

London Borough of Islington

Housing Scrutiny Committee - 23 April 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD - Islington Town Hall on 23 April 2019 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** O'Sullivan (Chair), Lukes (Vice-Chair), Debono, Hamitouche, Heather, Khondoker, Mackmurdie and Russell.

Co-optee: McDonald and Donaghey

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan in the Chair

82 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Gallagher.

83 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute members.

84 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

85 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

With regard to Item 80 of the minutes- Fire Safety in Council Housing, it was noted that concerns about the evacuation plans for vulnerable residents in tower blocks had the Corporate Director of Housing comments that she will be discussing the PEEP with Islington's Housing Disability Panel at their next meeting in May 2018 had been omitted from the minutes.

The meeting was informed that in light of the recent fire incident in Clifton court, the Chair reiterated committee's recommendation about installing sprinklers in tower blocks and requested that this issue be revisited by the Executive Member for Housing as it does not only prevent the loss of life but also damage to the fabric of the property.

In relation to concerns of a possible compartilisation breach in Clifton Court , The Executive Member for Housing informed the Committee that he was not aware of any breach but he would look into this issue further.

Councillor Hamitouche informed the meeting that her apologies for the last meeting had not been recorded in the minutes.

RESOLVED:

That subject to amending the minutes to include the comments omitted in the minutes regarding fire safety and the inclusion of Councillor Hamitouche's apologies, the minutes of

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

86 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

The Chair thanked members, officers and the public for their contribution to the committee's business in 2018/19 and in particular expressed his thanks to external organisations such as Clarion, Hyde and Partners for Improvement for sharing their performances and plans with Members. In addition special thanks was extended to the Executive Member for Housing having attended all the committee meetings and his valuable contribution.

The Chair formed members of a forthcoming housing award event for national housing associations being held in central London, an opportunity for members to have an insight into how the industry rates registered social landlords especially for those based in Islington.

87 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

88 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

None

89 HOUSING SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE REVIEW - 12-MONTH REPORT BACK (Item B1)

Helena Stephenson, Head of Housing Partnerships on behalf of Paul Byers introduced the report which provided a 12 month update on the Committee's review of services for vulnerable people and the following points were highlighted:

- A suggestion that the definition of the meaning of vulnerable resident should be extended to include elderly and frail persons was noted.
- A request for details including the cost to the Council about the recent judicial case that was settled in favour of a vulnerable resident which involved Now Medical was noted. The Executive Member for Housing indicated that the Council will be reviewing its relationship with Now Medical in the future.
- In response to a question on whether blind residents would be able to access the services available for vulnerable people published on the website, Members were invited to review the web page and provide feedback.
- On the issue of domestic abuse victims, meeting was advised that in comparison to other authorities, Islington has good practice in place to ensure that domestic abuse victims are protected and are not encouraged to relinquish their tenancies, however where safety is an issue, the Council will re house them away from their perpetrators.
- Members welcomed the efforts of Housing Services in keeping staff trained on how best to support tenants with additional needs as staff awareness and knowledge will have a practical impact on their work and how they interact with residents.
- Housing Services recognises the value of a skilled workforce to manage service users with different needs and has recently reviewed how staff are recruited as it is important that its staff have a more holistic approach when dealing with vulnerable residents. Officers were reminded that as part of its staff training that the Council's

Equalities strategy is taken on board.

- With regards to recommendation 8, Housing Services will be developing a resilience matrix which ensures that it is able to recognise crises and life changing events which could mean more people needing more extra support. Members were reminded that with the council children's services using resilience matrixes in their services, there is good practice in place available to learn from and build on. A suggestion that the resilience matrix should not be made available to all council tenants and not only vulnerable residents was noted.
- With regards to the essential information provided in welcome packs for vulnerable residents, Housing officers were advised that the Housing Disability Panel views should be taken on board as they will have a better insight on experiences of vulnerable residents.
- Members welcomed the Homes and Communities locality-focused pilot in the Tollington area which aims to bring key partners together to improve the range and quality of community services.
- In terms of recommendation 12, setting clear expectations for contractors working with disabled and vulnerable tenants, a suggestion that officers need to specify the level of training required from contractors right from the onset especially when the bid goes out was noted by the Assistant Director of Housing. Members agreed that compliance should be enforceable and regularly monitored to ensure that contractors are compliant with relevant disability legislation.
- On concerns about re housing homeless people discharged from hospital without proof of residency or proper identification, the meeting was informed that although not a requirement, the Council still has a duty to re house homeless people, however there will be instances where identification will be required and that each case is considered on its merits.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. An officer update be scheduled in the work programme for 2019/20 Municipal year.

90 FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESPONSIVE REPAIRS SERVICE - FINAL REPORT (Item B2)

The Committee considered the final report and recommendations. The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- Recommendation 1 should be reworded to read- The Service needs to focus on a detailed analysis of the root causes of service failures within the population of repair jobs not completed first time to identify the reasons for failure and put in place measures such as systems thinking approach to correct these failures.
- Recommendation 8 to be reworded to read - With regard to future building projects, planned maintenance projects and capital programmes, the Responsive Repairs

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Service should be consulted and their recommendations should be acted on.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendments to the recommendations noted above, the Committee agreed that the report be delegated to both the Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee and the Assistant Director of Housing to be signed off.

91 WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19 (Item B3)

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

CHAIR