



**Community and Wellbeing
Scrutiny Committee
20 July 2016**

**Report from the Director of Performance,
Policy and Partnerships**

For Information

Scrutiny Task Group report on Brent's Housing Associations

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This task group was set up by the previous Scrutiny Committee to review the implications of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 for housing associations operating in Brent, and consequently the local authority's own housing policies.
- 1.2 The objective set for the task group was after gathering findings from registered providers and other partners to develop a set of recommendations for Brent Council's Cabinet which could influence the local authority's housing policies and its work with housing associations.
- 1.3 The scope of the task group's work was narrowed down to focus on the implications of the Acts for five main areas for policy development – the Right to Buy extension to housing association tenants, social housing supply, social rent reduction, Pay to Stay and partnerships. It was not the purpose of the task group to review all the implications of the wide-ranging pieces of legislation.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to discuss and consider the findings of the task group's report.
- 2.2 Members of the committee approve the recommendations made by the task group and support the development of an action plan for the Cabinet to take these forward.
- 2.3 The committee to agree to receive a progress report about the recommendations which are agreed by Cabinet in this municipal year 2016-17.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 A task group was set up in March 2016 because of concerns about the effects of housing associations of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 and the Housing and Planning Bill. Since the task group started its work, the Housing and Planning

Bill received royal assent on 12 May 2016 and is now the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

- 3.2 As part of its work the task group spoke to senior officers in housing associations, tenants, senior officers at Brent Council and experts who specialise in housing policy. As well as the elected members on the task group a lay representative – Jacky Peacock OBE, executive director of Advice for Renters, was also co-opted onto the task group.
- 3.3 The task group’s methodology was to have structured discussions around the five main policy themes it was looking at, and to consider the issues from these different perspectives. The task group focused on in-depth discussions with a small number of registered providers who were broadly representative of large, medium and small-sized registered providers.
- 3.4 The task group also requested data from Brent Housing Partnership to help develop its analysis of Right to Buy, and during the discussions asked registered providers for data on their modelling of the extension of Right to Buy.

3.5 Task Group Recommendations

The task group made 19 separate recommendations across the five areas of the Right to Buy extension, social housing supply, social rent reduction, Pay to Stay, and partnerships. The detail of the recommendations are contained in the report for members to discuss and agree in committee.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There was one recommendation which had financial implications, which was to jointly fund a post with housing associations to do fraud investigations around Right to Buy.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 None

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 None

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 There would only be staffing implications for Brent Council’s Audit and Investigations Team, which operates a shared service with Ealing and Hounslow councils, if the recommendation to jointly fund an anti-fraud investigator is accepted.

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