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|  Brent | <p style="text-align: center;">Full Council 18 September 2017</p> <p>Report from the Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships</p> |
| For Action | Wards Affected: ALL |
| <p>Report from the Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Janice Long</p> | |

1.0 Summary

This report provides a summary of the work carried out by the Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Standing Order 41. The report covers the period from the end of the previous Full Council meeting on 10 July 2017 to present, detailing committee members, planned training, programme of work and items discussed during the committee meeting.

2.0 Detail

- 2.1 The Housing Scrutiny Committee's remit is to scrutinise housing functions within the Community Wellbeing department, including the transfer of Brent Housing Partnership; housing supply; housing growth numbers; temporary accommodation; landlord licensing; the private rented sector; housing policy; homelessness; registered providers; supported housing; floating support, and home adaptations. Its remit primarily covers the portfolio area of the Cabinet Member for Housing & Welfare Reform.

The membership of the committee for 2017/18 is:

Councillor Janice Long, Chair
Councillor Reg Colwill, Vice-Chair
Councillor Shafique Choudhary
Councillor Mary Daly
Councillor Patricia Harrison
Councillor Orleen Hylton
Councillor Sandra Kabir
Councillor Kana Naheerathan

The committee also has agreed to appoint a co-optee who is a leaseholder of a Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) property, and another who is a BHP tenant

(the process for appointing these is currently in progress, and this is elaborated on below).

On 27 June 2017, a member-led workshop developed a work programme for 2017/18 with input from officers. This was done by filtering items according to the criteria for scrutiny and deciding what subjects or ideas would be appropriate for a task group report and what would be appropriate for a committee report. The Cabinet member for Housing & Welfare Reform also attended the workshop.

The annual work programme for the municipal year 2017/18 was agreed at the first meeting of this committee on 14 July 2017. A certain degree of flexibility has been included within the work programme to ensure agenda items can be shifted between scrutiny meetings in order to respond to items based on public and corporate concerns.

2.2 Engagement and development

Members of the committee undertook a visit to Lynton Close Traveller's Site on 4 August 2017 to understand the needs and concerns of the residents. As part of the 2017/18 Work Programme members will be considering which other visits they will want to make as part of their reports and which experts in particular policy areas from outside the local authority can complement the committee's work.

The Chair attended a meeting on Air Quality organised by the London Scrutiny Network on 14 July 2017, for the purposes of meeting colleagues from across London.

2.3 Committee Meetings

Since the Full Council meeting on 10 July 2017, this committee held its inaugural meeting on 14 July. The scrutiny committee received the following reports:

Fire safety measures for tower blocks across Brent

The report focused on enhanced fire safety measures across Brent Council properties as a response to the fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017. This report provided members with an update on the 2017-18 housing works programme in relation to fire safety measures for tower blocks across Brent.

The areas of focus included: Fire Risk Assessment Programme; fire safety improvement works; improved awareness of the mitigation measures in place for civil emergencies; awareness across different public agencies; and responding to wider public interest. There were details of the council's commitment to spend £10 million on a package of enhanced fire safety measures for high rise blocks such as sprinklers, smoke detectors and fire alarms. Officers also reported that council and BHP officers are developing a fully itemised and costed programme of fire safety works for council consideration and approval in October 2017. The report also mentioned that a letter would be sent to the Secretary of State asking the Government to meet this £10 million cost increase to the Council's 2017/2018 Capital Programme.

Officers mentioned that 12 fire-related Freedom of Information inquiries were received compared with two inquiries on fire safety and expenditure in the whole year 2016-17.

Members had an opportunity to ask further questions on the report relating to fire safety assessments, costing, impact on tenants and leaseholders and quality of contractors work. A member asked a question in relation to the number of contractors and sub-contractors and overall quality of contractors' work, as often tenants were charged higher than normal rates for even simple repairs. A further question on monitoring illegal subletting was posed to the officers present.

The committee was keen to communicate to the Cabinet member that residents would not be asked to pay the additional £10m being proposed for additional fire-works. A task group proposed at the scrutiny meeting on 14 September 2017 will review types of fire incidences, cause of death, fire safety measures and fire safety awareness campaigns in Brent with a specific focus on low-rise properties (up to nine storeys).

Update on Transition back to the Council and the BHP Transformation programme

The report provided an overview of the transition of the Housing Management function from Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) to Brent Council, following the Options Review carried out last year. The Housing Operations Transformation programme, which is a fundamental review of the service's operating model, was required irrespective of the decision to bring the service back to the Council. It outlined the transfer of 11,000 council properties back to the Council. The changes included the BHP retaining significantly reduced responsibilities for 329 properties. This is as a consequence of the June 2017 Cabinet decision to retain this separate company in the short term and reassess as Invest4Brent (I4B) develops as a company over the next 18 months. The BHP board retains the right to take decisions regarding service delivery, as it remains legally responsible for delivering services up until 2nd October 2017.

The officers outlined BHP contracts will novate to the Council, which will ensure the council is able to utilise these contracts pending any re-procurement of contracts by the council itself. Prior to agreeing to the novation or assignment of contracts to the council, officers will undertake relevant due diligence to assess the risks and appropriateness of any novation or assignment.

Members had an opportunity to ask further questions about the existing multiple contracts across the borough, in particular Veolia's, which had been causing a lot of issues. A further question was posed on land ownership and "un-adopted land" as one of the main source of issues with regard to contracts.

The committee requested officers provide a report on BHP performance data, resident engagement strategy and map of all BHP properties in each ward at the next scrutiny meeting on 14 September 2017.

Co-opted members

The report set out a suggested process for appointing co-opted members to the committee, taking into account evidence from other London Boroughs with co-opted members to their housing scrutiny committees. The report highlighted the importance of including the voices of BHP tenants and leaseholders by co-opting one of each to the committee. The need to further explore the inclusion of registered providers was also mentioned.

The recommendations included a competitive recruitment process for two posts – one each from BHP leaseholders and tenants. The selection would be overseen by a panel composed of members of this committee and officers from the Policy & Scrutiny team. The original timeline outlined in the report has been extended until end of November 2017 to increase the number of potential applications along with measures to attract interest from residents.

3.0 Upcoming Scrutiny Meetings and Activities

The upcoming meeting on 14 September 2017 will consider the following items:

- i. BHP performance data, resident engagement strategy and map of all BHP properties in each ward;
- ii. Rent and management of Travellers site;
- iii. Implementation of actions previously recommended by Local Government Ombudsman;
- iv. Scope – task group on Fire Safety of low-rise domestic properties (up to nine storeys);
- v. Review and update the Committee's Work Programme 2017-18 (attached as an appendix to this report).

Contact Officers

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Housing Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2017-18

Thursday 27 July 2017

| Agenda Rank | Item | Objectives for Scrutiny | Cabinet Member/Member | Attendees |
|-------------|---|---|--|--|
| 1. | Fire safety measures for tower blocks across Brent | 1.To assess the risk of any event similar to that of Grenfell Tower occurring particularly in social housing in Brent, and provide assurance if appropriate 2.Improved awareness of the mitigation measures in place for civil emergencies; 3. Responding to wider public interest. | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing Peter Gadsdon, Director of Performance, Policy & Partnerships |
| 2. | Timeline of integration of Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) & Transformation programme | 1.Taking stock of the current state the transformation plan; 2. Understand the impact on shared services for residents. | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing |
| 3. | Initial arrangements for co-opted members | Agree method and criteria for recruiting one BHP tenant and one BHP resident as co-optees. | Cllr Janice Long | N/A |

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| 4. | Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2017-18 | The report updates Members on the Committee's Work Programme for 2017-18 | Cllr Janice Long | N/A |
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Thursday 14 September 2017

| Agenda | Item | Objectives for Scrutiny | Cabinet Member/Member | Attendees |
|---------------|---|---|--|---|
| 1. | BHP performance data, resident engagement strategy and map of all BHP properties in each ward | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of performance indicators to understand delivery of housing services; 2. Use the current data as a baseline for future points of comparison after BHP's transition. | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance. |
| 2. | Rent and management of Travellers site | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutinise rent levels and rent collection; 2. Management and delivery of services for residents. | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance; 4. Oxfordshire County Council. |
| 3. | Implementation of actions previously recommended by Local Government Ombudsman | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evidence of action taken based on the recommendations from the Local Government Ombudsman. | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of |

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| | | | | Finance. |
| 4. | Scope – task group on Fire Safety of low-rise domestic properties (up to nine storeys) | 1. Agree scope (to have regard to work already done and previous reports to committee and full Council). | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance; 4. Sanjan Haque, Senior Policy Officer |
| 5. | Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2017-18 | The report updates Members on the Committee's Work Programme for 2017-18 | Cllr Janice Long | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sanjan Haque, Senior Policy Officer |

Wednesday 1 November 2017

| Agenda | Item | Objectives for Scrutiny | Cabinet Member/Member | Attendees |
|---------------|--|---|--|--|
| 1. | Brent based Registered Providers (RP) delivery of social housing | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of existing assets 2. Future strategy for Brent 3. Welfare issues addressed by RP (methods, means, and areas of collaboration with LBB) 4. Commitment and action between RP and their section 106 commitments | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance; 4. One registered provider (TBC). |
| 2. | Brent's Housing Associations: scrutiny task group report (July 2016) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate progress on recommendations from original report to CWB Scrutiny Committee in July 2016. | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance; 4. John Magness, Head of Housing Partnerships |
| 3. | Housing complaints | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutinise housing complaints from annual complaints report and determine key messages; 2. Scrutinise handling of vexatious complaints; 3. Review new complaints handling mechanism after | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance |

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| | | BHP dissolved | | |
| 4. | Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2017-18 | The report updates Members on the Committee's Work Programme for 2017-18 | Cllr Janice Long | 1. Sanjan Haque, Senior Policy Officer |

Tuesday 16 January 2018

| Agenda | Item | Objectives for Scrutiny | Cabinet Member/Member | Attendees |
|--------|--|--|---|--|
| 1. | Housing Revenue Account (HRA) rent setting | 1. Pre-scrutiny of decision; | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance |
| 2. | Fire Safety task group report | 1. Review final report before submitting to Cabinet | Task Group chair (TBD); Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance |
| 3. | Brent based Registered Providers (RP) delivery of social housing | 1. Use of existing assets 2. Future strategy for Brent 3. Welfare issues addressed by RP (methods, means, and areas of collaboration with LBB) 4. Commitment and action | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance; 4. One registered provider (TBC). |

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| | | between RP and their section 106 commitments | | |
| 4. | Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2017-18 | The report updates Members on the Committee's Work Programme for 2017-18 | Cllr Janice Long | 1. Sanjan Haque, Senior Policy Officer |

Thursday 22 Feb 2018

| Agenda | Item | Objectives for Scrutiny | Cabinet Member/Member | Attendees |
|---------------|--|---|--|--|
| 1. | Leaseholder services | Section 20 consultation process: 1. notice of intention; 2. notification of estimates; 3. notification of award of contract; | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance; |
| 2. | BHP Development plans | 1. Size of portfolio; Value of portfolio; 2. Management and usage plans beyond integration of BHP within LB Brent Housing; 3. Financial forecast. | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance |
| 3. | Brent based Registered Providers (RP) delivery of social housing | 1. Use of existing assets 2. Future strategy for Brent 3. Welfare issues addressed by RP (methods, means, and areas of collaboration with LBB) 4. Commitment and action between RP and their section 106 commitments | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance; 4. One registered provider (TBC). |

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| 4. | Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2017-18 | The report updates Members on the Committee's Work Programme for 2017-18 | Cllr Janice Long | 1. Sanjan Haque, Senior Policy Officer |
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Wednesday 21 Mar 2018

| Agenda | Item | Objectives for Scrutiny | Cabinet Member/Member | Attendees |
|---------------|----------------------------|--|--|---|
| 1. | 'Find your home' programme | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performance of the scheme in Brent; 2. Understand whether programme is fit for purpose based on social needs; 3. Understand the relationship with welfare reform; 4. Impact on homelessness with special focus on Children & Young People. | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance. |
| 2. | Homelessness Reduction Act | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Role of the Trailblazer programme in delivering reduction in homelessness; 2. Council's preparation for the delivery of the new legislation. | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance. |

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| 3. | Brent based Registered Providers (RP) delivery of social housing | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of existing assets 2. Future strategy for Brent 3. Welfare issues addressed by RP (methods, means, and areas of collaboration with LBB) 4. Commitment and action between RP and their section 106 commitments | Cllr Harbi Farah, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance; 4. One registered provider (TBC). |
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