## **56 ESTATE SERVICES MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY REVIEW - WITNESS EVIDENCE -TO FOLLOW (Item 10)**

David Salenius, Housing and Adult Social Services and Garry Harris, GMB Trade Union were present for discussion of this matter.

Members considered a laid round report from Garry Harris, copy interleaved.

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- In response to a question it was stated that a number of agency staff had been appointed to permanent posts and all agency staff were encouraged to apply, however some were not successful at interview. There were currently 7 vacancies and a recruitment process was currently in operation
- Members were informed that agency staff could not be assimilated into permanent posts but had to undertake a recruitment selection process in accordance with the Council's Human Resources procedures
- Members were of the view that it would be advantageous if consideration of the report should be deferred to the next meeting in order that the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services could respond to the points raised in the laid round submission

### **RESOLVED:**

That consideration of the report be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee in order to enable a response to be considered in conjunction with the response from the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

## **57 PROPOSED SITE VISIT - SCAFFOLDING - VERBAL (Item 11)**

This matter was dealt with under Minute 52 above

The meeting ended at 9.40p.m.

**CHAIR**

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## Estate Services Management Housing Scrutiny Report

### Introduction

Following the Housing Scrutiny review meeting in late 2014, it was agreed by the committee that the GMB would compile a detailed report, and submit it as evidence for the committee to consider on many aspects of the caretaking service focusing on estate management.

The following report explains the previous management structure of managing caretakers and repairs staff, to the current system today.

It highlights many difficulties in the current system of management duplication and the inefficiency in this management structure, which clearly is not cost effective to the council and residents of the borough.

Although this type of management structure may of worked in Homes for islington, it fails to fit in with the integrated structure of islington council. This structure is repetitive, inefficient, and costly to our residents.

### Service Description

The current service has several layers of management and in each area office there is a serious issue about duplication of Caretaking management roles and tasks

The current structure is:

### Officer Posts

- Area Housing Manager
- Estate Services Manager
- Estate Service Coordinator (ESC)
- Quality Assurance Officer (QAO)
- Support Manager
- Support managers Admin support officers
- Administration support staff / Inspectors (only Highbury)
- Independent inspectors
- Resident inspectors (not employed)

### Mechanised Services

- Cleaner Streets Program Manager
- Cleaner Streets Manager
- Assistant Mechanized Service Manager

## Manual Posts

- Mechanised operatives (bulk refuse)
- Resident Caretakers
- Non Resident Caretakers
- Part time Seasonal Grass Litter Pickers
- Agency staff

The **Area Housing Officer** has overall responsibility of the caretaking service within the office structure as well as other main service areas, but not hands on approach.

**Estate Services Manager** again has responsibility of the caretaking service but has caretaking as part of their management duties in their job description

**Estate Service Coordinators** are the main officers who manage the caretaking service with management responsibilities, however the Quality Assurance Officers do the main day to day management of the caretakers although their job descriptions say they assist in reality this is not the case they are more like managers.

**Quality Assurance Officers (QAOs)** deal with all aspects of caretaking and are the main day-to-day link to caretakers, and in fact although their task should be one of supervision and support they have become the real managers by default without recognition.

Most offices now simply treat the QAOs as the main managers when it comes to workload, performance, and day-to-day management but in reality they are performing the tasks of the Estate Service Coordinators who are suppose to manage the caretakers. This confusion and duplication of work is inefficient, costly, and confusing for staff when it comes to caretaking responsibilities.

The QAOs are also responsible for the reporting of day to day repair reporting and estate inspections. However over recent months against the union agreement there has been an introduction of Staff deemed as another layer of "inspectors" when this function is clearly the responsibility of the QAOs.

**Support Managers** are in addition to all the above where there is another layer in caretaking management who are employed to support the estate service coordinators in managing the day-to-day duties, and support duties for caretaking.

If you take annual leave requesting as an example it's for the Estate coordinators to agree, the QAOs to organise, and the support manager to record. This is an inefficient way to manage a service, and there are many other examples. It's this duplication of roles that confuses caretakers, other officers and more importantly residents as to who is responsible for each part of the caretaking management service.

**Support Managers Admin Assistance** are also an addition to the above and are employed to support estate service coordinators, QAOs, and Support

managers, whereas in fact this is the roll that a support manager should be doing and was not part of the original caretaking management structure when the service was changed some years ago. Like the inspectors this post was introduced after the Review and although there maybe some need for admin posts, the layers above should be sufficient to cover this work.

**Administration Assistants / Inspectors.** This is another recently introduced post that has been disputed by the unions as there was no clear recruitment process and why are we introducing more managers posts when its front line post we desperately need.

**Independent Inspectors** are a rollover from Homes from Islington who are a group of staff who were used to independently monitor estates for both repairs and cleaning.

However the roll is now more concentrated on caretakers performance, cleaning, attendance, and ignoring some of the outstanding repairs which is an area we do look to improve as it certainly requires more attentions and a review of costs. This could also fit into the policy and performance Review on Income generation of the return of the Housing Building Maintenance contract from Kier to the council where improving areas of the repairs contract, and selling it to the private market would be a benefit to the residents and the council.

