

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET MEMBER SIGNING HELD ON FRIDAY, 23RD MARCH, 2018, 10.00am

PRESENT: Councillors: Alan Strickland

Also present: Hannah Adler, David Sherrington, Ayshe Simsek

28. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Cabinet Member referred to agenda item 1, as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting and Members noted this information.

29. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business put forward.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest put forward.

31. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN FINDING

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and Planning noted that report has been compiled following notification of the outcome of a complaint made to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman) by Ms X, a former homeless applicant placed into temporary accommodation by Homes for Haringey in discharge of the Council's statutory duties owed to her.

The complaint centred on the suitability of the temporary accommodation provided, which had a lack of cold water supply to the kitchen, as well as other defects.

The Ombudsman found fault on the part of the Council, which had caused injustice to Ms X. He also made a number of recommendations which were attached to the report (appendix one) as well as the main report.

The purpose of this report was to bring the matter to the Council's attention, and to seek authority to implement proposed action to be taken in response to the non-compensatory parts of the recommendations made by the Ombudsman in his report.

The Cabinet Member was informed that Ms X and her family had been moved from this property to better accommodation, in June 2017.

The Cabinet Member noted that the Corporate Committee had considered the attached report at their meeting, last night, [22 March] and agreed the compensation payments in line with their terms of reference. The Committee had further asked for ex gratia payments to be granted to Ms X given the intolerable conditions that she had

been forced to preside in. The Committee had been advised that this request would be considered, outside of the meeting, by the Council and Homes for Haringey. The Cabinet Member followed up on this request and was advised that Homes for Haringey and the Council Housing Team would consider whether the total payments made, were in line with Homes for Haringey compensation policy or Council compensation Policy and if there were any further additional payments required. The outcome would be reported back to the Corporate Committee at their next meeting in June 2018.

The Corporate Committee had also commented on the failure of the complaints process to progress the complaint from stage one to stage two, and asked the Cabinet Member to take a view on whether a review of the process should be undertaken. The Cabinet Member agreed to write to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources to ask for a review of the co-ordination of this complaint between the Council complaints team and Homes for Haringey team, to understand if there were any lessons to be learnt and new practices that would need to be applied for dealing with Homes for Haringey related housing complaints.

The Cabinet Member was assured that the LGO findings had been fully considered and lessons learnt. In particular, the management of Housing Reviews and monitoring of water supply in blocks throughout the borough.

The Cabinet Member asked if there was a systemic issue with the water tanks on the Love Lane Estate, where his block had been located. It was noted that the homes in this particular block, where running water was an issue, had since been decanted and additional water tanks fitted. These properties could now be re-let to homeless households. Homes for Haringey officers had also been door knocking on the block in question and similar blocks to ensure that tenants had sufficient water and there were no issues reported from this exercise.

Going forward, Homes for Haringey were fitting electronic monitoring systems to water tanks in Council housing blocks, across the borough, so when water levels dipped below the required amount or there was a drop in temperature, an alarm would notify the housing management team. This device would also be fitted to housing block lifts to help with the overall effort to ensure that services to tenants become less reactive and more proactive.

The Cabinet Member noted that the LGO review had also been considered at a recent Homes for Haringey Board meeting and they were aware of the case and the actions that needed to be taken to respond to the LGO findings.

The Homes for Haringey leadership team were monitoring Housing Reviews and considering monthly performance reports to ensure that these reviews were suitably investigated.

Further to responses to his questions, the Cabinet Member was content with the actions being taken forward to respond to the LGO findings and placed on record his disappointment that Ms X had been placed in this inadequate accommodation and her

complaints not dealt with effectively. The Cabinet Member apologised, on behalf of the Council, to Ms X for the distress caused.

RESOLVED

1. To note the outcome of the Ombudsman's investigation contained in his report dated 31st January 2018.
2. To note the content of a report to the Corporate Committee meeting on 22nd March 2018, and the resolution adopted.
3. To agree and authorise the implementation of the actions proposed by Homes for Haringey to address the non compensatory aspects of the Ombudsman's Recommendations.

Reasons for decision

In view of the fact that officers and Homes for Haringey (HfH) accept the findings of the Ombudsman, coupled with the fact that the Corporate Committee only has the Constitutional power to authorise compensatory payments, the issue has to be determined by Cabinet / Cabinet Member signing. Further, this referral is also required in order to comply with the requirement made by the Ombudsman to provide written evidence of the fact that his report has been considered by "full Council or Cabinet".

Alternative options considered

Council Officers and HfH have accepted the outcome of the Ombudsman investigation, so no other options have been considered.

32. URGENT BUSINESS

None

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date