

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON MONDAY 10TH JUNE 2019, 7.00 - 9.10pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Khaled Moyeed (Chair), Ruth Gordon, Bob Hare, Yvonne Say and Sarah Williams

1. 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'.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Barnes and Cllr Stone.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Moyeed declared an interest in relation to the Wards Corner scrutiny review as he had previously acted as a lawyer representing two of the traders at Seven Sisters market. While this issue was not scheduled to be discussed at the meeting, Cllr Moyeed wished to place this interest on record at his first meeting as the Chair of the Panel. He would therefore be recusing himself from any future discussions of this issue at the meetings of the Panel including the forthcoming discussions on the recommendations of the Wards Corner scrutiny review.

5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

A valid deputation request had been received from Rev. Paul Nicolson who addressed the Panel about temporary accommodation in Haringey. Rev. Nicolson said that the policies of the government were making people hungry, homeless, mentally and physically ill and shortening their lives. There are 82,310 homeless families with 123,630 children in temporary accommodation in England, some of whom are in work. 56,560 of these families (69%) are in London and just under 3,000 families, with 5,208 children under 18, are in Haringey. This situation can only get worse as incomes are

too low, housing benefit is cut, rents are too high, council housing is demolished and there is a shortage of affordable housing in London. Land is taken by developers for what is called regeneration and the value of land is allowed to exceed the capacity of people on low and middle incomes to afford a home. Billions should be invested into solving the housing crisis in the same way that the government invested to resolve the 2007/08 banking crisis.

In response to questions from the Panel, Rev. Nicolson said:

- That tenants can now be required to accept their first offer of permanent accommodation in council housing or the private rented sector though in some cases this offer is unsuitable. The Panel should advise officers that the Council should only offer accommodation that:
 - is fit for habitation
 - the landlord is not about to be repossessed by a mortgage company
 - the property is not owned by a buy-to-let landlord who anticipates selling it within the next five years
 - that the homeless family is not financially damaged by high private sector rents
- That the Panel should advise officers that the High Road West regeneration scheme should be scrapped because it reduces the number of truly affordable homes to rent.
- In cases where the landlord is the local authority, temporary accommodation tenancies, such as those on the Love Lane estate, could be converted to secure tenancies for the people currently living there.
- That he was aware of some families that had been living in single-room accommodation at Broadwater Lodge and Whitehall Lodge for an extended period of time even though it ought to be only a holding operation while more suitable accommodation is found.
- The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 now enables local authorities to take action against landlords with sub-standard accommodation.

Cllr Moyeed thanked Rev. Nicolson for his deputation and said that the Panel would take forward the issues raised as part of the later agenda item on temporary accommodation.

6. MINUTES

The action points from the minutes of the previous meeting were discussed:

- On the outstanding action point from the meeting held on 21st February which concerned a forthcoming report on the review of the management process for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Cllr Gordon suggested that this be added as an item to the agenda of the next meeting in September. (ACTION)
- Asked about timescales for the action point on providing a redacted copy of the Development Agreement for High Road West, Dan Hawthorn, Director of

Housing, Regeneration and Planning, said that this should be available shortly. (ACTION)

- It was agreed that an item on the £10m socio-economic programme that is to be implemented as part of the High Road West regeneration scheme be added to the agenda of a future meeting to allow for questions on the report that had been provided. (ACTION)
- On the action point about holding a fuller discussion about the Local Plan and the 50% affordable housing target at a future meeting, it would now be necessary to invite Cllr Hearn who is now the new portfolio holder for Planning. (ACTION)

Members of the Panel requested that the feedback from action points be provided at an earlier stage in future to allow more time for them to be properly considered.

AGREED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2019 be approved as an accurate record.

AGREED: That new deadlines be added for each item on the action point table.

