



AGENDA FOR THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee are summoned to a meeting to held remotely by Zoom on, **12 January 2021 at 7.00 pm.**

Link to meeting: <https://weareislington.zoom.us/j/93451113752>

Enquiries to : Ola Adeoye
Tel : 020 7527 044
E-mail : democracy@islington.gov.uk
Despatched : 4 January 2021

Membership

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan (Chair)
Councillor Marian Spall (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Theresa Debono
Councillor Troy Gallagher
Councillor Phil Graham
Councillor Mouna Hamitouche MBE
Councillor Gary Heather
Councillor Gulcin Ozdemir
Rose Marie McDonald (Resident Observer) (Co-Optee)
Dean Donaghey (Resident Observer) (Co-Optee)

Substitute Members

Councillor Santiago Bell-Bradford
Councillor Alice Clarke-Perry
Councillor Vivien Cutler
Councillor Osh Gantly
Councillor Sara Hyde
Councillor Jenny Kay
Councillor Roulin Khondoker
Councillor John Woolf

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

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7. Public Questions

For members of the public to ask questions relating to any subject on the meeting agenda under Procedure Rule 70.5. Alternatively, the Chair may opt to accept questions from the public during the discussion on each agenda item.

| B. Items for Decision/Discussion | Page |
|--|-------------|
| 1. HRA Business Plan - A Presentation by Corporate Director of Housing | |
| 2. Thames Water - Billing Arrangements for Tenants | |
| 3. Main Scrutiny Review - Partners for Improvement - Witness Evidence | |
| 4. Mini Scrutiny Review - Triage System - Presentation and SID | 7 - 8 |
| 5. Mini Scrutiny Review - Communal Heating - SID | 9 - 10 |
| 6. Work Programme 2020/21 | 11 - 12 |

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 | Page |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
|-------------------------------------|-------------|

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 2 March 2021

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London Borough of Islington

Housing Scrutiny Committee - 23 November 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the virtual meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held on 23 November 2020 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors: O'Sullivan (Chair), Spall (Vice-Chair), Debono, Gallagher, Graham, Heather and McDonald (Co-Optee)

Also Present: Councillor Ward

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan in the Chair

208 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Hamitouche and Dean Donaghey.

209 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute Members

210 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest

211 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

212 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

The Chair stated that the Housing White Paper and that the new Code of Governance for Housing Providers had been published. The Code of Governance, which whilst not having an impact on Council housing, would impact on registered providers

The Chair added that the proposed new Planning proposals would also have implications for social housing with the potential loss of SIL and section 106 monies, and that in future a detailed briefing may be requested by the Committee

213 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The Chair stated that the order of business would B2, B1,B3, B4 and B5

214 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions

215

MAIN SCRUTINY REVIEW : PLANNING FOR THE END OF THE PFI PROPERTIES IN 2022 - PRESENTATION AND TO AGREE SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (Item B1)

Karen Lucas, Interim Director Housing Needs and Strategy was present and outlined her presentation to the Committee

During the presentation the following main points were made –

- The PFI Integration Board meets every two months to oversee the programme
- Membership of the Board included Councillor Ward, Director of Housing, Directors Home and Communities, Property Services, Housing Needs and Strategy and Integration Programme Manager, relevant Heads of Service, representatives from other key partners, including legal, finance and IT. This includes a number of work streams and those reporting into the Programme Manager
- Noted that the PFI2 contract ended with Partners in April 2022, and the properties would then come back to the Council. Consultation had taken place, and 92% of residents wanted the properties to come back under Council control from Partners
- It was stated that as the SID was a public document the acronyms used in the report should be replaced with a full description, so that is easier for the residents and Members to understand
- There were 9 work streams, and an officer had been appointed to ensure milestones were kept and to ensure delivery. A number of work streams were currently underway, and others due to come on board in the future
- To date progress against schedule is good, and it is anticipated that the survey on handback condition of properties would be completed before Xmas. A Member stated that the Council needed to ensure these properties were handed back in a good state of repair, as Partners often did not complete repairs in a satisfactory manner. It was stated that the contract with Partners was clear, and that properties should be handed back in a satisfactory condition. The Council had engaged an expert contractor to carry out the condition survey to ensure that this was the case
- In response to a question it was stated that Partner properties should meet the Decent Homes standard, however there is need to ensure that information is provided to the Committee during the scrutiny to ensure qualitative repairs had been carried out by Partners not just quantitative data
- It was stated that consideration would be given to staff transferring to the Council, in order to ensure that they were familiar with the Council's ways of working and where they were situated
- Reference was made to a number of issues that Partners tenants had with the quality of repairs, and that some cyclical works had not been undertaken 3 years after they were scheduled. In addition, Partners were not engaging tenants and also claiming they were having problems in doing this due to Zoom technology. The Director of Housing stated that she would investigate this

