MINUTES OF THE MEETING Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Monday, 23rd June, 2025, 6.30 - 9.30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: John Bevan, Diakides and Adam Small (Chair)

234. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting, and Members noted the information contained therein'.

235. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Buxton and Cllr Barnes.

236. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business

237. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

238. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

239. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting on 6th March were agreed as a correct record.

240. TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED

That the Panel:

I. Noted the terms of reference (attached at Appendix A) and Protocol (attached at Appendix B) for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Panels.

II. Noted the policy areas/remits and membership for each Scrutiny Panel for 2025/26 (as set out in Appendix C of the report).

241. HOUSING ADAPTATIONS

The Panel received a report which set out how the Occupational Therapy (OT) Aids and Adaptions service operated and how it interfaced with Housing. The report provided an overview and service offer across Adults and Children's services, with a focus on council housing stock, and the impact on council tenants. The report was introduced by Jahedur Rahman, Director of Housing, Christian Carlisle, AD for Asset Management, and Alexandra Domingue, Commissioning Programme Manager. Also present for this item were Cllr Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing Planning, and Cllr Das Neves, Cabinet Member for Health, Social Care and Wellbeing. The following arose during the discussion of this item:

a. The Chair sought clarification about the £1k threshold for minor versus major works and whether this was across all tenures, and whether it was means tested. In response, officers advised that all works below £1k were not means tested. The organisation was reviewing means testing for works over £1k. Officers clarified that the threshold was £1k in total, so this would include a package of smaller jobs that added up to that amount. Cllr Das Neves advised that nationally the threshold for when means testing might be used tended to be around £30k.
b. In response to a question about a drop in the number of cases in 2023/24 compared to the previous year, officers advised that it was possible this drop reflected a higher percentage of non-Council properties being fitted for aids and adaptions that year. Officers also set out that there were some resourcing issues around that time, which have subsequently been rectified, including the recruitment of additional surveyors.
c. In response to a question, officers advised that the Housing Aids and Adaptions Policy was in draft and was being reviewed by Housing colleagues. It was anticipated this would be ready in a few months.
d. In response to a question, officers advised that the CQC did an inspection of Adult Social Care and in general they had positive comments about OT, but were concerned about things like waiting lists. The Adults Health Scrutiny Panel had also asked officers to evidence how they were incorporating the voice of the residents in this. The Director of Housing advised that any policy that went to Cabinet for Approval would also go to the Resident Voice Board first for their feedback and consultation.
e. The Panel queried whether aids and adaptions were carried out on to housing association properties. In response, officers advised that the aids and adaptions were carried out for the residents rather than the provider, so yes work was done on housing association properties, but their permission was needed.
f. In response to a question about caseloads, officers advised that the number of cases was down to around 350 and that this was specific to the OT Sensory team. Those people on the waiting list were very likely to have already been seen by the OT Duty team and offered minor adjustments.

g. In reference to recruitment of Occupational Therapists, officers acknowledged that this was a national issue and that work was being done to look at this. Officers confirmed that they did have an apprenticeship currently in place in that team.
h. The Panel sought clarification about reason that the volumes for the OT Duty Team were much lower that the OT Sensory team in 2024/25 and whether this was a result of the Duty team being able to discharge cases. In response, officers advised that it was a combination of the fact that the data only came in at the end of 2024 and that the OT Duty team was able to see people more quickly. They're timescales were to see someone within two weeks and for the assessment to be made two weeks after that. The OT Duty team were able to make determinations about short term equipment and would refer more complex cases to the OT Sensory team. Officers advised that the OT Duty team were fully functioning by October 2024 and that this had had a big impact on being able to clear the backlog. The service had also been able to deploy some external resources to clear the backlog.
i. The Panel queried the fact that costs had increased significantly in 2023/24 despite the number of cases going down and questioned whether this was down to the complexity of the cases. In response, officers advised that this was during the cost of living crisis and that construction costs went up dramatically. Officers also advised that with the backlog in cases it was likely that people's needs had become more complex if they had been waiting without any intermediary intervention taking place.
j. The Panel sought clarification about whether aids and adaptations works were only carried out in a person's home or whether it was possible to carry out works in front gardens or to the pavement outside their homes. In response, officers advised that the works could be external to the property, provided they owned the land. The works undertaken would be based on their assessed eligible need under the Care Act. Works to the pavement would require the consent of the highways authority.
k. In response to a question, officers advised that they were not clear about when they would be re-inspected by the CQC, but would expect this to be around 12 months later. It was cautioned that the CQC had well publicised capacity issues which may affect the timescales for re-inspection. Officers advised that there was a three year improvement plan in place.
l. The Panel sought clarification about the areas of improvement that officers felt the service needed to focus on. In response, officers advised that there was a huge opportunity for strengthening integration with health colleagues in areas like hospital avoidance. Officers also identified the need to work with residents and to offer clear information and advice. It was also commented that the service would like to see even more local people recruited into social care in Haringey.
m. The Panel queried about the burden of funding and how the equity question could be resolved around funding. In response, Cllr Das Neves advised that equity was an important part of everything the organisation did. The locality model split the borough into three areas – central, east and west. The CQC welcomed this approach as part of their inspection and the fact that it allowed the Council to put more resources in greater areas of need. The Cabinet