The front line of caretaking has been cut back to the bone whereas the management structures are repetitive and there is a serious element of duplication. The reasons we feel that this is an issue is that the management of caretaking is not attached to the residents service charges and layers of increased management can be hidden in various budgets, whereas the manual side is transparent and open and is related to service charges.

This is why the management of the caretaking service needs a fresh look at a new management structure streamlining the management tasks having a consistent approach across all offices and estates, but rather than losing jobs, we feel there is a need to redevelop and split the management of caretaking into two areas, one line of management for caretaking, and cleaning including inspections, and the other into dealing with estate repairs and selling the new in-house repairs service to the private sector.

Splitting the demarcation between caretaking and Repairs would allow both departments to concentrate on each service area far more than it can at the moment. Currently QAOs who are responsible for reporting and inspecting day-to-day repairs are being bogged down with a caretaking service issues whose resources are decreasing to an all time low as well as caretakers moral.

The same is said on repairs where the QAO spends extensive amounts of time on Repair reporting and chasing, takes them away from managing the caretaking service and sometimes urgency of issues within caretaking are left unmanaged.

Problems have increase where the area housing offices have reduced, yet the caretakers in each office who the managers have responsibilities for have increased, the managers patches have therefore increased, the areas for repair reporting and chasing have increased, managers duties are being duplicated inadvertently, and the management of both estate repairs and caretaking is inefficient, ineffective, duplicated, and in need of review.

Proposed structure for the committee is to go back to a dedicated caretaker Manager solely responsible for managing the caretaking service in each area housing office.

Reintroduce assistant caretaking managers in each area office, who also carry out inspections on cleaning and caretaking duties.

### **Charge Hands**

The previous service allowed the use of on site charhands dealing with day-to-day issues of caretaking. The committee may want to investigate this further as part of any proposed changes to the management of the service. It was far more effective and the response to caretaking problems was instant. It was also an area of natural progression regards promotion.

### **Repairs Staff**

Reintroduce repairs officers who solely report and chase estate repairs, giving the residents one single person who will have responsibility for repairs. These employees can also fit into the possible recommendations of the policy performance review committee on income generation to help sell the repairs service to the private sector and leaseholders at a cost and generate income for the council.

### **Proposed Structure**

#### **Management**

- Area Housing Office Manager
  - Caretaking manager
  - Assistant Caretaking Manager
  - Caretaking charge hands
- 
- Repairs manager
  - Repairs reporters and chasers
  - Repair inspectors

#### **Manual Workers**

- Resident Caretakers
- Non Resident Caretakers
- Part time workers (predominately women workers)
- Estate Operative

### **Caretaking service fit for a "Future that works"**

There are several problems with the current caretaking stemming from the transfer from hfi and membership of an organisation that homes for Islington was a member of "One Housing Group".

We are a member of this organization that operates within the private housing sector and whose members are housing associations some outer boroughs, and mainly non inner city local authority employers.

### **Housing Estate Services Support Team**

We have a dedicated housing management team which over the years has expanded from one officer to many, we are not sure of this departments responsibility's, apart from look at alternative equipment for the caretaking service but plays no part in repairs.

There are several options to the function of this team one is that the role of this team can be incorporated into a collective responsibility of the caretaking manager's job should this be an agreed way forward.

The current team liaises with some outside bodies such as one housing group, and several housing associations, but not many local authorities that have the same make-up as Islington.

One Housing Group is an organisation that has a one size fits all policy and designed to drive down costs, at the risk of service provision. It can be seen as an outside contractor working across various housing organisations within the private sector.

The problem here is that we can't compare the private sector services with those in public sector.

We need to design our own outcomes and not pay annual membership costs to another outside organisation to do this for us, we can compete and start delivering standards developed in islington, not Barnet, or anywhere else.

At the last presentation management stated that the standards are high which we agree. However there is much room for improvement in service delivery and cost.

A survey used may record the standards as high using a formula designed to give this result, but on the ground the front line service are substantially supporting an expensive management estate caretaking and repair structure.

This is seen as draining front line resources, which results in the service being under resourced and in need of improvement by re-investment, and streamlining the management structure.

### **Caretaking Estate Measurement Scheme**

The caretaking service is the only council service that openly determines the cost to the resident of the borough. Currently the resident's pay a percentage of a global service charge of an accumulation of the overall budget costs.

In other words if you have 200 Caretakers, the council divides this cost across all residents no matter what service on the estates they receive. It could be that a resident pays the same if they get 7 days a week cleaning as someone who only gets two days a week which is inconstant across the council.

The caretaking measurement scheme is a scheme that determines how many caretakers we need to achieve a service. However the scheme fails to take many issues into consideration, such as traveling time like homecare, Health and Safety inspections, leaf clearance, management duties like lumber collections, report writing, attending the ever increasing meetings called by management.

The most important issue here is that there is no built in measurement for covering a caretaker's annual leave or indeed sickness this is achieved by getting other caretakers to cover outside of his or her own estate measurement scheme.

