

MINUTES OF THE HOUSING SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9 March 2016 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillors Carl Handley (Chair), John Coughlin, Amanda De Ryk, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Maja Hilton, Olurotimi Ogunbadewa, Jonathan Slater and Susan Wise

Apologies: Councillors Peter Bernards and Simon Hooks

Also present: Timothy Andrew (Interim Overview and Scrutiny Manager), Jeff Endean (Housing Programmes and Strategy Team Manager), Rachel George (Housing Regeneration & Projects Manager), Mark Humphreys (Group Finance Manager, Customer Services), Genevieve Macklin (Head of Strategic Housing), Nina Morris (Lettings and Support Services Manager), Kevin Sheehan (Executive Director for Customer Services), Rupert Bateson (Shelter) and Chennel Lawrence (CAYSH)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2016

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January be approved as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of interest

Councillor Susan Wise declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to item four as a Member of the Board of Lewisham Homes.

3. New homes programme

Jeff Endean (Housing Strategy and Programmes Manager) and Rachel George (Housing Regeneration and Projects Manager) introduced the report; the following key points were noted:

- The report provided an update on the Councils programme to develop 500 new homes in the borough by 2018.
- There had been a number of starts on new affordable homes in the borough, bringing the total to 1987.
- Details were provided of each of the key sites for immediate development.
- An update was also provided on the development at Campshill Road, which had stalled.
- The development agreement with L&Q for the Excalibur estate regeneration had been signed with phases 1 and 2 now underway. Decants for other sites were also progressing.
- There was an acknowledged discrepancy between the figures in the report and the planning application for the development site in Deptford. However, the higher quoted number of affordable units would be delivered. This was because the Council had a legal agreement in place with the developers to provide higher numbers of affordable homes than could be secured through the Planning process.

- Across both sites the developers were to provide 35% affordable housing
- The development of the Eliot Bank site had been slightly slower than anticipated. It was planned that there would be a consultation in May or June with a planning application in July. Officers believed that a developable scheme was still possible.
- A new rent model had been designed for the Besson Street housing development. The proposal had 35% affordable housing, which was a discounted market rent product.
- Then model used the London Living Wage income for two people and projected the cost of spending 1/3 of that income on housing.
- Market testing had been carried out on the model, which had demonstrated that it was robust.
- The timing for the delivery of the scheme was ambitious and may be subject to change.

Jeff Endean, Genevieve Macklin, Rachel George and Kevin Sheehan responded to questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- The size of the units being planned for the Besson Street development was suitable for the tenure that was being built.
- Living wage projections took into account a range of typical living costs, with some contingency.
- In some Built to Rent schemes, childcare provision had been provided if it was recognised that there was a demand.
- A fully rented scheme of this kind could help to develop a new kind of sustainable option for families.
- Some families in the private rental sector were paying up to 50% of their disposal income on rental.
- The model was based on low incomes for two earners in a family – but officers expected that the allocations would be through meeting criteria which would include income bands, so homes could be accessible to one person on a median income. The example discussed at the Committee was that of a primary school teacher.
- The discounted rent properties would be prioritised for people with a connection to Lewisham. This meant they had either to live or work in the borough.
- In relation to progress on the Church Grove self-build scheme, the organisation that would be developing the new homes was preparing to invite stakeholders to its ballot event.
- People entering into the ballot were currently living in social housing but the delivery of the project would free up homes for people on the waiting list.
- The Lewisham homes acquisition programme was ahead of target: all of the homes being acquired were in Lewisham.

Members highlighted the positive improvements that had been noted at Family Mosaic, particularly in relation to their customer service offer.

The Committee acknowledged a vote of thanks to officers for their hard work on the estate regeneration programme, with special mention of Excalibur phases 1&2.

Resolved: that the progress on the delivery of the new homes programme be welcomed. It was agreed that all Councillors should receive a copy of the report.

4. Lewisham Homes management agreement

Jeff Endean introduced the item, noting the key aspects of the report.

Resolved: that the report be noted and its progress to Mayor and Cabinet be agreed. The Committee also resolved to further scrutinise the development of the Community Benefit Society as part of the 2016-17 work programme.

5. Annual lettings plan

This item was considered after Item 4.

Madeliene Jeffrey introduced the report, noting the key points, including:

- The reduction (of 19%) in available lets.
- The five priority areas for the year ahead.

