

Scrutiny Café – 16 September 2022

Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel

Top Priorities from Survey from within terms of reference:

1. Social Housing
2. Housing Supply and Investment
3. Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation
4. Regeneration
5. Private Rented Sector

Issues Suggested in Scrutiny Survey or at Scrutiny Café

Suggestion	Comments and Feedback from Survey and Cafe	Response (Item for Panel meeting/potential review/Cabinet Member Question/no further action)
Management of repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality and standards of repairs.• Concerns around cyclical and reactive repairs. Either not being done which caused bigger problems later down the line or being done to a poor standard.• If the Council does not deal with repairs, the problem escalates and gets worse.• Presence of mould in accommodation. Poor quality of window and doors in people's homes• Better maintained communal spaces (inc. outside space).• Communication on repairs. A failure to adequately communicate with residents about how long a particular repair would take, when it would be carried out etc.• TA repairs –lack of feedback about how long repairs take.	<p>Possible short scrutiny review in the future, once the Council repairs service has time to bed-in following the transition to in-house.</p> <p>Report to a future meeting</p> <p>Questions to Cabinet Member</p>

Suggestion	Comments and Feedback from Survey and Cafe	Response (Item for Panel meeting/potential review/Cabinet Member Question/no further action)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty of navigating repairs service for those who don't speak English or are unable to follow up through the complaints process for whatever reason. • Subcontractors and a lack of adequate contract management. • "Residents do the right thing and report repairs but then nothing is done and then it ends up being taken down the route of resident complaints and judicial review". 	
Housing for people with specific needs - Aids and Adaptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable accommodation for those with disabilities or parent/carer responsibilities. People being put into very unsuitable accommodation and the fact that aids and adaptions either took a long time to implement or were done badly. • Time lag between people surveying aids and adaptions and anything happening. "Why does it take 6 months?" Suggestion that Council needed to be better at communicating the process • People with severe learning disabilities and other disabilities should be given priority for housing. • Housing needs for young people should be captured as part of their Education Health Care Plans that begin when they are young children. Their future Housing needs should be captured here from the age of five and a long term view given as to how to support them into housing (so they are don't just fall through the cracks in transition from children to adulthood). 	<p>Report to future Scrutiny Panel</p> <p>Questions to Cabinet Member</p> <p>Question to Cabinet Member</p> <p>Question to Cabinet Member</p> <p>Question to Cabinet Member</p>

Suggestion	Comments and Feedback from Survey and Cafe	Response (Item for Panel meeting/potential review/Cabinet Member Question/no further action)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queues at customer service centres and the difficulty this creates around housing and urgent needs. Communication channels with the Council and the perception that there was a general lack of empathy or understanding from the Council. • Does the Council keep a record of the adaptations it carries out? • How is the council planning for the housing needs of vulnerable adults, particularly in later life. 	<p>Question to Cabinet Member</p> <p>Question to Cabinet Member</p> <p>Question to Cabinet Member</p>
Empty Properties/Voids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of time taken to around empty properties when people move out. There is a long waiting list for housing and how can the Council look to fill those voided properties quicker. Noted that some of the voids require extensive works to them and this can take some time, given the supply chain issues etc. • Key link about the relationship between voids, adaptation needs, adult social care and the housing waiting list. 	<p>Empty Homes Policy update received in June 2022</p> <p>Further report to future Scrutiny Panel</p>
Private Sector Landlords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to social housing very difficult for young people • The cost of private rented sector accommodation - £800/£900 for a single room in a shared house. • Concerns about rogue agents withholding the administrative and letting fees paid by tenants when offers fell through. Lack of regulation of estate agents and the extent to which the Council can enforce against them. • The route to housing for most young people is blocked, whether that is through the private sector or social housing. Private sector housing is getting harder and harder. 	<p>Report to September meeting of the Panel.</p> <p>Short Scrutiny Review planned around the impact of legislative changes on the Council and the impact of increasingly seeking to place people in housing in the private rental sector.</p>

Suggestion	Comments and Feedback from Survey and Cafe	Response (Item for Panel meeting/potential review/Cabinet Member Question/no further action)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rent stabilisation and support packages. Concerns that landlords just collect rent and often don't seem to have the welfare of sick or disabled residents at heart. The Council needs to be able to encourage good private sector landlords. 	
HMO Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll-out of licensing scheme and the extent to which it improves compliance rates by rogue landlords. Need for tougher HMO licensing enforcement but also concerns raised about additional costs to landlords being passed on to renters in an already very expensive market. Has anyone looked at the unintended consequences of the MHO licencing process. Many landlords are conscientious the Council needed to be mindful of the language it used when discussing the issue. 	<p>Report on licensing received by the panel in June 2022.</p> <p>Follow-up report to come to a future meeting.</p>
Housing Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of accommodation and repairs provided by Housing Associations Housing Associations are regulated separately so the Council has limited influence. Concerns about specific providers, such as London and Quadrant and a lack of accountability. 	<p>Report to a future meeting of the Panel.</p> <p>CEO of leading Housing association to be invited to a future meeting.</p>

Suggestion	Comments and Feedback from Survey and Cafe	Response (Item for Panel meeting/potential review/Cabinet Member Question/no further action)
<p>Temporary Accommodation & Homelessness</p> <p>Homelessness – customer service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of repairs in TA • Need to consider the everyday lived experience of the people in Temporary accommodation and the fact they have to go to local schools and work in the local area. The Council needs to make sure that it places families not too far away as many people don't have access to cars. Placing people across London and Hertfordshire is unfair. • Impact on people's mental health from poor quality TA. • Disproportionate impact on single parents and families with children. • Provision of homelessness services • Homelessness customer service was seen as being poor and difficult to navigate. "emails never get a reply, and some phone numbers never work, plus caseloads take too long to be resolved." 	<p>Report to Scrutiny Panel</p> <p>Questions to the Cabinet Member.</p>
<p>Role of the planning process in ensuring the protection of green spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth spaces to be provided as part of the development process and Section 106 funding. Council should be doing more to pressure developers. • Street Trees and green spaces • Council Should ensure that all new housing is done on brownfield sites • Passive Haus design accreditation for all new developments and consideration of environmental impact and energy efficiency. • Build in biodiversity to developments 	<p>Report on the New Borough Plan received by the Panel in June 2022.</p> <p>Further questions to be put to the Cabinet Member</p>
<p>Leaseholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with and involving leaseholders in decisions made about their properties. 	<p>Questions to Cabinet Member</p>

Suggestion	Comments and Feedback from Survey and Cafe	Response (Item for Panel meeting/potential review/Cabinet Member Question/no further action)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for greater scrutiny on Noel Park works 	
Trees on housing estates	<p>“Not building on or removing existing green spaces with mature trees on estates such as the Ramsey Estate, Downhills Estate, Parkland Walk.”</p> <p>“Need to protect mature trees around ALL housing for healthy air, mind, air cooling.”</p>	Questions to Cabinet Member
Street properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links into empty homes policy and wider housing strategy. <p>“I think the council need to scrutinise street property that it owns in my area or do some monitoring. I think you should bring back some of the tenant’s panels so we can input things so the council is up to date with what’s going on so it can deal with things faster.”</p>	Empty Homes Policy update received in June 2022
Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue about how the Council treats its customers and residents and the people skills of its staff who deal with sometimes vulnerable residents with multiple care needs. 	Put up to main committee with a suggestion that this is a cross-cutting issue for OSC to look at.
Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place making and question of who regeneration is for? • Concerns about impact of gentrification 	Questions to Cabinet Member
Failure to integrate housing, social care and repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there scope for greater integration. Benefits vs costs. 	Questions to Cabinet Member