- A Member referred to a tenant who had not had a new bathroom for 30 years, and enquired as to the reason given Partners were supposed to have brought properties up to Decent Homes standards. It was stated that if details were provided the Director of Housing would look into this
- A Member referred to a number of instances where litigation by tenants was being taken out against Partners, and enquired once transfer had taken place if this would then be the Council's responsibility. It was stated that this issue was being looked at by Legal officers, and the situation could be reported at a future meeting
- Reference was made to which data would be transferring back to the Council from Partners on handover, and it was stated that this is under consideration to ascertain what information the Council required

RESOLVED:

That the following items be added to the SID for final approval –
Removal of the acronyms in the report and a brief description of these issues
Additional witnesses/organisations who specialise in maintaining and dealing with Victorian street properties be added to the list of witnesses
Residents/Leaseholders be added to the list of witnesses
Data required by the Council when Partners properties come back in house

The Chair thanked Karen Lucas for her presentation

216 TRIAGE SYSTEM - OFFICER UPDATE (Item B2)

Jo Murphy, Director Homes and Communities was present, and during her presentation the following main points were made –

- Noted that discussions had taken place with the Executive Member Housing, and Councillors, about the problems with the triage system. When the dedicated telephone line had been introduced in December 2019 it had not been anticipated that the service would be impacted by COVID 19, and this had presented challenges in dealing with the increased number of calls to the service
- There had been an increase of up to 6 times the number of calls received to the service, and there had also been challenges in training staff in new ways of working. However progress was being made, and staff who had been working from home had received support from IT, however it was accepted that the situation had not been acceptable. In the last 6 weeks however there had been progress in reducing the number of calls ended, and call waiting times
- Members were informed that a task and finish group had been set up to look at the issues and to ensure improvements in future
- It was noted that there had been a threefold increase in the number of residents calls and Member enquiries during the COVID period, and that measures were being put in place to remedy this, however numbers had now

reduced and the backlog was being dealt with. It was added that more detailed information could come to a future meeting

- A Member referred to the considerable problems with the service over the past few months and in some more complex cases, especially relating to mental health, he had spoken to a number of different officers and there seemed to be a lack of co-ordination in these cases. He added that there needed to be a 'flagging up' of such cases by officers, and an escalation of these cases where circumstances justified
- It was stated that there also needed to be a culture change, in order to ensure that there is more co-ordination between officers and Chairs of TMO's/TMC's on how the new triage system worked, and to engage the community, with identifiable front line officers who could be contacted

RESOLVED:

That a mini-scrutiny review be agreed on the Triage system, and a SID meeting be arranged between the Chair, Vice Chair and Councillor Gallagher with officers to discuss this and the draft SID then forwarded to the Committee for approval

The Chair thanked Jo Murphy for her presentation

**217 QUARTERLY REVIEW OF HOUSING PERFORMANCE (Q1- 2020/2021)
(Item B3)**

This item was taken in conjunction with agenda item B.4.- see Minute 218 below

**218 QUARTERLY REVIEW OF HOUSING PERFORMANCE (Q2- 2020/2021)
(Item B4)**

Councillor Diarmaid Ward, Executive Member Housing was present and outlined the report

