

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY, 13TH MARCH, 2018, 18:30

PRESENT:

Councillors: Emine Ibrahim (Chair), John Bevan, Zena Brabazon, Vincent Carroll, Ann Waters and Clive Carter

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting, and Members noted the information contained therein'.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Engert and Cllr Newton.

Cllr Carter was in attendance as a substitute Member.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

There were no deputations, petitions, presentations or questions.

6. MINUTES - 7 NOVEMBER 2017

The Panel requested an update on the Thames Water issue. In response, the Panel was advised that HfH were still looking at the case and the Thames Water contract. Initial legal advice was that that the decision was taken wrongly and that officers were awaiting the outcome of a test case.

The minutes of the Panel meeting of 7th November were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

7. MINUTES - 19 DECEMBER 2017

In response to the previous item on Broadwater Farm Gas and Fire Safety, the Panel sought assurances from HfH about what lessons had been learnt in relation to engaging with residents. In response, the Interim Managing Director of HfH, acknowledged the need to engage at an early stage and keep everyone informed of developments at regular intervals.

The minutes of the Panel meeting on 19th December were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

8. HOUSING-RELATED SUPPORT FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The Panel received a presentation on the Housing Support Transformation programme in relation to older people. The presentation was given by Gill Taylor, Programme Delivery Manager and was included in the agenda pack at pages 17-29.

The following points were noted in response to the discussion of the presentation:

- a. The Panel sought clarification on the hub and cluster model and whether the hubs would be located within sheltered housing. In response, the Panel was advised that the hubs were existing sheltered housing services and the location of those hubs was selected to ensure that they were in close proximity to cluster services. Hub managers would be responsible for ensuring that all tenants in the hub were aware of the cluster services. When placing new tenants, those with higher level of support needs would be encouraged to live in a hub service providing greater access to staff and facilities.
- b. In response to a question on what was being done to support those within general needs accommodation, the Panel was advised that a key feature of the hubs was their utilisation of community spaces to increase access to services and reduce social isolation. It was hoped that networks from partner agencies could be used to spread the reach and impact of these services, including to older people with general needs accommodation.
- c. The Panel queried the role of the hubs in filling gaps in existing adult social care services. In response, officers suggested the hubs weren't a replacement for adult social care centres but that some services could be incorporated into the community spaces. Further work was being done to understand the extent to which an outreach programme could be incorporated.
- d. In response to a question about whether there was a high void rate in sheltered housing, officers advised that there was a high void rate across both HfH properties and those commissioned by voluntary sector partners.
- e. The Panel sought assurances around whether there was enough interaction between sheltered housing and other housing services. The Panel also questioned whether there was a range of 2 or 3 bedroom properties available through sheltered housing. In response, officers advised that a lot of work was undertaken to match voids with residents who were in temporary accommodation or those who required a larger property. Officers acknowledged that there were residents who lived in sheltered accommodation with 2 or 3 bedrooms.
- f. The Panel questioned whether good neighbour schemes were still in existence. In response, officers advised that those schemes had changed significantly

- over the last ten years following budget cuts, and now they tended to just be general needs properties allocated to older people.
- g. The Panel highlighted a recent case study involving Anglesey County Council in which they had adopted a housing first policy and had used void properties to house homeless people. In response, officers commented that the Council already commissioned housing first for homelessness in the borough and that they had been really successful in helping to stabilise those with complex needs and experiences. Officers advised that ongoing consideration would be given to how to use sheltered housing properties differently, particularly in the context of decreasing demand from older people.
 - h. The Panel considered what incentives could be offered to those with a multiple bedroom property that was under occupied, to relocate. The Panel emphasised the importance of local networks and queried whether properties within existing estates could be reconfigured to incentivise people to move, albeit within their own local area. Officers acknowledged that there was significant demand for people entering sheltered accommodation to stay within their local area. Officers advised that there was a good spread of sheltered housing schemes across the borough.
 - i. In response to a question around the provision of properties at Larkspur Close, officers advised that redevelopment works were ongoing but that significant investment had been made in improving properties and reconfiguring the layout, to bring more light in for example. Panel members expressed an interest in visiting the location once works were completed. The Interim Managing Director HfH agreed to provide details to the Panel of when the works would be completed. **(Action: Chris Liffen).**

9. TA JOINT VENTURE

The Panel received a presentation on the establishment of two new housing companies being set up to provide housing stock for Temporary Accommodation. The presentation was given by Alan Benson, Head of Housing Strategy and Commissioning.

The following points were noted in response to the discussion of the presentation:

- a. The Panel sought clarification on what the incentives were for the joint venture partner. In response, officers outlined that the Council would provide a void guarantee and in doing so would provide tenants for each property. This would provide the partner with a guaranteed source of rent and also allow them to borrow money at very low rates. In addition, the joint venture partner would receive the maintenance contract for the properties as well as refurbishment fees for each of the 400-800 properties. It was hoped that the winning consortia would include a housing association to provide expertise in both acquisitions and property management.
- b. The Panel queried the need to enter into an agreement with a partner organisation and questioned why the Council couldn't borrow the money, build and manage the units on its own. In response, officers outlined that there would be two companies, one of which would be entirely owned by the Council and would be funded through capital investment and a second joint venture which was entirely revenue funded. The advantages of the joint venture was that the Council could acquire stock without undertaking any borrowing itself.

- c. In response to questions about where the properties would be located, officers advised that as many properties as possible would be in Haringey, however it was also in the Council's interest to purchase them as quickly as possible. Officers advised that all properties should be in north London and hopefully contiguous to Haringey. Furthermore, each purchase would be signed off by Cabinet. Officers stated that it may be a good time to buy property due to pending changes to the rules around Buy-to-Let mortgages and wider volatility in the housing market.
- d. In response to a question about the success of similar schemes, officers stated that Bromley had progressed quite far with a similar scheme and were in the process of selling stock to sure up other services.
- e. In response to a question, officers clarified that Right-to-Buy receipts could not be used to purchase properties in a wholly-owned Council vehicle. Out of the two companies, RTB receipts would go the capital-funded CBS vehicle.
- f. In response to concerns about the rationale for a joint venture, the Panel were advised that as well as not being able to invest Right-to-Buy receipts, there were questions about the levels of rent that could be charged through a wholly owned vehicle. Officers emphasised that the purpose of these properties was not to build homes at social rent levels but to acquire properties for temporary accommodation only.
- g. In response to a question around who would hold the tenancy, officers advised that the landlord would be a registered provider, such as a housing association, that would form part of the winning consortium. Officers elaborated that the tenancy would in effect be an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.
- h. In response to a request for clarification on the level of savings expected, the Panel was advised that it was anticipated that savings of £3.5 million-£4million would be made over 4 years.
- i. In response to a question on the governance arrangements, officers advised that Councillors would likely make up two of the five board members of the joint company.
- j. Officers advised that the refurbishment and maintenance contract for the CBS vehicle could conceivably be carried out by HfH. Officers anticipated that if this did happen then there could be opportunities to provide apprenticeships in the HfH repairs service.
- k. The Panel sought clarification on what the main risks to the proposals were, in response officers suggested that the biggest risk was around uncertainty in the housing market and the potential for the council to lose money in the eventuality of a downturn in property values. As part of the mitigation of this risk, officers advised that purchasing would be undertaken sequentially. Officers also suggested that strong governance arrangements were necessary to ensure that the arm's length company continued to work in the Council's interests.
- l. In general, the Committee acknowledged the need to reduce the costs of Temporary Accommodation provision and welcomed the proposed approach.

10. NEW LONDON PLAN

The Panel received a presentation on the consultation to the new London Plan, from Emma Williamson AD for Planning. A table of the representations made by Planning

Officers in response to the consultation was included in the agenda pack at pages 31-54.

The following points were noted in response to the discussion of the report and presentation:

- a. The Committee commended the thoroughness of the consultation response.
- b. In response to a question around housing quality and standards, the AD Planning agreed to come back to the Panel with further information relating to the provision of separate kitchens in family sized housing units. **(Action: Emma Williamson).**
- c. In response to a question about the Council's position on small sites, the Panel were advised that they were not judged separately from overall housing targets. The target in London Plan for Haringey was 626 small sites which officers admitted would be challenging, and would also supercede local policies such as the family housing protection zone.
- d. In response to a question about what local leavers were available to restrict the implementation of small sites or Pockets Homes, officers advised that Planning Policy determined acceptability criteria and that pocket homes met the GLA's minimum size criteria and so could not be refused on those grounds. Officers confirmed that Pocket Homes were classified as affordable homes.
- e. In response to a question, officers confirmed that there was nothing to stop the Council selling off small sites on its land for development and then using the revenue to purchase larger sites. Officers confirmed that the revenue generated from disposal could also be combined with Right-to-Buy receipts. However, Right-to-Buy receipts could not be combined with GLA funding. A wholly-owned vehicle could not use Right-to-Buy receipts and would have to borrow the money.
- f. Officers also confirmed that the Council was able to acquire TfL land in the borough. However, it was suggested that TfL would likely want to develop their own sites to raise revenue.

11. SOCIAL HOUSING SCRUTINY REPORT

The Panel received a verbal update on the Social Housing Scrutiny report. The Panel noted that the publication deadline for the report going to OSC was 16th March.

12. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Panel received a report which provided an update on the Panel's work programme.

RESOLVED

- I. That the Panel considered its work programme and considered any areas to be rolled over to 2018/19.
- II. That OSC be asked to endorse the carry forward of work at its next meeting.

13. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

14. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

N/A

CHAIR: Councillor Emine Ibrahim

Signed by Chair

Date