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**AGENDA FOR THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee are summoned to Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on, **1 December 2016 at 7.30 pm.**

**Stephen Gerrard**  
**Director of Law and Governance**

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Despatched : 23 November 2016

Membership

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan (Chair)  
Councillor Marian Spall (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Gary Doolan  
Councillor Aysegul Erdogan  
Councillor Osh Gantly  
Councillor Mouna Hamitouche MBE  
Councillor Una O'Halloran  
Councillor Angela Picknell

Substitute Members

Councillor Gary Heather  
Councillor Olly Parker  
Councillor Alice Perry  
Councillor Raphael Andrews  
Councillor Alex Diner  
Councillor Satnam Gill OBE  
Councillor Dave Poyser

Observers

Rose Marie McDonald (PFI Managed Tenants)  
Jim Rooke (Directly Managed Tenants)

**Quorum: is 4 Councillors**



## A. Formal Matters

Page

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. Items for Decision/Discussion</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Housing Services for Vulnerable People: Witness Evidence	7 - 10
To include:	
a. Representatives of Peter Bedford Housing Association	
b. Representatives of Notting Hill Housing Association (TBC)	
c. Glenn McCorkindale, Property Services Programme Manager	
d. Jon Farrant, Head of Tenancy and Estate Services	
2. Quarterly Review of Housing Performance (Q2 2016/17)	11 - 14
3. Estate Services Review – Caretaking Recommendations Update	15 - 24

**C. Urgent non-exempt items (if any)**

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

**D. Exclusion of press and public**

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 press and public during discussion thereof.

**E. Confidential/exempt items**

**F. Urgent exempt items (if any)**

Any 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.

The next meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee will be on 10 January 2017

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# Agenda Item 4

London Borough of Islington

## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 17 October 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 17 October 2016 at 7.30 pm.

**Present:**           **Councillors:**           O'Sullivan (Chair), Erdogan, Gantly, Hamitouche and O'Halloran.

**Resident**                   Rose-Marie McDonald and Jim Rooke  
**Observers:**

**Also present:**           Councillor Diarmaid Ward

### Councillor Michael O'Sullivan in the Chair

#### **216        APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gary Doolan, Marian Spall and Angela Picknell.

Councillor Ayseguul Erdogan submitted apologies for lateness.

#### **217        DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**

None.

#### **218        DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item A3)**

None.

#### **219        MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)**

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

#### **220        CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A5)**

The Chair advised that representatives of Family Mosaic Housing Association had been invited to present to the Committee under Item B1, RSL Scrutiny, however unfortunately they were not available to attend the meeting. Family Mosaic would be invited to a future meeting.

It was advised that Jon Farrant, Head of Tenancy and Estate Services, had been due to give evidence to the Committee under Item B2, Housing Services for Vulnerable People:

Witness Evidence, however unfortunately he was unable to attend the meeting. It was noted that Jon Farrant would attend the next meeting.

The Chair highlighted recent casework received from Hyde Housing Association tenants. It was commented that residents were anxious about the organisation's review of community centres, and it was suggested that the organisation should provide all stakeholders with further information about the review.

**221 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item A6)**

No changes were proposed to the order of business.

**222 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A7)**

The Chair outlined the procedure for public questions and the filming of meetings.

**223 RSL SCRUTINY (Item B1)**

The Committee noted apologies from Family Mosaic Housing Association. The item was deferred to a future meeting.

**224 HOUSING SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE: WITNESS EVIDENCE (Item B2)**

The Committee received a presentation from Cora Nicholls, Housing Options Manager, and Vicky Manser, Principal Re-Housing Manager, on the work of the Housing Needs service in supporting vulnerable people.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- There were around 20,000 households on the housing register, but only around 1,200 properties available to let each year. Around 9,000 households were in housing need, with almost 5,000 applicants in overcrowded housing.
- The Housing Needs team provided advice to residents on their housing options. Information was available from the council's website, and also directly from the municipal offices at 222 Upper Street. The service provided 'floor walkers' at the municipal offices to assist vulnerable people who may have difficulty accessing the computer terminals.
- Residents could apply for council housing online, with their application instantly assessed against the council's allocations scheme. The form was designed to be accessible in different languages and to those needing different text sizes.
- The council operated a 'choice based lettings' scheme in which households were able to bid for properties suitable for their needs. The eight bidders with the highest number of points were invited to view the property. It was advised that vulnerable people, such as those with mobility issues, were able to visit the property for a second time. The council offered a more flexible service to these residents.
- The Housing Needs service worked in partnership with area housing offices, social services, the Police, and other agencies such as Age UK to discuss vulnerable tenants in order to better understand their particular housing needs.
- The service had a positive working relationship with the Islington Learning Disabilities Partnership and discussed cases with them monthly. Applicants with a learning disability could qualify for supported housing, or those with a lower level learning disability could be supported in their own home through the KeyRing service. The KeyRing service helped those with learning disabilities to maintain their tenancies by providing floating support. This included helping to develop their

## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 17 October 2016

independence by providing support with budgeting, repairs, personal safety, and life skills such as cookery.

- The Housing Needs service had developed a housing options booklet and tenancy agreement in an easy read format for those who struggled with written English.
- The service worked with support organisations such as Centre 404 to provide supported housing projects to those with high and complex needs.
- The Housing Needs service reported a good relationship with both Adult and Children's Social Services. Vulnerable people's housing options were discussed with support workers to find the most suitable housing available. Advice surgeries were also held with vulnerable families.
- Two officers were appointed as GP link workers. It was reported that lots of valuable information was received from GPs which helped vulnerable people to access housing; particularly vulnerable people who were not known to the council.
- The housing bidding system had been developed with vulnerable people in mind. The website indicated if the property had been adapted or was wheelchair accessible. The website was intended to be easy to use.
- It was known that around 5% of those on the housing waiting list could not access the internet to bid for properties, and these tended to be vulnerable people. In such instances the system was able to automatically bid on properties on their behalf, if details of preferred areas and types of property were provided.
- There were 651 supported accommodation spaces across the borough and these were allocated with the Supported Accommodation Referrals Team.
- The council's Floating Support team helped to manage vulnerable people's tenancies and prevent homelessness. Around 2,000 households a year accessed the service.
- The council's planning policies required new homes to be built to a 'lifetime homes' standard, meaning they would be adaptable if tenants developed mobility issues in the future. There was also a requirement for 10% of new homes to be wheelchair accessible.
- A member queried if it was easy for vulnerable people to obtain the 120 points required to bid for housing. In response, it was advised that many vulnerable people were able to qualify for additional points due to medical need. Applications were reviewed by the council's independent medical adviser and either 40, 80, or 150 points could be awarded depending on the severity of the resident's condition. Additional points could also be awarded to tenants with other vulnerabilities, such as having young children, or those facing other risks.
- Following a query, it was confirmed that the children of leaseholders were not eligible for the 'next generation' scheme, which awarded additional points to the children of council tenants.
- A member provided an example of a vulnerable family living in unsuitable housing, however had not been able to successfully bid for a property, despite having over 220 points. Whilst officers could not comment on individual cases, it was known that housing need exceeded supply.
- Following a question, it was confirmed that the council had one independent medical officer, who was a qualified GP. Those with medical conditions were assessed against the council's lettings scheme. There was no standard points award for residents with cancer, the medical officer instead assessed how the cancer affected the resident's housing need.
- Although residents' GPs or consultants sometimes provided letters in support of an application, this was not encouraged. It was advised that all medical matters were considered by the independent medical officer, who would contact other medical professionals if further information was needed.

## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 17 October 2016

- It was advised that additional points were available for residents living in overcrowded conditions; this included needing extra bedrooms, and opposite sex overcrowding, where males and females aged over 10 had to share a bedroom.
- If it was thought that a vulnerable family needed rehousing, the Housing Needs team would liaise with social services and the child's school to assess the risks to the family. The service also worked with early help services such as Families First.
- The Committee appreciated the importance of building to the 'lifetime homes' standard, commenting on the difficulties of adapting some older properties and the risks associated with staying in unsuitable housing.
- A member commented that vulnerable people often felt that they needed to reiterate their needs to housing providers; for example, those who are deaf would not hear the doorbell to open the door to repairs operatives. It was queried how the council identified the needs of vulnerable people. In response, it was advised that Housing worked closely with social services and other organisations, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, to identify the needs of tenants.
- It was advised that the council would face an even greater shortage in properties as a result of national housing policy changes and in future mutual exchange may be the most effective way to move property. Mutual exchange surgeries were held at the municipal offices and there was a dedicated officer to support tenants seeking a mutual exchange.
- Following a question, it was advised that voids were refurbished to meet health and safety standards before being re-let and officers would advise of the works to be carried out when prospective tenants visited the property. It was suggested that tenants should be provided with a written list to confirm the works to be carried out before they accepted the property, as this would clarify expectations and help vulnerable tenants' and their carers to assess the suitability of a property.
- A member commented on the poor condition of some properties, indicating that some tenants had turned down street properties due to their condition and unsuitability for vulnerable people. It was suggested that the council's website sometimes needed clearer information on accessibility and the condition of the property. Officers advised that they were working to improve the quality of information received from Area Housing Offices.

The Committee thanked Cora Nicholls and Vicky Manser for their attendance.

### **225 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT (Item B3)**

The report was introduced by Councillor Diarmaid Ward, Executive Member for Housing and Development, and Sean McLaughlin, Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Services.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- This was the first quarterly performance report submitted to the Housing Scrutiny Committee. Corporate performance indicators were previously reported to the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee, however it had been agreed that quarterly performance should be reported to the appropriate review committee instead.
- Several affordable housing schemes were behind schedule. As these were being developed privately, the council had very little influence over their progress.
- Concern was expressed at the increase in homeless acceptances in quarter one, however it was thought that this would decrease slightly in quarter two.
- Repairs satisfaction was reported to be 94%, which was considered very high.



## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 17 October 2016

- The government's requirement for the council to sell housing stock would significantly decrease the council's ability to re-house vulnerable people. It was expected that increasing the use of temporary accommodation would be an unavoidable consequence. The Committee was very concerned by the impact of national housing policy changes. It was noted that the implementation of secondary legislation under the Housing and Planning Act had been delayed.
- It was clarified that rent arrears had increased to 1.8%, which was only a 0.1% increase, and not by 1.8% as indicated in the report. However, officers were investigating this increase, as 0.1% represented over £100,000 of lost income.
- It was queried why the implementation of the new repairs ICT system had been delayed until April 2017. In response, it was advised that there had been developmental delays and it was not appropriate to implement a new system over winter, which was the busiest time of year for the repairs service. Difficult conversations had taken place with the supplier and officers thought that the revised implementation date would be met.
- In response to a query, it was advised that the council did evict families from time to time, however this was a last resort and Children's Social Care were always involved in decisions where children would be affected. No families had been evicted as a result of the bedroom tax, and evictions often took place following repeated non-payment and refusal of advice and support.
- The Committee raised concerns with Partners' repairs performance. It was commented that Partners' outstanding repairs were not part of the historic backlog, which had been cleared.
- The council sought to downsize tenants in under-occupied housing where possible. For example, one and two bedroom properties on the Bemerton Estate had recently been earmarked for those looking to downsize. This would increase the availability of family-sized units, however, it was acknowledged that many tenants did not want to downsize from larger properties.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the progress against key performance indicators in Quarter 1 be noted.

226

### **SCAFFOLDING AND WORK PLATFORMS SCRUTINY REVIEW - 12 MONTH UPDATE (Item B4)**

Damian Dempsey, Group Leader – Quantity Surveyors, and Mike Hall, Direct Works Group Leader, presented the report which set out progress in implementing the recommendations of the scaffolding and work platforms review.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- A member commented on scaffolding being used to carry out work at a relatively low height. Officers advised that scaffolding was installed to provide a safe working environment, regardless of height.
- Following a question about mobile elevating work platforms, it was confirmed that the council owned one vehicle which was used daily. A scissor platform was sometimes hired to carry out pre-construction surveys.
- Whilst Housing sought to maximise the use of maintenance-free materials, planning permission for installation was not always granted.
- The council emphasised to its staff and contractors that scaffolding should be removed at the earliest opportunity. A member raised casework related to scaffolding being kept on housing association properties for unreasonably long periods of time. Officers could not comment on the practices of other organisations.

## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 17 October 2016

- It was noted that the roofs of some properties could be accessed from inside the building, however this sometimes required access to be granted by tenants or leaseholders, and this was not always received.
- The future of OJEU procurement rules was unknown given the decision to leave the European Union; however it was not expected for procurement rules to be relaxed, as the OJEU rules were strongly supported by the government.
- The council was working to multi-skill all operatives. Training was taking place at Hackney College, with 120 operatives to be trained over the next few years.
- The Committee commented on the financial pressures facing the council and emphasised that any saving on the cost of scaffolding would be welcomed.

### **RESOLVED:**

That progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Scaffolding and Work Platforms Scrutiny Review be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm

**CHAIR**

# Agenda Item 1

## Housing Scrutiny Committee 2016/17

### Housing Services for Vulnerable People – Witness Evidence Plan

Overall aim: To review the effectiveness of the housing services the council provides to vulnerable people.

6 September 2016		
Who / What	Organisation / Purpose	Other key information
Paul Byer, Service Development Manager	To provide an introduction to the support services offered by the Housing service to vulnerable residents, and other contextual information.	To meet SID objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify and assess the housing options and additional housing services available to vulnerable people</li> </ul>
Claudia Thompson, Assistant Director, Adults Integrated Community Services	Adult Social Services – To provide an overview of the social care context in Islington and to describe the additional needs and challenges faced by vulnerable residents.	To be supported by written information compiled by Tessa Cole, Improvement and Efficiency Programme Manager, and Michele Chew, Head of Quality and Performance.  To meet SID objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To review the extent of joint working with adult social care and others.</li> </ul>

17 October 2016		
Who / What	Organisation / Purpose	Other key information
Cora Nicholls, Housing Options Manager	Housing Needs and Strategy – on the work undertaken by the service on supporting vulnerable people.	To meet SID objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify and assess the housing options and additional housing services available to vulnerable people</li> <li>To assess how vulnerable people and their particular needs are identified by housing services</li> <li>To evaluate how the council's housing services communicate and engage with vulnerable people</li> <li>To review the extent of joint working with adult social care and others</li> </ul>

<b>1 December 2016</b>		
<b>Who / What</b>	<b>Organisation / Purpose</b>	<b>Other key information</b>
Jon Farrant, Head of Tenancy and Estate Services	Housing Operations – on the work undertaken by the service on supporting vulnerable people, including referrals to advocacy organisations and Social Services.	To meet SID objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify and assess the housing options and additional housing services available to vulnerable people</li> <li>• To assess how vulnerable people and their particular needs are identified by housing services</li> <li>• To evaluate how the council's housing services communicate and engage with vulnerable people</li> <li>• To review the extent of joint working with adult social care and others</li> </ul>
Glenn McCorkindale, Property Services Programme Manager	Property Services – on the work undertaken by the service on supporting vulnerable people.	
Representatives of Peter Bedford Housing Association, potentially including a tenant	Peter Bedford Housing Association – to review the services for vulnerable people provided by a good practice Housing Association.	To meet SID objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To benchmark the council's housing services for vulnerable people against those of other housing providers and to identify best practice</li> </ul>
Representatives of Notting Hill Housing Association (TBC)	Notting Hill Housing Association – to review the services for vulnerable people provided by a good practice Housing Association.	

<b>10 January 2017</b>		
<b>Who / What</b>	<b>Organisation / Purpose</b>	<b>Other key information</b>
Housing Disability Panel representatives	Housing Disability Panel – to provide information from a service user perspective.	To meet SID objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To confirm that the council's housing services are accessible to vulnerable people</li> <li>• To evaluate how the council's housing services communicate and engage with vulnerable people</li> </ul>
Carers Hub representatives	Islington Carers Hub – to provide information from a service user perspective.	
Service users	Open invitation for service users to attend and provide evidence.	

**2 February 2017**

Who / What	Organisation / Purpose	Other key information
Representative of another local authority	To benchmark the council's housing services for vulnerable people to that of another local authority.	To meet SID objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="970 501 1445 667">• To benchmark the council's housing services for vulnerable people against those of other housing providers and to identify best practice</li></ul>
Partners representative	Partners for Improvement in Islington – on the additional services offered to vulnerable Partners tenants.	

**Scrutiny visits:**

Visit to service users – to be arranged.

Officers are scoping a potential visit to a Homeless Reception Centre.

**Key dates:**

2 February 2017: Concluding Discussion

28 March 2017: Draft Recommendations

16 May 2017: Final Report

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**Report of:** Executive Member for Housing and Development

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Ward(s):</b>
Housing Scrutiny Committee	1 December 2016	All

<b>Delete as appropriate:</b>	Exempt	Non-exempt
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## Report: Quarter 2 Performance Report - Housing

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1 Each year the council agrees a set of performance indicators and targets which, collectively, help us to monitor progress in delivering corporate priorities and working towards our goal of making Islington a fairer place to live and work.
- 1.2 Progress is reported on a quarterly basis through the council's scrutiny function to challenge performance where necessary and to ensure accountability to residents.
- 1.3 This report sets out a progress update for those indicators related to Housing over the first half of 2016-17 (i.e. 1 April to 30 September 2016).

