
AGENDA FOR THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee are summoned to Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on, **25 September 2023 at 7.30 pm.**

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Despatched : 15 September 2023

Membership

Councillor Jason Jackson (Chair)
Councillor Ilkay Cinko-Oner (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Phil Graham
Councillor Valerie Bossman-Quarshie
Councillor Michael O'Sullivan
Councillor Mick Gilgunn
Councillor Gulcin Ozdemir
Councillor Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong
Dean Donaghey (Resident Observer) (Co-Optee)
Rose Marie McDonald (Resident Observer) (Co-Optee)

Substitute Members

Councillor Jilani Chowdhury
Councillor Ben Mackmurdie
Councillor Heather Staff
Councillor Rosaline Ogunro
Councillor Caroline Russell
Councillor Marian Spall
Councillor Dave Poyser

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. External Attendees (if any)

1 - 10

7. Order of Business
8. 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. Major Scrutiny Review 2023/24: New Build Homes-Officer presentation and witness evidence	11 - 50
2. Major Scrutiny Review 2022-23 , Strategic Review of Overcrowding in Islington - Draft Recommendations , To agree	51 - 52
3. Damp and Condensation Mould - Officer update	53 - 62
4. Housing Ombudsman Severe Maladministration Determinations and Reports	63 - 76
5. Quarterly Review of Housing Performance (Q1 2023/24)	77 - 86
6. Work Programme 2023/24	87 - 88

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 7 November 2023

WEBCASTING NOTICE

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London Borough of Islington

Housing Scrutiny Committee - 17 July 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 17 July 2023 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Jackson (Chair), Cinko-Oner (Vice-Chair), Graham, Bossman-Quarshie, O'Sullivan, Gilgunn and Jegorovas-Armstrong

Councillor Jason Jackson in the Chair

15 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)**

Apologies were received from Councillor Ozdemir and apologies for lateness from Councillor Bossman-Quarshie due to council business.

16 **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)**

There were no declarations of substitute members.

17 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

18 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

19 **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)**

The Chair informed the meeting that since the last meeting he attended the Local Government Association, an opportunity to learn what other authorities are doing in relation to housing challenges and what they are doing. Very informative views were shared which will be of benefit to the committee and its ongoing work.

20 **EXTERNAL ATTENDEES (IF ANY) (Item 6)**

None

21 **ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 7)**

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

22 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 8)**

None

23 **MAJOR SCRUTINY REVIEW 2023/24 : NEW HOMES BUILD IN ISLINGTON - TO AGREE SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (Item B1)**

As an update, the Interim Acting Director of New Building Development & Delivery informed the meeting that due to council restructuring Karen Sullivan, the Acting Corporate Director of Community and Well Being will now be the Lead officer for the Committee's review into New Build Homes .

Meeting was advised that the overall aim of the review is to understand the Council's historic performance in comparison with other Local authority developers and to understand how the programme intends to adapt or mitigate against future challenges such as lack of land supply, high development costs and fluctuating current and future economic climates.

Officer explained how the review would be carried out, highlighting that committee will receive a presentation at the next meeting which will explain in detail where the Council is in terms of its housing programme and its challenges so that members could put the issues in context prior to the review exercise commencing. Committee will also receive written evidence, performance data, witness evidence from neighbouring boroughs and will benchmark council performances with other developing boroughs.

A number of suggestions, that the review should include evidence from other local authorities in other parts of England, that the review should not only focus on quantity but also consider issues around resilience and sustainability especially in light of the climate emergency. It was also noted that the SID made no reference to engagement with residents and tenants.

In light of the issue around scarcity of land within the borough, the review should consider the possibility of building up and in addition purchase land outside the borough to build good quality homes for Islington residents.

RESOLVED:

That subject to amending the details of the Acting Director as noted above, the Scrutiny Initiation Document be agreed.

24 **MAJOR SCRUTINY REVIEW 2022/23 : STRATEGIC REVIEW OF OVERCROWDING IN ISLINGTON - DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS (Item B2)**

The Chair informed the meeting that following the last committee in June, he and the Vice-Chair Councillor Cinko-Oner had met with the Director of Housing needs to draft recommendations, inviting members for their views, to add any additional recommendations or amend the draft recommendations in the agenda pack.

The Director of Housing advised members that draft recommendations are a result of officer presentation committee received, evidence from external parties such as Islington Law centre, Peabody etc .it was also noted that committee approved questionnaire that was sent not only to Islington tenants but residents living in properties managed by Partners Improvement, that feedback has been fed into some of the draft recommendations.

With regards to the downsizing scheme and the suggestion for it to be reported to the September meeting it was agreed that this should be considered at the November meeting.

The Chair stated that going forward when Executive have accepted the committee final report and draft recommendations he would suggest that Committee receive a 6 month update so that members will be able to monitor the implementation of the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

That the draft recommendations be agreed

That the reporting of the downsizing scheme to the Committee be considered at the November meeting

That an officer update regarding the draft recommendations be considered 6 months after being considered at Executive.

25

DAMP, CONDENSATION AND MOULD - OFFICER UPDATE (Item B3)

Matt West, the Director Housing Property Service updated the meeting on how council is addressing damp, condensation and mould within its housing stock and the following points were highlighted:

- Feedback on key performance indicators from members have been received which has informed headline key performance indicators and that a sub-set of indicators are being scoped.
- Further demographics data and "known to" Adult Social Care and Children Social Care has been added to the One View dashboard and that officers continue to work with Public Health to have a strong data-led approach, as a result of which a structured data monitoring plan has been designed and agreed for the short, mid- and long-term time of the programme.
- Phase two of Council's urgent response has been launched and letters to the remaining tenants who reported damp and mould between Jan 2020 – Dec 2022 were sent on the 19th of June 2023. It was noted that from that mail-out there, 37 new jobs were raised, that officers are monitoring responses and will design a process for contacting tenants who are yet to respond.
- It was noted that Officers continue to apply learning from its on-going engagement with residents, benchmarking and Housing Ombudsman special investigation reports. Also Council continues studying the outcomes of all Housing Ombudsman investigations, the 3 reports into other council's and housing associations to learn from these reports so as to ensure Islington Council continuously improves the services for its residents.
- The Homes and Neighbourhoods service updated the Islington Health and Wellbeing Board on the 4th of July, report was positively received which has now led to the Health and Well-Being Board agreeing to undertake a strategic review of Health and Housing work to improve the health outcomes, educational attainment, reduce stress in households and improving the living conditions for its communities.
- In addition to the above, meeting was advised that the Housing and Neighbourhoods service have reached out to Health colleagues to progress

this important work, that a meeting is being arranged to conduct this strategic review over the next 12 months.

- It was noted that with Childrens Social Care leads, it has been agreed initially for there to be a frequent data sharing arrangement to maintain the level of visibility of the whole household and risk factors. This area of work will expand to Adult Social Care. The Homes and Neighbourhoods service is meeting with the Adult Social Care service on the 11th of July 2023, to progress this seamless delivery of services.
- The Tenancy and Property visits pilot is in phase two, that tenanted properties in the north and south of the borough will be visited, and that a new digital tool has been designed with the aim to improve data quality and reporting.
- Director informed meeting that training is ongoing and includes call handlers, that this is built into the continuous learning programme. Training for elected members was conducted in June 2023 and July 2023 around Damp and Mould and Disrepair.
- In June, officers met with representatives of University College London to discuss a research project to inform the services Council delivers in relation to damp, condensation and mould. This is an academic input and review of damp techniques and processes to ensure the most up to date and rigorous systems are adopted. It aims to reusing Net Zero Carbon data to prepare funding/investment bids targeting damp and Net Zero Carbon.
- Council conducted a positive meeting with the Housing Ombudsman on the 6th of July 2023, relating to the Section 49 investigation, that officers will update members on the outcomes of the meeting in due course.
- As part of Council being proactive in addressing damp and mould, Council is conducting 30 community drop-in sessions for all 36,000 residents living in an Islington Council property from June 2023 to the end of September 2023, that these community drop-in sessions will ensure residents voices are heard and council acts upon these views, this will include residents living also in street properties.
- Community drop-in sessions provides an opportunity for council to 'walk' in the shoes of its residents and services provided going forward meet the expectations and needs of our residents.
- The proposed new housing allocations scheme is to be considered at Executive meeting on the 20th of July 2023 with proposals that will ensure people living in damp and mould properties are provided with higher priority for rehousing through the Choice Based Lettings scheme.
- Meeting was advised that training of elected member provided on damp and mould and disrepair is to ensure elected members are empowered to challenge the service for the benefits of its residents.
- With regard to the council's collaboration with UCL on issues around damp and mould, the Director acknowledged that Committee will be updated at future meeting, a further opportunity for members to scrutinise this work.
- A suggestion that council workers on estates be more proactive on issues such as repairing broken drain pipes and leaks and removal of plants was noted.

- In terms of monitoring works of contractors, meeting was advised that all work is post inspected, that roughly about 10% is randomly inspected, that includes any repairs over £500, that the council expects its contractors to adhere to the Council's high standards.
- On the question of the pending number of staff awaiting training, the Director acknowledged that 100% of staff in Housing services had been trained and in house surveyors, that details about staff trained in customer services will be provided at a future meeting.
- In response to a question, the Director stated that following the decision of Council to revisit cases identified over 3 years, 37 new jobs were identified, that details will be provided at future meetings.
- On the issue of digital tools, the director acknowledged that it has been designed and implanted, that the next stage is to put it into action with live cases.
- In terms of the housing ombudsman, meeting was informed that Council has a very short time to respond to the outcome of the investigations, however details will be brought back to committee in September or later.

The Chair welcomed the ongoing work and actions being undertaken in addressing damp, mould and condensation, in particular its proactive stance, thanking officers and the Executive Member and its importance of it being on the committee agenda as it is for the benefit of its residents well being.

26

ROUGH SLEEPING DATA ANALYSIS (Item B4)

Islington's Director Housing Needs and Strategy informed the meeting that following request from members on rough sleeping in Islington, the report provides the following details:

- The report outlines the central Government data for rough sleeping in Islington, that the information was requested at the previous Housing Scrutiny meeting, that the performance data will ensure that Islington Council will indicate that it is the best housing service in the country.
- It was noted that one person sleeping on the streets of Islington is one person too many, that elected members expressed concern about the numbers of people sleeping rough in Islington at a previous meeting.
- Meeting was advised that the attached data in the report honestly and transparently shows rough sleeping in Islington over a longer period of time than the data provided through the quarterly performance data reporting framework allows.
- The attached report allows members to critically appraise Council work and to assist with its Improvement plan.
- Director advised that rough sleeping is soaring in London, with over 1,700 more people living on the streets of London compared to last year, a 21% rise, according to figures released from the Greater London Authority (GLA) on the 28th of June 2023. It should be noted as stated in the attached report, that Islington Council performance is actually far better than the rest of London.

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- It was noted that the increase from 8,329 people seen sleeping rough in London in 2021-22 to 10,053 sleeping rough in London in 2022-23 was described as “categorically terrible” by Rick Henderson, the chief executive of the Homeless Link frontline charity, and “extremely alarming” by Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London.
- Increase in rough sleeping is a result of the cost of living crisis, Brexit and the pandemic.
- It was noted that although government made a manifesto commitment to “end the blight of rough sleeping by the end of the next parliament” and with 18 months to go it is looking increasingly unlikely this target will be met across London.
- There is a particularly sharp rise in the number of people sleeping rough for the first time, up 26% on last year to 6,391. This trend in Islington is not the same and the majority of people sleeping rough for the first time in Islington have been sleeping rough in other parts of London but are new to sleeping on the streets of Islington. However, in this area it is clear the performance in Islington is better than the data released for other London Council’s.
- Also the number of people who returned to living on the streets after more than a year without sleeping rough jumped to 1,578, a 31% increase. However, in Islington this is not the case.
- It was noted that Council will require much more support from central government, and better cooperation between central Government departments if it intends to end rough sleeping in Islington.
- It was reiterated that cost of living crisis is driving increases in homelessness and rough sleeping and the majority of the levers and controls to prevent homelessness and eliminating rough sleeping rests with central Government policies around the Local Housing Allowance rates, Welfare Benefits, the cost of living crisis and immigration policies.
- Analysis published on the 27th of June 2023, by the Institute for Fiscal Studies revealed only one in 20 private rented homes in Britain are now affordable to people relying on housing benefit– the lowest level on record.
- Islington Council remains committed to eliminating rough sleeping so as to assist people to build a better future, that in comparison to other local authorities released by GLA, which is demonstrated by our performances.
- On the question of discretionary housing payments, meeting was advised that this is not within the remit of Housing Services but the Community Wealth Building Team, that details can be provided.
- Members were reminded this issue will remain a challenge for all local authorities in light of the cost of living crisis, universal credit changes, less funding from central government and lately Central government’s eviction notice to the 4000 Afghan living in bridging hotels on 31st October and the ending of the hosting arrangement with united kingdom households for the Ukraine refugee.