What is required is a cleaning set of frequencies for each estate, which relates to a charge to each resident and not a global charge. These are what the union has been pursuing for some time now by what is know as a "estate service level agreement". This will determine the exact resources needed, and determine a fairer consistent system to each household, which will highlight the actual costs to each resident, not the overall estate.

At the moment we have the same costs to residents no matter how much service they get they all pay the same.

An example is where we have less than 20 dwellings in a block; these blocks only get cleaned twice a week. Where as blocks such as Andover have a seven-day daily cleaning service, the charge to the resident is exactly the same.

Although there is a significant difference in distributed resources applied, the cost to the residents so different.



## **Estate Facilities**

Caretakers have been complaining for many years about the complete lack of basic facilities on their estates. Many are working out of converted sheds with poor toilet facilities if any. Women caretakers are increasing which is a welcomed asset within this service. However there are no separate facilities for women caretakers, which is a barrier we must challenge and conquer.

In the offices there has been extensive budgets spent on workplace facilities for all office based staff. However compared to the facilities caretakers and others have available, it could be said that those who work in the offices are treated far more favorably than those manual workers on estates.

There needs to be a massive investment in basic facilities for staff working outside the office environment as a matter of urgency.

## **Caretaking Stores**

There is a noticeable reduction in the supply and allocation of cleaning stores to caretakers, both non resident and resident. Stores allocation is a fundamental problem for caretakers to reach an agreeable standard.

There's an urgent need to review the stores allocation to each estate in line with the estate service level agreements for each estate not an area housing office based group of estates or caretakers. It should be on the basis of need per estate, which identifies the actual costs per residents for which these stores are used.

## **Caretaking Recruitment**

The GMBs view is to increase the numbers of women caretakers within the caretaking service. Identifying shorter hours to allow Single parents to work while the children are in school. This will result in many women coming off of out of work benefits and into the workplace, gaining both experience and a pathway into suitable employment.

At the moment many caretakers are overlooked for promotion into office based jobs. The current way to gain promotion is via an old friends network, or by agency use.

The current caretakers have lost all confidence in the recruitment process ever since the removal of trade union Equality Observers, this has left the process open to abuse and nepotism.

However, this problem is not only within caretaking, it's a serious issue within many departments within the council, and needs a serious investigation if we are to be seen as a serious equality-promoting employer.

## **GMB Trade Union shop stewards**

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It includes a detailed description of the experimental procedures and the statistical tools employed.

3. The third part of the document presents the results of the study, including a comparison of the different methods and a discussion of the factors that influence the outcomes. It also includes a table summarizing the key findings.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the study and provides recommendations for future research. It highlights the need for further investigation into the underlying mechanisms and the potential applications of the findings.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes the study and summarizes the main points. It reiterates the significance of the research and the value of the data collected.

6. The sixth part of the document provides a list of references and sources used in the study. It includes a mix of academic journals, books, and online resources.

7. The seventh part of the document includes a list of appendices and supplementary materials. These materials provide additional details and data that support the main text of the document.

8. The eighth part of the document contains a list of figures and tables. These visual aids help to illustrate the data and make it easier to understand the results of the study.

## **Caretaking Estates Services Management**

### **Clarification on paper submitted by GMB**

#### **Introduction**

This paper provides some further clarification on the issues raised and proposals made regarding caretaking and estates services management in the paper presented by GMB at the Housing Scrutiny Committee meeting on 26 January 2015.

This report will show how management is working with the GMB and others on moving the service forward to improve service delivery and resident satisfaction and make it ready to consider how we can offer caretaking services to others to increase income.

#### **Service description**

As was pointed out in the presentation made on 2 December 2014, there are layers of management in the Area Housing Offices, see attached appendix one.

This structure was recommended from a best value review completed in 2006 which provided a holistic approach to estate management combining the management of caretaking, communal repairs and estates services. The new structure has been successful in improving tenant's satisfaction with the caretaking service from 42% to 81% in 2013.

Caretakers are currently line managed by Estate Services Co-ordinators (ESCs) and are assisted by Quality Assurance Officers (QAOs) who provide day to day supervision. The QAOs undertake proactive monitoring of cleaning, communal repairs, grounds maintenance and health and safety checks through their inspections.

Previously as part of the Quality and Performance team in Homes for Islington, independent estate inspections were completed by that team along with a range of other inspections of the organisation's services. When these posts were deleted housing operations assumed these roles within their existing resources, including independent estate inspections.

The estate services support manager's primary function is to assist the ESCs by ensuring stores and equipment and training is provided for the caretakers and their leave is managed and covered.

The responsibility for repairs ordering varies across the offices however they are responsible for investigating reported communal repairs and ordering those repairs mainly with our Estates Maintenance Team based at Downham Road. This responsibility however only amounts to ordering approximately one order per officer per day. They may of course also chase orders reported to them by residents or indeed ones they find on their estate inspections.

The Resident Engagement team in the Housings Needs and Strategy division recruited resident inspectors to check a variety of services in housing including customer services and estates services. These provide us with an essential view of residents to ensure we maintain and improve all services.

