

Homes and Neighbourhoods
222 Upper Street, London, N1 1XR

Report of: Cllr Una O'Halloran, Executive Member for Homes and Communities

Meeting of: Executive

Date: 14 July 2022

Ward(s): All

Subject: Executive response to the Housing Scrutiny Committee - Reintegration Programme of PFI 2 Services Review

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. In April 2022 the Executive received a report from the Housing Scrutiny Committee about its scrutiny of the end of contract arrangements for its housing private finance initiative (PFI) contract, known as PFI 2. The report provided recommendations about the council's plans for reintegrating services in the council's own structures at the end of the contract and the communications with residents about these coming changes.
- 1.2. As services ended on 4 April 2022 recommendations were responded to by the Executive Member for Housing and Planning and officers at they were developed for the Committee and this report back on the activity which has taken place in delivery the end of contract work and response to the recommendations of the Committee.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To agree the responses to recommendations made by the Housing Scrutiny Committee set out in section 4 of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1. The committee took evidence from November 2020 to January 2022, with an overall aim to ensure that there were robust processes in place for an orderly transfer of services, effective from the end of the contract with Partners in April 2022.
- 3.2. Witnesses included:
 - Octavia Housing Association
 - Ridge and Partners, who carried out the hand back survey of homes under the PFI2 contract
 - The Programme Manager of the end of service programme
 - ADs of Property Services and Capital Programme Delivery
 - Director of Digital Services
 - Lead legal officer on TUPE issues
 - A resident from a street property co-operative

4. Responses to recommendations

- 4.1. The committee set out six recommendations, reported to the Executive. Responses to each are set out below:
- 4.2. **Recommendation 1: That the transfer of PFI 2 properties from April 2022 be communicated to residents as soon as possible, to ensure that they are aware of the transfer, and for relevant contact details of Council officers post April 2022 for the reporting of repairs/issues to be made available.**
- 4.3. **Response:** Communicating with the residents transferring into council services from Partners was an important part of ensuring a successful and smooth transfer of services. A number of means were used to ensure that residents were aware of the transfer. All PFI 2 residents were written to directly twice, to inform them about the changes to their management arrangements and how they would need to contact the council in future for their services. In mid-October 2021 residents were made aware of the change, when it would be happening and where they could access further information on specific topics through our website. In mid-March 2022 residents were contacted again with details of how to report repairs and access services once the transfer had taken place. Partners also publicised the change, on the council's behalf through the February edition of the Partners Gazette and the change was promoted through our partners in the voluntary and advice sector, to ensure all communities within Islington were reached. Frequently

asked questions were available on the website to address common queries asked by PFI2 residents about the transfer of their homes and services.

- 4.4. This communication seemed to have reached our residents effectively, with plenty of contact being received direct to the council in the early weeks following the transfer. Positive feedback has also been provided by elected members that they did not have constituents contacting them confused about the arrangements around the time of transfer.
- 4.5. Information continues to be available on our website, to support residents who have transferred from Partners to access the council services at [PFI 2 properties | Islington Council](#).
- 4.6. Drop-in sessions are currently being arranged for the early summer by the Estate Champions Team, to hear from residents previously managed under the PFI2 contract. These sessions will be an opportunity to hear from residents about the experience of having their services transferred back to the council, to promote our approach to delivery of quality services to them and any hear about any on-going support needs they may have as a group of street property residents.
- 4.7. In addition to the information provided to residents, the change was heavily promoted throughout the council to ensure that all council staff were aware of the change and could direct residents accordingly. The staff transferred were warmly welcomed and introduced to colleagues, through a range of internal communications methods.
- 4.8. **Recommendation 2: That the Council ensure that an effective scaffolding plan is put in place, in order to ensure that scaffolding is available for works to PFI 2 properties, and ensure this is linked into cyclical maintenance, and net zero carbon 2030 works, to ensure efficiency and value for money.**
- 4.9. **Response:** Returning PFI2 properties are being incorporated within Islington's planned investment programme based on their condition and whether there are any outstanding investment needs. Islington is using data provided by Partners, as well as inspections, to build this knowledge and prioritise accordingly.
- 4.10. Any repairs, planned or responsive, will be managed via existing long term contracts where the provision of scaffolding is included and managed effectively. AD Construction have been appointed to deliver the council's street property programme, ready for the reintegration of these properties.
- 4.11. The properties will also be incorporated into Islington's Net Zero Carbon targets, based on specific property performance to define priority, and the improvements to these properties will be managed by the in-house surveying team and our partner contractor, AD Construction.

- 4.12. **Recommendation 3: That staff transferring under TUPE be informed of their pension entitlements and given suitable advice on transfer of pensions and options available.**
- 4.13. **Response:** The 31 staff who transferred from Partners to the council were provided with details of the council's pension scheme and were automatically enrolled into the scheme on their transfer to the council. Staff were also informed about their right to opt out of the scheme and were offered the opportunity to ask individual questions related to their particular circumstances through the council's pensions team.
- 4.14. Staff were also provided with a welcome pack to help them settle into the council, providing them with lots of information about their employment and working at the council
- 4.15. Each service arranged for a tailored induction programme into the council, led by their new Heads of Service, with opportunities to meet members of the Homes and Neighbourhoods Senior Management Team, meet the new teams, talk to HR colleagues about any issues affecting them and meet with the housing training team to help them navigate the councils' intranet, HR applications and training they needed to undertake as part of their induction. Staff were also buddied up with existing members of their team, to help them settle into their new environment.
- 4.16. **Recommendation 4: That regular updates be submitted to the Executive Member Housing and the Executive on the digital information transfer plan which is being put in place to transfer information from Partners to the Council, and that the system is ready for transfer from April 2022. In addition it should be ensured that historic data is transferrable for use by Housing management.**
- 4.17. **Response:** A detailed data transfer plan was developed and implemented by the Islington Digital Services Team, in close consultation with the receiving services. Dedicated project and technical resources worked on the project over the 18 months running up to the transfer. Regular and detailed updates were given to the Digital Project Board, set up to oversee this important part of the reintegration programme. In addition monthly progress updates were provided to the PF12 Reintegration Board in Homes and Neighbourhoods, chaired by the Corporate Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods.
- 4.18. Monthly updates on all aspects of the programme, including the digital transfer were provided to the Executive Member for Housing and Development.
- 4.19. In order to ensure that the data needed for running services was in place within our systems at the point of transfer, several uploads of the data were undertaken

during the last few months before transfer. This data was then tested to ensure it meet each services' requirements. A final transfer of data took place after the transfer of services to ensure that all records held by Partners were transferred, as appropriate into council's systems or Share Point sites.

- 4.20. The data transfer was successfully delivered, with services able to effectively pick up where colleagues at Partners had left off.
- 4.21. **Recommendation 5: That the Committee welcome the excellent work to date that has taken place on the PFI 2 transfer by the EM Housing and officers, in order to ensure a smooth process takes place for residents and the Council.**
- 4.22. **Response:** Officers would like to thank the Committee for their support and recognition of the work undertaken by the Executive Member for Housing and officers both throughout the council and within Partners. This work lead to a well organised and relatively smooth transfer of services, homes and data between the organisations. The programme took over three years of planning and delivery and was one of the first housing PFI contracts to come to an end in the country. Dedication and support was provided by a large number of contributors, who have all been thanked by the Senior Leadership Team within Homes and Neighbourhoods for their hard work and commitment.
- 4.23. **Recommendation 6: That a progress report on the PFI2 transfer be submitted to the Committee, prior to transfer, to identify any outstanding issues and to assess progress of the transfer to date.**
- 4.24. **Response:** A progress report was provided to the Housing Scrutiny Committee on 3rd February 2022, giving them a progress update on the plans to reintegrate services. The presentation and webcast can be viewed at [Islington Council - Democracy.](#)

5. Implications

5.1. Financial Implications

- 5.1.1. Following the return in-house in April 22, of the PFI2 properties, both the HRA's revenue and capital budgets were re-aligned in order to reflect the re-integration of services into the Council's own structures. These re-aligned budgets have also been reflected over the long term within the HRAs 30 year business plan. It is recognised that these are potentially more challenging properties from a repairs and investment perspective and as such as the HRA's asset management strategy

and plans are developed further, taking on board fire safety and NZC requirements, these challenges will also need to be incorporated.

5.2. Legal Implications

5.2.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5.3. Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

There are no specific environmental implications in relation to the recommendations within this report.

5.4. Equalities Impact Assessment

5.4.1. 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.

5.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because an Resident Impact Assessment was completed for the programme but not needed specifically in relation to the recommendations within this report.

6. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

6.1. The Scrutiny by the Housing Scrutiny Committee was carried over the last 18 months of the delivery of the reintegration programme and therefore as recommendations were drafted and developed, it was possible to build these into the existing programme of work being led by Homes and Neighbourhoods, with support from Islington Digital Services, Legal Services, Finance and Human Resources. This report summarises the progress and delivery in relation to the recommendations made by the Committee.

Appendices:

- None

Background papers:

- None

Final report clearance:

Signed by:



Cllr Una O'Halloran Executive Member for Homes and Communities

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