Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Panel
Minutes of 3rd March 2016

Present: Cllr Ayisi (Chair), Cllr Engert, Cllr Gallagher, Cllr Gunes, Cllr Ibrahim & Cllr Newton

In attendance: Cllr Strickland

1. Webcasting
The meeting was not webcast.

2. Apologies for absence
Cllr Griffith.

3. Declarations of interest
None received.

4. Urgent items of late business
None.

5. Petitions
None.

6. Minutes
6.1 To approve the minutes of the 3rd March 2016.

7. Cabinet Q & A

7.1 The Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration attended to respond to questions from the panel on this portfolio. The following provides a summary of the key issues covered in this session.

7.2 Northumberland Park Development – it as noted that there had been significant learning from the resident and engagement and involvement process, particularly in relation to Love Lane. It was noted that there are now three residents associations in the area which will help to facilitate engagement on future development plans for the area.

7.3 Development vehicle – this was approved by Cabinet, and procurement is about to commence for a partner. This scheme would help the council to develop local housing by bringing in additional skills and expertise. It is anticipated that a development partner would be in place by the end of the year / beginning of 2017.

7.4 There is a new Head of Social and Economic Regeneration – and the panel may wish to invite this new post holder to a future meeting.

7.5 Housing Fraud – there had been concerted action to help identify illegal subletting in both Homes for Haringey and other registered providers (as this was now a criminal offence). It was noted that over 60 properties have been returned to

the council or other providers back as a result of this initiative. Fraud within Temporary Accommodation was also being assessed.

7.6 Right to Buy Applications – all applications are subject to fraud investigation. There have been over 250 applications this financial year of which 75 have either been declined or withdrawn as a result of local investigations. This has resulted in a saving of £100k per property (the discount available) or £7.5m saving in total. The council has been approached by a registered provider to support them in similar process that would be introduced in this sector in the future.

7.7 Modular Build – there are two pilot sites which together could provide in excess of 100 temporary accommodation units. It is likely that new sites will emerge as regeneration plans progress. It will be important that sites are not left idle and ensure that maximum housing opportunities are provided through such sites. It was noted that the Cabinet member will continue to meet and discuss such plans with local councillors. It is important to help reduce use of emergency nightly rates accommodation given the relative expense of this form of housing.

7.8 The council recognise that where possible, it is better to keep those that need accommodation within their community so that they can continue to access established support networks. It was suggested that increasing the supply of temporary accommodation quickly through modular build which can be sited locally may help local residents to maintain links and reduce costs for the council. The cost of a modular build was estimated to be £70-80k as opposed to £270-280k for a permanent home.

7.9 There was some concern as to the quality of modular build and stigma (if these were to be used solely for temporary accommodation). It was noted that there were in excess of 20 different designs available and that there was an intention to mix the tenures at the scheme (i.e. not just TA).

7.10 It was noted that the new Mayor, whoever is elected, may introduce new housing and regeneration policies which may significantly impact on how the council meets local housing needs. The council would be bidding for a second Housing Zone in the borough.

7.11 The Chair thanked the Cabinet member for attending.

8. Preferred Partner Agreement

8.1 The new and emerging protocol for the Preferred Partnership Agreement (PPA) was presented to the panel. It was noted that an existing PPA was agreed at Cabinet in November 2014, which confirmed the following Registered Housing Providers (RHP) as preferred partners:

- London & Quadrant
- Circle
- Family Mosaic
- Newlon
- Notting Hill
- Sanctuary.

8.2 The purpose of the PPA was promote information sharing and to support change in the sector locally. Four key service areas form the basis of the PPA, which include:

- New development
- Homelessness / Temporary Accommodation
- Estate management
- Relationships with elected members.

8.3 The panel noted that there had been significant improvement to the two-way relationship since November 2014 and that a good working relationship was in existence with this smaller group of RHPs to help achieve housing and other related objectives stated in the Corporate Plan. The panel noted that:

- A Memorandum of Understanding had been developed to support a common set of management standards across the sector;
- Work was progressing to establish an agreed procedure for member enquiries;
- Partners were working together to identify how residents can be4 supported to maintain their tenancy in challenging circumstances;
- RHPs were keen to be involved in prospective development partnerships with the council.

8.4 Prospective changes anticipated through the Housing and Planning Bill would impact on the sector, in particular the forced sale of properties through Right to Buy. It was noted that forced sales could significantly affect the business model of smaller RHPs and could affect their overall viability. In the context that there are 45 RHPs operating in the borough, most of which are relatively small scale operations, the Cabinet member has met with the largest local RHPs to determine what support could be provided to smaller RHPs operating in the borough to minimise future risks in the sector.

8.5 Further clarification was given in respect of the use of RTB receipts. It was initially hoped grants would be offered to preferred partners to assist in the delivery of new affordable homes. In reality, there has been a low take up of the grants mainly because these grants could only account for 30% of the total cost of the scheme and they were unable to use RTB receipts with other grants. In the context of the above, eligibility for RTB receipts has been extended to a wider pool of RHPs, including smaller housing organisations, to facilitate take up and increase the provision of affordable homes.