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note progress to the end of Quarter 2 against key performance indicators falling within the remit of the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 The council routinely monitors a wide range of performance measures to ensure that the services it delivers are effective, respond to the needs of residents and offer good quality and value for money.
- 3.2 This year, rather than Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee (PPS) scrutinising all quarterly performance reporting, a new approach was agreed whereby each of the four theme based scrutiny committees – Children's Services, Health and Care, Environment & Regeneration, and Housing – will be responsible for monitoring performance in their own areas

## 4. Quarter 2 update on Housing performance

4.1 This report contains an update on Housing indicators for Quarter 2.

Objective	PI No	Indicator	Frequency	Q2 Actual Apr-Sep	Q2 Target Apr-Sep	Target 2016-17	On/Off target	Same period last year	Better than last year?
<i>Increase supply of and access to suitable affordable homes</i>		Number of affordable new council and housing association homes built	Q	<b>94</b>	N/A	460	<b>N/A</b>	43	<b>Yes</b>
		Number of severely overcrowded households that have been assisted to relieve their overcrowding	Q	<b>40</b>	39	78	<b>On</b>	N/A	<b>N/A</b>
		Number of under-occupied households that have downsized	Q	<b>83</b>	100	200	<b>Off</b>	93	<b>No</b>
<i>Ensure effective management of council housing stock</i>		Percentage of LBI repairs fixed first time	M	<b>84.3%</b>	85.0%	85.0%	<b>Off</b>	85.3%	<b>No</b>
		Major works open over three months as a percentage of Partners' total completed major works repairs	M	<b>16%</b>	1.0%	1.0%	<b>Off</b>	1.0%	<b>No</b>
		a) Rent arrears as a proportion of the rent roll - LBI b) Rent arrears as a proportion of the rent roll - Partners	M M	<b>1.9%</b> <b>2.3%</b>	2.0% 2.0%	2.0% 2.0%	<b>On</b> <b>Off</b>	1.7% 2.2%	<b>No</b> <b>No</b>
<i>Reduce homelessness</i>		Number of households accepted as homeless	M	<b>209</b>	200	400	<b>Off</b>	169	<b>No</b>
		Number of households in nightly-booked temporary accommodation	M	<b>428</b>	470	440	<b>Yes</b>	461	<b>Yes</b>

NB: Frequency (of data reporting): M = monthly; Q = quarterly

### *Increase supply of / access to affordable housing*

4.2 The number of new affordable homes completed in Quarter 1 exceeded the figure for the same period last year. This is largely due to a large number of homes completing at the Packington Estate regeneration scheme. As reported in the Quarter 1 update however, we anticipate a significant slowdown in affordable housing completions for the remaining quarters due to large schemes being delayed and looking to complete in 2017-18. While it is highly unlikely 460 affordable homes will be delivered this financial year, 16 new council homes are completing this year, with another 239 on site and 237 due to start this year.

4.3 The majority of the borough's affordable housing development is undertaken by housing associations and private developers, and as such, the council has limited influence over timescales for delivery.