Member advised that if there was a magic money tree she would like to see greater investment in more preventative work at an earlier stage, as well as more work to address health inequalities. The Cabinet Member advised that NHS colleagues had set out that Haringey had around 20% more people living with two or more conditions than some other London boroughs.

n. In response to a question, officers recognised that there had been problems historically around updating the asset management register when adaptations had been carried out. Officers advised that a piece of work had been undertaken over the past nine months to ensure that records were updated when an adaptation was carried out. Officers commented that their preference would be that an adapted property was allocated to someone who needed that adaptation when it became that property became empty, rather than the adaptation being removed and the property allocated to general needs housing.

RESOLVED

That the report was noted.

242. HOUSING SERVICE PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY 2024/25 OUTTURN

The Panel received a presentation which provided an overview of Housing Service performance, comparing year-end results for 2024/25 and 2023/24. It included the KPIs used in the services monthly reporting and covered areas such as; repairs and voids, compliance, asset management, tenancy management, estates & neighbourhoods, income collection, leaseholder services, and support & wellbeing. The presentation was introduced by Jahedur Rahman, Director of Housing as set out in the published agenda pack at pages 61-92. Paul McCabe, Head of Repairs was also present for this agenda item, along with Christian Carlisle and Neehara Wijeyesekera, AD Housing Management. Cllr Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning was present for this item. The following arose during the discussion of this item:

a. The Panel sought raised concerns about the length of time it would take to undertake tenancy checks and sought clarification about the frequency with which they would be undertaken. In response, officers advised that they were committed to complete 20% tenancy checks year-on year, so that would mean all tenancy checks would be completed on a five-year cycle. In response to a follow up, officers advise that the checks were undertaken by the housing officer responsible for that location, and that it was done through an in-person visit.
b. The Panel sought an update around progress on bringing the Noel Park Estate up to the Decent Homes Standard. In response, officers advised that the programme was split into two phases. Stage one was completed earlier this year and stage two would begin later this year. Officers provided assurances that they were still committed to undertaking all of the renovations in Noel Park.
c. The Panel sought clarification about the Decent Homes standard and how the Council would be able to meet the decency standard on the remaining 20% of homes, given the 2.3% improvement in the last year. In response, officers

advised that they had agreed a five-year plan on getting to a 100% decency rate with the regulator. This plan had year-on-year targets for decency levels, and the Director of Housing officers advised that he was confident that the organisation would meet those year-on-year targets. The Director of housing advised that the organisation had gone from a position where 32% of homes were non-decent when he arrived, to 20% in around two years. Officers also acknowledged that the year-on-year targets were back loaded, and assurances were given that additional capacity had been built in in order to achieve this. Officers advised that a key factor was having the supply chain contracts in place, which Cabinet had recently agreed. In response to a follow up question, the Cabinet Member commented that she did not think that there was a big gap between what a tenant might consider a decent home and what the technical definition was. Both included things like double glazing, modern kitchens and a reasonable standard of repairs.

d. The Panel sought assurances around the reason behind an increase in new voids up from 393 in 2023/24 to 619 in 2024/25. In response, officers advised that the increase in voids was a result of the Council's housebuilding programme as well as the neighbourhood moves scheme resulting in people moving to new homes and that empty property needing to have work done to it. It was commented that LBH managed around 15k properties and the industry standard would be around 350 voids per year. In response to a follow up, it was acknowledged that only 488 of the 619 new voids in 2024/25 were made ready for let, and that in an ideal world this would be 100%. However, the Cabinet Member commented that this represented a 25% increase in output from the team from the previous year. The Director of Housing provided assurances that the service also utilised external resources to help provide additional capacity. It was also commented that the service had made significant progress in reducing the number of voids in the last 2.5 years.
e. The Panel sought clarification around the estates parking project. In response, officers advised that engagement on the first tranche of estates was underway and that the plan was to role this out over nine zones, with planned completion in 2026/27. As a follow-up, the Panel raised concerns about residents having to pay for parking on estates. Officers emphasised that the driver was to ensure consistent access across the borough and to make it fairer. The Cabinet Member emphasised that the charges were not the same as they were for a CPZ and that by implementing this, residents would be able to park on their estates.
f. In relation to the timescales for the new Asset Management system, officers advised that a contractor had been appointed and the service was now at the mobilisation stage. It was stated that it would take three to six months to transfer the legacy data from the old system to the new one. The new system would be fully integrated with the tenancy management system and the repairs system.
g. The Panel sought clarification around the estate inspection programme, it was commented that there used to be a much more systematic approach in the past. In response, officers advised that there was a programme of inspections and that these were publicised to allow residents to attend. It was noted that the frequency with which they took place was decided in discussion with

individual resident groups. Officers comments that they attended an inspection recently and that it was very well attended. It was commented that this experience did not necessarily chime with that of individual Panel members. Cllr Bevan commented that he could not remember the last time a resident attended an estate inspection in Northumberland Park. The Chair commented that in his experience they tended to be something that was driven by ward councillors.

h. The Panel commented that there seemed to be an issue with getting feedback on the actions that were picked up as part of the estate walkabouts. It was suggested that sometimes ward councillors did not receive any feedback and it was speculated that a failure to see resolution to actions had led to residents not engaging. In response, officers accepted that it was a mixed position and it was stated that there was a continuous improvement group being set up. The Director of Housing acknowledged the concerns put forward by the Panel and advised that he would take the feedback on how the service communicated the outcomes from inspections back to the team for further consideration. The Head of Repairs provided assurances to the Panel that his officers were attending resident group meetings and that the feedback they gave was used to improve the service.
i. The Panel sought clarification about how the indicator for satisfaction with last repair was compiled and also whether the satisfaction with a first fix was a judgment call by the resident or by the service. In response, officers advised that satisfaction with repairs was responded to by residents via a text message that they were sent asking to provide feedback. Officers also advised that the first fix was a judgment call made by the service.
j. In response to a question, officers advised that there was no indicator specific to general satisfaction rates with repairs but that a comparative score of 90% would be seen as good performance in light of benchmarking with other boroughs.
k. The Panel sought clarification around the deep cleaning service. In response, officers advised that as part of the Housing Delivery Plan, it was agreed to have a deep cleaning programme, which consisted of a team of three, as a pilot programme, who would do deep cleaning on blocks where the organisation received particularly negative feedback. It was commented that this was an endorsement on top of the usual caretaker services, and it was partly in recognition that the caretakers did not have the resources to undertake a deep clean. It was acknowledged that the deep cleaning programme could only improve feedback scores so much and that painting the blocks was outside the scope of the deep cleaning programme. Officers advised that the programme would be paid for through the service charge.
l. The Panel queried how residents would get assurances that they got the services that they were paying for through the service charge. In response, officers set out that residents were only recharged for the services that they were given. In the case of the deep cleaning programme only residents in blocks who had received this service would be charged for it.
m. In response to a question about charges to leaseholders for major repairs and a sinking fund, officers advised that what could be charged for would be determined by the individual lease. It was commented that Haringey had a very

generous set of repayment options available to leaseholders including a 25 year repayment plan. Leaseholders also had the option of placing a voluntary charge against the property so that it would be paid when the property was next sold.

n. The Panel enquired about how clearing the backlog of Right to Buy applications in response to a change in the rules on the amount of discount available. In response, officers acknowledged that they had received over 700 applications and that the responses has been issued to those who were able to move forward. It was commented that work was being done ensure that verification was accurate and that, like most councils, it would take a bit of time to get through it.

