

DRAFT
Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Panel
June 27th 2016

Present: Cllr Amin, Cllr Bevan, Cllr Engert, Cllr Ibrahim (Chair), Cllr Morton & Cllr Newton

In attendance: Cllr Gideon Bull

1. Webcasting

The meeting was not webcast.

2. Apologies for absence

Cllr Gallagher

3. Declarations of interest

None received.

4. Urgent items of late business

None.

5. Petitions

None.

6. Terms of reference

6.1 Panel members noted the term of reference report, in particular the additional inclusion of parts of the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Sustainability portfolio on carbon reduction and the Council's 40:20 ambitions.

6.2 The Cabinet member for Housing & Regeneration would continue to be invited to attend, but would now respond to questions in respect of Housing, Regeneration and Planning to reflect an expanded portfolio.

6.3 Planning enforcement and HMO licensing are now located within the portfolio of the cabinet Member for Environment and discussions are taking place as to the most appropriate panel in which scrutiny of these issues should take place.

6.4 The Budget review process and timeline of the new MTFS is still being agreed, and this will be reflected in future work programme schedules for the panel.

6.5 The panel also discussed performance issues and noted that a briefing would be provided ahead of future panel meetings to help guide and inform discussions.

Agreed: The web-link to the performance wheel would be sent out to panel members.

6.6 The panel noted and agreed the terms of reference report.

7. Minutes

7.1 Members noted a number of issues arising from the minutes:

- The development vehicle, discussed at the previous meeting, would be subject to discussion as part of the work programme for 2016/17;
- The new Head of Economic and Social Regeneration has been appointed, and an invite would be issued to attend a future meeting (with the Cabinet Member for Housing & Regeneration) to discuss future plans for Tottenham;
- The Cabinet Member for Housing & Regeneration agreed to bring a short report to the panel on Right to Buy receipts, this would now be factored into the new work programme for 2015/16;
- The Community Infrastructure Levy report was submitted to Cabinet in May at which all recommendations were agreed.

Agreed:

- (1) Development vehicle subject to in depth scrutiny in 2016/17;
- (2) Right to Buy Receipts update to come to the panel on 2016/17 work programme;
- (3) Invite the new Head of Economic and Social Regeneration to a future panel meeting;
- (4) That the outcomes of the Supported Housing Review and the formal consultation is presented to the panel.
- (5) Community Infrastructure Levy update report to come to Overview & Scrutiny in March 2017.

7.2 It was suggested that there are a number of performance issues with some of the Registered Providers that are 'preferred partners' of the council. This could be raised with the respective Cabinet member at their Q &A session with the panel.

7.3 The panel noted that the process through which member enquiries to housing associations are handled is part of the Preferred Partnership agreement. Despite this work, it was suggested that there was still no set procedure for handling member enquires.

Agreed: that a briefing is provided to the panel to update members on work being undertaken to establish a member enquiry handling process with local RHPs.

7.4 In response to issues arising from modular build, it was agreed that a site visit should be arranged to view examples in London.

Agreed: That a site visit is arranged to view modular builds used for residential accommodation in London (dates will be circulated to the panel).

7.5 Further to the above discussions, the minutes of the last meeting were approved.

8. Temporary accommodation

8.1 The Manager of Housing Demand attended to provide an overview of the work currently being undertaken to support those in temporary accommodation in Haringey. A presentation was given outlining the key challenges in managing

demand and increasing supply (attached). The following highlights areas of discussion additional to that given in the presentation.

8.2 In respect of re-lets, it was noted that there were 491 in 2015/16, though in excess of 50% of these were 1 bedroom units. Thus for families in temporary accommodation requiring two or more bedrooms, it will take substantially longer for properties to become available.

8.3 It was noted that as a result of the Welfare Reform agenda and the uncertainty this had precipitated in the market, there was increased nervousness among private rented sector landlords. It was perceived that supplying properties to those in receipt of welfare benefits was now more risky and this was deterring landlords to from investing in this sector.

