



Item 16.2

Full Council – 21 November 2022

Liberal Democrats Group Motion

Holding Housing Associations to Account

The Council notes:

Many Brent residents live in properties managed by Housing Associations. They may be Housing Association tenants, leaseholders or shared owners.

The number of residents who will live in properties managed by Housing Associations will continue to grow in the coming years, as more large tower blocks and Housing Association managed units are approved and built in our borough.

Housing Associations were originally set up as charitable, non-profit making organisations, with the aim to provide low cost housing for people.

In recent times, as Housing Associations have grown in number and as their stock has vastly increased, their original focus seems to have been lost as they now seem to be driven by profit and the desire to continuously increase their stock.

As Elected Members we are often made aware of issues within buildings managed by Housing Associations, whether in individual properties or in communal areas.

The communication between tenants and Housing Associations is poor, resulting in long periods of time passing before issues are identified and resolved.

There is a distinct lack of accountability when it comes to Housing Associations, and leaseholders, tenants, shared owners, often feel their concerns are ignored.

Ever increasing Service Charges continue to cause financial misery to many in our borough.

Frequently, Service Charge bills are not explained in detail to residents, as should be the case and scrutinising huge increases in bills is often complicated, meaning many experience financial hardship without fully understanding where their money is going.

Building repairs identified in individual homes and communal areas often take unacceptably long to rectify, despite residents paying vast Service Charges and most Housing Associations having considerable amounts in reserves, to deal with building defects and similar issues.

Essential building repairs are not prioritised, comprising the health and safety of residents, or causing real obstacles for people with disabilities or impairments.

Housing Associations rarely review the work of their contractors, resulting in issues reoccurring for no reason. In the long run this costs tenants more.

This Council believes:

1. Housing Associations must be held accountable and deliver for their tenants, some of whom are vulnerable and have specific housing and care needs.
2. That Housing Associations have both a legal and moral duty to ensure that their tenants' needs are met and all issues are addressed in a timely manner.
3. There is often a distinct lack of communication between Housing Associations and their tenants, which fuels the frustration many feel.
4. It is difficult for tenants to make complaints when issues persist and are left unresolved as it is hard to know who within these bureaucratic organisations is responsible for different issues that arise.

This Council resolves to:

1. Exert our influence to demand better for residents who are currently experiencing issues with their Housing Association
2. Collate a directory of useful contact information of all Housing Associations who have stock in our borough, in order for Elected Members and Officers to be able to better support residents who have ongoing problems with their Housing Association.
3. Help signpost residents to their specific Housing Association officer who would be best placed to help resolve ongoing issues in their homes or communal spaces in their building.
4. Organise a roundtable with all Housing Associations who have stock in Brent in order for a frank and open conversation to take place between Elected Members and representatives from Housing Associations about ongoing issues within their stock.
5. Review our relationship with Housing Associations who have significant issues, particularly those who do not address building defects within their existing stock.
6. Support local people in holding their Housing Association to account by seeking to democratise the relationship between tenant and Housing Association through setting up Resident Associations where in public meetings issues can be raised and actions determined.

Cllr Anton Georgiou
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