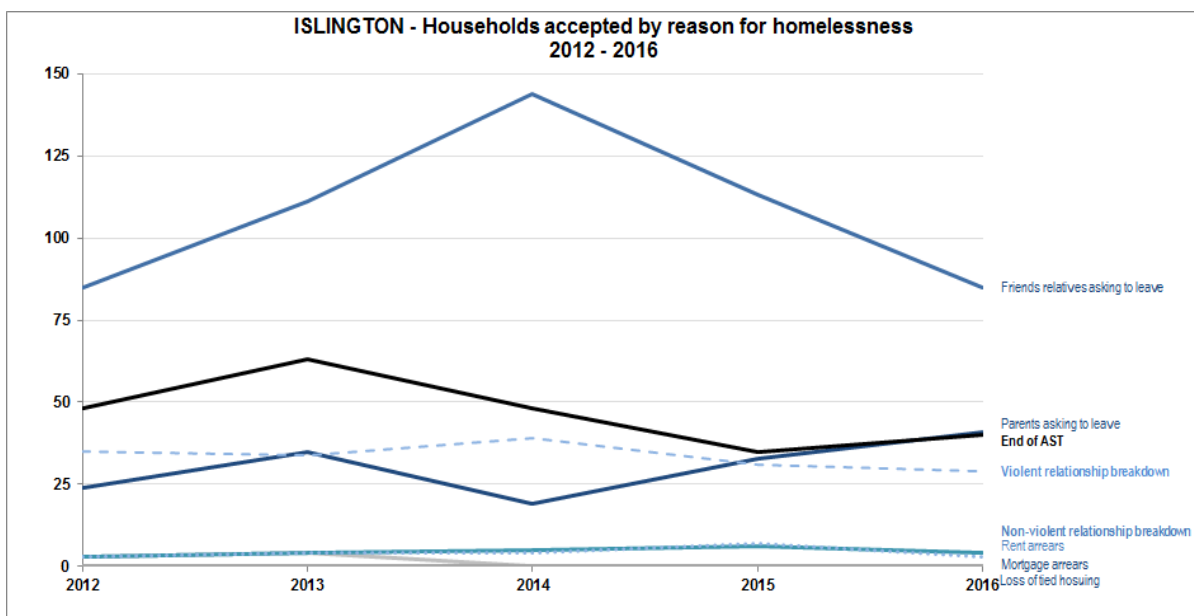
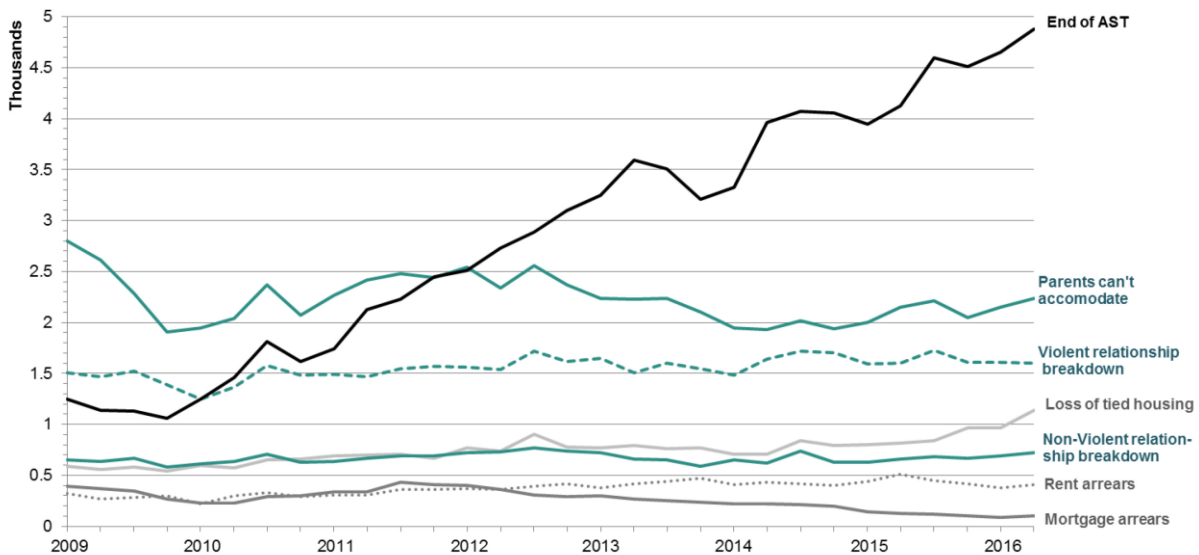


### Effective management of council housing stock

- 4.4 The volume of major works over three months old as a percentage of Partners' total major works repairs has increased 2% from 14% to 16%, as reported up to the end of September 2016. There are 32 major repairs open over three months, the current status of which is identified as:
- 7 of the 32 works are now underway
  - 18 of the 32 are still delayed as a result of legal processes associated with leaseholders who can scrutinise proposed works under the section 20 process, planning requirements and Party Wall protocols, which need to be completed with neighbouring properties.
- 4.5 The figure included in the report last quarter was as a percentage of both responsive repairs and major repairs at 2.7 %, which is a less useful presentation of the delays being experienced by residents awaiting major works. The figure for quarter 1 as a percentage of major works only was 14%.
- 4.6 Rent arrears for Islington Council is on target and, although slightly higher than this time last year, current trends show a decrease to 1.8%. We are making steady progress in reducing rent arrears with teams continuing to monitor accounts on a weekly basis, using the escalation policy and ensuring actions are taken in a timely manner and ensuring support is provided to tenants.
- 4.7 The Benefit Cap came in on 7 November and the Income teams are working closely with the imax team. For those residents not engaging, our Income Recovery Officers will be making contact to ensure payment of rent.
- 4.8 We are confident that we will be below target at year end.
- 4.9 For Partners for Improvement in Islington, at the end of Quarter 2 our arrears as a percentage of the rent roll were 2.29%. This is a decrease (and therefore an improvement) from Quarter 1.