## **Proposals**

It is not accurate to say that the caretaking service has been cut back to the bone.

In fact since 2002 the establishment has increased by two, following requests for extra staff to complete the tasks set out within the measurement scheme. This scheme was agreed with the GMB union to establish the caretaking resources required to clean and maintain our estates. The caretaking establishment is calculated using this scheme.

During the same period whilst we have maintained the caretaking establishment, the housing management structure in operations has been reviewed twice and reduced management posts by 33%, through the reduction of Area Housing Offices, saving approximately £500,000.

Services to support the caretaking services have also been increased with, for example, the introduction of mechanised estate road sweeping and bulk refuse disposal provided by the Environment and Regeneration department.

The GMB's proposal to return to a separation of caretaking management and estates repairs would divide responsibility for our residents who often complain that they have too many different officers to contact. This would be a regressive step for our residents. The service provided before the changes recommended by the best value review was not noted for its efficiency or effectiveness and the GMB's proposals do not show how these could be improved.

The reporting of repairs by quality assurance officers is not significant part of their role and does not warrant any radical change. We want to maintain the holistic service developed since the best value review and look at other ways of making it more effective.

## **Fit for the Future**

One Housing Group was only linked to Homes for Islington because it developed new housing on the existing Six Acres estate.

We believe the GMB is referring to our benchmarking that is carried out across many social housing providers as a good way of comparing our services with similar organisations.

It is accepted that the current service is expensive although we do not have current accurate comparable costs. Savings have been made to the support given to the caretaking services through reductions in costs for mechanised services, window cleaning and bin cleaning.

With these savings the caretaking services now cost approximately £7.7 million compared to the estates services management from the local offices which costs £1.2 million.

## **Way Forward**

We agree with the GMB that changes need to be made to the service and we have been working with the GMB shop stewards at monthly meetings to find ways to go forward.

There are three main areas of work we want to progress, Improving Cover for Caretakers Absence, Weekend Cover and Introduction of New Tasks, as well as finding ways to create new income.

Improving Cover for Caretakers Absence – we do not have sufficient resources to pay for full cover when any caretaker is on leave or ill and we have put forward to the shop stewards suggested cover arrangements including paired working and use mobile relief cover.

Weekend Cover - The current arrangements are expensive and not seen as an effective use of resources. We want to look at full week day cover and an alternative week end cover service to improve satisfaction.

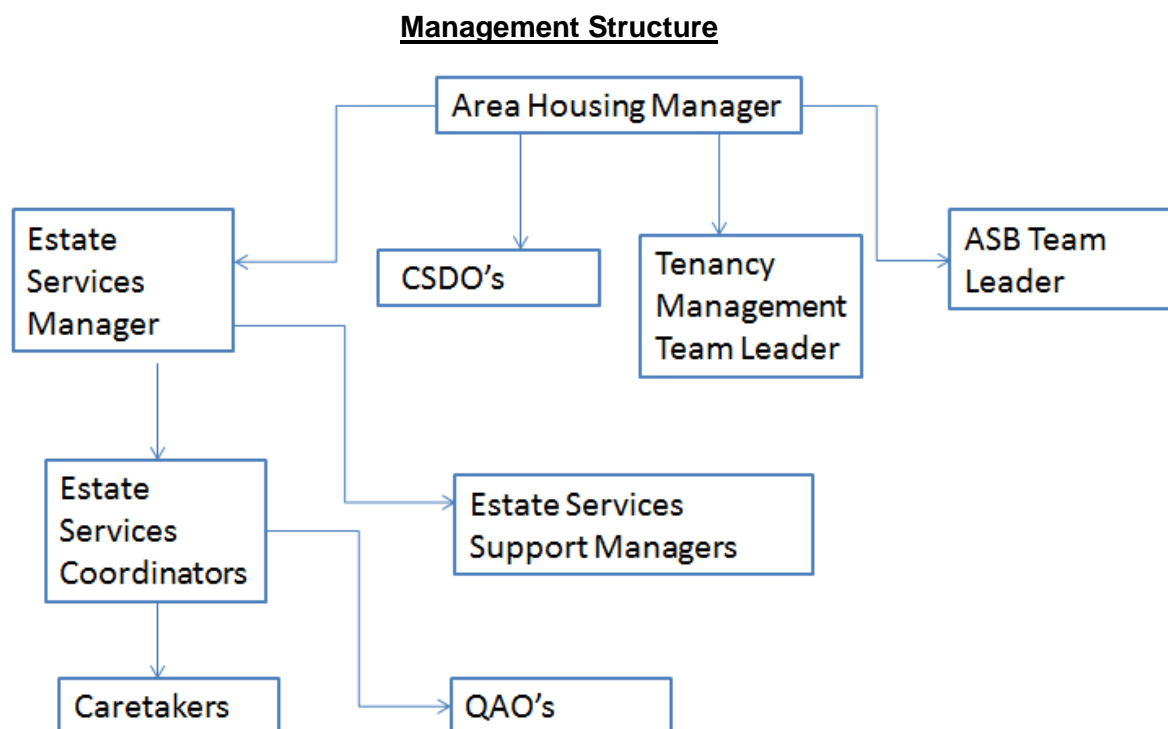
Introduction of New Tasks – Because the caretaker’s tasks have all been measured each caretaker knows what they have to do. However if new task is required we need to agree a procedure for its introduction with the shop stewards. This will be extremely important if we are to offer services to other clients to raise income.

Papers on these changes have been or will be discussed with the GMB at our monthly meetings.

Increasing income is a high priority for the Council and following a presentation at the Policy and Performance Committee in January we have been asked to provide costs of the services we could offer, such as voids clearance or minor decorations for other social landlords.

**David Salenius**  
**Principal Housing Manager – Estate Services**  
**24 February 2015**

**Appendix 1**



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## Housing Scrutiny Committee

### Scrutiny Review: Scaffolding and Work Platforms

#### Site Visit: 12 February 2015

On 12 February 2015, members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee visited a number of active sites where the Council is carrying out improvement works to housing stock through the use of scaffolding, mobile scaffold towers, mast climbers, and cherry pickers.

The visit was attended by Councillors O'Sullivan, Kay, Andrews, Erdogan, and O'Halloran; Jim Rooke, the Housing Scrutiny Committee Directly Managed Tenants Representative; officers from the Property and Democratic Services sections, and representatives of the Council's contractors, the Breyers Group and Mears Projects.

The following sites were visited:

- Mayeville Estate, N16
- Riversdene, N5
- Stavely/Keighley Close, N7
- Ewe Close, off Shearling Way, N7

Those present inspected the works being carried out on site and discussed the appropriate usage of different types of working platform, how improvement works are planned and delivered, health and safety aspects, access arrangements and communication with residents.

During the visit the following main points were made –

- Each property is assessed on its own merits before the most suitable way of carrying out the work is agreed. Before deciding if scaffolding is required, contractors will take into account the extent of the work that needs to be carried out, the resources required, and if there are any alternatives. Discussing works with residents can also help to assess which resources are required, as residents may be able to identify problems with their own property.
- Works which require a significant amount of manpower, or working at considerable height for a prolonged period of time, will often require scaffolding. Cherry pickers are height limited and are only able to accommodate a maximum of two workers. For safety reasons certain works are only able to be carried out from a scaffold, for example roof works involving hot bitumen.
- Cherry pickers can be limited by the local environment. Works must allow access for emergency vehicles and it would not be considered good practice to close a road or obstruct a footpath to enable works when there is an alternative available.
- Safety is the most important consideration when carrying out improvement works. A series of inspections are carried out before, during and after the works, the results of which are discussed between the Council and the contractor.
- There can be a perception that scaffolding is erected for a long period of time with little work taking place. Although there can be unforeseen delays to works, unoccupied scaffolding is often due to inspections and preparatory work taking place.

- There are various reasons why works may be delayed. Delays can be caused when additional works are identified during the course of the works. This requires agreeing additional funding and re-evaluating project plans. A delay has previously been caused by scaffolding not being erected to a sufficient standard. Delays can also be caused by ongoing consultation with leaseholders.
- When visiting the Mayeville Estate, some Members expressed concern at the apparently low number of operatives working on the site given the length of the contract and the inconvenience to residents.
- When working on a number of properties, it is not possible to work in series moving scaffolding from one property to the next as the materials must undergo a safety inspection following disassembly.
- Members provided details of relevant complaints received from local residents.
- Contractors use a variety of methods to engage with local residents including monthly newsletters and resident liaison officers. Breyers informed Members that residents were the most important part of the process and this was stressed to their Resident Liaison officers.
- The Council works closely with contractors, with clerk of works officers visiting key sites daily. Officers consider the Council to have sufficient resources to administer the volume of work currently being undertaken.
- Scaffolding is a fixed cost regardless of the time period it is erected for. As a result, scaffolding can represent a significant expense within the overall cost of a scheme, especially if the works being carried out are relatively low value. However, the cost of scaffolding through the Council's responsive repairs contract has significantly decreased recently, and the fixed cost only increases if additional works are required or if a project is intentionally delayed.
- Capital works are carried out on a seven year rolling programme. Officers could consider moving non-urgent works to a fourteen year cycle; however each would require assessing on a case by case basis. It was queried if an alternative cycle should be adopted, such as ten years.
- On visiting Stavely/Keighley Close, Members were advised that Mears has recently employed four apprentices, three of which were female, and apprentices are regularly offered full time jobs at the end of their apprenticeship.
- It was suggested that the Council could seek to work with housing associations which are due to undertake capital works to properties neighbouring council-owned properties, as this could lead to efficiencies.
- The Council has recently procured its own cherry picker, which is available for property works, as well as repairs to street lighting and similar works.

Those present thanked the contractors for their cooperation and contribution to the scrutiny review.