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

- Members were informed that unfortunately 19 properties had been lost to social housing under Right to Buy, and that it was hoped that Right to Buy would be ended by this or a future Government. However, it was noted that the number of genuinely affordable new homes completed by developers was above target
- The number of overcrowded families assisted is also below target, and this was partly due to the challenges of moving people during lockdown
- LBI first time fix repairs had gone up to 92%, however this is partly due to the prioritisation of emergency repairs during lockdown, and these have a higher first time fix rate than the average repair. A Member stated that he welcomed this and lessons should be learnt
- Major works by Partners indicator is on target, but below the target of 15%, and the performance at the same time last year
- Rent arrears had increased to 4.5% due to COVID, and the Council were trying to assist residents as much as possible

- Noted 78 street homeless had been supported into accommodation, and it hoped to build on this work. Additional monies had been provided by the Government, however this may not be sufficient
- A Member referred to the problems with EWS 1 forms, and that this needed to be resolved, as residents had been unable to get mortgage approval without these forms. It was stated that there were limited professionals who were able to complete EWS1 forms, however some mortgage lenders were accepting information from the Council, although this varied amongst mortgage lenders. The Government needed to resolve the situation, and work is taking place with local M.P.'s to lobby the Government in this regard. However, if residents were experiencing problems they could contact the Council for advice. The Chair stated that Inside Housing were looking at a campaign on this issue, and the Executive Member stated that he would investigate this
- Reference was also made to the letter sent out to tenants in relation to water bills, and that this had not been acceptable. The Executive Member stated that the letter had been sent without him approving it and apologised for this, however he stated that a new letter would be sent to tenants explaining the situation. This had arisen as a result of Court ruling stating that water bill charges must be sent separately from Thames Water in future, and not included on tenants rent charges. He added that the new letter would include a section on frequently asked questions, and a better communications strategy would be put in place. However, Council tenants would not have to pay additional charges at present, but he could not rule out that Thames Water would not increase their charges in future, however any increase would not be due to the Council
- Reference was made to whether waste water conservation could be considered for tenants, and the Executive Member stated that he would investigate this possibility
- In response to a statement, that the visit promised to Brewery Road to view the dashboard had not taken place, it was stated that the Executive Member would look into arranging a Zoom visit in the near future
- The Chair stated that he had seen a report on completion of complex repairs, and that this had shown that the Council had performed well in this regard, and that consideration should be given to publicising this
- The Chair also referred to the fact that the Committee would be considering the loss of social housing in relation to Housing Associations in the borough at a future meeting/s
- Reference was made to which future KPI's should be submitted to the Committee, and it was stated that the Executive Member would welcome any suggestions in this regard

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and Councillor Ward be requested to arrange a Zoom meeting to view the Dashboard at Brewery Road

The Chair thanked Councillor Ward for attending

219 WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021 (Item B5)

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the approval of a mini scrutiny item on the Triage system, the work programme 2020/21 be noted

The meeting ended at 9.15 p.m.

CHAIR

SCRUTINY REVIEW INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)

Review: Review of Housing Triage and Enquiry Services

Scrutiny Review Committee: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Director leading the review: Jo Murphy, Director Homes and Communities

Lead Officers: Kiran Aujal (Service Manager – Housing Triage) and Anna Turvey (Compliance Manager), Georgina Bavetta (Intensive Tenancy Sustainment Manager).

Overall aim:

Mini Review: To evaluate the new ways of working within Housing Tenancy and Enquiries Services and to identify opportunities for further development and improvement in service delivery.

Objectives of the review:

- To evaluate the performance of Islington Council’s Housing Triage and Enquiries Services, and to hold decision-makers to account as required.
- To evaluate resident satisfaction and perceptions of the services.
- To review examples of gaps and failures in service provision, identifying what went wrong, and how such issues could have been prevented.
- To consider if the systems and processes supporting operatives are optimal, and if there is scope for further improvement.
- To evaluate how services communicate with residents, and to identify opportunities for further development and improvement.
- To consider specific elements of service (namely complex needs and ASB) and their handling through Triage and Enquiry Services.

