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|  | <p style="text-align: center;">Housing Scrutiny Committee 1st November 2017</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Strategic Director of Community Wellbeing</p> |
| Wards affected: | |
| Working With Housing Associations in Brent | |

1.0 Summary

This report updates Housing Scrutiny Committee on the progress made, following the Brent's Housing Associations scrutiny task group report of July 2016. The focus has been on engaging with and developing the role of Housing Associations in Brent with the objective of increasing the supply of affordable housing.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That Scrutiny Committee members note the content of the report.

3.0 Renewed Focus on the Supply of Accommodation

3.1 The Council has, for some time, had ambitious targets for the delivery of new Affordable Housing in the Borough. Successive Housing Strategies have indicated a desire to see on average 1000 new affordable homes delivered per annum. However this target has not been achieved and more importantly not defined according to tenure, property size or location.

3.2 In order to more accurately define targets and more importantly put in place actions to achieve said targets a number of activities have taken place throughout 2017. One of the more important of these has been the redefinition of the relationship with the key Housing Associations operating in Brent.

3.3 Early in the year The Strategic Director, Community Wellbeing instigated a number of individual meetings with key decision makers in all of the Housing Associations operating in Brent. This led to a series of meetings with Chief Executives and Senior Directors in the following organisations;

- Metropolitan Housing
- Genesis Housing
- Peabody (formerly Affinity Sutton)

- Network
- Hyde
- Octavia Housing
- Catalyst

- 3.4 The purpose of the meetings was to seek feedback on the draft Housing Strategy but more importantly to identify how Brent might encourage these organisations to invest more vigorously in the Borough. Universally it was clear that these organisations valued the one to one interaction at a senior level and saw it as an opportunity to develop relationships. Furthermore it was clear that they needed support in navigating through the Council in an effort to deal with some of the more complex problems they faced when proposing new development.
- 3.5 The Strategic Director CWB made it clear that Brent is “open for business” and that the Housing Partnerships team existed to act as a first point of contact and provide a consultancy based response to issues that the organisations encounter.
- 3.6 These meetings have led to a commitment to meet on a regular basis. However the most positive aspect has been a desire from several of the leading players to work more closely on a number of projects including the regeneration of two estates and consultation on new development which will provide significant new supply of housing. Brent is now actively influencing the delivery of new housing supply and the tenure mix. The Housing Partnerships team have sight of a number of significant developments and is actively working to improve the solutions proposed to more accurately meet need in the Borough.
- 3.7 Additionally this contact has provided the opportunity to introduce the Council’s subsidiary I4B, with a view to entering into negotiations to increase even further the supply of rented accommodation.
- 3.8 A Housing Strategy and Investment Board has been set up which meets quarterly. All Housing Associations in the Borough are eligible to attend and the intention is to discuss all issues with the exception of new Development (which will continue to be discussed on a one to one basis). The Board will discuss all Housing Management and other issues including wider employment and wellbeing initiatives. The Board provided a forum for discussion on Fire Safety following the Grenfell fire tragedy which resulted in the formation of a subgroup to discuss best practice issues.
- 3.9 The Partnerships team is now actively working on a number of Joint Venture opportunities with Housing Associations, towards the delivery of affordable housing within the borough.
- 3.10 One of the key problems previously has been the failure to provide strategic direction and outline the expectations that Brent has for the delivery of affordable supply to its Housing Association partners. Put simply this has meant that all development has been entirely opportunity led and Brent has had no

influence over development which has led to a surfeit of Shared Ownership Property.

- 3.11 In order to more accurately target the type of accommodation Brent requires research has been commissioned with the Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research(Cambridge University) to identify affordability levels of various tenure types in Brent. Separately the existing Housing Register has been interrogated to provide a more accurate assessment of the property types and rent levels needed to meet the known demand in bands A, B and C. This data will be used to create targets of tenure, rent levels and property size in the Borough.
- 3.12 Finally the Housing Partnerships team have become actively involved with colleagues in Planning in an effort to provide more information on the supply required when developers are seeking planning permission on new developments and the offer of affordable housing we expect them to make.
- 3.13 In order to build on the progress made in 2017 the Operational Director of Housing is developing a new structure for the Supply and Partnerships team, with a change in emphasis away from managing “partnerships” and moving towards actively developing new supply internally, via I4B , via Housing Associations and also influencing the affordable accommodation offers secured in s106 agreements.

Contact Officers

John Magness
Head of Supply and Partnerships

Hakeem Osinaike
Operational Director Housing

Phil Porter
Strategic Director
Community Well Being