8.4 In terms of the net inflow and outflow of people in to temporary accommodation, it was noted that fewer people were now able to come out because there were fewer opportunities for them to move out (e.g. declining number of re-lets and limited private rented sector opportunities).

8.5 Many landlords were however moving into the emergency accommodation market, as in times of excess demand, as this was more lucrative. In less buoyant market, landlords may prefer to go into longer lease arrangements as this guarantees income at times when demand may be lower. It was noted that emergency accommodation is expensive rates available on a nightly rate, and therefore a presenting real and ongoing budgetary risks.

8.6 The council owns and manages a number of hostels (150 bed spaces in total).. There are a couple of larger hostels including Russell Road and small block at Brunel Walk. In the west of the borough there are approximately 5 or so converted properties providing hostel accommodation. Investment will be needed to ensure that these are up to standard and the panel noted that there were development proposals in the capital strategy to do so.

8.8 A review of hostel accommodation is currently being undertaken to ensure that the maximum benefit and opportunities are being derived from each of the current hostel sites (this is aligned to the Supported Housing Review).

8.9 In respect of the emergency accommodation used by the council, the panel noted that these were self contained units and not Bed and Breakfast type accommodation. They are classified as emergency accommodation as these are paid on a nightly rate not a long term lease. Currently a shared facility hostel at Northumberland Park is used and as a last resort a B & B may be used for the occasional night if there is nothing else available.

Agreed: that a list of hostels and the type of accommodation that they contain is provided to the panel.

8.10 The panel noted that families with children placed in B&B, including Northumberland Park hostel, cannot stay in this type of accommodation for longer than 6 weeks. The time that people spend in TA itself will vary depending on the

needs of those placed there (see 8.2) and the availability of suitable accommodation. On current data, families requiring 2, 3 or 4 bedroom properties will be on the waiting list of upward of 8 years to obtain such a property. For those in similar need but requiring a 1 bedroom flat, waiting times will be substantially less, (generally months instead of years, particularly if prospective tenants don't have any extenuating needs and can be flexible).

8.11 The issue of families placed in accommodation with shared facilities raised safeguarding issues with the panel, particularly where there was just one carer. The panel also noted that there were also health and welfare issues in respect of cooking and diet. The panel indicated it would be useful to know how many families were in this type of accommodation locally.

Agreed: that further information on the number of families that are living in such accommodation is provided to the panel.

8.12 In respect of finance, there are significant cost pressures for the TA budget, with a forecast overspend of £6.4m in 2016/17. It is very difficult for the council to source temporary accommodation that falls within the subsidy, therefore the council is required to fund the difference in more and more cases, hence the existing and future budget pressures. It was noted that the subsidy that is received by local authorities is based on the 2011 Local Housing Allowance rate, not the current rate, so cost pressures are increasing in a buoyant property market. A new subsidy regime is due for consultation, which may introduce a subsidy allocation to each authority, rather than a property by property subsidy.

8.13 Panel members enquired about annualised losses accrued from the difference between the subsidy and actual housing costs for different bed size properties.

Agreed: that further information on the annualised impact of discrepancy between subsidy and actual costs of TA units for different bedside units is provided.

8.14 The panel noted that there are 6 areas which the council is focusing on to reduce demand, increase supply and contribute to improved budget position for TA (these are discussed in detail in the attached presentation):

- Homeless prevention and managing demand – e.g. homeless prevention fund'
- Increasing the number of lets for prevention and discharge of duty, including out of London
- Delivery of revised TA offer - New supply initiatives; Placement Strategy including Out of London
- Controlling TA prices
- Making best use of existing stock
- Increased efficiency and a significant cultural shift.

8.15 The panel discussed Broadwater Lodge and noted that historically this was older people's home which was now being converted for use as temporary accommodation for families only. Although the units would not be self contained, the facilities would be clustered for use by a small number of families. Other properties are being assessed for similar projects (e.g. Whitehall Street).

8.16 The new TA allocations policy is due to be considered by Cabinet in July set out authorise the consultation process for the new policy, with the final decision being taken in the autumn. The panel noted that a number of out of borough placements are made and these are routinely mapped. In terms of ongoing support to families, it was suggested that the new policy should contain explicit reference to communication with social care services to ensure coordinated support for vulnerable children is maintained.

Agreed: (i) that further details of where out of borough placements are being made to be distributed to the panel;
(ii) that a request is sent to the Cabinet member, to involve the panel in the consultation on the new TA Allocations policy.

8.17 It was anticipated that greater use of modular build would help to increase supply of TA accommodation as this would be cheaper and quicker to construct. Further clarification was sought however as to the respective costs of modular build units as detailed in the recently published Capital Strategy.

Agreed: that further information is provided on the Modular Build programme, particularly in relation to units costs as detailed in the Capital Strategy.

8.18 The panel confirmed that it would like to include within its work programme, the nature and level of support provide for families in crisis. The work could focus on what support could be provided to prevent families from entering emergency accommodation. It was suggested that this work could also focus on whether the council was targeting the right places for homelessness prevention or any other policy areas that could provide preventative support.

8.19 The panel noted that there could be many households locally which may be under occupied and have spare rooms and capacity which could somehow contribute to improved access to emergency accommodation. It was suggested, that there may be local families that may be able to provide rented accommodation for 6 weeks for those in need of emergency accommodation. Whilst prospective families would need to undergo appropriate checks, it was suggested that this could provide a flexible source of temporary emergency accommodation.

8.20 There was some discussion so to whether RPs were 'cherry picking' prospective tenants. It was noted that some RPs have introduced affordability assessments, to ensure that they have the ability to sustain a tenancy. Whilst officers present could not recall any instances when tenants had been rejected, this would be monitored. With the introduction of a further reduction at which benefits are capped, tenancy sustainability is likely to become an issue for more local households.

8.21 It was noted that there is an inter borough agreement for rates paid for temporary accommodation to help suppress prices and participating boroughs must inform all those in the agreement if the payment rates are breached. There may be circumstances where an authority has no option but to breach, and it was noted that the Council on average breaches these rates on a limited number of occasions each

week though this will vary depending on the demand levels. The Council's general policy is that it would prefer to breach this agreement rather than entering the commercial hotel sector to place those needing TA.

8.22 Where people are placed out of the borough, the panel were keen to understand how the council plan to manage those properties to which those in temporary accommodation have been allocated? It was noted that in these circumstances, the council would seek to procure with other boroughs and to have generalised management and maintenance agreement. Tenants would also be grouped in localised properties so that support could be provided more effectively.

8.23 Given the pressure on waiting times for larger properties and option for households to accept properties that are one bedroom smaller it was suggested that such tenants should be made fully aware of the waiting times for larger properties should their circumstances change. It was noted that small families placed in 1 bedroom accommodation was only happening in a small number of cases when household agreed, and that parents who were moving in with a small child or infant, were well aware of the likely wait for a larger property.

9. Work programme

9.1 The panel noted how work programme was developed and the resultant priorities listed in the work programme report were derived. It was noted that a long list was developed through:

- An open public consultation;
- Submissions from members, partners and other local stakeholders;
- Carry over items from the 15/16 work programme.

9.2 The Scrutiny Cafe took place on the 9th June 2016 at which over 70 people attended including members, senior officers and partners. The aim of this session was to develop a short list from the suggested items (from 9.1) and to prioritise those issues to be included within the scrutiny work programme. The Panel discussed these priorities for the scrutiny work programme for 2016/17 and the format in which they could be best approached.

9.3 Priority 1 - Affordable Housing.

Agreed:

(i) That scrutiny should focus on the development vehicle, in particular the governance arrangements that will support this new body (e.g. membership, relationship between board and Council and associated priorities of the Council). This work could also assess arrangements for corporate and public accountability and future scrutiny of this body (Autumn 2017)

(ii) That it would be beneficial to receive short report in respect of the following:

- a) Future housing supply strategy to be presented to HRSP on route to finalisation.
- b) An update on the previous scrutiny report on Council role in supply of housing is presented to HRSP within 2016/17.

(iii) That the Chair would meet with officers to further scope and agree this item.

9.4 Priority 2 - Private Rented Sector

Agreed:

- (i) That the panel receive a short report on the plans to introduce Selective Licensing or extend Mandatory Licensing.
- (ii) That the Chair would meet with officers to further scope and agree this item.

9.5 Priority 3 -Temporary Accommodation

Agreed:

That in depth work is undertaken to:

- (i) Review the nature and level of support provided to people presenting as homeless and in crisis and to assess further opportunities to increase supply or stem demand for emergency accommodation (Stage 1).
- (ii) Assess the nature and level of support provided to people that are housed out of borough, in particular comparative models of how this is approached in other boroughs.
- (iii) That the Chair would meet with officers to further scope and agree these items.

9.6 Priority 4 – Regeneration of Tottenham & Wood Green

Agreed:

- (i) That there is possible scope for more in-depth scrutiny involvement to assess how the Wood Green Regeneration Programme can learn from the Tottenham Regeneration Programme. In particular, such work could focus on communication process and how local residents are engaged and involved.
- (ii) That the Chair would meet with officers to further scope and agree this item.

9.7 Priority 5 and 6 - Planning

Agreed:

- (i) That short reports could be taken in respect of:
 - (a) Planning Enforcement
 - (b) Improving confidence in the local planning system (digital transformation)
 - (c) Priorities for local development gain
 - (d) Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.
- (ii) That the Chair would meet with officers to further scope and agree these items.

9.8 Priority 7 – Housing Allocations

Agreed:

- (i) That a short report is requested on the emerging policy could come to scrutiny for comment and discussion. This work could also assess the work of the Decision Panel, how it operates and how this could be improved?
- (ii) That the Chair would meet with officers to further scope and agree this item.

9.9 Priority 8 – High Streets

Agreed:

- (i) That a report is provided to the panel on the work undertaken in 2015/16 to help improve local High Streets (Cllr Sahota).
- (ii) That the Chair would meet with officers to further scope and agree this item.

9.10 Unassigned priority - Older peoples housing

Agreed:

- (i) It was suggested that this could utilise a scrutiny in a day session to assess what options are available to help people to downsize and release larger properties for

families. It would be beneficial to understand how other local authorities are approaching this issue to identify good practice.
(ii) That the Chair would meet with officers to further scope and agree this item.

10. Viability assessment update

10.1 The Panel noted and discussed some of the key issues emerging from this scrutiny in a day exercise. These were:

- **Transparency of arrangements:** Publishing with applications, Redactions, Involvement of community
- **London Wide Viability Protocol:** Local adoption
- **Development of Haringey Viability SPG?**
- **Review mechanisms:** Included within a local SPG and London wide protocol
- **Three Dragons Toolkit:** to identify any changes to assumed factors that underpin this model (e.g. Levels of profitability, other costs)
- **Priorities guidance in planning obligations and viability discussions:** social housing products in S106n negotiations (e.g. Social rent, shared ownership); other infrastructure – schools, green-space.
- **Flat rate quota for affordable housing:** Impact on local infrastructure funding
- **Impact of Housing & Planning Bill:** Imperative of Starter Homes over affordable homes
- **Impact of new Mayor proposals:** Number of policy intentions already announced – including viability assessments, Amendments to London Plan (2-3 years)

10.2 The panel agreed that a further meeting should be convened to discuss and agree recommendations for this review. This should take place before 13th July 2016 and agreed at OSC on 21st July. Dates will be circulated to those members that assisted with this review.

11. New items of business.

11.1 None

12. Dates of future meeting

The next panel meeting is on 3rd October 2016.