Report of: **Corporate Director of Housing & Adult Social Services**

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Housing Scrutiny Committee	5 March 2015	11	All

Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt
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## **SUBJECT: Private Rented Sector Scrutiny Review – 12 Month Report Back**

### **1. Synopsis**

- 1.1 The Communities Review Committee conducted a scrutiny review of private sector rented housing during the period July 2013 – February 2014. The overall aim was to look at the quality, cost and regulation of the private rented sector (PRS) in Islington and how this could be improved. The review was to inform the process of developing a new private sector housing strategy.
- 1.2 The Committee agreed a list of recommendations in February 2014, which was agreed by the Executive on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014.
- 1.3 This report updates members on progress in implementing the recommendations of the Communities Review Committee's report on 'A better deal for Islington's private renters'. It summarises the context of the review, the ambitions of the Committee, the response of Executive and the adoption of a private sector improvement plan.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To note progress to date on the recommendations contained in the report 'Private Sector Rented Housing' as set out in Appendix A. A full description of the Committee's recommendations and the Executive's response are available by way of background papers.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Islington's large and growing private rented sector comprises approximately 24,000 households or 26% of all households by tenure, and is expected to rise to 35% by 2025.

The borough faces several challenges in the private rented sector, including insufficient supply of affordable accommodation, some poor quality housing, impacts of welfare reform, and unregulated PRS management, leading to difficult conditions for some tenants.

- 3.2 Despite the growing PRS sector, the supply of privately rented properties for those on middle and low incomes has become severely restricted in recent years. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels, which are intended to reflect the lower end of the market, have in fact lost touch with market rent levels.
- 3.3 There is currently no statutory regulation of letting or property management companies. This means that anyone can open a letting or property management business without any qualifications or accreditation. The growing number of rental properties in the borough has presented an opportunity for more lettings agents to enter the market, and there are now over 150 letting agents operating in Islington.
- 3.4 Assured Shorthold Tenancies only offer tenants limited security of tenure, often only for a period of 6 months, with landlords being able to gain vacant possession any time they wish after the expiry of the tenancy.
- 3.5 For many years, the council has made extensive use of the PRS by using private rented properties as temporary accommodation for clients approaching the Housing Aid Centre as homeless or in housing need. The council also operates a Private Sector Opportunities Scheme (PSO Scheme), which assists people to access the PRS through a deposit or incentive paid by the council.
- 3.6 As well as working to secure private sector opportunities, the council works to improve standards. It is estimated that there are 8,000 PRS dwellings in Islington with a category one hazard, making it unsuitable to let unless rectified.
- 3.7 In July 2013 the Communities Review Committee commenced a scrutiny review, with the overall aim to look at the quality, cost and regulation of the private sector rented sector in Islington and how this could be improved. The review was to inform the process of developing a new private sector housing strategy.

The objectives of the review were to:

- Examine best practice of local authorities and from other housing providers;
- Examine information on costs, quality and regulation of the private rented sector in Islington;
- Examine the role of the private sector in meeting housing needs;
- Recommend changes to the way the council deals with the private rented sector;
- Produce recommendations to government on changes to legislation relating to the private rented sector.

The review received evidence from a number of statutory and voluntary organisations and council officers, and reported its recommendations to the Executive in March 2014.

- 3.8 The Communities Review Committee, whilst recognising that the private rented sector is often an excellent housing option for many people with many properties meeting good quality standards, were of the view that more could be done by the council to influence and improve the sector, and root out poor landlords.
- 3.9 The Committee recommended that the council should use its discretionary powers under the Housing Act 2004 to further improve property and management standards through the introduction of additional licensing.
- 3.10 The Committee was also of the view that more could be done to help households on low and middle incomes to access the PRS, by establishing a council-run social lettings agency.
- 3.11 The Committee hoped that its recommendations would establish a more regulated PRS offering a secure, settled and good quality home for many for whom owning a property or accessing social housing is not an option.

- 3.12 In March 2014 the Executive accepted in full the recommendations of the Communities Review Committee and agreed to incorporate the scrutiny recommendations and the Executive's response in the council's ongoing and future work in relation to private sector services, and to form a basis for the council's new private sector housing strategy for 2015-18.
- 3.13 The Committee's recommendations have been laid out in a PRS Improvement Action Plan (Appendix A) and has been updated to show progress in implementing the Committee's recommendations.

Some actions have been completed and others are ongoing and will continue to be monitored to ensure that the improvements envisaged by the Committee are delivered. Progress will be reported annually.

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Financial Implications**

Any additional costs of implementing the licensing scheme that cannot be met by the licensing fee or through existing resources will be monitored and as necessary, met from the contingency fund.

Additionally, resources required for the development of a social lettings agency will be approximately £45k, for which funding has been identified. The initial set up costs of the agency include consultancy, staff, IT, legal and marketing costs. It is envisaged that the agency will be run by existing staff resources for the first year.

An initial review of similar schemes indicates that the agency may be able to break even after year two and start to generate surplus income after year three.

All other activities referred to in the report around working with lettings agents (para 4.3) and supporting private tenants (para 4.4) will be contained within existing resources.

### **4.2 Legal Implications**

#### **Social Lettings Agency**

The council is establishing an in-house social lettings agency ('SLA') using its general power of competence (section 1 of the Localism Act 2011). The council may charge landlords for the provision of the SLA services up to the full cost of providing those services (section 93 Local Government Act 2000 and section 3 Localism Act 2011).