RESOLVED

Noted

243. HOUSING RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT APRIL 2023 TO DECEMBER 2024

The Panel received a report which set out a summary of the Resident Engagement Annual Review that covered the financial year 2023-2024. The Annual Review document was attached to the report at Appendix A. The report was introduced by Neehara Wijeyesekera, AD for Housing Management as set out in the agenda pack at pages 93-120. Reda Khelladi, Community & Resident Engagement Manager was also present for this item along with Cllr Sarah Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing & Planning. Afia Ankrumah, the chair of the resident voice board (and a Haringey tenant) was also present for this item. The following arose as part of the discussion of this item:

a. The Panel commented that it would be helpful in future iterations of this report if there was a breakdown of the geographic location of resident associations across the borough. In response, officers agreed to provide this as part of the 2024/25 report and commented that the number of associations had increased to 26.
b. In response to a question about the community food box, officers acknowledged that the relevance for this service had diminished since Covid, given the number of food banks and similar organisations operating in the borough. Officers advised that they would continue to work with partners in this area.
c. The Panel sought clarification about how we advocate the resident voice board to the wider group of residents, particularly those who weren't particularly engaged. In response, officers advised that they were confident that they had created a process which worked but acknowledged that it was a process that was in development. It was commented that part of this was around including those that were not in the resident governance structure and that they were working to create digital engagement for specific groups. The chair of resident voice board advised that as residents they also talked to other residents

informally about resident engagement. It was noted that, as the chair, she had appeared in the residents' magazine and that people stopped to talk to her.

d. The Panel sought assurances that resident engagement was happening in every estate across the borough. In response, officers commented that people from across Haringey were represented in the engagement framework. It was also stated that there was a resident association network which brought together the chairs and secretaries of each resident association, and which met every two months. The Director of Housing commented that the resident engagement framework was only 18 months old and acknowledged that there was room for it to grow. The Director commented that having 50 people involved was considered to be good progress, especially compared to what a number of other boroughs were performing in this area.
e. The Chair commented that the statement in the report around every resident having a 30 minute slot as part of the estate drop-ins did not necessarily chime with his experience. In response the Cabinet Member acknowledged that there was a mixed picture and that some drop-in sessions were busier than others.
f. In response to a question, officers advised that the resident continuous improvement group met regularly and that they had reviewed the Council's support to resident associations as part of their work. As a result of this work, resident associations were now receiving more funding from the Council to help sustain them. There was also a dedicated officer in place who worked with the resident associations and helped them bring in external grant funding.
g. The Panel asked about annual tenant satisfaction surveys, in response officers advised that the regulator of social housing had brought in a range of 22 measures that were compared across the national average. Officers also commented that the report highlighted that in 12 months covered by the report there had been an 18% increase in residents feeling more informed.
h. The Chair invited the chair of the resident voice board to give her perspective as a resident. In response, Afia advised that residents preferred numbers to percentages and stated that it was helpful to see concrete examples of what had changed. In relation the areas of most concern, the Panel were advised that these were repairs and ASB. It was commented that in relation to ASB there were historical problems with complaints being parcelled off to different services, and a perception that there was a lack of a joined up coherent approach to tackling ASB.
i. In response to a question, officers advised that Housing produced an annual report on their performance as a landlord, which was available on the Council website and the latest version covered 2023/24. The Panel requested that the guidance on the new arrangements for supporting the tenants associations be circulated via email. **(Action: Neehara).**
j. The Chair thanked the Chair of residents voice for giving up her time and coming to speak to the Panel.

RESOLVED

Noted

244. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING & PLANNING

The Panel undertook a verbal Q&A session with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning (Deputy Leader), Sarah Williams on matters arising in her portfolio. The following arose as part the discussion:

a. A member of Panel commented that he attended an event during the day and that at the event he had a conversation with people from another London borough, who had raised concerns about the level of technological advancement in new build properties, compared to existing housing stock. Of particular concern was the heating systems and the fact that the repairs staff didn't know how to work them. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that councils hadn't built any new homes in a generation and that this resulted in a lack of organisational memory. The Cabinet Member suggested that Haringey would be able to build up the skills in its workforce quite quickly. The Council has undertaken a separate contract of repairs for new builds, which was time limited and included a provision for our existing repairs staff to be trained up on mechanical heating and ventilation systems. The Panel was also advised that new build properties would have more wrap around care from tenancy managers for thinks like using air source heat pumps. In regards to landscaping, the Panel were advised that there was a two-year contract in place to manage landscaping on new builds, which should provide enough time to build in a programme of ongoing maintenance from existing staff.
b. The Panel requested a summary of survey feedback that was collected from tenants who had moved into new build properties. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that this was collected as an annual report and that she would circulate the Annual Council House Building report to the Panel. **(Action: Cllr Williams).**
c. The Panel raised concerns about delays to works at Kenneth Robbins House and Stellar House. The Panel sought clarification if residents had been advised that reason for the delays was because of legislative changes brought in by the government. In response, the Cabinet Member commented that she shared the Panel's frustrations. It was clarified that any works being undertaken to a building above a certain height now had to be cleared by the building safety regulator. The regulator had a two year backlog for approvals. The Cabinet Member advised that residents of both blocks had been advised of the reasons for the delays. The Director of Housing advised that the Council was as keen as residents to get the works underway. The contract had been awarded and the contractor was ready to start in March last year, but the works needed to be signed off by the regulator before they could start. The Panel was advised that the works could start from December 2025 onwards based on the current backlog.
d. In response to a follow-up question, officers advised that the delays would not invalidate the original contract but that it was possible there could be additional costs arising from the delay.
e. The Panel raised concerns about severe overcrowding and a perceived delay to estate repairs being done. A member of the Panel raised concerns about delays to works at Turner Avenue. In response, the Cabinet Member

acknowledged that overcrowding was a serious issue and that, in part, it reflected the wider housing crisis. The Cabinet Member contended that building new Council homes at scale was vitally important, and that having larger new housing units coming online was already having an impact on severe overcrowding. It was commented that the impact on severe overcrowding would get better as more new housing was completed. In relation to Turner Avenue, officers advised that the contractor had gone into bankruptcy and that the Council was in the process of re-procuring the incomplete works. This was due to be agreed by Cabinet in September.

f. The Panel commented on the sheer number of policies covering the Housing portfolio and in that context sought assurances that all of the policies were delivering on the administration's goals. In response, the Cabinet Member noted that some policies were more important to the delivery of the administrations key goals that others. It was commented that there were a number of policies that had to be updated to reflect a changing regulatory framework and other were important in terms of delivering on the Haringey Deal, such as resident engagement. The Cabinet Member advised that dealing with every outstanding action set out in the regulator's judgment, as part of the Housing Improvement Plan was a key priority.
g. The Panel queried how many people who were under-occupying their home had agreed to downsize. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that there had been people moving as part of the Neighbourhood Moves scheme, but it was acknowledged that the numbers were not enough. It was suggested that the Ashley Road site might be somewhere that tenants wanted to move into and that the Council was prioritising downsizers and older people for these properties. Officers added that in 2024/25 31 larger homes had been freed up through under-occupation moves. This represented a 5 fold increase from the previous year.
h. The Panel enquired about a scheme to house a certain number of ex-service personnel and whether this had been dropped. In response, the Cabinet Member noted that it was called the Armed Forces Covenant. The Cabinet Member set out that that there were a number of groups of people who were recognised in the Lettings Plan for being a priority group, including ex-service personnel and care leavers. The extent to which they would be prioritised would depend on their individual circumstances and many may also have a housing need priority based on other factors like vulnerability.
i. The Chair enquired about the Affordable Energy Strategy and whether there were any plans to renew this when it expired. In response, officers advised that this came under Environment & Resident Experience and a written response would be provided. **(Action: Philip).**
j. The Panel queried whether the timescales for the Community infrastructure levy were still on target. The Panel also noted concerns with the process in relation to Highgate receiving more funding than wards in Tottenham. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the timescales were broadly on track and that it was expected to be in the Autumn.
k. The Panel enquired about the nature of the subletting policy. In response, officers advised that when leaseholders sublet their property, they had a requirement to notify Housing Management and to provide their forwarding

address. Similarly, council tenants are required to notify their housing officer if they have a guest staying with them for more than three months.

l. The Chair commented that people being able to sublet a room in their home may act as a disincentive towards them downsizing and requested a written response on the number of residents who sublet a room. **(Action: Jahedur).**

RESOLVED

Noted.

245. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Chair commented to the Panel that he would like to do a scrutiny review around the downsizing policy later in the year.

RESOLVED

That the Panel:

I. Noted the terms of reference (at Appendix A) and Protocol (at Appendix B) for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Panels; and

II. noted the policy areas/remits and membership for each Scrutiny Panel for 2023/24 (at Appendix C).

246. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

247. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 23 September (amended)
- 17 November
- 15 December
- 9 March

CHAIR: Councillor Adam Small

Signed by Chair ……..

Date ……