

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 9TH FEBRUARY, 2017, 7.00 - 9.35 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Charles Wright (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair), Makbule Gunes, Patrick Berryman, Emine Ibrahim, Zina Brabazon, Tim Gallagher, Martin Newton, Gail Engert

Yvonne Denny

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

Noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Hearn, Councillor Berryman attended as a substitute for her.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

It being a special meeting under Part 4, Section B, Paragraph 17 of the Council's Constitution no other business was discussed.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

6. CONSULTATION ON FOUR POLICIES TO MEET HOUSING NEED

The Chair invited the Director for Public Health, Dr de Gruchy, to give a presentation on the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work on social inclusion. This was followed by a presentation by Nick Smith Housing Strategy Officer, and Alan Benson, Head of Housing Strategy & Commissioning on the four policies on which the Committee's views were being sought – the Homelessness Strategy and Delivery Plan, the Tenancy Strategy, the Allocations Policy and the Intermediate Housing Policy – and the responses to consultation on those policies.

Invited to introduce the four policies before the Committee and members of the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel, the Cabinet Member for Housing,

Regeneration and Planning set out that there was a close link between social inclusion and housing. In further discussion, Members noted the wider policies that interacted with the social inclusion agenda, and discussed that further scrutiny could be around crosscutting support for childcare in relation to job-seeking parents or the links between housing and educational outcomes, as examples. It was agreed that it would be helpful for social inclusion to be part of the information routinely provided to Scrutiny Panel Chairs.

Members asked about the robustness of the consultation findings, given the level of response and the application of general findings to a specific group. The Cabinet Member and officers responded that they were satisfied with the level of engagement with the consultation, and that there would be difficult in disaggregating demographic groups to identify specific views on a given matter. Officers also confirmed that the consultation was available in languages other than English upon request.

In response to questions on the increased level of rough sleeping observed in the borough, the Cabinet Member set out that the profile of rough sleepers had changed and become more complex, with a sizeable proportion being younger, able to work and effectively voluntarily sleeping rough. Officers also outlined additional sources of funding recently secured by the Council that could be used to tackle rough sleeping and would be available soon.

Members queried why ex-service personnel were given such a high priority under the allocations policy, which was part of the Armed Forces Covenant. It was noted that there had been a perception that a significant number of rough sleepers had served in the armed forces previously.

In relation to other priority groups, it was noted that a high proportion of rough sleepers had been in prison at some point. It was also noted that the age level for care-leavers treated as a priority was lower than practice in other contexts of support, and the lower age of 22 reflected Government policy. It was suggested that a needs-based assessment would enable better allocations decisions rather than age-based.

Following a discussion on the application of an income threshold when considering renewal of a tenancy, particularly since the Government's 'Pay to Stay' policy had been abandoned, Members agreed that could inhibit residents' aspirations and should not be used.

Noting the Government had recently announced further changes to the policy and legislative context in relation to housing, Members invited a briefing on changes from the Chief Executive of Homes for Haringey. This could also discuss housing supply and temporary accommodation, given the Members' concerns about the cost-effectiveness of long-term temporary accommodation.

Members asserted that it was important to consider emergency accommodation and temporary accommodation separately, and officers confirmed that no one in the borough remained in emergency accommodation for more than six weeks. Furthermore, by opening Broadwater Lodge the Council had been able to cease using a private hostel or bed and breakfasts for emergency accommodation.

In response to a query about whether the current practice of using vacated property in estates due for renewal as temporary accommodation could continue if the estate had been transferred to the proposed development vehicle, Members were told that there would be no reason for that practice to end.

In discussion of the proposed change of the definition of a household, it was confirmed by officers that the proposed change was not well drafted, and was intended to refer to non-married couples, not necessarily only couples in a civil partnership. Members were concerned about the exclusion of multi-generational families in the proposed definition, which households in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities often included.

RESOLVED

- **To recommend that income thresholds not be used for the tenancy strategy, with a particular concern that a threshold could impinge on residents' aspirations**
- **That the proposed change to the definition of a household was not appropriate, particularly mindful of multi-generation households in some communities.**
- **That the Managing Director for Homes for Haringey be asked to give an all-member briefing on housing supply and temporary accommodation**
- **That information on Social Inclusion, considered by each of the Priority Boards, be shared with Panel Chairs to help develop the future scrutiny work programme.**
- **That needs-based assessment rather than age-based assessment be used for supported housing**

CHAIR: Councillor Charles Wright

Signed by Chair

Date