The Chair thanked officers for the update acknowledging that the myriad of factors causing the increase in rough sleeping across London and welcoming the efforts of the Council.

27

COUNCIL'S BENCHMARKING OF THE TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES AND PILOT REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING WORK INSPECTION FRAMEWORK (Item B5)

Meeting was informed that the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill enacts a set of measures to improve standards for people living in social housing, that it had gone through 1st and 2nd reading in House of Parliament . The bill sets out a new regulatory framework for the consumer regulation of social housing to strengthen the accountability of landlords for providing safe homes, quality services and treating residents with respect.

- It was noted that many of the changes in the Bill are to be implemented by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) with Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) forming part of this new framework.
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) are the new performance metric for all landlords and in addition to the TSMs, the RSH will also carry out regular "Ofsted style" inspections and investigate organisational complaints to ensure compliance with the new standards.
- The 22 TSM's were published by the government in September 2022 after consultation. TSMs came into force from 1st April 2023 and it applies to all social landlords in England with over 1,000 properties.
- Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) will monitor performance and standards through the above measures which will ensure standard and consistent measure across the social housing sector. There is an Annual reporting requirement and that RSH will publish results, including naming & shame social landlords.
- RSH have powers to impose unlimited fines, remedial action orders, compensation.
- It was also noted that Council's with TMOs/Partners, are responsible for collecting and reporting on all TSMs and that Landlords must share the results with their residents.
- Meeting was advised that earlier in the year, London Housing Directors' Group commissioned Housemark to undertake a survey of stock-holding London borough Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), that report was finalised and published in March 2023.
- LBI scores 80% for complaints responded to within timescales (stage 1), which comparatively falls within the London Councils median quartile and the national average. The London Councils upper quartile score sits at 93.2% which is considerably higher than the LBI score and the national average. Contextually, the total number of complaints in London has increased by 20% from the previous year and this is representative of the fact that the sheer volume of properties in London is higher, and as such the complaints teams are seeing a greater demand for their services.
- LBI scores favourably in the number of complaints per 1,000 properties at 29, which is in line with the national average. Comparatively the London Councils lower quartile scores this at 92.6 and the upper quartile at 38.6. This would indicate the LBI responds to a lower proportion of complaints based on the total number of properties it manages.

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- The LBI score for satisfaction that the home is safe and secure is 74%, which comparatively falls within the London Councils upper quartile, but lower than the national average at almost 83%. Contextually, resident perception will vary from London and inner-city areas to more rural areas, as local crime rates and other factors will differ considerably.
- For the number of ASB cases per 1,000 properties, LBI scores favourably at 8. Comparatively, the national average is nearly 50 with London Councils lower and upper quartiles scoring at 55.4 and 69.8 respectively. Whilst this appears encouraging, the caveat would be that LBI has only recently started collecting and reporting on this specific metric, and therefore we need to exercise caution until we have at least two quarters worth of data to see a fuller and more accurate and up to date picture in this area.
- LBI is taking part in RSH Pilot Inspection Framework, that the process started in May 2023, that initial contextual information and documentation has been provided.
- Meeting was advised that RSH announced its first wave of Pilot inspections in 2022 with seven landlords, that the 2nd Wave of Pilot Inspections announced in April 2023 with four landlords, that the pilots will enable the regulator to test and refine its approach to consumer inspections, before rolling them out to social landlords from April 2024.
- In addition to the above, meeting was advised that regulator will continue its work to prepare for new consumer regulation over the next 12 months and that another key milestone will come in summer 2023, when the regulator intends to launch its consultation on the revised consumer standards.
- Identifying areas for improvement before an actual inspection will include, assessing the effectiveness of service delivery and quality assurance processes; identifying gaps in compliance with regulatory requirements; Improving staff understanding of regulatory requirements; boosting staff confidence in handling actual inspections; improving customer care/experience and outcomes; boosting resident confidence that landlord is compliant and offering excellent services – increase satisfaction.
- Meeting was advised that detailed information has been provided to the RSH, who have acknowledged that the submission is highly professional compared to other submissions. Islington Council presently is the only large Local Authority Landlord which is participating in this pilot work.
- Meeting is being arranged to scope work out with the RSH in two weeks, that RSH are aware of the Housing Ombudsman investigation work at Islington, and they are liaising together. The RSH will inspect the service during the last week in July or the first week in August.
- Meeting was advised that going forward, RSH will be meeting the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Homes and Communities, the Corporate Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods, Housing officers, the Complaints Team. Also the RSH will aim to visit one of the Community drop in sessions and will view the meetings of the Housing Scrutiny and the Executive in July.
- As part of the process, LBI will not receive a grading from RSH but will receive an action plan, that RSH welcome Islington piloting this work in areas

such as tenants' views and empowerment, Health and Safety, Repairs and complaints.

- The Director acknowledged that this regulation only applies to social housing landlords, that a bill on private sector regulation is presently going through parliament.
- The Director acknowledged that detailed data breakdown can be made available at future meetings for easy understanding.
- On resident's concerns highlighted in the report about safety in their homes, Director noted that is not in relation to building safety such as lift, gas and fire but around anti-social behaviour issues and crime in their neighbourhood.

The Chair thanked Officers for the update, acknowledging that the measures will be an addition to the performance indicators which are reported quarterly to committee, and an opportunity for members to scrutinise the services.

28 ISLINGTON BROADBAND - UPDATE ON PROGRAMME DELIVERY (Item B6)

- As an update to the Council's programme on the fibre broadband rollout since the last meeting, meeting was advised that G-Network wayleave agreement was signed on 28th June, that 184 survey packs from Community Fibre and Hyperoptic have now been approved by the delivery team as of 1 July.
- In addition to the above, cabling is now complete for 16 blocks, 14 further blocks since the last update (1247 units) have been cabled in addition to Spriggs House and Barratt House already reported. These completed blocks are now waiting for the providers' network builds.
- Meeting was advised that providers are keeping Council informed of their timetables for these works, so that residents are informed as soon as services are live.

RESOLVED:

That officer update on Islington Broadband rollout should be quarterly rather than monthly.

29 WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 (Item B7)

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

That at the next meeting committee will receive an officer presentation on the scrutiny review topic of 2023/24, New Build Homes

The meeting ended at 10.05 pm

CHAIR

Housing Scrutiny Committee

Major Scrutiny Review 2023/24:

New Build Homes

Introduction and overview

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Agenda Item B1

Housing need in Islington

- There is a housing crisis with a desperate shortage of genuinely affordable homes
- Over 15,700* registered on Islington's housing waiting list
- Just under 3,000 Islington households in overcrowded accommodation of which over 500 are severely overcrowded households
- Homelessness is on the rise and temporary accommodation availability is declining
- 146 applicants on the housing register needing wheelchair accessible accommodation

* August 2023 figure



New Build Programme Introduction

‘A safe place to call home’ is one of the council’s five missions that will create a more equal future for Islington by 2030

In 2008 Islington Council became one of the first local authorities to start building new council housing again for 25 years. A period through which it had been forced sell off housing stock through the Right To Buy scheme.

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“A RAY of hope was offered to thousands of families lodged in Islington’s chronic housing crisis when works to build the first council homes in Islington for 25 years started this week.”

“Islington is one of the first councils in London to start building council homes again and if the £10million pilot is a success more are in the pipeline.”

Islington Tribune – 8 August 2008

Islington context

- At just under 6 square miles, Islington is one of the smallest and most densely populated boroughs in London
- Much of the borough is already built up, resulting in a scarcity of land for new housing

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The lack of land supply and high property values in Islington has driven the council to look for opportunities to build new homes on land it already owns. Most of the completed and under construction new housing projects consist of building new homes alongside existing homes on council-owned estates

- These ‘infill’ projects are often on constrained sites that require carefully considered design and well managed construction. This tends to result in higher construction and development costs.



Top: new homes on Dover Court Estate
Bottom: new homes on Brunswick Close Estate

- With every project, we aim to:
 - ✓ Build as many new council homes as we can
 - ✓ Improve as communal areas, facilities and landscaping
 - ✓ Make sure the new homes and any improvements we make to an estate meet residents' needs
 - ✓ Ensure that when work takes place, it disrupts residents as little as possible
 - ✓ Get the best value for money that we can for our budget
 - ✓ Ensure our proposals prioritise a mix of homes more closely aligned with housing need, including larger family homes, accessible homes and specialist supported housing
- Our local lettings policy gives local residents priority for the new council homes we build, particularly those living in homes that don't meet their current needs. This releases existing homes that are then re-let to meet the needs of other Islington residents

Design and construction quality

- Our aspiration is to achieve higher standards for housing design and build quality. We want to be at the forefront of building safe, secure, high quality, maintainable, energy efficient new homes that our residents are proud to live in
- Our approach is bespoke to each individual site but pinned to a core set of principles to achieve a consistently high level of quality and performance
- Our new homes are designed to be tenure blind, with no visible difference in the appearance and common areas of buildings of different tenure
- Our own contractor framework provides us with access to the right contractors to deliver the quality homes and to manage the construction impacts on local residents

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Additional benefits

- As well as providing high quality homes, the new homes programme has delivered investment in our estates with new or improved landscaping and security, community facilities and affordable workspaces - making sure the benefits of our new housing projects are felt by both existing and new residents and the wider community

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The council has worked successfully with our contractors to maximise the training and employment opportunities for residents arising from our housing development projects



Resident engagement

- Our schemes involve a significant amount of engagement with local residents, through a variety of different ways to ensure all residents have an opportunity to get involved and have their say

Page 18 We are committed to involving residents from very early stages, encouraging them to provide their lived experience about their home and estate. Their feedback helps us to design schemes that can address housing need, tackle anti-social behaviour and upgrade or provide new facilities for the community



Housing delivery

- Between 2009 and the end of August 2023, 580 new high quality, genuinely affordable council homes were built.
- New specialist supported accommodation was also provided, enabling Islington residents to live in their communities rather than outside the borough and to receive the best care and support possible.

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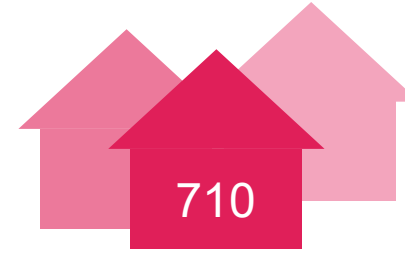
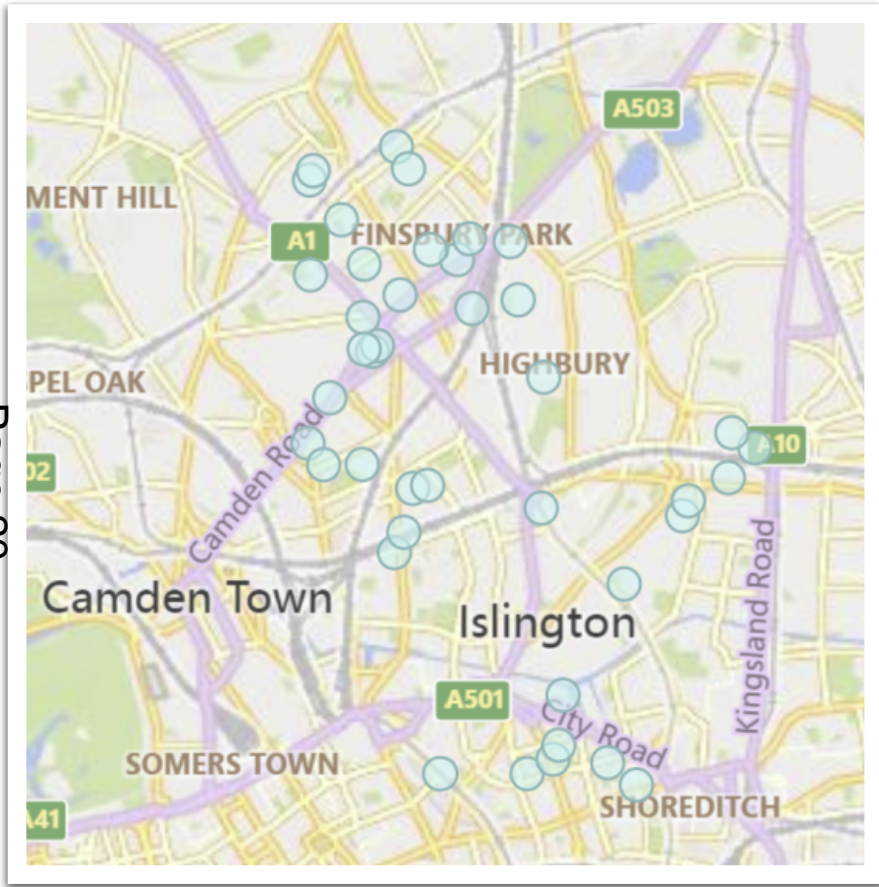
Development has taken place at more than 40 locations in 17 wards and housing over 2,500 Islington residents

- The council have also built 28 shared ownership, and 102 outright sale homes in that period, receipts from these homes helping to pay for the new affordable housing and other associated estate and social infrastructure improvements



New Build delivery statistics

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580 new council homes completed, including 49 supported housing dwellings

102 outright market sale homes and 28 shared ownership

523 x
1 & 2
bedroom
homes

147 x
3 +
bedroom
homes

40 x
Single
person
homes

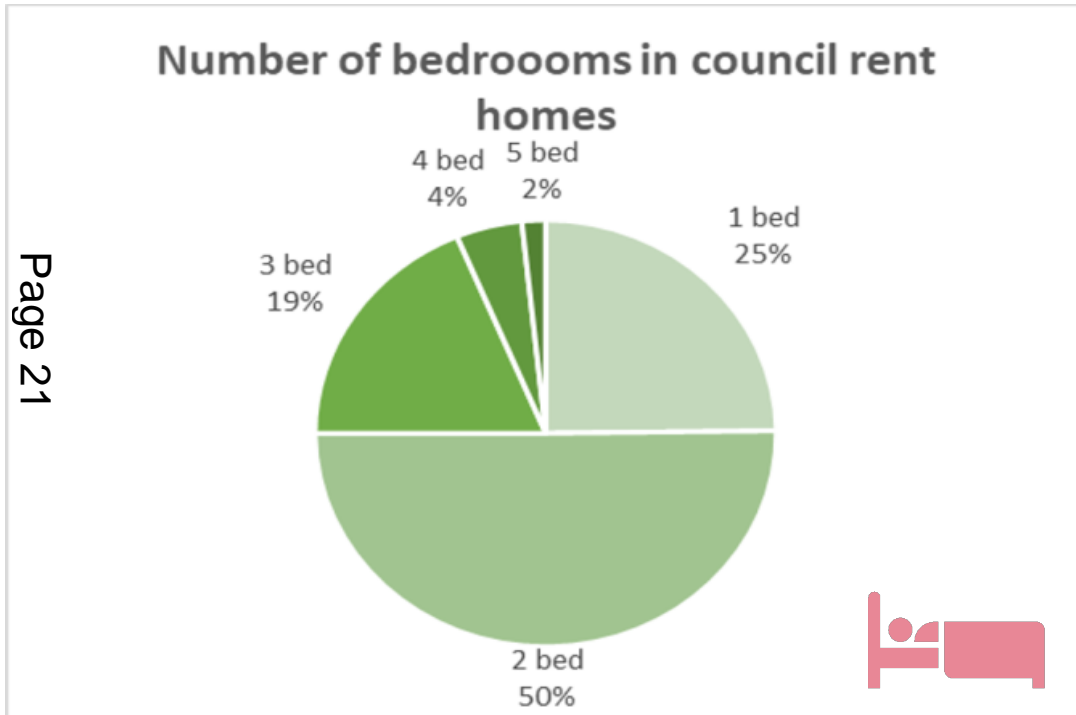
 67 of these homes designed for wheelchair users

229 x new homes are currently under construction which will deliver an additional 185 new council homes

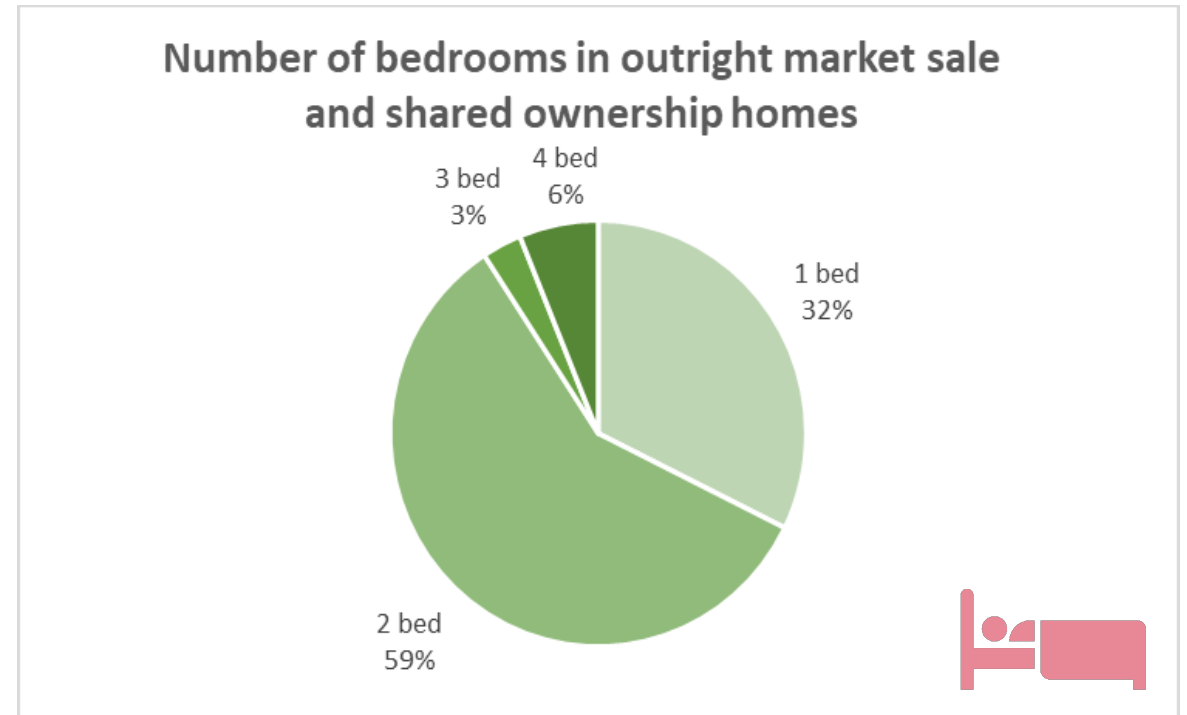
* Note that the figures shown relate to the period Jan 2009 to Aug 2023

New Build delivery statistics continued

Over 2,000 people housed in new council rent homes



457 people housed in market sale and shared ownership homes



* Note that the figures shown relate to the period Jan 2009 to August 2023

How the New Build Programme is financed

Funding

- Rental income from the new council rent homes
 - Prudential borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (lower than Bank of England interest rate but still affected by rate changes)
 - Open market sales
 - Right to Buy (RTB) receipts / GLA grant funding
-
- Borrowing is paid back over 30 years using rental income from new council homes
 - The New Build Programme is designed to be self-funded. The income received (RTB receipts/GLA grant, market sales receipts, and rent) aims to cover the capital costs and the cost of borrowing over 30 years.

Finsbury Leisure Centre and Vorley Road – schemes in progress

The council has a target to start the construction of 750 new council homes between 2023-2027. Proposed schemes at Finsbury Leisure Centre and Vorley Road will contribute to meeting this target

Page 23



- 200 new homes, 50% council rent meeting Passivhaus standards
- New leisure and medial centres
- New public realm, play and landscaping



- c70 new homes, 50% council rent
- New medical centre and library
- Council's first Passivhaus scheme
- Improvements to Girdlestone Park

New Build – challenges / risks

- Current wider economic climate presents significant viability pressures and considerable risks:
 - High inflation
 - Interest rate rises leading to higher borrowing rates for councils
 - Construction costs at a 40-year high and unlikely to fall
 - Flatlining sales values and increased mortgage rates
- Delivery has become increasingly challenging and many public and private sector housing developers have either paused, slowed, or radically altered their delivery programmes, resulting in fewer affordable homes being built, particularly in London.
- Work is underway to mitigate these challenges

Page 24

More than half of English housing associations reduce forecast development plans

NEWS 02.03.23 2.30 PM BY PETER APPS

A quarter of councils plan to halt development programmes altogether, warns CIH

NEWS 12.06.23 7.00 AM BY GRAINNE CUFFE

Housing slump to cause construction contraction in 2023

11 SEP 2023 | BY CHARLOTTE BANKS

Outline of topics for discussion at future meetings

- Consultation and engagement methods and communications
- Partnership working activities and opportunities
- Measures in place to meet the current and potential future economic challenges
- Lobbying activities to increase financial support and access to potential sites for development
- How other Local Authorities are meeting the current economic challenges
- Compare performance with other LA housebuilders to measure performance
- Innovative practices, including modular, build-overs, garage conversions
- Estate transformation opportunities to increase new housing supply and address issues in existing housing stock

Page 26
Comments / questions?

Housing Scrutiny Panel New Build Design Quality

Page 27

Setting the bar high

- Being an exemplary housebuilder for Islington
 - Achieving over and above local, London and National standards and regulations
- Delivering consistently high quality
 - Safe, secure, comfortable and sustainable homes

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Elmore Street & Lindsey Mews (CGI)

Generous and inclusive

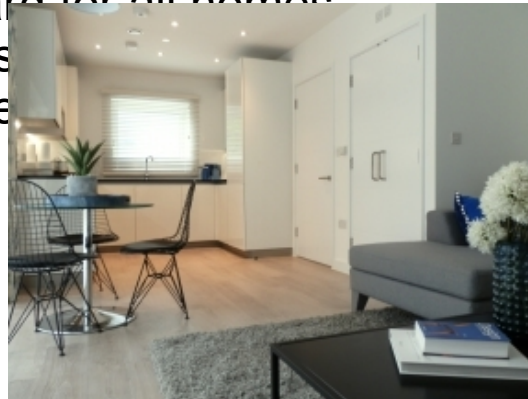
- Well sized homes

- Family-sized homes where we can sensibly build them
- Home sizes 5% over and above National Standards

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- Accessible and inclusive design

- Lifetime Homes standard for all homes ensures that our homes meet residents' changing needs and accessibility



Armour Close



Safe and secure

- Fire safety
 - We have introduced improved fire safety for our homes in advance of changes in Building Regulations
- Secured by Design
 - All our homes have Secured by Design certification (Official Police Security Initiative)

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Vaudeville Court



King Square

Enhanced energy performance

- High performing homes and low bills for residents
 - Homes that perform over and above local and national policy standards and regulation
 - Code for Sustainable Homes / Passivhaus standard (pilot underway), exceeding current Building Regulations
 - Green roofs, solar panels, mechanical ventilation and enhanced fabric performance are standard for our homes

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Dover Court



Vaudeville Court

Attractive and tenure-blind

- High quality materials
 - High quality, attractive, durable and easily maintainable materials and fittings, making a positive contribution to the public realm and instilling pride in residents
- Active frontages
 - Improving the quality of the public realm and providing a safer environment by introducing new homes
- Tenure blind homes
 - No visible distinction between rented and private for sale homes in external appearance and common areas

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Dover Court Estate
before and after



Benefits for existing residents

- Estate improvements
 - improved common facilities and amenities including bin and cycle stores, landscaping, play space and social infrastructure such as a community spaces



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Redbrick Estate / Vibast Centre



Holly Park / Brickworks

Challenges

Building affordable homes in a central London location

New homes in a dense urban borough

- Building in existing context

- Land is scarce in Islington and many of our developments are infills to existing estates, located on small 'residual' plots such as garage sites;
- We must deliver sensitive infills whilst minimising the loss of open space and trees
- Competing demand for ground floor space

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Dover Court Estate
before and after



Building in existing context

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Elmore St & Lindsey Mews

- Complex sites

- Our sites require a highly creative, well considered design approach
- Multiple site constraints result in higher design and build costs
- High quality external materials are an expectation, particularly in historic / conservation context



Responding to local need



Centurion Close

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- **Overcrowding**
 - Providing larger homes where families need them
- **Changing demographics**
 - Developing homes suitable for an ageing population and supported housing
- **Addressing local issues**
 - Designing out crime and anti-social behaviour

The climate emergency

- Better performing homes for resident comfort and affordability
 - Keeping residents' heating bills low
 - Minimising the risk of homes overheating in summer
- Achieving Net Zero Carbon
 - Reducing the amount of carbon embodied in our buildings
 - Renewable energy generation (solar panels)
 - Mitigating the loss of trees on our development sites
 - Designing and constructing to circular economy principles

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Building Safety

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- Fire Safety
 - We put residents' fire safety first, using fire safety design standards over and above current regulations
 - Updated regulations post Grenfell are only being adopted now; in the intervening years we have consistently provided enhanced fire safety for our residents
 - Further current changes in building fire safety standards, through the Building Safety Act, impact on viability, e.g. requirement for second stair in higher buildings
- The Golden Thread of Information
 - Stricter building information management regulations require additional project resources



Vorley Road (CGI)

Achieving and securing quality

Safeguarding our design standards and aspirations through the design and construction process

Setting standards



- Working in close collaboration with our stakeholders
 - Our new homes developments are designed to be looked after by Islington Council long-term
 - We work closely and continuously with our planners and asset management and maintenance teams to ensure that the standards and specifications we set for our buildings and landscaping meet their requirements and Islington's policies
- New Build Design Guide
 - ...Culminating in our New Build Design Guide, which sets out clearly the overarching principles, standards and technical requirements to be followed by the architects and engineers appointed to design our homes

Getting things right from the start

- Choosing the right team
 - Architects and other consultants designing our homes are carefully selected using the relevant frameworks and competitive tendering where appropriate
 - Many of our projects have been designed by Islington- based architectural practices who bring local knowledge to the table
 - Monitoring and managing the performance of our design consultants
- Engaging with residents
 - All our schemes go through a comprehensive resident engagement process, focussing particularly on the earlier design stages, to ensure that local residents' voices are heard and their feedback considered, and to help us understand local issues that need to be addressed in the design



Securing design quality

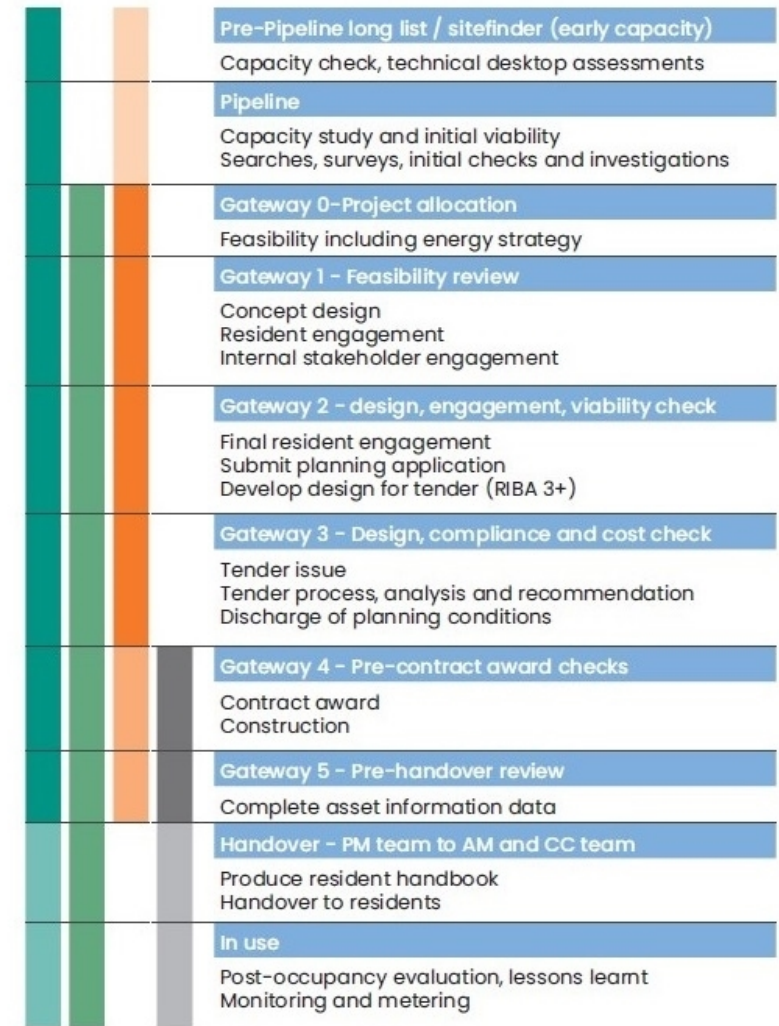
- Governance

- Our Gateway process: key design deliverables and thorough design checks at every Gateway, to ensure that our standards are met, and our stakeholders review and agree design proposals
- Monitoring of design and sustainability Key Performance Indicators

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- Managing statutory compliance

- We work closely with Islington's Planning team throughout the design process, and receive valuable feedback from the Design Review Panel
- We employ Islington Building Control for a better route to achieving statutory compliance



New Build Gateway process

Safeguarding quality through construction



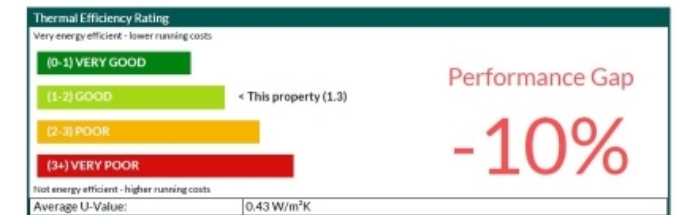
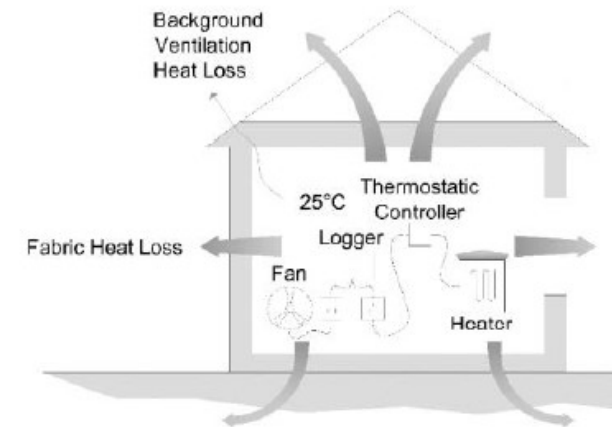
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- Employers Requirements
 - Clear and robust Employers Requirements that are kept under review and updated annually in collaboration with Islington Housing Property Services
- Contractor procurement
 - Construction procurement through New Build contractor framework
- On site quality control
 - Employing a Clerk of Works and M&E Services design guardian
 - Arranging internal stakeholder inspections at key stages

Handover and in-use

- Aftercare team
 - Effective Aftercare Service to manage comprehensive handover and post-construction building defects remedials, as well as handover to residents / tenant management
- Post Occupancy Evaluation
 - Resident surveys for all new homes
 - Pilot currently underway for Building Performance Evaluation, including heat and electricity metering, indoor air climate monitoring and thermal performance testing
- Lessons learnt approach
 - Feeding all lessons learnt back into the design and briefing process, including resident feedback and building performance

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Thermal performance testing

Feedback

What others say about our homes

Feedback from our residents

- Our resident surveys bear witness to the quality of our new homes
 - In 2022 we asked 155 of our residents across six of our completed schemes for their feedback on their new homes:
 - **91%** said that moving into their new home has improved the quality of their life
 - **90%** rated the appearance of their building excellent or good
 - **86%** said that their home is always or usually warm in winter
 - **81%** rated the natural light in their home excellent or good



Awards

- Our new homes developments have also received industry recognition having won numerous awards:
 - **Housing Design Awards** 2010 (Armour Close), 2012 (Vaudeville Court)
 - **RIBA London Award** 2016 (Vaudeville Court)
 - **LABC Building Excellence Awards** 2017 (Brunswick Close), 2018 (Brickworks), 2019 (Goodinge), 2020 (Centurion Close)
 - **New London Awards** 2018 (Andover Estate Ph 1)
 - **Urban Design Awards** 2019 (Andover Estate)
 - **The Planning Awards** 2019 (Redbrick Estate)
 - **London Construction Awards** 2022, Regeneration project of the year (Redbrick Estate)



Questions & Comments

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Thank you

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DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1- Housing Services to undertake a comprehensive Tenancy and welfare audit of all its housing stock with a view of identifying overcrowding, under occupiers, and victims of domestic abuse etc. this is currently being trialled in Halton Mansions
- 2- Committee recommend that Housing Services rigorously promote issues around existing incentives for under occupiers such as mutual exchanges, that financial incentives be reviewed, - The downsizing scheme to receive a comprehensive review and the outcome of this review to be reported to the September 2023, Housing Scrutiny Committee. The council will also conduct regular sessions/ briefings/community drop in sessions to promote downsizing and mutual exchanges to address overcrowding
- 3- Complete review of the housing allocation scheme by making sure we are addressing that needs as it is clear that there are thousands of people who are living in overcrowded accommodation but not on the housing register - what fits on the local estate or local community
- 4- Council should consider building larger 4-5 bedroom accommodation
- 5- Working with the GLA to try and develop /design a scheme that allows LA to access funds because at the moment it is possible to buy properties to accommodate people from Afghanistan and Ukraine but there is no grant that helps addressing overcrowding residents and rehousing them.
- 6- Adopt a communication plan across the council , ie children services -simple tips on how to address overcrowding
- 7- Committee should consider reviewing its tall building policy, maybe in the long term – not just building on existing top of roof tops
- 8- Increase in supply of 4 and 5 bedroom properties for families in need of larger homes using all means possible
- 9-Collaborating more with community groups
- 10- Explore alternative schemes – GLA, seaside and community home scheme for those over 55
- 11 - Council in its partnership with RSL's assist in identifying more voids /abandoned homes
- 12 - As statutory overcrowding is difficult to address, the Council lobby and liaise with GLA on redefining the Overcrowding standards as they are long overdue for a change.
- 13 - Council should address issues of language barriers as this may hinder under occupiers residents and especially those who do not engage in mutual swaps

14- In response to evidence from Islington law centre, indicated that Islington residents do not meet the councils adverse threshold to bid for larger properties. – Conduct detailed annual analysis for those accommodated through the Choice Based Lettings scheme and amend policies accordingly to ensure overcrowded households are rehoused as a equal proportion of those on the housing register.

15 When a void property which is a 3, 4 or 5 bedroom property these properties should be fast tracked through the voids process

16 Undertake right size moves on our estates to promote a series of chain lettings in order to increase lettings locally and reduce overcrowding.

17 During the community drop in sessions the council seeks the views of residents on how to improve services to people who are overcrowded or under-occupying properties and the council then produces policies and procedures in light of this feedback

18 the council empowers residents through the resident empowerment framework to help the council to develop new ways of working to address overcrowding.

19 The council designs a seamless service offer between Health, Adult Social Care, Housing, and Children's services to ensure we address overcrowding, damp and mould, education attainment and health improvements for people living in overcrowded households

20 The council develops data platforms across the council to capture an holistic approach to benefit residents who are overcrowded and this ensures services are developed using this data and empowering residents to influence the way we work.

Homes and Neighbourhoods

Islington Council

222 Upper Street

N1 1XR

Report of: Matt West, Director of Housing Property Services

Meeting of: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: 25th September 2023

Damp, Condensation and mould programme Draft Recommendations

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. This report aims to provide the Housing Scrutiny Committee with information and progress made to date on the damp, condensation and mould programme since the previous update to the Housing Scrutiny Committee in July 2023.
- 1.2. Officers encourage the Housing Scrutiny Committee to appraise this work and make suggestions of how the council's work in this critical area can be improved.
- 1.3. Members of the committee are asked to amend add and approve the draft recommendations for presentation to the council's executive committee

2. Introduction

- 2.1. It has been just over ten months since the publication of the coroners report investigating the tragic death of Awaab Ishak due to damp and mould in his family's home, and also the Councils response to damp, condensation and mould was accelerated. Since then there have been focussed energies on improving awareness, how damp and mould is reported, a joined up partnership approach, activities related to net zero carbon, resident engagement and critical reviews of key policies and processes which scaffold the programme and endeavour to improve the lives of residents living in Islington Council properties.
- 2.2. The Government has published new guidance on 7th September 2023: [Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home](#). The guidance is for social and private sector landlords and sets out a clearly the health risks of damp and mould, regulation on damp and mould, what is damp and mould and root causes, how to respond to reports, taking a proactive approach to reduce the risks, collaborative working with other professionals and building relationships with tenants. The guidance states "This guidance is a direct response to the Coroner's report, and has been developed with a multidisciplinary group of experts in housing and health. Members of the government's expert [Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants](#) were also consulted. It makes sure that social and private sector landlords have a thorough understanding of their legal responsibilities, and of the serious health risks that damp and mould pose". Islington is assessing itself against this best practice guidance.

3. Activity overview

- 3.1. Current position against Islington Council's five-point action plan to tackle damp and mould:

3.1.1. Reviewing all damp and mould cases from the last three years – contacting to make sure issues are resolved, and taking more action if needed

Update: All tenants on this list have been contacted via multiple communication methods. From the phase two of contact via letter. The remaining no access cases have been passed for priority tenancy audit The dashboard created for this activity has been used to design an operational damp and mould dashboard for new and live cases.

3.1.2. Investing an extra £1million every year for a new damp and mould action team, including specialist surveyors and more funding for ventilation and insulation

Update: Islington have invested over £2 million this year on damp and mould activities. This includes additional works, additional surveying resources and increase number of administrators and operatives.

3.1.3. Training non-specialist staff - for example staff carrying out gas compliance checks - to identify damp and mould when visiting homes.

Update:

An extensive training programme has been rolled out to all housing staff, including damp and mould awareness and its importance is embedded in the departmental induction for any new staff.

The pilot for the tenancy and property visits has been extended to 450 households and is over halfway through.

3.1.4. Managing a dedicated line for calls from council tenants concerned about damp and mould, so the council can book a survey and tackle the damp

Update:

Since the creation of the dedicated telephone option for damp and mould, on the 6th December, there have been 4017 calls and Diagnostic Surveyors have completed 2732 damp inspections.

A dedicated email inbox was also created to receive reports, there have been 2,101 emails.

3.1.5. Working more closely with other local partner agencies to give joined-up help and support to residents including finance, housing needs, medical conditions and repairs

Update:

- a. The damp, condensation and mould framework was co-designed with local partner agencies which remains to be a strong structure to tackling damp, condensation and mould.
- b. The Islington Council damp and mould webpage was updated with up-to-date information on damp, condensation and mould, referral information to SHINE for tenants who are having difficulty heating their home or managing their heating bills and information for non-council tenants and leaseholder in December 2022 and

- c. The programme and updates on its activity has attended multiple meetings including partnership roundtables, Children Social Services and Adult Social Care boards, Health and Wellbeing Board and Islington Housing Group (attended by registered social landlords in Islington).
- d. Data has been shared with Housing by Children Social Services and Adult Social Care to support the prioritisation of cases.
- e. Currently, Islington Council is working with Health colleagues to improve sharing health and housing data to identify tenants who may be vulnerable to ill health due to damp and mould being present in their homes.
- f. The partnership referral form has been piloted with one GP medical practice, there has been a limited number of referrals. Further work is required to understand how to improve referrals.

4. Key performance indicators

4.1. The damp and mould Power BI dashboard will be available in Q2 2023. This dashboard will provide real-time updates on damp and mould performance, monitor data over time, identify 'hotpots' and look at damp and mould through an equalities lens.

4.2. There is still ongoing work to quality assure the figures in the dashboard.

4.3. The data and insights team are in the process of scoping a project to match health and housing data. Currently the team is meeting with health colleagues to define a minimum dataset. Next steps are to work with information governance colleagues.

The aim of this project is to:

- Understand the prevalence of clinical conditions in different housing tenures that can be exacerbated by poor housing conditions, particularly damp and mould.
- Flag in the housing system Oneserve a household that has someone present with a clinical condition, that evidence suggests can be exacerbated by poor quality housing.

4.4. Current TA / property availability

The Council will decant residents to temporary accommodation if the prevalence of damp and mould or household risk factors are sufficiently high. Since December 43 households have been decanted. The supply of temporary accommodation especially large specialised units are under considerable pressure due to increases in homelessness and other housing pressures. The council continues to take all actions available to have the widest variety of properties available for temporary accommodation.

4.5. UCL and Net Zero Carbon and capital works.

University College London have been commissioned to provide three reports over the next six months. A report on the academic basis use and validity of methods to detect and quantify damp and mould, A report of the academic basis use and validity of

remediation methods and a report cross referencing UCLs work on insulation and net zero carbo opportunities with damp and mould data.

4.6. Training

Training for surveyors is completed and training for non technical staff continues. We are also developing a package of bi-annual refresher training and training for new starters.

5. Winter preparedness

- 5.1. The service has been contacting residents with individual gas boilers encouraging them to test they work to avoid peak demand when the weather turns cold.
- 5.2. Boiler renewals, most reported boiler repairs identified. Property letter to agree visit to check boiler and replace where needed, has started.
- 5.3. A roof and gutter program has been reinstated for rainwater pipe and gutters where they are checked, cleared and repaired.
- 5.4. Restocking electric heaters at Brewery Rd has started.
- 5.5. Meeting with current Gas contractors to confirm resources/remit & escalation points will start pre-October.
- 5.6. Additional gas contractor procedure - currently being contracted being finalised and in place pre-October.
- 5.7. Additional front end call centre staff will be in-place October/November.

6. Joint working

- 6.1. Since the Damp and Mould Casework Board Taskforce was established, in February 2023, there have been 109 cases managed through the boards process and currently there are 32 cases open. The casework board is where leads from relevant services meet weekly to discuss high priority cases related to damp and mould, providing an overview, setting actions and tracking progress.
- 6.2. *This panel has highlighted the complexity of some cases and the key risks remain access to properties form decants of complex families and the need for access injunctions in some cases. At Least five of the open 32 cases are progressing towards access injunction to ensure Islington complete the required works*

7. Housing Ombudsman

- 7.1. The Paragraph 49 special investigation by the Housing Ombudsman is still underway.
- 7.2. Since the beginning of August 2022, the Housing Ombudsman has issued 23 determinations of Severe Maladministration, within 15 cases relating to Islington Council, of which two are related to damp and mould. The Ombudsman will usually

consider a number of key points or issues within a case and issue a determination on each one.

8. Scrutiny Recommendations

- 8.1.** Over the course of the scrutiny the panel has considered a number of reports from officers and presentations by several registered social landlords below are the recommendations of the Draft Housing Scrutiny Panel based on these reports. It is acknowledged that as the service is developing its approach some recommendations below may have already been adopted or underway.
- 8.2.** Officers have captured recommendations made by the committee over the course of the scrutiny set out below. Some of these actions have already been set in place but are included for completeness

8.2a Access and Reporting of Damp and Mould

Establish a dedicated online and phone channel for residents to report damp and mould and receive support and advice

The committee noted issues residents had alerting the service to damp and mould. The benefits of a dedicated reporting system for advice and to arrange damp and mould will help residents get the level of response required.

Ensure technical staff are trained and competent to identify and manage root cause of damp

The committee noted occasions of poor or incorrect diagnosis in some damp cases and were concerned that surveyors could on occasion default to blaming tenants lifestyle as a cause for condensation. Technical training is important to ensure correct diagnosis and remediation of damp and mould

Ensure technical staff have sufficient equipment to conduct diagnosis

In addition to correct training the committee seeks reassurance that all available techniques and equipment pursuant to the investigation of the root cause of damp and mould is available to technical staff. Including but not limited to Thermal Imaging equipment, moisture meters and water tests. It is also imperative staff are fully trained on the use of these techniques

Train nontechnical staff to recognise and report damp

The committee notes that it is important that all staff recognise the signs and impacts of damp and mould and understand what action is required to report that issue to ensure it is swiftly dealt with by the correct department. Nontechnical staff who enter homes should receive basic training and signposting to dedicated referral pathways for damp and mould

Undertake property audits to identify damp and mould

The committee noted the risk of residents not reporting damp and mould and suffering in silence particularly disabled and vulnerable residents. The Committee recommend the tenancy management service undertake routine audits of tenancies on a periodic basis noting any concerns including damp and mould. The service should consider embedding these visits with other routine visits such as gas servicing

The service should try to deliver a rapid response to all cases but develop a prioritisation tool to prioritise cases in period of high demand.

The Committee expects all damp cases to be assessed as quickly as possible but notes that there may be periods of high demand. It encourages the service to develop a detailed prioritisation tool based on knowledge about the resident to ensure at times of high demand the most vulnerable and at-risk residents receive help quickest.

The tool could also be used to identify priority for remediation work or rehousing

The service continues to develop referral pathways for other services such as GPS and Health Practitioners

The committee note the good work undertaken by the department working with health partners to identify cases and risks. The service is encouraged to further develop this information sharing and create a joined-up approach for residents suffering damp and mould.

8.2 b Process of Managing Damp and Mould

Ensure cases are tracked to completion

The committee noted the work undertaken by the service to ensure each case is recorded and tracked until the damp and mould issue is full resolved. The Committee would like to see this process further strengthened and developed to ensure good initial diagnosis and response and long lasting benefits of the councils interactions. Data from the tracker should also inform trends in damp across the estates and performance feedback for staff

Ensure the risk of damp and mould is removed as a first stage and repeated until root cause is dealt with

The committee noted that historically damp cases failed to quickly remove the risk of mould while other work was being conducted. It notes the Changes to the service but recommends that this approach is embedded as standard ensuring that resident's exposure to mould is minimised as a matter of priority in every case.

Improve communication with residents on process setting out the actions the service will take for each root cause

The committee noted that the councils web pages and policy information combined with information provided by staff failed to clearly set out the various stages of addressing damp and mould. This has on occasion led to frustration and complaints by residents who feel that the council is not addressing the root cause of the issue. The committee note that the approach will vary dependent of the cause of the damp and mould but feels better communication and documentation is required to make this clear to residents and manage expectations

Consider review process and ensure that returning damp and mould is escalated in response to returning cases or long term failure to address the root cause.

The committee noted that on occasion dealing with damp and mould can be difficult or that the issue returns after works are completed. The committee welcomes the service introducing a three month review period however expressed reservations if this period was over the summer months. The committee would also like the service to ensure that an escalated response is shown to cases that return or that take an excessive amount of time to resolve leaving residents exposed to damp and mould for long periods. This should be set out in the new damp policy.

Develop and report KPIS for tackling damp and mould and its root causes

The committee note the work the service has done developing specific monitoring statistics for its response on damp and mould. The committee would like to see regular feedback on this performance ensuring the service maintains its focus on addressing damp and mould. The committee would also like to monitor the extent of damp and mould in the borough and the distribution of the various root causes to inform further investment and scrutiny.

Ensure cases where overcrowding is a root cause are suitably prioritised

The committee note the particular challenge of damp and mould in overcrowded homes and note the work reflecting this in the allocations policy. The committee would like to ensure that assessment and deployment of these priority points is embedded in the process

Ensure senior management escalation for ongoing cases where root cause can't/has not been remedied

The committee approved the establishment of a Damp and Mould Taskforce reviewing the high profile and hard to remedy damp and mould cases. The work of this group in tackling the hardest cases is noted and the committee encourage the service to embed this approach with clear processes for escalation and referral to this group.

Deploy additional ventilation as appropriate to the situation

The committee note the importance of ventilation in tackling damp and mould and recommend the service install appropriate ventilation to remedy cases and ensures existing ventilation is properly serviced and maintained. The service should consider install as standard in high risk estates as part of any investment program or void works.

Ensure record keeping for cases is robust

The committee note the feedback from the ombudsman that the services record keeping does not always support all of the actions taken in a case. It notes the new case management process and changes to the Oneserve system but encourages the service to constantly review its process and staff behaviour to ensure accurate detailed records are kept for all cases.

8.2 c Strategic Response to Damp and Mould

Ensure Damp and Mould Remediation is a focus for asset strategy and capital investment planning

The committee note that long term reduction of damp and mould cases is only possible through investment in the housing stock improving insulation and ventilation in homes. The committee notes there are a range of competing pressures such as building safety, decent homes and carbon reduction but encourages the service to ensure that any future investment strategy and asset plan specifying recognises and addresses improvements targeting reduction in damp and mould.

Ensure mapping of damp and mould identifies estates for investment

The committee note the work the service is doing geographically mapping cases of damp and mould. It encourages the service to further develop this approach using data about high prevalence areas to target investment and capital works

Undertake outreach work in estates where there is a high prevalence of damp and mould

The committee would like the service to regularly review the geographical data on damp and mould and on estates with a high prevalence undertake outreach work writing to residents and setting up drop in sessions to ensure no resident with damp and mould is unidentified.

The committee notes the service has started trials of this approach on several estates and received good feedback.

8.2 d Other Recommendations

The service to complete and evaluate its remote monitoring pilots

The committee noted the work done to establish pilots for remote and advance monitoring of homes for excessive humidity. The service should continue to develop and assess the pilots and consider the benefits of wider investment and use of this technology.

The committee expects further recommendations following the publishing of the Housing Ombudsman section 49 report

The committee notes that further recommendations will be required to ensure compliance with the section 49 investigations recommendations. The committee also expects briefings on all future maladministration findings on a quarterly basis along with details of the learning actions and changes made by the service as a response.

The Committee expect further recommendations following the governments adjustments to decent homes.

The committee notes that the Regulator for Social Housing and Government are reviewing and updating the decent homes standard and would like information on how the service will address these changes once more details are released.

Members of the committee are asked to amend or add to the draft recommendations.

Homes and Neighbourhoods
Islington Town Hall

Report of: **Corporate Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods**
Cllr O'Halloran Executive Member for Homes and Communities

Meeting of: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: 25th September 2023

Ward(s): All Wards across Islington.

Subject: Housing Ombudsman determinations

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. In the last 12 months (August 2022 – September 2023), the Homes and Neighbourhoods directorate has seen a significant increase in the number of Severe Maladministration determinations being issued by the Housing Ombudsman and particularly within the last six months.
- 1.2. In December 2022, the Housing Ombudsman notified the council of its intention to launch a 'Paragraph 49 Investigation' into the council's handling of reports of damp and mould, and complaints submitted as a result of these issues.
- 1.3. This report provides details of the Housing Ombudsman determinations relating to Islington Council and also reflects on the national picture around the Housing Ombudsman.
- 1.4. This report provides an honest and transparent assessment to allow our residents to hold the Homes and Neighbourhoods service to account.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That Housing Scrutiny Committee note the Report and the likely outcome of the upcoming Paragraph 49 Investigation report, as outlined in section 5, below.

- 2.2. The Housing Scrutiny Committee are presented with a strategic action plan at the November 2023 Housing Scrutiny Committee to ensure the Homes and Neighbourhood address the areas identified by the Housing Ombudsman and continuous improvements around the delivery of services to our residents takes place.

3. Background

- 3.1. As part of the council's response to these 15 cases, a total of £46,744 has been paid in compensation to our residents.
- 3.2. The earliest of these was issued in March 2023. Prior to this, the department had not been issued with a determination of Severe Maladministration for over five years, which suggests that the criteria for this determination may have changed. It should be noted that the Housing Ombudsman has not published a definition or criteria for 'Maladministration' or 'Severe Maladministration' on its website or in other guidance.
- 3.3. 67% of these determinations were issued in June 2023, bringing them within the scope of the P49 Investigation.
- 3.4. In addition to an increase in the volume of Severe Maladministration determinations, the severity of the orders issued by the Housing Ombudsman has also increased noticeably, with higher levels of compensation being awarded and broader, more far-reaching reviews of both policy and the council's housing stock being either recommended or ordered.
- 3.5. This growing trend is not unique to Islington. Since 2019-20, the Ombudsman no longer reports annually on Severe Maladministration rulings but, instead, issues press releases on individual cases. However, it is still possible to extract this data from the Ombudsman's website:

2019-20: 5 cases of Severe Maladministration
2020-21: 3 cases of Severe Maladministration
2021-22: 11 cases of Severe Maladministration
2022-23: 31 cases of Severe Maladministration
2023-24 (to date): 23 cases of Severe Maladministration

To date, Islington has not been the subject of a press release for a Severe Maladministration determination.

- Looking at the most up-to-date information published by the Housing Ombudsman 1284 determinations were made in the April 2023 to June period a 69-percentage increase on the January 2023 to March period when 759 determinations were made. Fifty-two percent of all determinations results in compensation being made to residents across England.
- The Homes and Neighborhood service at Islington Council manages 26,000 rented homes and 10,000 leasehold properties. Therefore, severe maladministration has been identified for 0.042 percent of the properties managed by Islington Council. These severe maladministration's determinations are disappointing, and the council will leave no stone unturned to ensure improvements take place.
- If we then analyse the number of repairs completed to Islington Council homes since the first complaint was submitted in March 2020 relating to these fifteen determinations, then severe maladministration has been identified on 0.006 percent of all repairs completed in this time period. Once again, we accept improvements are required to ensure our residents receive the best possible service.
- The council has received 7509 complaints relating to the provision of housing services from residents in the period of the Housing Ombudsman investigations over the last three years and six months. Therefore, the severe maladministration determinations relates to 0.20 percent of all complaints received in this period.
- If we, therefore, analyze the residents who have accessed our Housing services in this period of the Housing Ombudsman investigation it shows we have provided services to 456788 individual requests for service provision. This, therefore, shows that severe maladministration has been identified in 0.003 percent of interactions for the areas within the determination framework of the Housing Ombudsman.
- Consequently, given the housing crisis, the financial position faced by Islington Council's Housing Revenue Account as result of Central Government decisions impacting the level and quality of services which can be provided to residents of Islington, then the council will need to consider carefully the best way to address our improvement and resident empowerment journey in the future and make some difficult decisions in light of these Housing Ombudsman determinations.
- Every complaint is important, and we need to acknowledge and respect each complaint as if the complaint was made by a member of our own family.

- 3.6. The Ombudsman publishes individual case summaries on its website for each case in which it has made a determination of Severe Maladministration. These are also issued as press releases. They do not collate or report on the total number of determinations of Severe Maladministration within these cases. The 15 cases in which Islington have received one or more Severe Maladministration determinations this year are not included in the 23 cases cited above, as they have not yet been published. The Ombudsman is currently publishing these case summaries, typically 4-6 months after the determinations are issued, so we should certainly expect to see some of Islington's cases being published imminently.
- 3.7. Whilst the council is currently the subject of a P49 investigation by the Housing Ombudsman, we have not been singled out as other landlords have in wider or more public forums. This includes Housing Secretary, Michael Gove, writing to 14 social landlords over findings of severe maladministration. It is likely, however, that we will be named in various publications over the coming months, due to these more recent determinations. The P49 Investigation report will also be made public.

4. Themes and Trends

4.1 Complaints Handling

Complaints handling accounted for 39% of the determinations of Severe Maladministration issued against Islington Council.

Despite these determinations being issued between March and August 2023, due to a historical backlog of complaints at Stage 2 of the council's complaints procedure, as well as lengthy delays in the Ombudsman's own investigations, many of the cases being reviewed date back a number of months or even years.

In November 2022, the council developed a corporate Complaints Improvement Board and council-wide Complaints Improvement Plan. At the time, the Stage 2 backlog, which accounts for the vast majority of the Severe Maladministration determinations in this area, saw complaints being responded to at Stage 2 between eight and ten months outside of the timeframe set out by the Ombudsman's complaints handling code. This matter was also the subject of an investigation by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

In December 2022, the Corporate Complaints Team recruited an additional 10 officers to work to reduce the backlog, which was cleared in March 2023. Since then, Stage 2 complaints have consistently been responded to within the timescale set out within the Complaints Handling Code and the council's own complaints procedure.

The following actions have also been taken:

- An independent review of the council's complaints handling was commissioned, the findings of were developed into the Complaints Improvement Plan.
- Weekly Board meetings are held with CMB representation to review performance at all stages of the procedure.
- The corporate Complaints Procedure has been reviewed and updated in line with the Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.
- The Complaints Improvement Plan is reviewed and updated weekly, designed to drive up quality and performance in complaints handling across the organisation.
- A new Customer Relationship Management system has been procured and is currently being configured. This will improve complaints handling, information management and reporting.

4.2 Management of reports of damp and mould

Whilst the council's management of damp and mould reports does not stand out as a theme within the Severe Maladministration determinations received, being referenced only twice within the 23 determinations issued, it is the key subject of the Paragraph 49 Investigation launched by the Housing Ombudsman.

In the last 12 months, Housing Property Services has undertaken the following actions with regards to damp and mould:

- The Repairs service has conducted a full review of damp and mould across the council's housing stock. Wider analysis of damp and mould data enabled Property Services to run resident engagement events in partnership with Tenancy and other Homes and Neighbourhoods services. Diagnostic surveyors have attended events with colleagues within other teams, such as SHINE, to provide support and to carry out inspections where residents have reported damp and mould issues.
- External expertise, including Building Pathologist Mike Parrett, was brought in to train and advise staff. A review has been completed of all properties that have had a damp and mould inspection over the last two years and a bespoke dashboard has been designed to prioritise these in order of risk, depending on varying factors such as vulnerability and overcrowding. Further investment has been made within capital programming to reduce damp and mould issues.
- There has also been increased recruitment within the Housing Direct service and a dedicated phone line and e-mail address has been set up for residents to contact the council to raise issues relating to damp and mould. This sits alongside the weekly call-over meetings with colleagues across the department to review high risk casework, in addition to weekly meetings that are held to review the

newly developed damp and mould framework. The department has also been working closely with a 'critical friend' in HQN and has reviewed all damp and mould processes and procedures.

- In addition, technical training in diagnosing damp and mould has been provided for Diagnostic Surveyors as well as basic technical training for all Housing Direct staff.

4.3 Anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance

Low-level noise nuisance and noise transference between properties has been a consistent theme since the first national lock-down, with all landlords reporting a spike in both reports and complaints.

Recent determinations demonstrated that some of our practices and procedures were outdated, and no longer fit for purpose. Record keeping, specifically in relation to ASB cases, has also been poor, undermining our ability to demonstrate where good practice has taken place.

As a result, the department has taken a number of actions to address these issues:

- **Improve data recording:** Steps have been taken to ensure that correct processes are being followed by officers and an improved data recording system is currently being developed for all areas of Tenancy Management, including ASB.
- **Staff training: Improved training for all** processes, including data input, has been developed and rolled out to all staff and was undertaken in July, August and September.
- **A Tenancy Management Restructure is being developed and implemented** in line with a new vision for the service.
- **Procedural changes:** The previous ASB Procedure, dated 2015, was updated in July 2023 and implemented with immediate effect. This will be reviewed alongside the wider ASB program and any recommendations that might stem from this program surrounding good practice will be implemented. The council also employed the Housing Quality Network to undertake Mystery Shopping exercises in this area of our work.
- The service is developing better ways of recording performance and monitoring ASB using a new live Power BI tenancy ASB dashboard. - We are developing a new ASB corporate policy as we recognise the last policy is dated 2015 following the wider ASB review program, and this is currently being drafted. In addition to this we are developing a good neighbourhood policy as recommended by the housing ombudsman. The service will also be implementing tenancy visits (audits) to ensure we gain a better understanding of our tenants needs and properties.

5 Paragraph 49 Investigation

5.1 In December 2022, the Housing Ombudsman notified the council of its intention to complete a Paragraph 49 Investigation into the council's handling of reports of damp and mould,

and complaints submitted as a result. Paragraph 49 gives the Ombudsman powers to investigate thematic issues arising from complaints, as opposed to investigating individual cases. This was due to four maladministration determinations being issued in relation to damp and mould in the year 2021-22.

5.2 Officers from the Housing Ombudsman have held three meetings with the council to date, to discuss the progress of and likely outcome of the report. The Ombudsman has advised that they may bring other topics and themes into the scope of the investigation depending on the cases reviewed throughout the investigation.

5.3 The period within scope for the P49 Investigation was January – June 2023. 67% of the Severe Maladministration rulings issued during this period were issued in June.

5.4 Through discussions with the Ombudsman, and reviewing the determinations issued over this period, it is likely that the Ombudsman will include the council's approach to anti-social behaviour and complaints handling within the scope of the investigation, alongside our approach to reports of damp and mould.

5.5 The council has been working collaboratively and in cooperation with the Ombudsman throughout their investigation to highlight and share the work that has already taken place to improve our approach in these three key areas.

5.6 A final meeting with the Housing Ombudsman is scheduled to take place on 18 September, where we expect that they will advise us of the broad findings of their investigation and when they expect to issue their draft report. At present, this is likely to be in October 2023 and the council will be given the opportunity to comment prior to publication.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 The cost to establish a taskforce to effectively tackle damp and mould issues in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) stock is estimated at £2.001m in 2023-24 and an on-going budget requirement of £1.021m with effective from 2024/25.

6.2 The 2023/24 budgets do not include a provision to meet the anticipated costs associated with damp and mould. It is expected that costs will in the first instance be met from HRA contingency and or any identifiable underspends with the wider HRA. Costs that cannot be met by the forementioned will need to be met from HRA reserves. The on-going budget requirement currently estimated at £1.021m per annum will be included in the HRA base budget from 2024/25 as part of the budget setting process. This budget adjustment would represent growth to the HRA.

6.3 The investment outlined in 6.1 does not allow for the payment of compensation to residents or any penalties that could arise once the Financial Ombudsman's paragraph 49 investigations have concluded. It is anticipated that any payments of compensation or penalties will be met from the existing HRA compensation budgets (£0.187m) and HRA contingency.

6.4 The current HRA business plan is operating a balanced position on the basis that savings of £6.000m will be achieved over the next few years. To date, £5.000m worth of savings have been agreed with £1.000m of savings yet to be identified.

The HRA business plan is being updated to incorporate the anticipated financial impacts of emerging base budget pressures which includes Damp and mould £1.021m, Increasing Legal

Disrepair cases £1.000m, Building Safety £1.191m and the 23/24 pay settlement that is likely to be significantly greater than anticipated £2.312m. It is extremely likely that the growth generated from the emerging pressures mentioned above will result in the requirement to identify further savings from major works (capital) or from day-to-day landlord activities such as housing management or repairs.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 The Monitoring Officer has a duty under section 5A of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to report from time to time to the executive on findings of maladministration by the Ombudsman service. If a s5 report is prepared the executive have to respond with a suitable action plan to respond to the findings. This report confirms that a strategic action plan will be presented at the November 2023 Housing Scrutiny Committee to ensure the Homes and Neighbourhood address the areas identified by the Housing Ombudsman and continuous improvements around the delivery of services to our residents takes place. The Monitoring Officer will review at that stage whether a further report is required.

8 Conclusion

8.1 It is of the greatest importance the council implements service wide improvements to address the findings of the Housing Ombudsman's findings contained within this report to ensure the council provides the best possible services to our residents. However, we must also recognise until the housing crisis is addressed, we will continue to see rising casework. The new regulatory settlement will have a significant and positive impact. The root causes also need addressing, otherwise the risk of more service failure is acute. The council aims to provide the best housing services in the country and the Housing Ombudsman work will assist with these service improvements.

Appendix 1 – Case Summaries

Case 1

Date: March 2023

Number of Severe Maladministration orders: 1

Order(s) for: Handling of repairs and noise reports from property above

Case summary: The complaint was about the landlord's handling of repairs and reports of noise nuisance for the flat above the resident's property and its complaints handling and communication with the resident.

Action taken: Compensation paid, and apology issued. Inspection completed of property above and repairs carried out, including too noisy floor joists. Tenant supported to install appropriate floor coverings.

Compensation awarded: £1,400.

Case 2

Date: March 2023

Number of Severe Maladministration orders: 1

Order(s) for: Handling of repairs to a leak

Case summary: The complaint was about the landlord's handling of repairs to a leak which caused damp and mould in the resident's property.

Action taken: Compensation paid, and apology issued. Seeking to gain access to complete outstanding works. Review undertaken of similar properties in the block.

Compensation awarded: £1,801.

Case 3

Date: April 2023

Number of Severe Maladministration orders: 1

Order(s) for: Handling of ongoing leak

Case summary: The resident has complained about the landlord's handling of an ongoing leak issue, including the standard of workmanship and the service provided.

Action taken: Compensation paid, and apology issued. Further investigations completed by a leak detection specialist - further works identified and completed.

Compensation awarded: £6,050.

Case 4

Date: June 2023

Number of Severe Maladministration orders: 2

Order(s) for:

Repairs to the roof and gutter to address water ingress.

Complaints handling

Case summary: The resident complained about the landlord's handling of reports of repairs to the roof and guttering to address water ingress and the landlord's complaint handling and the resident's request for compensation for damage to her property.

Action taken: Compensation paid, and apology issued. Outstanding works identified and completed. A self-assessment of the Ombudsman's Spotlight report on Landlord's engagement with private freeholders and managing agents is in progress with the PFI, TMO and Home Ownership Teams.

Compensation awarded: £2,300.

Case 5

Date: June 2023

Number of Severe Maladministration orders: 1

Order(s) for: Complaints handling

Case summary: The complaint was about the landlord's handling of the resident's reports of antisocial behaviour and complaint handling.

Action taken: Compensation paid, and apology issued. Training rolled out to all Tenancy staff on ASB case management and record keeping.

Compensation awarded: £1,050.

Case 6

Date: June 2023

Number of Severe Maladministration orders: 2

Order(s) for:

Handling of the installation of extra radiators in the home

Complaints handling

Case summary: The complaint was about the landlord's handling of the resident's report of a sewage leak into her home and her concern that it did not adequately investigate the cause, reports of items disposed of after the leak, the installation of extra radiators in the property, the resident's request to insulate her home, and related concerns about damp and mould in the property, the installation of a flue safety chain, the boxing in of pipes and complaints handling.

Action taken: Compensation paid, and apology issued. Drainage within the block reviewed. Flooring replaced and a heat loss survey completed. Completed installation of thermal board insulation to the external walls to the bedroom and living room.

Compensation awarded: £2,720.

Case 7

Date: June 2023

Number of Severe Maladministration orders: 2

Order(s) for:

Consideration of vulnerabilities

Complaints handling

Case summary: The complaint was about the landlord's handling of the resident's request for repairs to a leak from the bathroom, in particular from her toilet and shower into the living room. She further complained about the windows in her property, requested that the landlord remedy garden drainage issues causing rainwater to enter the property and repairs to the shed and her toilet. The resident also complained about the handling of her request for her shed to be replaced or made watertight, the handling of reports of damp and mould throughout the property, the response to her request for her kitchen to be repaired or replaced and the handling of the complaint, including the level of compensation offered.

Action taken: Compensation paid, and apology issued. Blitz cleans of the property arranged and all outstanding repairs completed. Further inspections of the property and a garden drainage survey completed.

Compensation awarded: £8,468.28.

Case 8

Date: June 2023

Number of Severe Maladministration orders: 1

Order(s) for: Complaints handling

Case summary: The complaint was about the landlord's handling of repairs to the roof of the building and the standard of workmanship provided by the landlord as well as the handling of the complaint.

Action taken: Compensation paid, and apology issued. Review completed of the handing of repairs to the roof.

Compensation awarded: £1,025.

Case 9

Date: June 2023

Number of Severe Maladministration orders: 2

Order(s) for:

Handling of reports of noise nuisance

Complaints handling

Case summary: The complaint was about the landlord's handling of the resident's reports of noise from the upstairs property and complaint management.

Action taken: Compensation paid, and apology issued. Inspection completed of property above to ensure adequate floor coverings. Training rolled out to all Tenancy staff on ASB case management and record keeping, in particular with regards to recording vulnerabilities.

Compensation awarded: £4,500.

Case 10**Date:** June 2023**Number of Severe Maladministration orders:** 2**Order(s) for:**

Handling of the resident's reports of noise nuisance

Complaints handling

Case summary: The complaint was about the landlord's handling of the resident's reports of noise nuisance, the handling of reports that she was experiencing ingress of urine through her hallway ceiling and complaint handling.**Action taken:** Compensation paid, and apology issued. Inspection completed of property upstairs to ensure adequate floor coverings. Training rolled out to all Tenancy staff on ASB case management and record keeping, with an emphasis on completing risk assessments.**Compensation awarded:** £3,920.**Case 11****Date:** June 2023**Number of Severe Maladministration orders:** 1**Order(s) for:** Complaints handling**Case summary:** The complaint was about the landlord's response to the resident's request to replace bathroom fixtures to match, about communications regarding cyclical bathroom improvements, the response to the resident's request to remove a disused fireplace, skirting boards and floor beading which contained asbestos, the response to the resident's request to relocate the kitchen extractor fan, the response to the resident's reports of repairs to plaster and complaints handling.**Action taken:** Compensation paid, and apology issued. Complaints Improvement Plan shared with Ombudsman.**Compensation awarded:** £825.**Case 12****Date:** June 2023**Number of Severe Maladministration orders:** 2**Order(s) for:**

Replacement of fob key

Complaints handling

Case summary: The complaint was about actions in providing a replacement key fob and the associated offer of compensation and complaint handling.**Action taken:** Compensation paid, and apology issued. Review completed into the handling of the request for a replacement fob.**Compensation awarded:** £4,394.04.**Case 13****Date:** June 23**Number of Severe Maladministration orders:** 1**Order(s) for:** Complaints handling**Case summary:** The complaint was about the handling of the resident's reports of antisocial behaviour and complaint handling.**Action taken:** Compensation paid, and apology issued. Training provided to all Tenancy staff on ASB case management and record keeping.**Compensation awarded:** £1200.

Case 14

Date: July 2023

Number of Severe Maladministration orders: 1

Order(s) for: Management of the mutual exchange

Case summary: The complaint was about the landlord's management of the mutual exchange process; the management of the major works transfer process and complaints handling.

Action taken: Compensation paid, and apology issued. Trial launched to conduct joint inspections for mutual exchange properties with a tenancy officer and a surveyor.

Compensation awarded: £1,275.

Case 15

Date: August 2023

Number of Severe Maladministration orders: 3

Order(s) for:

Handling of repairs

Response to reports of damp and mould

Complaints handling

Case summary: The complaint was about the landlord handling of repairs reported at the property, the response to the resident's reports of damp and mould and the handling of the resident's complaint.

Compensation awarded: £5,816.10.

Action taken: Compensation paid, and apology issued. Inspection carried out with an independent mould specialist, works completed and measures put in place to monitor whether works have been effective.

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Jed Young **Corporate Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods**

Councillor O'Halloran Executive Member for Homes and Communities

Date: 14th September 2023.

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**Chief Executive Department
Town Hall, London N1 2UD**

Report of:

Meeting of:	Date:	Ward(s):
Housing Scrutiny Committee		All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt
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SUBJECT: Quarter 1 Performance Report: Housing

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The council has in place a suite of corporate performance indicators to help monitor progress in delivering the outcomes set out in the council’s Corporate Plan. Progress on key performance measures is reported through the Council’s Scrutiny Committees on a quarterly basis to ensure accountability to residents and to enable challenge where necessary.
- 1.2 This report sets out Quarter 1 progress against targets for those performance indicators that fall within the Housing outcome area, for which the Housing Scrutiny Committee has responsibility

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note performance against targets in Quarter 1, 2023/24 for measures relating to Housing.

3. Background

- 3.1 A suite of corporate performance indicators has been agreed, which help track progress in delivering the seven priorities set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan - *Building a Fairer Islington*. Targets are set on an annual basis and performance is monitored internally, through Departmental Management Teams, Corporate Management Board and Joint Board, and externally through the Scrutiny Committees.
- 3.2 The Housing Scrutiny Committee is responsible for monitoring and challenging performance for the following key outcome area: Housing: Delivering decent and genuinely affordable homes for all

4. Quarter 1 performance update – Housing

4.1 Key performance indicators relating to Housing.

#	Indicator	2020/ 21 Actual	2021/ 22 Actual	2022/ 23 Actual	2023/24 Q1	Targets	On target?	Q1 last year	Better than Q1 last year?
H1	Percentage of homeless decisions made in the target timeframe	40%	68%	77%	71%	80%	NO	77%	NO
H2	Number of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000	5.1 per 1,000	8.1 per 1,000	9.3 per 1,000	10.5 per 1,000	NA	NA	8.3 per 1,000	NO
H3	Number of households in nightly booked temporary accommodation per 1,000	4.4 per 1,000	4.4 per 1,000	5.2 per 1,000	5.6 per 1,000	NA	NA	4.5 per 1,000	NO
H4	Number of homeless preventions	947	701	808	158	850 (annual)	NO	250	NO
H5	Number of people sleeping rough	11	6	6	11	0	NO	14	BETTER
H6	Percentage of all lettings provided to council tenants securing a transfer	35%	29%	32%	29%	35%	NO	39%	NO
H7	Percentage of LBI repairs fixed first time	92.9%	88.5%	88.0%	86.0%	85%	YES	88.4%	NO
H8	Rent arrears as a proportion of the rent roll – LBI and partners	4.8%	4.7%	4.8%	4.6%	Target TBC	N/A	4.8%	SIMILAR

4.2 Tenancy Satisfaction Measures

#	Indicator	Q4 2022/23	Q1 2023/24	Target	On Target?
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H10	Overall satisfaction	NA	64%*	<p><i>New Indicators</i></p> <p><i>This is the first quarter reporting these indicators. Some indicators are being newly collected.</i></p> <p><i>Once regular benchmarking and trends are available, targets will be set.</i></p>
H11	Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	12%	8%	
H12	Repairs completed within timescale	77%	74%	
H13	Gas Safety checks	99%	98%	
H14	Fire Safety checks	100%	71%**	
H15	Asbestos Safety checks	96%	2%**	
H16	Water Safety checks	100%	33%**	
H17	Lift Safety checks	87%	24%**	
H18	Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (per 1000 homes)	8 per 1,000	9 per 1000***	
H19	ASB cases that involve hate crime incidents (per 1000 homes)	1 per 1,000	1 per 1,000***	
H20	Complaints relative to size of the landlord - stage 1 & 2 (per 1000 homes)	27 per 1000	22 per 1000***	
H21	Complaints responded to within the Complaint Handling Code timescales - Stage 1 and 2	68%	50%	

*TSM survey was taken in August 2023. Most recent data available had been included in this report
** These indicators are impacted by only reporting 1 quarters worth. For building safety measures this is because works happen at different points throughout the year, the accurate figures won't be available till year end.

*** Measures that are by 1,000 households are also impacted by only reporting 1 quarters worth. End of year projections have been provided in the narrative below.

4.3 H1: Percentage of homeless decisions made in the target timeframe

71% of homeless decisions were made in the target timeframe in Q1. Performance is below the annual target of 80% (stretch target of 90%). The service has continued to experience a significant increase in demand as homelessness increases across the borough and London as a whole. The increase has stemmed from homeless applicants approaching due to a combination of domestic abuse, disrepair (damp/ mould/ condensation), lack of private sector housing and cost of living. An improvement plan is being implemented to address this performance and measures are being implemented.

The service continues to have a weekly focus on performance for this indicator, increasing the officer target for decision reached and provision of overtime for high performing officers to reach decision within the target time frame. The service has set an ambitious target and if achieved this will result in the council being placed in the top quartile of performance.

4.4 *H2: Number of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000*

The number of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 is a new indicator in the housing scrutiny report. In Islington in Q1, 10.5 per 1,000 households were in temporary accommodation (1,144 households). Although rates have increased and performance is higher than Q1 last year, performance is still below London (17 per 1,000 households, 4 per 1,000). The latest government statistics on homelessness in England, show that the number of households in temporary accommodation has increased nationally.

Nationally, the number of households with dependent children housed in B&Bs more than doubled in final quarter of 2022 compared with the same period the year before to 2,980 – a rise of 129% in a year. There has also been a 50% rise in homelessness due to no-fault evictions in the past year. Additionally, an estimated 700,000 UK households missed or defaulted on a rent or mortgage payment last month, according to data issued days before another expected rise in the cost of borrowing. Missed housing payments were “particularly high” among renters, affecting one in 20 tenants surveyed.

4.5 *H3: Number of households in nightly booked temporary accommodation per 1,000*

There were 5.2 per 1,000 households in nightly booked temporary accommodation (607 households). A target of no more than 550 households was set last year meaning performance is

above target. Although the number of households is above target, Islington rate is similar to London, where 5.2 per 1,000 households are in temporary accommodation. Islington has 0 households in bed and breakfast. Across London 2,760 households are in bed and breakfast hotels (1 per 1,000) and in England 10,000 households (0.4 per 1,000).

Based on the most recent benchmarking and the increase in demand, Islington Council's overall performance in managing temporary accommodation is excellent. However, further reductions in the use of private sector properties are urgently needed going forward and we should not be complacent. The council has set a stretching target to eliminate the use of expensive nightly paid temporary accommodation to provide greater security for our homeless residents. The team are continuing to work to discharge ineligible households as quickly as possible, to bring the number down further.

4.6 *H4: Number of homeless preventions*

There were 158 households that were prevented from being homeless this year, figures are below the quarterly target of 212. We believe performance this year has been impacted by various challenges. These include the increase in rents in London which will make securing private sector accommodation more challenging, corresponding decrease in affordability due to the cost of living crisis, energy costs, inflation etc which will impact more acutely on those on low and moderate incomes. Concerns about the affordability of social housing properties owned by Housing Association and a further increase in homeless presentations from September 2022, as initial six-month placements through the Homes for Ukraine scheme end. Homelessness is expected to increase throughout 2023/2024 financial year as a result of the cost-of-living crisis and people being unable to afford the basics of heating their homes, food for the households, and stable/secure accommodation.

4.7 *H5: Number of people sleeping rough*

The number of people sleeping rough this quarter (11) is above end of year performance (6) but better than Q1 last year. Rough sleeping is increasing across London. However, Islington Council continues to re-house people from the streets as no one should be sleeping on the streets of Islington. The increase in people sleeping on the streets is being driven by a number of councils closing covid accommodation in particular for people with no recourse to public funds and Councils going back to business as usual and assessing people under the Homeless Reduction Act for interim temporary accommodation. This has led to rough sleepers moving into Islington due to the lack of provision in the boroughs the rough sleepers were previously in. The service continues to offer accommodation in our emergency off the street hotels. The service has 4 outreach shifts per week along with new navigator posts to work with people with complex needs.

4.8 *H6: Percentage of all lettings provided to council tenants securing a transfer*

This indicator shows how many of the council's existing tenants have been successful in moving to a more suitable social rented home, alleviating overcrowding for example and freeing up council homes for those in need. Lettings performance in Q1 is 29%, below target (35%). Performance being off target is partly due to the delay of expected new build properties which are mainly let to transferring tenants. This is also impacted by the increase in temporary accommodation and housing our homeless customers.

The service continues to focus on downsizers to release larger properties for households that need them and encouraging social housing tenants to consider the mutual exchange scheme to increase the lettings to those seeking a transfer.

4.9 *H7: Percentage of LBI repairs fixed first time*

86.0% of repairs have been fixed first time this year. Performance is above the annual target of 85%. Although performance is below last year Q1 (88%), around 4,000 more repairs have been completed in Q1 this year compared to last year (13,326 in Q1 2022/23, 17,358 in Q1 2023/24). Some of this increase is due to the insourcing of PFI however the remainder is due to a range of factors the service is still exploring.

4.1 *H8: Rent arrears as a proportion of the rent roll – LBI + Partners*

In Q1, rent arrears as a proportion of rent roll was 4.6%. In April 2022 the Council took back the management of PFI2 housing stock, approximately 3,000 properties which has resulted in the proportion of rent arrears of the rent roll for LBI increasing.

37% of the former PFI2 accounts are in arrears, which represents between 4% to 8% more arrears accounts than for LBI patches. Rent values for PFI properties are up to 25% higher than pre-existing LBI managed stock and the average arrears value of these accounts is also £417 higher compared to pre-existing LBI managed properties. A detailed review of PFI2 accounts has been undertaken since handover resulting in a significant number requiring enforcement action to bring them in line with the LBI arrears process.

Reducing rent arrears over the next year will be a significant challenge, due to the increase in the cost of living and fuel bills, which will adversely affect a majority of our residents and limit their ability to make rent payments.

5.0 **Tenancy Satisfaction Measures**

The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill has introduced a set of measures to improve standards for people living in social housing. These measures were confirmed on 21st September 2022 and are part of a new system developed by the Regulator of Social Housing to assess social housing landlords, on their provision of good quality homes and services. There are 22 measures, 12 of which are collected via tenant perception surveys and 10 of which are generated via management information.

Currently, the 10 management indicators are being measured on a regular basis and included in this report.

5.1 *H10: Overall Satisfaction*

The results of the new monthly survey showed that overall satisfaction levels have increased across all questions when compared to the 2021 results.

5.2 *H11: % Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard*

A decent homes deep dive and quality assurance process was actioned in Q1. This deep dive was the result of Islington being benchmarked in the upper quartile of London boroughs. The work allowed the team to link the non-decent elements to properties they affect. This has led to improvements in the data quality and Q1 is reporting more accurate figures compared to Q4.

5.3 *H12: Repairs completed in target timescale*

The figure of 74% is the combined performance based on 3 different measures: Emergency (92% in target timescale), Urgent (91% in target timescale) and routine repairs (65% in target timescale). When benchmarked against London, Islington Q1 performance is in the lower quartile.

5.4 *H13-H17 Building safety measures*

All 5 building safety measures (gas, fire, asbestos, water and lift safety) will be accurate at year end. This is due to the nature of the work happening at different points of the year. For monitoring purposes they will be included in the report but caveated. When benchmarked across these indicators, Islington is generally similar to London. Further benchmarking is needed to accurately understand how we rank against other London boroughs.

5.5 *H18 & H19 – Anti-social Behaviour*

As this is a newly reported measure, there is ongoing work to understand how our collection and reporting fits into the wider context of other boroughs and checking the accuracy/appropriateness of how ASB and Hate crime is recorded internally. We have undertaken an internal benchmarking process to address this. End of year projections would benchmark Islington in the lower quartile; however we are aware that this could be due to the data quality challenges mentioned above.

5.6 *H20 – H22 – Complaints*

The number of stage 1 complaints in Q1 has decreased compared to quarter 4. End of year projections based on Q1 performance would indicate that Islington is in line with the lower quartile in London. There is ongoing work to improve the complaints data system. This work should lead to improvements in data quality, timeliness and accuracy.

Implications

4.11 Financial implications:

The cost of providing resources to monitor performance is met within each service's core budget.

4.12 Legal Implications:

There are no legal duties upon local authorities to set targets or monitor performance. However, these enable us to strive for continuous improvement.

4.13 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030:

There are no environmental impact arising from monitoring performance.

4.14 Resident Impact Assessment:

5. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010).

The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and

encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

5.1 Conclusion

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out a clear set of priorities, underpinned by a set of firm commitments and actions that we will take over the next four years to work towards our vision of a Fairer Islington. The corporate performance indicators are one of a number of tools that enable us to ensure that we are making progress in delivering key priorities whilst maintaining good quality services.

Signed by:

Corporate Director, Homes and Neighbourhoods Date:

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Email: Evie.Lodge@islington.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Tenancy Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill will enact a set of measures to improve standards for people living in social housing. These measures were confirmed on 21st September 2022 and are part of a new system developed by the Regulator of Social Housing to assess social housing landlords, on their provision of good quality homes and services. There are 22 measures, 12 of which are collected via tenant perception surveys and 10 of which are generated via management information.

Earlier this year, London Housing Directors' Group commissioned Housemark to undertake a survey of stock-holding London borough TSMs. The Housemark report was finalised and published in March 2023. Data for twenty-six London boroughs is included but their responses are anonymised.

The summary below shows the benchmarked data for Islington. Going forward, TSMs will be monitored on a quarterly basis and embedded into the scrutiny performance report.

TSM	Islington Council	London Councils lower quartile	London Councils median	London Councils upper quartile	National median
TP01 – Overall satisfaction	65.00	60.2	64.5	79.3	69.0
RP01 – Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	9.51	0	0.56	10.73	0

RP02 – Repairs completed within target timescale	82.69%	76.3	80.5	89.2	85.2
BS01 – Gas safety checks	99.21%	98.76	99.54	99.93	99.99
BS02 – Fire safety checks	100%	99.1	100	100	100
BS03 – Asbestos safety checks	100%	100	100	100	100
BS04 – Water safety checks	100%	100	100	100	100
BS05 – Lift safety checks	86.51%	100	100	100	100
CH01 – Complaints per 1,000 properties	27	38.6	61.5	92.6	27.4
CH02 – Complaints responded to within timescales	80%	63.5	78.7	93.2	80.3
NM01 – Anti-social behaviour cases per 1,000 properties	8	55.4	60.4	69.8	49.9

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

25 SEPTEMBER 2023

- 1) Main Scrutiny Review 2023/24 - New Homes Build in Islington -Officer presentation and witness evidence
- 2) Damp and Mould – officer update
- 3) Strategic Review of Overcrowding in Islington – Draft Recommendations
- 4) Quarterly Review of Housing Performance (Q1 2023/24)
- 5) Work Programme 2023/24

7 NOVEMBER 2023

- 1) Main Scrutiny Review 2023/24 -New Homes Build in Islington: – Witness evidence
- 2) Damp and Mould – officer update
- 3) Fibre Broadband update on programme delivery
- 4) Work Programme 2023/24

8 JANUARY 2024

- 1) Main Scrutiny Review 2023/24 -New Homes Build in Islington: –
- 2) Quarterly Review of Housing Performance (Q2 2023/24)
- 3) Work Programme 2023/24

6 FEBRUARY 2024

- 1) Main Scrutiny Review 2023/24 -New Homes Build in Islington: – Draft Recommendations
- 2) Housing Performance Annual Report from Executive Member
- 3) Work Programme 2023/24

18 APRIL 2024

- 1) Main Scrutiny Review 2023/24 -New Homes Build in Islington: – Witness evidence
- 2) Quarterly Review of Housing Performance (Q3 2023/24)
- 3) Work Programme 2023/24

13 MAY 2024

- 1) Membership, Terms of Reference and Dates of Meetings

2) Draft Work Programme 2023/24 and Potential Scrutiny Topics

20 JUNE 2024 provisional date subject to Annual Council in May 2024)

1) Draft Work Programme 2024/25