7. Q&A - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING & ESTATE RENEWAL

Cllr Emine Ibrahim, Cabinet Member for Housing & Estate Renewal began this item by responding to the points raised by Rev. Nicolson in his deputation earlier in the meeting. Cllr Ibrahim agreed with much of what Rev. Nicolson had said, however said that it also had to be acknowledged what a difficult position many local authorities are in with a national housing crisis that is more acute in places like London and boroughs like Haringey.

On the point about single room accommodation, Broadwater Lodge is not temporary accommodation, it is emergency accommodation which is often only one room. Emergency accommodation can be a difficult experience and 12 weeks is usually set as the maximum time. People placed here often have children because the placements are based on priority need. Places like Broadwater Lodge and Whitehall Lodge, where the Council has control over the conditions, are an improvement on the bed and breakfast premises used for emergency accommodation in the past where there could often be health and safety concerns. However, this does not change the fact that it is still single room accommodation for a family and Cllr Ibrahim said that improving the experience of people in emergency accommodation was a particular priority for her.

On a point raised by Cllr Williams about the Council's policy not to accept its responsibility for rehousing a family until a bailiff arrives rather than when the notice to quit is served, Cllr Ibrahim said there are certain legal issues impacting on this but it is something that the Council should look at. Denise Gandy, Executive Director of Housing Demand at Homes for Haringey (HfH), added that there had been a change in guidance following the passing of the Homelessness Reduction Act regarding people who have received Section 21 notices to work with them much earlier. There is a specific test on how to consider the reasonableness of when to move people as a

preventative before the stage where a bailiff is called. However, this is not always possible due to the short supply of housing. Denise Gandy agreed to circulate further details about the test to the Panel. (ACTION)

Cllr Ibrahim cited Right to Buy as a key factor in the extended lengths of time that families are often placed in temporary accommodation as Councils have not been able to replace their stock with the proceeds of purchases. As families are likely to be in temporary accommodation for a longer period of time the Council needs to ensure that the quality of temporary accommodation is sufficiently high and that no family is forced to accept accommodation that is not fit for habitation. There have been some cases, that have arisen via casework, where the Council has fallen short and this reflects the huge challenge faced in securing enough suitable properties. The review process is now being delivered by HfH rather than being outsourced.

Asked what procedures are in place to prevent people from being placed in emergency accommodation for a long time, Cllr Ibrahim said that to be in emergency accommodation for more than three months is often because of unique circumstances. An example could be somebody fleeing domestic violence while they have an existing tenancy elsewhere meaning that it can take some time for HfH to establish that they are homeless. Other examples include cases where it is unclear that the person has recourse to public funds or whether they have become voluntarily homeless and an appeal is heard which takes time. When there are children involved there can still be a Children's Act duty. Denise Gandy, Executive Director of Housing Demand at HfH, expanded on this point saying that when there is an intentionality decision, which is comparatively rare, there is 45 days notice for the period to engage with Children's Services so they will stay in their accommodation while that process happens. A dedicated worker is being recruited to work between HfH and Children's Service with these families to help this process run in a seamless way. This post is just about to be advertised, so will hopefully be in post by the end of the summer, and will be funded through the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant. Denise Gandy also said that she receives a report every three days on the placements in Broadwater Lodge and Whitehall Lodge and the reasons why they are still there in cases where it has been longer than would usually be expected. While this type of emergency accommodation is not ideal, when the Lodges were first established they were to provide an alternative to placing people in private hostels or elsewhere outside of the Borough. Cllr Ibrahim confirmed that she does not receive the same regular update reports as Denise Gandy on a routine basis but can ask for information like this whenever required.

Cllr Gordon asked about a recent report from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman concerning a family placed in Temporary Accommodation with issues including cockroach infestation, damp, mould and broken locks and what action was being taken in response to the report. Cllr Ibrahim said that the Ombudsman's report requires a formal response from the Corporate Committee. A meeting date of 17th June had been set and HfH would be attending to respond to the criticisms made.

