

MINUTES OF THE HOUSING SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 2 September 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Carl Handley (Chair), Peter Bernards (Vice-Chair), Paul Bell, John Coughlin, Amanda De Ryk, Maja Hilton, Simon Hooks, Jonathan Slater and Susan Wise

APOLOGIES: Councillors Olurotimi Ogunbadewa

ALSO PRESENT: Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), Jeff Endean (Housing Programmes and Strategy Team Manager), Genevieve Macklin (Head of Strategic Housing) and Leigh Pattison (Development Manager) (Lewisham Homes)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2014

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July be agreed as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of interest

Councillor Wise declared a non-prejudicial interest as member of the board of Lewisham Homes.

Councillor Bell declared a non-prejudicial interest as a member of the board of Lewisham Homes.

3. New Homes Better Places Phase 2

Jeff Endean (Housing Strategy and Programmes Manager) and Leigh Pattison (Development Manager, Lewisham Homes) gave a presentation; the following key points were noted:

- Following changes to the housing revenue account in 2012, the Council had begun its first programme of house building in 35 years.
- Construction work had already started on the first phase of the scheme, which would deliver six new homes.
- The report set out the plans for phase two of the scheme, which recommended the delivery of more than 60 new homes.
- Some development was proposed for garage sites. A review of these garages found that few of them belonged to residents in neighbouring blocks and the majority were being used for storage.
- Where need had been identified for garages, Lewisham Homes was attempting to ensure that tenants were able to access alternative provision.
- Almost all of garden spaces which had been identified for new homes were being underused. In some instances residents didn't know that outside space was part of their property.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- At 37-39 the Boone Street site, changes had been made to the outdoor space available to residents of the scheme's bedsits. Designs had been revised to provide a communal space solely for the use of residents.
- Houses built for private sale would be sold with their freehold. Owners of private flats in blocks would be sold as leaseholds. Officers were taking legal advice about how best to manage this process.
- Officers were also considering the potential implications of right to buy.
- There were no existing proposals to offer shared ownership for any of the new homes, but this was something that could be considered for future developments.
- It was proposed that all of the new development would achieve code four of the code for sustainable homes. A range of options, including solar panels, would be considered but no decisions had yet been taken.
- Where appropriate preference had been given to individual boilers in homes, over communal heating systems.
- It was acknowledged that the linkages between the new build programme and proposals for decent homes could have been more effectively communicated and coordinated.
- The decent homes programme was prioritised to focus on the homes most in need of work.
- In homes for rent, residents tended to want living spaces with separate kitchens. In homes for sale, people tended to prefer open plan living spaces.
- Commercial sales agents were advising on the design of homes for private sale. Maximising the value of these homes was of primary importance to their design.
- New homes would meet the 'secure by design' standard. However, it was recognised that secure by design principles had to be combined with practical considerations.
- It was recommended that decision making be delegated about *the process of assessing the feasibility* of future phases of the scheme.

The Committee also discussed and noted the following points:

- It was acknowledged that there would be some difficult decisions to be made in future phases of the scheme about the use of land; sales to the private sector and options for development. The Committee believed that it would be essential for it to be involved in reviewing future development proposals.
- The Committee celebrated the benefits of the scheme and development of the existing proposals. The Committee commented on the importance of proactively communicating the positive aspects of the programme.

The Committee resolved to refer its views to Mayor and Cabinet, as follows:

- The Committee commends the aims of the programme and is supportive of the progress that is being made.
- The Committee asks that it be kept updated about the future progress of the programme.
- The Committee expects that sufficient periods of advance notice will be given for pre-decision scrutiny of future decisions. In particular, it believes that any future recommendation to delegate decision making to officers or to implement recommendations that have been made following the delegation of decision making, should be available to be scrutinised as part of a full and frank process.

- The Committee recommends that the Council make best use of all opportunities to promote the benefits of the programme.
- The Committee intends to visit the development sites once work has commenced.
- Members of the Committee wish to be involved in the procurement process.

4. Select Committee work programme

Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the work programme. The Committee then discussed the report. The following key points were noted:

- The main focus of the Committee's December meeting would be the private rented sector. Invitations would be sent to Newham and Southwark Councils to attend the meeting.
- Officers would be asked to assess the cost effectiveness of implementing a scheme in Lewisham, with a particular focus on the sustainable self-financing of any future scheme.
- The Committee would consider a scoping report on communal heating systems at its meeting on 1 October.
- The Lewisham Homes and Brockley PFI mid-year reports would be moved to the committee's November meeting.

5. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

Resolved: to refer the Committee's views under item three to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm

Chair:

Date:
