

Report for: Cabinet

Item Number: 8

Title: Matters arising from Housing, Planning & Development Scrutiny Panel – Undertaking a review of the Housing Register

Report Authorised by: Councillor Alexandra Worrell, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Lead Officer: Philip Slawther, Scrutiny Officer,
philip.slawther2@haringey.gov.uk, 020 848 2954

Ward(s) affected: N/A

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** Non-Key

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 This report is put forward in accordance with Part 4, Section G, Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules – paragraph 12.1, and sets out a recommendation from the Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel as part of the consideration of a report on the housing strategy and policy programme, which was considered at its meeting on 26 September 2024.
- 1.2 As set out in Part 4, Section G, Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules - paragraph 10.2, the Scrutiny Review Panels must make any recommendations they wish to put forward through the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. OSC is required to formally ratify the request from the Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel and agree to submit the recommendation to Cabinet.

2. Introduction

- 2.2 At the Housing, Planning & Development Scrutiny Panel on the 26th of September, the Panel received a report which set out the key strategies and policies being developed within the Housing Strategy Team. One of the policy documents discussed was the housing allocations policy, which was in the final stages of development following engagement with residents and stakeholders.
- 2.3 All local housing authorities need an allocations policy which sets out who is prioritised for social housing in the area. Within a wider context of a chronic shortage of social housing, and growing demand, the Panel considered that a fair and clear housing allocations policy was even more important.
- 2.3 The Panel sought assurances around the housing register and when the last time that a review of that housing register was undertaken, in order to ascertain that the register was up to date. The Panel contended that there may be people on the register whose circumstances had changed and who no longer required a

council home, either because they had moved out of the area or because they had found alternative housing in the private sector. It was noted that a similar undertaking had been done in the past.

- 2.4 In response to the above, officers advised that to the best of their knowledge, this had not happened for some time and that part of the reason for this was down to resources. It was acknowledged that writing to those on the housing register and asking them to update the Council on the current status of their housing needs had been done in the past.
- 2.5 The Panel also feel that any consultation process around the allocations policy needs to be mindful that a number of residents may not be comfortable using computers and may have limited access to the internet. The Panel would like a degree of face-to-face consultation taken out, it was suggested that this could be conducted in libraries.

3. Outcome

- 3.1 The Panel resolved that they would like to submit a formal recommendation to Cabinet, through the OSC, that the Council undertakes a review of the housing register. In doing so, the Council should write to everyone on the housing register and ask them to provide an updated return on their current housing status. It was felt that the most appropriate time to do this was as part of the consultation process for the updated housing allocations policy.
- 3.2 At its meeting on 25th November, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed that the recommendation be submitted to Cabinet.

4. Overview and Scrutiny Recommendation

- 4.1 To recommend that Cabinet consider writing to everyone on the housing register and taking forward a review of the register, in order to ascertain the extent to which the information held by the Council was up to date and whether, in light of the length of time some people spend on the register, their housing needs had changed.

5. Cabinet Response

- 5.1 As part of the implementation process of a revised Housing Allocation Policy that it is anticipated will be adopted in 2025, the Council will need to reassess all existing applications against any changes to assessment criteria. This will include ensuring we have up to date information for all existing applicants on which to base an accurate assessment against the new policy. As part of this process, applicants will be invited confirm or otherwise update their current circumstances.
- 5.2 Following implementation of the new the new policy, we will ask for applications to be renewed and conduct reviews of applications at regular intervals. This approach will be set out in the draft policy that will go out to consultation.