Medeline Jeffrey and Nina Morris responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- The 1700 people in temporary accommodation were part of the 9000 people who were on the housing waiting list.
- There were 185 families who had no recourse to public funds. Some of these families had been moved out of the borough.
- Average waiting times were listed in the report.
- Queue position in the housing waiting list regularly changed, meaning that people had to regularly check when they made bid through the choice based lettings scheme.
- There was a priority for homeless people

Resolved: that the report be noted.

6. Rehousing the homeless: charity groups

This item was considered after item 4.

Chennel Lawrence from CAYSH provided a presentation outlining the key elements of CAYSH's supported lodgings scheme (the presentation is available on the Council's website with the papers from the meeting). The following key points were noted:

- CAYSH negotiated supported lodgings for 16-25 year old single people.
- This was one of the solutions for young vulnerable homeless people in Lewisham.
- The recruitment of households to provide supported lodgings was an intensive process.

- Each placement required the negotiation of a good relationship between the participant, the householder and the caseworker from CAYSH.
- Prevention was a key part of the approach developed by CAYSH.
- There were a number of benefits associated with providing supported lodging.
- Householders did not join the scheme for financial gain. Many were motivated by a sense of community.
- Describing and highlighting the benefits of supported lodging was important.
- There were advantages and disadvantages of the scheme and a level of complexity which would mean it was not always the best solution in every case.
- CAYSH would not support the housing of homeless families in lodging because of the potential complexities and issues that placing a family might cause. Not least amongst these issues would be the availability of homes large enough to accommodate a family with children.
- Other potential problems include the potential risks involved in placing children and the issues that might be involved in managing relationships between different families.
- There might be ways of developing a support model for people who were placed outside of their home borough, which would help them to engage in their new community.

Chennel Lawrence and Rupert Bateson responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- There might be opportunities to make the model work for young mothers building on what already existed.
- The potential for the supported lodgings model to house families was limited by the short term nature of lodging as well as the inherent vulnerabilities of people in need of accommodation.
- Spending time around a family in a peer situation could be helpful – but the practicalities (as described) could be difficult.
- CAYSH always worked closely with the local authority in the areas it placed people but it would challenge a local authority, where it felt this was necessary.
- CAYSH had made a bid to carry out some innovative work into the potential for intergenerational supported lodging. However, funding for new schemes was not readily available.
- Crisis and shelter had worked together on a project called Sharing Solutions looking into the use of empty homes.
- CAYSH noted that research had demonstrated the beneficial health and wellbeing impact of the supported lodging approach.
- There had been some success of the supported lodgings scheme in placing people out of the borough.
- The LAWN project brought together London authorities (managed by London Councils) to enable people to move to other parts of the country.
- Funding was available at the time to deliver the project (through London Councils) but the number of people who were enabled to move was quite small.

Officers noted the major increase in population that had been projected in London and the likely pressure this would continue to put on housing and services.

Resolved: that the report and the presentation from CAYSH be noted. The Committee also agreed that it would look to carry out further work into the development of support initiatives for vulnerable people as part of its upcoming work programme.

7. Key housing issues

Genevieve Macklin introduced the report; the following key points were noted:

- The forthcoming and Planning bill would affect the delivery of affordable housing.
- The Local Government Association had set up a housing commission, which was working to develop new approaches to dealing with housing demand.
- All London boroughs had difficulty in securing suitable lets because nightly paid accommodation was more lucrative to landlords.
- Work was taking place through London Councils to develop a joint approach between boroughs to the high cost of nightly paid accommodation.
- It was estimated that, of the 700 homes in multiple occupation (HMOs) in the borough 200 are licensed.
- There would be consultation for an extended period on subdivision of housing, which may take some time.

Genevieve Macklin responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- Some additional fines were being made possible for breaches of HMO rules, however, it was likely that these would have a limited impact.
- There was likely to be a London-wide approach to landlord licensing, though this was likely to take some time to come into effect.
- The numbers of people in temporary accommodation placed inside and out of the borough had been provided in the report.
- There were some households placed in Kent, there weren't any households placed further away.
- Work was taking place to prevent people from becoming homeless, however this relied on resources being available.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

8. Select Committee work programme

Timothy Andrew introduced the report, setting out the process for the development of the 2016-17 programme. Members discussed the 2015-16 work programme and put forward the following suggestions:

- Housing and health, including housing for people affected by poor mental health

- Housing for vulnerable people, with a focus on young people in the borough
- The Catford development
- Multi-agency working and housing

Resolved: that the suggestions put forward should be added to the 2016-17 work programme. It was also agreed that further work would be carried out to finalise the Committee's in-depth review on affordability.

9. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

There were none.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

Chair:

Date:
