

London Borough of Islington

Housing Scrutiny Committee - 19 April 2021

Minutes of the Virtual meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at 7.00 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** O'Sullivan (Chair), Debono, Gallagher, Heather, Ozdemir and McDonald (Co-Optee)

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan in the Chair

256 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillors Graham, Hamitouche and Spall

257 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute members

258 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest

259 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

260 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

The Chair noted that scrutiny reviews into Communal Heating, the Triage system and Partners would continue in the new municipal year as there was still further evidence to be received. In addition, the Chair also requested that the review into Housing Associations be included in the Committee's work programme for the new municipal year.

261 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The order of business would be B2 and B1.

262 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions

263 REGISTERED PROVIDERS -REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING DATA (Item B1)

Ian Swift, Director of Housing, Needs and Strategy was present and outlined the report, during which the following main points were made –

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- The Registered Social Housing Regulator regulates registered providers of social housing to promote a viable, efficient and well governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. The Regulator undertake economic regulation, focusing on governance, financial viability, and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. The Regulator also set consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a serious detriment to tenants
- Data available from the Regulator of Social Housing indicates there are 49 registered providers with homes in Islington. The largest registered provider is Islington Council, with 25302 properties, and this represents 58.9% of all social housing in Islington. The second largest is Peabody Trust, with 5162 properties, representing 12% of all social housing in Islington. The registered provider with the lowest number of homes in Islington is Metropolitan Housing Trust with 2 homes. In total there are 42926 Registered Provider Homes in Islington
- There are 1877 sheltered housing of supported housing homes in Islington with the largest provider being Clarion Housing Association, who manage 34.6% of all sheltered housing or supported housing accommodation in Islington. The next largest provider is Peabody Trust with 382 properties, and in total there are 1877 sheltered housing or supported accommodation properties in Islington
- There are 1454 low cost home ownership properties in Islington, with Newlon Housing Trust having the largest number of low cost ownership homes totalling 334. Islington Council owns 102 low cost ownership homes. The average Islington rent is £116.69, compared to the average registered provider rent being £125.63. Consequently the average rent weekly charged for all affordable homes in Islington is £119.65
- Members were advised that Islington Council had not sold any properties to Housing Associations in the previous 10 years
- With regards to the 22 5BR (bed room) units or more available in the borough to rehouse large families, the Director acknowledged the lack of such dwellings built in the borough. The Director indicated that he would provide information of the number of families presently awaiting rehousing in properties of 5BR , noting the challenge and reiterating that discussions are taking place with such families to discuss their housing options especially as they had little chance of being accommodated in such units in the near future due to the lack of availability
- In response to a question, the Director acknowledged that the council is in discussions with Housing Associations as to future builds and nomination rights especially as the greatest need in the borough was for 2/3BR type of accommodation
- With regards to available data regarding sale of Housing Association properties in the borough, meeting was advised that this information could be obtained from the Regulator for only the financial year 2017-19 period , ie properties sold off by Housing Associations in the borough and this could be provided to the Committee

- The Chair mentioned a survey carried out in 2010 detailing Housing Association properties in the borough and would forward to the Director of Housing Needs and Strategy

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Director of Housing Needs and Strategy be requested to contact the Regulator to ascertain details of properties sold off by Housing Associations as referred to above and provide such information to the Committee
- (b) That the information requested above on the number of residents awaiting rehousing in 5BR properties or above be circulated to Members of the Committee

The Chair thanked Ian Swift for his presentation

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MAJOR SCRUTINY REVIEW - PARTNERS FOR IMPROVEMENT - PRESENTATIONS OF HANDBACK SURVEY FINDINGS & AN OVERVIEW OF THE HANDBACK SURVEY (Item B2)

Saf Khan, PFI 2 Integration Programme Manager was present and made a presentation to the Committee, copy interleaved

Richard Hand, Ridge Consultants was also present and also made a presentation to the Committee, copy interleaved

During the presentation the following main points were made –

- There are 2 PFI street properties contracts with Partners for Improvement, referred to as PFI 1 and 2
- PFI 1 began in 2003 and is a 30 year contract and will end in 2033 and PFI 2 began in 2006 and is a 16 year contract and will end in April 2022
- PFI 2 – 1831 Street properties or blocks with 4002 homes, 2788 tenanted homes, 1224 leasehold homes. The handback survey was measured against contractual standards
- The Handback survey enabled the Council to conduct a survey to ensure properties are returned in line with contract requirements, and that any repairs identified are carried out by Partners before the end of the contract period. The value of the repairs are held in a retention fund until the repairs are completed. The Council clerk of works signs off repairs on a monthly basis and the value of completed repairs reimbursed to Partners. The value of any repairs not completed will be retained by the Council
- Ridge Consultancy were procured to undertake the surveys on behalf of the Council and the period of the survey was 6 months. Ridge employed a specialist team to undertake the stock condition survey and work with a number of varied clients
- 314 basement flats were surveyed and 940 other flats and homes were surveyed, making a total of 1254 surveys of tenants homes, from a total of

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2778 tenanted homes. Nearly all 1831 roofs and external surveys will be completed by end of April

- 5% of external surveys identified a repair, 9% of roof surveys identified a repair, 46% of internal surveys identified a repair and no repairs were found in 56% of homes surveyed. Total value of repairs identified were £446k
- A schedule of rates was used to price the repairs and 41 homes related to £151k of the total value of the repair costs, 53% of repairs cost less than £100 and 75% of repairs cost less than £250. Noted breakdown of costs per repair
- 3 key categories of repairs identified for most repairs, windows, damp and roofs. Noted other categories of repair identified
- Window repairs account for 398 individual works at 270 homes, including missing window restrictors, stays, locks, catches, handles, draught seals and other significant repairs include ease and adjust windows, rot, sash cords and renewal/overhaul of windows. The overall value of window repairs amounts to £70537.77 or £177 per repair
- Damp repairs were found in 265 homes with one instance spotted externally. There are 4 damp related issues which are not signs of damp, redecorate repair, damp survey costs, condensation, temporary repairs and these account for 203 of the 497 repairs identified. Penetrating damp, high meter readings, and water ingress are clear signs of damp/water penetration and account for 36% of the damp related issues found. Damp issues were predominantly found in basement and ground floor properties, and 21% of homes surveyed identified damp of some kind
- Roof repairs – most repairs identified on the roofs related to missing, slipped or broken tiles and account for 70% of repairs. The roof photographs show the roofs to be in generally good condition. The largest single costs are scaffold costs, which account for 79% of the total roof repair costs - £60k from £76k
- Next steps – writing to tenants of basement homes where access was not provided to encourage them to raise damp issues, continue to monitor repairs being conducted by Partners and hold them to complete works to the required standards, focus on all high value repairs and get them signed off, delayed payment on high value damp works to ensure all issues fully resolved, continue to monitor volumes of repairs being carried out and timescale for completion by Partners to the end of the contract. Work with Property Services to ensure Council retained repairs identified are completed
- Noted that Ridge Consultants who had undertaken the surveys were specialists in undertaking stock condition surveys and had carried out an onsite visual assessment of year of installation, quantity, remaining life and +PFI specific repairs and combined these with schedule of rates and lifecycles and put these into the LBI SAM database
- Noted that a 30 year business plan, aligned to other LBI stock had been undertaken and data cloned to provide a 100% output with first renewal and lifecycle repeats

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- Stock profile – 2663 dwellings, of which 1231 surveyed, 1432 cloned. 1387 blocks (100%) plus review of upshot images were carried out in an extremely challenging year due to the pandemic and access issues
- Common issues – typical London street properties, better than average condition, evidence of works undertaken and there is need to continue to maintain. Some issues with dampness, subsidence, window repairs, removed window restrictors etc. internal decorations
- Survey findings - £162m over 30 years including leaseholder block costs, low catch up total, improvements include £32.4m of wall insulation, excludes revenue allowance, and this equates to £60.8k per unit but £48.7k if exclude wall insulation
- In response to a question it was stated that the Clerk of Works was responsible for signing off repairs and Partners were also providing detailed photographic evidence of completed repairs. Noted that monies were retained in a retention fund until the Council were satisfied repairs were completed satisfactorily, and this included for dampness works
- Noted that if roofing works were deemed necessary for Health and Safety reasons these would be carried out by Partners otherwise if they were minor they would be dealt with as part of the future cyclical maintenance programme
- Noted that as many properties as possible had been surveyed within the 6 month period, and that this had been impacted by the pandemic and residents shielding or not wanting to grant access to their properties. However tenants were being written in basement flats, in order to let the Council or Partners know of any outstanding repairs so that these can be taken account of. Members were of the view that all tenants and leaseholders should be contacted in this regard
- In response to a question it was stated that the Council paid the cost of the survey and there was no cost to tenants or leaseholders
- Reference was made to the problem of draughty homes and that this needed to be addressed. It was noted that this was an issue the Council would need to address in the future with net Zero carbon, however this had not been raised as a specific issue in the survey, however there had been issues with window defects that could attribute to this and some issues with boiler pressure. Noted that Green Homes funding had been obtained for a pilot scheme and this would look at the issues with street properties, in conjunction with UCL
- Noted that Partners were providing information on the schedule of boiler replacement and CP12 certification

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and consideration be given as to contacting all tenants and leaseholders in relation to outstanding repairs as referred to above

The Chair thanked Saf Khan and Richard Hands for attending

265 WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21 (Item B3)

RESOLVED:

That subject to the extension of the scrutiny reviews on Housing Associations, Communal Heating, the Triage system and PFI 2 transfer of properties into the next municipal year, the work programme be noted

266 OTHER BUSINESS (Item)

Councillor Ward stated that he had visited the Ringcross Estate and had been extremely concerned at the poor conditions in the communal areas and lack of cleaning. Councillor Ward stated that he had been in contact with Hyde Housing Association who managed the properties and they were undertaking a deep clean of the communal areas and he would be re-inspecting the estate later that month to ensure that this had taken place

The meeting ended at 8.40 p.m.

CHAIR