

MINUTES OF THE HOUSING SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 18 September 2018, 7.30pm

Present: Councillors Susan Wise (Chair), Peter Bernards (Vice Chair), Tom Copley, Aisling Gallagher, Leo Gibbons, Silvana Kelleher, Olurotimi Ogunbadewa and Stephen Penfold.

Also Present: Madeleine Jeffery (Private Sector Housing Agency Manager), Osama Shoush (Housing Delivery Manager), Genevieve Macklin (Head of Strategic Housing), Jeff Endean (Housing Strategy and Programmes Manager), Rachel Dunn (Housing Policy and Partnerships Manager), Kevin Sheehan (Executive Director for Customer Services), and John Bardens (Scrutiny Manager).

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2018

Resolved: the minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

2. Declarations of interest

The following non-prejudicial interests were declared:

- Cllr Peter Bernards is a board member of Lewisham Homes.
- Cllr Olurotimi Ogunbadewa is a board member of Lewisham Homes.
- Cllr Tom Copley is a member of the London Assembly.
- Cllr Silvana Kelleher is a Lewisham Homes tenant.
- Cllr Aisling Gallagher is a Lewisham Homes tenant.

3. Responses from Mayor and Cabinet

There were no responses.

4. Working in the private rented sector

Madeleine Jeffery (Private Sector Housing Agency Manager) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- 4.1 Since 2001 the number of Lewisham households renting privately has doubled. The private rented sector (PRS) now accommodates 23% of all households in Lewisham.
- 4.2 Private rented sector stock is more likely to be older and considered non-decent than other tenure types. In Lewisham, 27% of PRS dwellings are considered non-decent. PRS homes have nearly double the incidence of dampness compared to the social sector.
- 4.3 The main way to improve standards in the poor quality private rented sector properties is through landlord licensing schemes. Lewisham operates a “mandatory” licensing scheme (national scheme) and an “additional” licensing

scheme (Lewisham only). The number of licensable properties has increased by 73% in one year.

- 4.4 The council's target for its "additional" licensing scheme requires it to license 300 new properties a year for the next five years.
- 4.5 Officers are using an increasing range of data sources to identify areas to target for licensing.
- 4.6 Officers have carried out 3,064 visits since January 2018. 195 potential houses in multiple occupation (HMO) were found, but 103 are being disputed. Landlords often dispute the number of tenants living in the property so as not to fall within the licensing framework.
- 4.7 A high number of landlords do not willingly come forward to licence their HMOs, but the council is trying to work with landlords so help them see the benefits of being licensed.
- 4.8 Officers are also working on developing a business case for an all-borough "selective" licensing scheme in the borough which would apply to all privately rented properties and not just HMOs.
- 4.9 However, a selective scheme can only be introduced where there are persistent and significant problems of anti-social behaviour (ASB) linked to PRS homes in the area and these can be proven.
- 4.10 Officers are developing the evidence base and plan to submit an application to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in early 2020.
- 4.11 The council has also refreshed its Enforcement Policy, to incorporate changes to the legislative framework such as Civil Penalty Notices, and re-established the rogue landlord team, which is tackling on average 25 illegal evictions/tenant harassment cases each month.
- 4.12 Officers work with trading standards to enforce energy efficiency standards with landlords.
- 4.13 The committee queried whether the council could make use of Interim Management Orders as other boroughs do.
- 4.14 The committee queried whether there were any particular pieces of evidence or data that would jeopardise the borough's application for an all-borough "selective" licensing scheme if it was not able to provide it.
- 4.15 Officers explained that the council would not necessarily have to provide every piece of evidence or data set out in the appendix to the report as long as the

council is able to demonstrate with the data it does have that a “selective” licensing scheme is necessary.

- 4.16 One member of the committee noted that they had seen examples of properties being marketed as potential HMOs. Officers asked members to provide them with information on any such examples.
- 4.17 Officers stressed that their work on rogue landlords was focused on the landlords and not the tenants. No deportations have resulted from any of the council’s work in this area. The council’s housing needs officers will work with tenants when necessary.
- 4.18 The council will also work with tenants to get Rent Repayment Orders when there is a prosecution against a landlord.
- 4.19 The committee queried the absence of an equalities implications paragraph in the report. It was agreed that there were equalities implications and reported that a full equalities assessment would form part of the “selective” licensing business case when it is fully developed and brought back to committee.

Resolved: the committee noted the report.

5. Capital Letters – Collaborative Pan-London Accommodation Procurement

Madeleine Jeffery (Private Sector Housing Agency Manager) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- 5.1 London Councils is working with London Boroughs to establish a London-wide procurement vehicle, “Capital Letters”, to deliver new supply of leased and private rented sector (PRS) accommodation for families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 5.2 Capital Letters will be supported by £38m grant from the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government and have access to 100% Local Housing Allowance (LHA) from the Department for Work and Pensions.
- 5.3 Capital letters is intended to allow local authorities to reduce the use of expensive self-contained nightly paid (SCNP) so tenants can be offered more security and better property standards.
- 5.4 The council will always need some form of bed and breakfast accommodation but the main driver of the scheme is to reduce the use of expensive nightly paid accommodation.
- 5.5 Capital Letters will help to reduce both numbers in nightly paid as well as overall numbers of homeless as Boroughs can discharge their duty into any leased accommodation.

- 5.6 With 2,000 people in temporary accommodation and 9,000 people on the housing waiting list in Lewisham, the Council's priority is to secure decent, long-term accommodation for families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 5.7 The scheme will also maximise economies of scale and procure accommodation in or closer to host boroughs.
- 5.8 One committee member expressed concern that the scheme may reduce the Housing List by allocating units of temporary accommodation as a person's permanent accommodation. The committee member also queried whether there would be any legal implications for the Housing Allocation scheme.
- 5.9 Officers explained that there is a need to maximise all accommodation options for homeless families as the demand is too high to be met by social housing alone and that discharging the Council's homelessness duties in the private rented sector was a policy agreed in the past by the Mayor & Cabinet.

Resolved: the committee noted the report and expressed support for the proposal to join Capital Letters.

6. Engaging residents on estate redevelopments

Osama Shoush (Housing Delivery Manager) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- 6.1 The council is in the process of creating a Residents' Charter which guarantees all residents the right to remain on their estate and guarantees an increase in genuinely affordable housing.
- 6.2 The Council is proposing to introduce residents' ballots on any estate regeneration scheme that includes replacing existing homes.
- 6.3 The officer report sets out some of the draft principles for a Residents' Charter and how estate regeneration ballots will be used in conjunction with a charter in Lewisham.
- 6.4 The committee expressed concern at the proposed timing of residents' ballots. The committee was concerned that having a ballot early in the process would potentially bind residents.
- 6.5 Officers explained that the Residents' Charter would include a commitment to greater resident involvement and influence over the design process before and after a residents' ballot.

- 6.6 The committee expressed concern about external influences on any residents' ballots. Officers explained that only those who meet the eligibility criteria will be able to vote.
- 6.7 The committee also expressed concern about the offer for private tenants of non-residential leaseholders and freeholders in the proposed Residents' Charter. Officers explained that they would invite responses to this point in the public consultation.

Resolved: the committee noted the report.

7. Building Council Homes for Londoners: Lewisham funding bid

Jeff Endean (Housing Strategy and Programmes Manager) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- 7.1 The Mayor of London has secured funding for the provision of new council homes in London. He published his grant funding prospectus, "Building Council Homes for Londoners", in May 2018.
- 7.2 Lewisham intends to submit a bid to the Greater London Authority (GLA) in order to deliver 782 new homes. The council intends to bid for in the region of £108.9m, comprising £57.5m grant funding and £51.4m of additional Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing.
- 7.3 The bid to the GLA covers a four year period. Officers are looking at every available option to deliver the additional homes, with a focus on vacant land. Mid-density and mid-rise developments are anticipated to be part of the programme. Officers will take the time to talk to residents affected by proposed developments. It was noted that there may be tough choices around density and location.
- 7.4 Overall scheme costs to deliver the council funded units are estimated to be in the region of £217m. This includes £57.5m GLA grant funding; £10m retained Right to Buy receipts; £69.4m existing HRA borrowing headroom; £51.4m of additional HRA borrowing; and £28.7m General Fund borrowing.

Resolved: the committee noted the report and expressed broad support for the Council's bid to the GLA's Building Council Homes for Londoners programme for additional funding and borrowing to build new council homes. The committee noted that the programme was an opportunity to build 21st century decent homes and expressed support for building more council homes through schemes like this.

8. New Homes Programme

Jeff Endean (Housing Strategy and Programmes Manager) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- 8.1 Planning applications have been submitted for all the homes which are part of the 500 home New Homes Programme. 106 homes are currently moving through the planning process.
- 8.2 The new Mayor has pledged to create 1,000 more social homes over the next four years. Officers anticipate that a full pipelines of potential developments will be available in March 2019.
- 8.3 Of the four “pop-up” new housing developments in Lewisham, two will be for temporary accommodation and the other two will provide secure tenancies for Lewisham Homes.

Resolved: the committee noted the report.

9. Select Committee work programme

John Bardens (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the work programme.

Resolved: the Committee agreed the work programme.

10. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

There were no referrals.

The meeting ended at 21.30pm

Chair:

Date:
