

London Borough of Islington

Housing Scrutiny Committee - 13 May 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 13 May 2024 at 7.30 pm.

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

Councillor Jason Jackson in the Chair

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Graham and Rose McDonald, a Co-optee.

53 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute members.

54 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

55 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2024 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

56 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

None

57 EXTERNAL ATTENDEES (IF ANY) (Item 6)

None

58 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 7)

None

59 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 8)

None

60 MAIN SCRUTINY REVIEW 2023/24 - NEW HOMES BUILD IN ISLINGTON - TO AGREE FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS - TO FOLLOW (Item B1)

Stephen Nash, Interim Assistant Director introduced the report and the following issues were highlighted;

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Meeting was advised that following the consideration of the draft recommendations at the meeting on 30 April and a request for the wording of recommendation 1 to be reworded, officers have made the changes.

A suggestion to amend the wording of recommendation 2.07 to read ` "Continue to design and build high-quality, sustainable and energy efficient homes as close to passivhouse standards as possible that meet the challenges presented by climate change.". This was agreed.

Also with regards details in recommendation 2.02, wording to be amended to read' that it should read ` appropriate officer resources are available to deliver the Council's target of delivering 750 new homes for social rent, as well as including completed current schemes on site, while being mindful of financial constraints with the HRA'

A request for a timeline on the council's target of delivering the 750 homes was not agreed as Committee viewed that in light of the current economic climate it would be unreasonable at this stage. Another suggestion was that officers could provide an update on the state of play after which committee may decide to include a deadline.

The Chair thanked, members, officers, residents and other stake holders all for their contribution, reminding meeting that at the centre of the review is residents which has been handled sensitively , noting the challenges of reviewing new build homes in light of the economic climate and the unique circumstances of lack of land supply in the borough

RESOLVED:

That the report and recommendations be agreed subject to the amended wordings as stated above to 2.02 and 2.08.

That an update from the New Build Team be scheduled in the Committee's work programme.

61 ISLINGTON BROADBAND - UPDATE ON PROGRAMME DELIVERY (Item B2)

The Director of Housing Needs and Strategy updated the meeting on programme delivery and the following issues were highlighted:

Council presently has 3 providers involved in rolling out community fibre to residents and is now in the final stages with BT Openreach who have advised that the terms have been agreed.

Meeting was advised that the estate broadband programme has been gathering pace over the last month and in due time Islington will on par with other neighbouring boroughs

The IMAX team have started to promote the providers' low cost (social tariff) options to their clients and feedback received from residents who have taken it are positive.

In response to a question about damage to roads caused by operators installing cables, the Director acknowledged that this is monitored regularly, reassuring meeting that operators are keen on maintaining their long-standing relationship with the Council and will be held to account.

On safeguarding concerns, the Director acknowledged that the contract can be shared with members of the Committee at future meetings.

The Chairs' suggestion to officers on the possibility of having one of the community fibre operators to a future committee meeting was noted.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

62

HOMELSSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY (Item B3)

The Director of Housing Needs and Strategy informed the meeting that the Homelessness and Rough Strategy is being presented in its draft form, that it had not been to another committee or Executive and that member input will be welcomed. The following issues were highlighted:

- Housing Operations have developed a new Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy (Appendix 1) to replace our current strategy which ended in 2023 and that it sets out how Islington Council intends to meet its statutory duties and work together with partners and colleagues across departments to prevent homelessness and eliminate rough sleeping in Islington.
- Four draft priorities have been identified to deliver its aim to meet current and emerging needs in Islington and that Council's work is aligned with and supports the overarching aims of the council in delivering Mission 3: A safe place to call home.
- It was noted that Council's priorities are based on our current and programmed work to prevent and relieve homelessness in Islington, they are aligned with the council's commitment to promote fairness and equality and with our Housing Strategy and Allocation Scheme.
- Priority 1 aims to prevent and relieve homelessness through early and tailored intervention. It is recognised that homelessness is not inevitable and it can be prevented, that Council and partners work to provide early help for those at risk of homeless. Islington Council believes that everyone who is homeless should have a right to a safe, secure home along with an appropriate level of support to create a good quality of life.
- With regards to priority 2, which is to eliminate rough sleeping and help people into settled housing, Islington Council will work side-by-side and holistically with our council colleagues and partners to eliminate rough sleeping; we work to the values set out in our Homelessness Charter with the aim to reach Functional Zero.
- On priority 3 Islington Council will aim to improve housing options available to meet the needs of our residents by providing every individual accessing our services with a realistic, sustainable good quality housing option where people can feel safe, maintain contact with their family and friends and which support their life choices

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- With regards to priority 4, Islington Council aims to providing accommodation and resettlement services to refugees and migrants. Meeting was reminded that Islington Council became an accredited Borough of Sanctuary in 2023 so it will work ambitiously with its partners to make Islington is a place of welcome, safety & success for all and to integrate new communities, build social cohesion and eradicate poverty
- Meeting was advised that draft strategy and action plan are due for presentation to CMT later in the month after which we will engage in a formal consultation for 6 weeks. Upon completion of this exercise and collation of feedback received, the final drafts will be submitted for Executive approval prior to implementation.
- Since October 2023, Islington Council has purchased 168 ex Right to Buy properties to use for temporary accommodation.
- On the issue of trauma induced approach, member welcomed this change in culture noting that the first point of contact tend to be stressful for those who are homeless and importantly how this is to measured.
- A suggestion to extend the offer of the 20 allocated ex right to buy properties to those under special guardianship was noted .
- Consideration should be given by Council to residents living in private temporary accommodation and especially with those with disabilities.
- A suggestion to avoid placing homeless people in the safe area where there are issue of alcoholic and drug use in the same poor area should be avoided especially as most of the Council's purchase of ex right to buy properties are in poor area, that every attempt must be made to have those ex right to buy properties in relatively good areas may help rehabilitate the homeless persons was noted.at Council.
- Meeting was reminded that the issue of homelessness is a London issue and maybe it should be addressed in that manner and also it is important to ensure RSL's are not allowed to sell off social housing which was given to them at peppercorn rent
- In response to the question of action 61, of recovering 50 properties subject to tenancy fraud, the Director advised that data analytic will be provided at a future meeting noting that it has been challenging as in the first quarter of the year so far 8 properties have been recovered.
- With regards to action no 48 and the target of building 750 new genuinely affordable homes, meeting was advised that the wording will be amended in line with recommendation 1 on the new build homes review on timelines .

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The Chair thanked Ian Swift, Director of Housing Needs, encouraging all stake holders to contribute and help shape the strategy during its six weeks of consultation.

RESOLVED:

That the draft strategy be noted,

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

CHAIR