#### **HMO Licensing Scheme**

A local housing authority must keep the housing conditions in their area under review, including the licensing of HMOs. Sections 56 and 57 of the Housing Act 2004 enable the council to designate areas within Islington as being subject to an Additional HMO Licensing Scheme in relation to some or all of the HMO properties in those areas which are not already subject to mandatory HMO licensing. The council must comply with specific requirements set out in those sections including being satisfied that a significant proportion of the HMOs proposed to fall under the additional scheme are being managed sufficiently ineffectively, consultation for the scheme must take place, and the scheme must be consistent with the council's overall housing strategy. Following approval of an Additional HMO Licensing Scheme, there are specific requirements relating to publicity and when the scheme may come into force (no earlier than three months after the date on which the designation is confirmed). The council must review the designation from time to time and may revoke it if considered appropriate. There is no fee structure prescribed within the Housing Act 2004 but the government has indicated that it should be self funding.

#### 4.3 **Environmental Implications**

The implementation of the recommendations will lead to improvements in the quality of private rented sector housing, including thermal efficiency, resulting in a reduction of housing carbon emissions.

#### 4.4 **Equality Impact Assessment**

Equality impact assessments will be carried out as part of the development and implementation of new schemes.

### **5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

5.1 Good progress is being made in implementing individual actions arising from the recommendations of the Communities Review Committee.

5.2 It is recognised that implementation of the recommendations will lead to a better deal for private tenants, a raising of standards in the quality of private sector accommodation, easier access to council services and support for private sector tenants and landlords. It will also facilitate more transparent access to lettings services for those seeking to find a decent home in the private sector.

#### **Appendices**

Appendix A: PRS Improvement Plan

#### **Background papers:**

Private Sector Rented Housing, Report of the Communities Review Committee, March 2014

Executive response to the above, March 2014

#### **Final report clearance:**

**Signed by:**

**Date:**

**Received by:** Head of Democratic Services

**Date:**

**Report Author:** Maxine Holdsworth

**Tel:** 020 7527 3517

**Email:** [maxine.holdsworth@islington.gov.uk](mailto:maxine.holdsworth@islington.gov.uk)

## PRS Improvement Action Plan

The purpose of this action plan is to facilitate implementation of the recommendations of the report of the Communities Review Committee 'The Private Rented Sector'. Progress in implementing the action plan will be reviewed annually.

**Key** REH: Residential Environmental Health, Islington Council  
 PHP: Private Housing Partnerships  
 HAC: Housing Aid Centre  
 HOPS: Housing Operations  
 IR: Islington Residential  
 TS: Trading Standards  
 HS+R: Housing Strategy and Regeneration

PRS: Private Rented Sector

### Recommendation 1: A better deal for Islington's Private Renters; develop a Social Lettings Agency

Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Progress / Comments	Timeline
1.1	Carry out a feasibility study for the development of a social lettings agency (SLA) in Islington and produce a business case.	PHP	Sept '14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feasibility study was undertaken, including market research, landlord survey, benchmarking with other authorities, assessment of various service models and products, and risk assessment completed.</li> <li>Report presented to Exec on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014, detailing findings of feasibility study and a detailed business case proving financial viability. Exec approval received to proceed with development of the agency, to be launched in April 2015.</li> </ul>	Completed
1.2	To set up a Project Team to oversee the development and delivery of the SLA and to appoint a Lead Officer will take day to day responsibility for setting up the scheme.	PHP	Oct '14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project board set up with representatives from Legal, Digital Services, Comms, Finance, REH, PHP, HAC, HOPS, IR, Strategy &amp; Development. The full board meets monthly, with smaller ad hoc groups meeting in between to discuss specific themed issues.</li> <li>Expert consultancy support commissioned and appointed to act as Lead Officer.</li> </ul>	Ongoing

1.3	To produce, deliver and monitor an SLA development project plan.	PHP	Oct '14 – April '15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project plan in place with progress monitored monthly by Project Board.</li> <li>• Achievements to date include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Name and logo agreed for SLA: 'Islington Lettings' (IL)</li> <li>- Agreement reached on landlord offers (guaranteed market rents / or guaranteed rent 6 months in advance for sub market rents)</li> <li>- Legal docs, including management agreement with Landlords, SLA with internal services, and tenancy agreements in process of being drawn up</li> <li>- Communications plan in place to market and promote IL (incl articles in resident publications, bus shelter campaign, posters, IL email address etc)</li> <li>- IL website signed off and with developers for production</li> <li>- Development of in-house repairs service through HOPS</li> <li>- Financial systems and processes being set up</li> <li>- Client sourcing and referral pathways being established</li> <li>- Staffing arrangements being finalised</li> <li>- Property standards been agreed</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Risk register been produced</li> <li>• Budget awaiting sign off</li> <li>• Discussions ongoing re integration of IR into IL</li> </ul>	Ongoing
1.4	To launch the SLA in April 2015.	PHP	April '15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch event planned for 25<sup>th</sup> March 2015, 6-8 pm, in Town Hall.</li> <li>• Council set to launch IL from April 2015</li> </ul>	Ongoing

