

London Borough of Islington

**Housing Scrutiny Committee - 10 June 2019**

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD - Islington Town Hall on 10 June 2019 at 7.30 pm.

**Present:** **Councillors:** O'Sullivan (Chair), Lukes (Vice-Chair), Debono, Hamitouche, Heather, McDonald (Co-Optee) and Donaghey (Co-Optee)

**Also present:** Councillor Ward, Executive Member for Housing & Development

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

**92      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**

Apologies were received from Councillor Spall, Gallagher and Mackmurdie.

**93      DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**

None.

**94      DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item A3)**

None.

**95      MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2019 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

**96      CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A5)**

The Chair advised that a Silent Walk and Solidary March for Grenwell would be held to commemorate the two year anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire.

It was noted that the Corporate Director of Housing would be providing an update on fire safety matters to the Committee in the autumn.

The Chair advised that he had informally discussed potential scrutiny topics with members of the Committee and it had been suggested that the Committee carry out two reviews; one on planned maintenance and the other on private sector housing.

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**ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item A6)**

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

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**PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A7)**

None.

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**MEMBERSHIP, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND DATES OF MEETINGS (Item B1)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the membership, terms of reference and dates of meetings of the Housing Scrutiny Committee for the 2019/20 municipal year be noted.

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**SCRUTINY TOPICS AND WORK PROGRAMME 2019/2020 (Item B2)**

The Committee agreed two main scrutiny topics for 2019/20. The Committee's primary focus would be on planned maintenance, with a particular focus on the insourcing of services. At the end of 2019 the Committee's focus would shift to private sector housing, which would consider recent and upcoming legislative changes, including 'Right to Rent' checks on tenants' immigration status. It was requested that Scrutiny Initiation Documents for both reviews be presented to the next meeting.

The Committee queried if the review of Planned Maintenance was timely, given that the council was currently re-procuring its major works contracts. In response, the Corporate Director of Housing advised that the review could help to inform the major works procurement and future procurement activity related to planned maintenance works.

It was advised that the Committee's review of Homelessness was still to conclude. It was noted that the Chair would meet with Cllrs Lukes and Khondoker to discuss the evidence received and develop recommendations for the agreement of the Committee. An update would be provided to a future meeting.

It was advised that the report of the Committee's review of Responsive Repairs would come to a future meeting for formal sign-off.

It was requested that Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association be invited to present to the 31 October meeting.

It was advised that the Committee would receive the 12-month update on its review of Housing Services for Vulnerable People. This was expected to be received in autumn 2019.

It was agreed that, instead of receiving a presentation from a Housing Association in January 2020, the Committee would receive an update on Tenant Led Organisations in the borough.

It was advised that the Committee would receive the 12-month update on its review of New Build Housing. It was suggested that this item would be presented in spring 2020.

The Committee requested a short briefing or presentation on the status of the Council's PFI contracts with Partners for Improvement in Islington in April 2020.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That 'Planned Maintenance Insourcing' and 'Private Sector Housing' be selected as the main scrutiny review topics for 2019/20
- (ii) That the work programme be agreed, subject to the amendments set out above.

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**QUARTERLY REVIEW OF HOUSING PERFORMANCE (Q4 2018/19) (Item B3)**

Councillor Ward, Executive Member for Housing and Development, introduced the report which set out the performance of Housing services in Quarter 4 2018/19.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- The number of genuinely affordable new homes completed by the council was slightly off target, however Cllr Ward was assured that the council would meet, or exceed, its overall target of delivering 550 genuinely affordable new homes by 2022.
- The number of genuinely affordable new homes completed by developers was below target. This was being monitored and the council was challenging where appropriate, however it was acknowledged that the council had limited influence over construction delays.
- The number of severely overcrowded households was above target, however the number of households downsizing had increased. It was thought that an increase in downsizing and the development of new genuinely affordable housing would help to reduce the number of severely overcrowded households in future.
- A discussion was had on the tenancy conditions of registered providers, including providers that made use of fixed-term tenancies. It was noted that housing associations were using a range of tenancy conditions and this may be an area for future review.
- The Committee considered the sale of housing association properties in the borough and expressed concern that social housing in Islington may be sold to fund development elsewhere, especially as some Islington Council

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properties were previously transferred to housing associations under previous administrations.

- The Committee noted that the first time fix rate was below target and expressed concern that improvements to housing repairs systems had not yet been fully implemented. It was advised that an update from officers would be requested.
- The Committee reiterated its concerns about the performance of Partners and the credibility of its performance measures. It was suggested that qualitative performance reporting would help to reassure the Committee that improvements were being made.
- It was suggested that the council should review the feasibility of increasing the number of precautionary works to prevent component failures and repairs.
- The Committee expressed concern that rent arrears had increased following the implementation of universal credit. Advice and support was being provided to residents receiving universal credit.
- The Committee noted concerns about vulnerable roughsleepers and emphasised the importance of support services for street homeless people, including mental health and addiction services.
- Following a query, it was advised that the council carried out tenancy checks on an annual basis.

The Committee thanked Councillor Ward for his attendance.

### **RESOLVED:**

That progress to the end of Quarter 4 against key performance indicators falling within the remit of the Housing Scrutiny Committee be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

### **CHAIR**