As Cabinet Member she had herself asked for a full response from HfH about this and was in regular contact with Sean McLaughlin and Denise Gandy who had provided

updates and answers. There was some criticism over the review process - these were previously been carried out externally and were now being done internally. It was important not to start apportioning blame and there has been a good level of responsibility taken and no one had sought to pass the buck. Denise Gandy said that the report had two main areas of recommendations, one on the reviews process including ensuring that they are carried out to the appropriate timescales and quality and the other on reporting and repair and checking that these are carried out by the landlord. The full report is already in the public domain and will be circulated to the Panel. (ACTION)

Asked how the Council will prevent the loss of any council-owned housing that will be built in the near future from being sold off under Right To Buy, Cllr Ibrahim said that this is a dilemma. If the properties are not 100% council-owned then only assured tenancies can be offered which are not subject to Right To Buy, however an assured tenancy is not ideally where you want to place families that have been in temporary accommodation. Those placed in secure tenancies have the legal right to buy, however many of the people in temporary accommodation for years and then placed in a secure tenancies are likely to be those on lower incomes so the chances of them being in a position to purchase the property in the first few years is quite low. Dan Hawthorn added that the high property values and the fact that the Right To Buy discounts are not as large in the first few years are also factors that make the purchase of the properties less likely.

Asked whether the 180 families in temporary accommodation on the Love Lane Estate could be allocated secure tenancies immediately, Cllr Ibrahim said that allocations of all people on the waiting list were calculated on the basis of priority need and this has to be respected.

Asked about Rev. Nicolson's other proposal about the Council not offering accommodation in a property that is owned by a landlord who anticipates selling it within the next five years, Cllr Ibrahim said that this is likely to exacerbate existing difficulties with sourcing sufficient good quality private accommodation. Offering accommodation in a property that is just about to be repossessed is something that the Council would already seek to avoid. Denise Gandy added that checks are made on landlords including through a questionnaire on issues such as their mortgage position and with a check of the rogue landlord list.

Cllr Ibrahim also referred to the 'Capital Letters' cross-London initiative which aims to collaboratively procure new properties to rent on behalf of London boroughs and prevent London boroughs from competing with one another and driving up prices.

8. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Denise Gandy, Executive Director of Housing Demand at HfH, presented some slides on temporary accommodation in Haringey, which had been circulated to Panel Members in advance, and highlighted some key points:

- Haringey has historically had a heavy reliance on temporary accommodation. There had been 6,000 households in temporary accommodation in 2006. The

current figure is 2,931 which is about the third or fourth highest of any borough in the country.

- The Homelessness Reduction Act, which came into force in April last year, had been very significant as the Council is now seeing around a third more people than previously, including more single people. The legislation is to be welcomed but it doesn't come with any additional supply so presents a challenge.
- Access to social housing lets is falling with the decant of the Tangmere and Northolt block on the Broadwater Farm Estate having a significant impact.
- Temporary accommodation is used in a number of circumstances. Sometimes it is provided in short term emergency situations such as for someone fleeing from domestic violence, other times it is when the Council has a relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act or where the Council has reason to believe that a household will be owed a homelessness duty and needs to investigate further. The homelessness duty can be discharged through an offer of suitable social housing or private rented accommodation but the shortage of suitable housing means that some households can remain in temporary accommodation for a long period of time.
- The Homelessness Reduction Act has added more emphasis on the importance of preventing homeless including through a "prevention duty" on local authorities to try to prevent the homelessness of anyone who is at risk of becoming homeless in the next 56 days. Everyone that the Council sees through this receives a personalised housing plan.
- The government has also changed the funding arrangements for temporary accommodation. Instead of the management fee of £40 per week per property that local authorities received, this has been replaced by the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant to carry out work on homelessness which is £6.7m for Haringey in 2019/20. This has to be offset against the losses made on temporary accommodation so may not in reality be as large an allocation as it seems.
- In addition to the Lodges referred to earlier, the other types of temporary accommodation used includes Council housing, properties leased from landlords on a 3 or 5 year basis, properties leased from landlords on a nightly basis and properties leased and managed by housing associations.
- There is a Temporary Accommodation Allocations Policy which was agreed by Cabinet which describes who has priority for local temporary accommodation. Families typically stay in one of the Lodges first, further work has been done to support single people including the conversion of properties on Hale Road into hostels.
- Only 347 social housing lets are expected to be offered this year. As there are significant pressures due to the decant of the Northolt block on the Broadwater Farm estate, only 90 of these let are expected to go to people in Temporary Accommodation.
- The provision of temporary accommodation cost the Council nearly £8m last year.