### Reduce homelessness

- 4.10 The number of households accepted as homeless in the first two quarters of this financial year are above target by 9 applications or 5%. The prediction based on the first two quarters is that homeless acceptances for the year will be 418 or a 10% increase on the previous year.
- 4.11 Nationally, homelessness acceptances in Quarter 1 of 2016-17 increased by 10% when compared with the same quarter in the previous year. Acceptances in London rose by 11% in the same period.
- 4.12 Nationally there has been an increase in homelessness acceptances since 2010 from a low of just under 10,000 per quarter to a current level of 15,100 in Quarter 2 of 2016-17.
- 4.13 The impact of welfare reform and changes in Local Housing Allowance (housing benefit) means that the private rented sector is no longer an affordable option for many Islington residents. The council is no longer able to procure sufficient affordable private rented accommodation in the borough to be able to offer to residents as an alternative to becoming homeless.
- 4.14 The graph below is taken from the DCLG housing statistical release and shows the reason for homelessness for households accepted as homeless nationally.



NB: AST= assured shorthold tenancy

4.15 The number of households in temporary accommodation provided by local authorities on 30 June 2016 was 73,120. This was 9% higher than a year earlier; in London, the number of households in temporary accommodation at 30 June 2016 was 52,820 a rise of 6%.

**Background papers:** None

**Appendices:** None

Final Report Clearance

*Sean Whangul*

21 November 2016

Signed by .....  
Corporate Director of  
Housing and Adult Social Services

.....  
Date

**Report author:**

Name: Jo Fry, Performance Team Manager, Housing and Adult Social Services

Tel: 020 7527 2679

E-mail: [jo.fry@islington.gov.uk](mailto:jo.fry@islington.gov.uk)

# Housing Scrutiny Committee Caretaking Recommendations

Update 1.12.16



# Recommendations

- Fourteen recommendations were made by the committee and agreed by the executive
- Many of these related to other services such as grounds maintenance and mechanised services
- Seven affect caretakers and the aim here is to update you where we are with these.



## Recommendations

- **That the Executive agrees with the objective of enhancing the caretaking service through the introduction of new tasks, subject to staff and union consultation and resources being available;**
- We are working with the Trade Union to simplify the process and having achieved agreement we hope to introduce new tasks in the new year. It is predicted that any new tasks added will not add to our costs.



# Recommendations

- **That the Executive seek to maximise income generation opportunities through the Estate Services section, including: Offering caretaking, voids clearance and minor repair and decoration services to external organisations, subject to appropriate consultation with caretaking staff and unions being undertaken;**
- This objective is part of our work plan and will be prioritised later this year.



## Recommendations

- **That the Executive review the management arrangements of the estates caretaking service, with a view to moving to a simpler, more direct management structure;**
- Consultation with staff and unions has been completed on the proposed new structure based on an increased number of estates service co-ordinators
- Interviews for new posts are being completed now



# Recommendations

- **That the Executive agree minimum standards for caretaking facilities and stores with staff and ensure that all estates meet these standards**
- We have spent £200,000 on upgrading our 100 plus lodges in the last three years.
- This year we have completed an assessment of the condition of all lodges and will be recommending a programme of further works commencing with health and safety measures
- We have completed regular checks to ensure delivery and quality of stores is maintained





# Recommendations

- **That the Executive provide a schedule of duties to tenants to clarify the duties of caretakers**
- We are using our notice boards on estates to advise residents about caretakers duties and this is also included on the council's housing web page. It is intended that this schedule is developed into a specific list for each estate.



# Recommendations

- **That the Executive advise tenants when their caretaker is unavailable due to holidays or sickness both through the website and by displaying a notice on the estate;**
- We are rolling this out with our digital services colleagues onto our electronic noticeboards



# Recommendations

- **That the Executive investigate proposals for increased holiday cover for caretakers**
- We estimate that to provide full cover for all caretaker's holiday absence each year would cost £544,000. We have discussed a preferred cover arrangement for caretaker's absence with the Housing Management Reference Group to provide full cover for absence over 10 days.



# Any Questions