How is the mini review to be carried out:

Scope of the mini review

The review will (in likely two or three meetings) focus on:

1. Performance indicators and Service targets
2. Levels of resident satisfaction, the accuracy of satisfaction surveys, other reported perceptions of the services.
3. Examples of gaps and failures in service provision, and how these can be prevented.
4. Potential system and process improvements
5. Written, verbal and online communication

Types of evidence:

- Written evidence from officers, including front-line staff
- Performance and satisfaction data
- Written examples of councillor casework

Additional Information:

To consider any useful comparators as part of a six month review) if required.

In carrying out the review the committee will consider equalities implications and resident impacts identified by witnesses. The Executive is required to have due regard to these, and any other relevant implications, when responding to the review recommendations.

Programme

| Key output: | To be submitted to Committee on: |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Scrutiny Initiation Document | 12th January 2021 |
| 2. Draft Recommendations | Tbc |
| 3. Final Report | Tbc |

| SCRUTINY REVIEW INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID) |
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| Review: Review of Communal Heating |
| Scrutiny Review Committee: Housing Scrutiny Committee |
| Director leading the review: Simon Kwong, Director Housing Property Services |
| Lead Officers: Christine Short (Head of Capital Programme Delivery) |
| <p>Overall aim:</p> <p>Mini Review: to evaluate the communal heating service provided to approximately 4,000 properties throughout the borough, to identify opportunities for further development and improvement in service delivery, and to consider potential low-carbon alternatives and their implications.</p> |
| <p>Objectives of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To evaluate the performance of Islington Council’s communal heating services, and to make recommendations on how this may be improved. • To review examples of gaps and failures in service provision, identifying what went wrong so as to prevent recurrences going forward. • To consider if the systems and processes in place are optimal, and if there is scope for further improvement. • To evaluate how services communicate with residents, and to identify opportunities for further development and improvement. • To consider and evaluate potential options for using low-carbon heating technologies as an alternative to gas-fired communal heating systems. • To consider communal heating charges and the communal heating season. |
| <p>How is the mini review to be carried out:</p> <p><u>Scope of the mini review</u></p> <p>The review will (in written reports and likely one or two meetings) focus on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing information on the scope of the service as well as performance information. 2. Examples of gaps and failures in service provision, and any lessons learned from these. 3. Potential system and process improvements 4. Whether there are lessons to be learned from comparable boroughs which provide a similar service. 5. New low-carbon heating technologies and any cost/benefit analyses for these. <p>Types of evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written evidence from officers • Performance data • Witness evidence from another borough operating a similar service. |

Additional Information:

To consider any useful comparators as part of a 12 month review if required.

In carrying out the review the committee will consider equalities implications and resident impacts identified by witnesses. The Executive is required to have due regard to these, and any other relevant implications, when responding to the review recommendations.

Programme

| Key output: | To be submitted to Committee on: |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Scrutiny Initiation Document | 12th January 2021 |
| 2. Draft Recommendations | Xxxx xxxx 2021 |
| 3. Final Report | Xxxx xxxx 2021 |

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

12 JANUARY 2021

- 1) HRA Business Plan – presentation by Corporate Director Housing
- 2) Thames Water – Billing Arrangements for Tenants
- 3) Main Scrutiny Review: Partners for Improvement – witness evidence
- 4) Communal Heating mini scrutiny review – Presentation/SID
- 5) Triage System mini Scrutiny review – Presentation/SID
- 6) Work Programme 2020/21

2 MARCH 2021

- 1) Annual Executive Member Presentation and Quarterly Review of Housing Performance (Q3 2020/21)
- 2) Housing Associations in Islington – An overview
- 3) Triage System mini Scrutiny review – witnesses evidence /reports
- 4) Communal Heating – witness evidence
- 5) Work Programme 2020/21

19 APRIL 2021

- 1) Triage System mini Scrutiny review – witnesses evidence /reports
 - 2) Scrutiny Review: Partners for Improvement - Draft Report/Recommendations (TBC)
 - 3) Main Scrutiny Review : Partners for Improvement – witness evidence (TBC)
 - 4) Work Programme 2020/21
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28 JUNE 2021

- 1) Scrutiny Review: Partners for Improvement/Draft Recommendation/ Final Report
 - 2) Triage System mini Scrutiny review – Draft Report/Recommendations
 - 3) Work Programme 2021/22
 - 4) Membership/Terms of Reference
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