8.6 It was noted that there was considerable demand by preferred providers for land to develop affordable homes. However, the Council is still in the process of identifying a partner for the proposed development vehicle and land that can be transferred to the vehicle is also still under consideration. The council will be better placed to consider the needs of preferred partners once these decisions have been taken. In the interim, the Council has continued to work with preferred partners, in particular Newlon and Notting Hill in the Housing Zone area.

Agreed: That the panel should receive an update on the use of RTB receipts and use for affordable housing.

8.7 The Housing Strategy will be updated and finalised toward the end of 2016, which will restate the importance of working with local partners to improve the supply of affordable homes in Haringey. It is hoped that preferred partners will sign-up to the strategy once agreed.

8.8 The terms of the preferred partnership will be continually monitored and updated as necessary in response to local or national policy changes.

8.9 The Chair thanked officers for attending.

9. Supported Housing Review

9.1 The council provides a range of supported housing services for older and vulnerable adults living in the community. The council provides:

- Short-term services; up to 2 years – for single homeless adults, young people, domestic violence, mental health, substance misuse and offending.
- Mid-term services; more than 2 years – for people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health.
- Long-term services; usually lifetime – for older people and people with learning and/or physical disabilities

9.2 A review of supported housing was undertaken in 2005, which revealed an oversupply of sheltered accommodation and undersupply of Extra Care accommodation. The review currently being undertaken will:

- Update the evidence base;
- Look at all supported housing, not only sheltered for the elderly;
- Transform and modernise services, focus support on need not age;
- Reflect strategic objectives in the Housing Strategy as well as operation pressures in homelessness and temporary accommodation.

9.3 The panel noted that the scope of the review will encompass the following:

- Services commissioned by all parts of the council (principally Housing Related Support & Adult Services);
- All supported housing will be included; older people's provision will be given priority;
- Focus on accommodation-based services;
- All providers, including private provision where possible;
- Property quality and standards in council-owned stock;
- Residential and personal care provision is out of scope but step-down & Extra Care needs.

9.4 The review will take 12 months and will analyse a wide range of needs assessment data to ensure that supported housing services meet the current and future needs of local residents. A consultation on proposed outcomes will take place in the autumn of 2016, the resultant recommendations to be presented to Cabinet in December 2016. A dedicated project manager is in place to support this work and project board will oversee the review.

9.5 The panel noted that the review will pay particular attention to sheltered housing for the elderly, where there are approximately 50 local schemes supporting over 1,300 local residents. The review will focus on the quality and standards of such schemes.

9.6 Although the review is not finance driven, it is anticipated that the data gleaned from the needs assessment will guide and inform more strategic approach to commissioning of supported housing, which may free up funds for further investment.

9.7 A key aim of the review will be to provide an evidence based assessment on each of the different sites and schemes within the supported housing programme and to make recommendations based on this to take forward in the consultation.

9.8 A critical aspect of the review will be to assess how such schemes are connected within the community and if there is potential that such schemes can operate as a service hub to a support wider range of older people's needs within the vicinity of the scheme. This model is currently being trialled at Larkspur Close. Members of the panel were supportive of this approach, particularly as this approach could be used to provide prevention services. It was noted that local Housing Associations may also be interested in this model and approach.

9.9 The panel noted that the review would also pay attention to culturally sensitive schemes. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) would be undertaken at the point of decision to outline how proposed developments will impact on equalities groups.

9.10 Larkspur Close was discussed where it was noted that a conditions survey would take place to identify any investment that may be needed. It was noted that there were no plans for redevelopment of the site in the short or medium term.

9.11 It was noted that that there were a number of guides to supported housing in the borough. These provided details of the schemes in the borough. These would be reassessed once the review had been completed.

9.12 The panel discussed how local residents become attached to a specific geographic area, which should be recognised and reflected in how people are placed in supported housing. It was noted that the review would generate improved data to better help match supply and demand, and enable geographical preferences to be taken in to consideration.

9.13 It was noted that the consultation would also explore the viability of expanding specific schemes. The review would look at geographical longer term demand and seek to plan services accordingly.

9.14 It was noted that Good Neighbour Schemes would also be included within the review to identify how older and other vulnerable residents can be helped to live independently at home. It was noted that many older people wanted to live at home in a general needs dwelling and could be helped with floating support and other such similar schemes.

9.15 It was suggested that an increase in the provision of single bedroom ground floor properties could also play a part in helping older and disabled people to live independently at home. Such additional provision within overall housing supply could help to create more opportunities for older people living in larger houses to downsize.

9.16 The Chair thanked officers for attending.

10. Community Infrastructure Levy

10.1 The panel received the final report of the Community Infrastructure Levy. It was noted that this would now be approved by Overview & Scrutiny Committee last in March 2016. It was anticipated that the review would be presented at Cabinet for agreement in May 2016.

11. Work Programme Update

11.1 The Viability Assessment review would take place on 7th April 2014. It was noted that in addition to a number of developers, both Greenwich and Southwark had both agreed to attend. As agreed, the panel would also have the support of the Planning Officers Society for objective and independent advice.

12. New items of business.
12.1 None

13. Dates of future meeting