

London Borough of Islington

Housing Scrutiny Committee - 28 June 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Town Hall on 28 June 2021 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** O'Sullivan (Chair), Spall (Vice-Chair), Bossman-Quarshie, Gantly, Graham, Jackson and Ozdemir

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan in the Chair

267 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Spall and Dean Donaghey

268 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute members

269 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest

270 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

271 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

The Chair welcomed new Members to the Committee

The Chair stated that he wished to place on record his thanks to Simon Kwong during his time working for the Council

The Chair also stated that he would be attending the Environment and Regeneration Committee on 15 July as there was an item on Net Zero Carbon 2030 in relation to housing and all Members should notify him or the Clerk if they wished to also attend. However due to COVID restrictions numbers were limited but the meeting was being webcast if Members wish to attend

The Chair stated that in terms of scrutiny topics the topics currently under consideration on Partners, Triage system, Housing Associations and Communal Heating would be taken forward and additional topics on cladding and Community Fibre Optics in Housing Blocks would also be considered

RESOLVED:

That the additional topics of Cladding and Community Fibre Optics in Housing Blocks be approved as the new topics for the current municipal year

272 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The Chair stated that the order of business would be as per the agenda

273 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

The Chair stated that due to COVID regulations the numbers attending the meeting were limited and therefore any Public questions should be notified to the Clerk following the meeting

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

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

275 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT HOUSING (Item B2)

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

During the report the following main points were made –

- Genuinely affordable homes – indicator finished on target and 12 new affordable homes were completed
- New Council homes – off target overall this year there have been 36 Right to Buy completions, leaving the net growth of 17 socially rented homes delivered by the Council. Including number built by developers genuinely affordable homes have increased by 135 this year
- Severely overcrowded households – ahead of target 183 households supported to relieve overcrowding
- Downsizing – 97 households supported to downsize against a target of 160
- LBI Repairs fixed first time – completion rate of 92.7% ahead of target, however noted that this figure has been increased by doing emergency repairs during the pandemic
- Rent arrears – off target due to pandemic, however it should be noted that the income recovery team have collected 98.5% of all rent owed and the arrears have grown less than last year despite pandemic.
- Rent arrears Partners is off target due to the pandemic
- Homeless – On target - 314 households have been accepted as homeless
- Nightly booked temporary accommodation – off target due to pandemic and difficulties around organising permanent accommodations, however work is taking place to bring the number down
- Number of street homeless supported into accommodation – well above target, and 200 street homeless supported to accommodation, compared to 155 last year
- Councillor Ward stated that he was organising a range of visits for newly elected Councillors and that if any new Members were interested in attending they should contact him thereon

- Noted that the Council had lost 12000 properties since Right to Buy was introduced
- Noted that additional emergency accommodation had been acquired by the Council, and they were in the process of obtaining additional premises
- Reference was made to the problems associated with cladding and obtaining of an EWCI certificate, however the Council were assisting residents wherever they can
- Reference was made to the planning permissions granted in relation to Council housing and it was stated that the correct figure would be notified to Members following the meeting
- Noted the Council was on target to complete 550 new homes by 2022
- A Member made reference to the service charges imposed by Housing Associations in her ward and that it was felt Housing Associations were increasing these as a way of raising revenue. Councillor Ward stated that he would discuss this with Councillor Ozdemir following the meeting
- Reference was made to the fact that the easy options for Council house building had now been fully exhausted, however opportunities still exists in the borough. The view was expressed that work should take place with TRA's and TMO's in this regard.

RESOLVED:

That Members be informed of the details of the number of planning permissions for new Council housing granted, as referred to above

The Chair thanked Councillor Ward for attending

276

PARTNERS FOR IMPROVEMENT -REINTEGRATING PFI PROPERTIES INTO OUR REPAIRS AND MAJOR WORKS SERVICES. (Item B3)

Matt West, Assistant Director Property Services and Robert Matthison, Interim Head Capital Programme Delivery were present for discussion of this item and made a presentation to the Committee, copy interleaved

During the presentation the following main points were made –

- It was noted that Partners undertake repairs and maintenance to 4007 properties and 1111 communal areas, 31% of which are leasehold properties
- All works include responsive gas repairs and cyclical testing, however it does not include communal areas which is not covered by Estate Services
- Partners carry out approximately between 80-100 voids additional work per annum
- The meeting was advised that the transfer will include 35 TUPE repairs staff
- Most of the transfer will be conducted on an in house first basis
- Members were advised that this programme is part of bigger project and it involves monthly Board meetings with oversight by DDB HMT and project delivery team. There are six interconnected work streams, including IT, Finance, HR, contract negotiation, housing management and contract

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delivery and that there is a dedicated contract manager to bring together work streams

- Staff is working with PFI who will still provide services post April when properties are transferred
- Repairs team still have several members of staff who were instrumental in the outsourcing in 2014
- Members were advised that the Council employed the services of independent QS company to validate the Partners repairs data and confirm the services and proposed delivery budgets. Hand back survey has been completed on Partners Improvement. Pre-emptive restructure of repairs to create sufficient management cover for the new stock and TUPE transferred posts. Preparing to purchase an additional 30 vans and vehicles which will be green to service new staff.
- Contracts will include clauses to include PFI stock and Repairs IT requirements have been provided to manage the IT work flow. Discussions continue with PFI managers about transferring work and staff are being briefed about TUPE arrangements over the Summer and Autumn
- Opportunities and risks were highlighted, experience of managing street properties and understanding the challenges of planning and design is welcome. In terms of challenges, the Council recognises that large number of boilers are reaching end of life so there will be considerable boiler replacement over the first few years of transfer. It was also noted that the transfer will generate employment opportunities especially local employment, apprenticeships and work experience. It was noted that the Council is aware that there will be big changes for the service and it is planning to minimise disruption
- In terms of capital works, PFI 2 properties will be integrated into the newly formed street properties programme. There is a dedicated in house team in place to manage works and the Service is currently mobilising contract with AD contractors.
- An initial pilot to 5 LBI street properties is taking place in July. Information and survey data being used to formulate programme for future years. Works will include repairs/renewals of roofs, rainwater goods, brickwork, windows and external and communal decoration. Noted that the results of the initial pilot of the 5 street properties would be reported back to the Committee
- PFI 2 is a big challenge and the focus is on delivering the best tenant focused service possible
- It was noted that work streams are reporting into Programme Board
- In response to a question it was stated that the handback survey had identified the repairs that Partners needed to complete, however any outstanding repairs from Partners the Council would be financially recompensed for
- The Chair stated that the Council needed to ensure that a transfer data plan was in place for transfer and that an implementation specialist was employed to ensure the system worked correctly. Members were informed that a specialist was in place but that the Committee could be updated on progress at a later date

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- Noted that all apprenticeships created by the Council had led to full time employment

The Chair thanked Matt West and Robert Matthison for attending

277 **WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22 (Item B4)**

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

The meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.

CHAIR