**Recommendation 2: Root out poor landlords – Carry out feasibility study into discretionary licensing in specific parts of the borough**

Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Progress / Comments	Timeline
2.1	Carry out feasibility and consultation on discretionary additional licensing scheme in Caledonian Road and Holloway Road	REH	Jan '15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposals to introduce an additional HMO licensing scheme to cover all shared accommodation on Caledonian Road and Holloway Road were put out for public consultation at the end of October 2014 and the views of private tenants and landlords likely to be affected by the scheme were collected alongside those of other residents and representatives from national organisations and local community groups. A wide range of views were received with the majority of respondents supporting the scheme. Those views have been considered and have helped to inform both the residents' impact assessment and the design of the scheme.</li> </ul>	Completed
2.2	Present findings of feasibility and consultation to Exec and make recommendation for an additional licensing scheme	REH	Mar '15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officers have reviewed the proposals which are due to be decided upon by the Executive on 12 March 2015. If the Executive approves the scheme then the Council will formally designate the scheme and publicise it so that implementation of the requirements for landlords to license all HMOs in the two Roads can take place from September 2015 onwards.</li> </ul>	Ongoing

**Recommendation 3: Bear down on lettings agents – ensure that letting agents in the borough have fair and reasonable terms and conditions, and fees that are clearly advertised.**

Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Progress / Comments	Timeline
3.1	Ensure lettings agents in the borough are aware of new government guidance and requirements;	TS	Sept '14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TS have written to all letting agents in the borough about: June '14 guidance from the CMA (Competition and Markets Authority) ; 'Guidance for lettings professionals on consumer protection law'; <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/319820/Lettings_guidance_CMA31.PDF">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/319820/Lettings_guidance_CMA31.PDF</a></li> <li>This strengthens requirements on lettings agents to ensure their standard contract terms are fair and reasonable; a 2014 decision by the Advertising Standards Authority requires them to clearly advertise all fees; and new redress schemes were introduced in October '14 that agents are now required to join.</li> <li>TS have produced their own good practice advice leaflets for Lettings agents in the borough.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
3.2	Carry out a programme of targeted visits to lettings agents	TS	March '15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visiting programme being delivered, informed by local intelligence and tip-offs from residents. Training will be offered to local agents in order to improve standards and promote good practice.</li> <li>When letting agents are failing to act responsibly we will take enforcement action against them; TS have successfully prosecuted one lettings agent in the borough in 2014.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
3.3	Promote GLA's London Rental Standard	TS	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LRS is being promoted as part of the communication and liaison with agents as under 3.1 and 3.2</li> </ul>	Ongoing



3.4	Step up partnership working with other boroughs	TS	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership working is regularly taking place through London Trading Standards (LOTSAs) network, national primary authority partnership and current involvement in the Office of Fair Trading (OFT)'s National Lettings Working Party funded by National Trading Standards Board (NTSB). An audit will be made of all regional/national letting agent chains that have an Islington presence and contact will be made with relevant primary authority to share local concerns.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
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**Recommendation 4 : Supporting private tenants - ensure that Islington residents needing any advice about renting privately know where to turn.**

Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Progress /Comments	Timeline
4.1	Launch a one stop telephone information service for all private sector queries	PHP	In place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>March 2014 saw the launch of a new, one stop telephone service – 0207 527 3001 – which puts renters or landlords needing any advice in touch straightaway with the relevant officer in the council who can help.</li> </ul>	Complete
4.2	Improve the council's private sector web pages	PHP/REH	Dec '14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council's web pages have been reviewed, updated, and improved in relation to private sector housing issues, so that they are clear and accessible, easy to navigate and are regularly reviewed to ensure they contain up to date information. The council invited Islington Private Tenants Group to take part of this review.</li> </ul>	Complete

4.3	Work closely with the Islington Private Tenants Group (IPTG) towards common goals of creating a better deal for private renters and increase awareness of their rights and services available for their benefit	PHP / REH	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islington council held a joint event with IPTG in the council chambers in 2014 and further ad hoc meetings have taken place between officers, councillors and IPTG.</li> <li>• We aim to undertake further work to enhance partnership working with IPTG, to share information and awareness of private sector housing issues; to run campaigns for public awareness and for changes in legislation.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
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**Recommendation 5: A call for change – Make representations to government where we consider existing legislation does not adequately protect private sector tenants including security of tenure, rent control, and minimum housing standards.**

Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Progress / Comments	Timeline
5.1	Make representation to the Government seeking the suspension of Right to Buy Sales in Islington and London as a whole.		Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing.</li> <li>The council has launched a programme of 'buy backs' of leasehold properties, with the aim to include them in the council social housing stock portfolio in the long run, after using the units for temporary accommodation for an agreed period.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
5.2	Comment on 'Homes for London; the Mayor's draft London housing strategy'	HS+R	Done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have forwarded Islington's comments on 'Homes for London; the Mayor's draft London housing strategy'. We have made Islington's case for a more secure, decent, and affordable private rented sector.</li> </ul>	Complete