- Future work includes some work with the Fairness Commission, learning from the recent Ombudsman findings and investing the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant.

Cllr Ibrahim added that £13.5m had been invested in 2018/19 so far in purchasing 47 street properties which are now being used for temporary accommodation and represents a significant increase in this type of investment compared to previous years.

Asked about the timetable for the decant of blocks on the Broadwater Farm Estate, Alan Benson said that all tenants are now out of Tangmere block but there are still three resident leaseholders living there. Some people have started to move out from Northolt block but this decant is expected to take a little longer, most of these are 1-bedroom properties so it is slightly easier to move them out but it will put pressure on lettings for 1-bedroom properties.

On the development of housing on Hale Road, Denise Gandy said these were previously not let on a permanent basis so these were given on licence to another organisation to let. These properties have now been taken back into HfH management, have been refurbished and there is now a support provider there which is St Mungos.

Asked why the proportion of Temporary Accommodation that is from landlords on a nightly basis is so high (there were 1,490 of these according to one of the slides), Denise Gandy said that many landlords who used to work in the leased sector have shifted to the nightly paid sector because it is more lucrative when demand is high. The spend is a big proportion of the £8m spent on Temporary Accommodation, further details could be circulated on the precise costs. (ACTION) Dan Hawthorn added that the Council's aim is to drive that proportion down through various initiatives because it is this type of temporary accommodation that is the most expensive and also the most difficult type to guarantee the quality of the accommodation.

9. CHILD YIELD STATISTICS - NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

Emma Williamson, Assistant Director for Planning, introduced the report on this item noting that the Panel's interest in this issue began with a deputation from Paul Burnham at a meeting on 15th January 2019 and was then followed up by a letter from the Chair of the Panel to the Leader of the Council. The issue related to which child yield calculator was being used to determine the requirements for play spaces and educational facilities for the expected child population arising from new developments. The GLA had two versions of the calculator on their website and, at the time of the Leader of the Council's reply to the Panel, the advice from the GLA was that the old calculator should be used. Since then the advice has changed and Haringey Council can now use the revised calculator, which results in increased contributions, in planning decisions.

The letter from the Leader of the Council had committed to carrying out research to establish a bespoke Haringey Child Yield standard but since then the Ministry of

Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has started some work on updating how child yields are calculated nationally. The Council will therefore instead examine whether a Haringey Child Yield standard is required or whether the MHCLG's work will help to achieve similar objectives. Asked which of these routes would be the quickest, Rob Krzyszowski, Head of Planning Policy, Transport & Infrastructure, said that the quickest method is to adopt the revised GLA calculator which has already been done. The GLA figures are sound but dialogue will also continue with the MHCLG over their work in this area to ensure that the most up to date and robust methodology is used. It is generally helpful for Haringey's Local Plan to align with national policy but if the Council has robust local evidence then it can make a case for this to be used. Cllr Gordon expressed the view that if there is local evidence for a higher standard than the requirements of the MHCLG then this should be applied.

10. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Panel reiterated that an item on the review of the management process for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and an item on the £10m socio-economic programme that is to be implemented as part of the High Road West regeneration scheme be added to the agenda for the next meeting in September.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 12th September 2019 (7pm)
- 4th November 2019 (7pm)
- 16th December 2019 (7pm)
- 3rd March 2020 (7pm)

CHAIR: Councillor Khaled Moyeed

Signed by Chair

Date