



Full Council
26 November 2018

**Report from the Director of
Performance Policy & Partnerships**

Housing Scrutiny Committee Chair's Update Report

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	Appendix A – Work Programme
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Jackie Barry-Purcell Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer Tel: 020 8937 1958 Email: Jacqueline.barry-purcell@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the work carried out by the Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee. The report covers the period from September 2018 to present, detailing a programme of work and items discussed during this period.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Council is recommended to note this report.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Housing Scrutiny Committee's remit is to scrutinise housing functions within the Community and Wellbeing department, including Brent Housing Management; 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).

3.2 **2018-19 Housing Scrutiny Committee Members**

Councillor Janice Long, Chair
Councillor Michael Maurice, Vice-Chair
Councillor Abdfatah Aden
Councillor Tony Ethapemi
Councillor Faduma Hassan
Councillor Robert Johnson
Councillor Daniel Kennelly
Councillor Thomas Stephens

3.3 The Committee also has two appointed co-optees - a leaseholder of a Brent Council home, and a Council tenant – Michele Lonergan and Karin Jaegar.

3.4 There is one committee meeting to report upon.

3.5 At its September meeting Councillor Southwood (Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform) introduced a report which outlined the council's current **Allocations Scheme** for social housing, and sought members' views on proposed amendments which would see private rented accommodation offered to homeless households through Registered Providers.

3.6 Members also asked officers about the affordability of rents and the potential impact of Universal Credit. Officers acknowledged the links to homelessness and assured the committee that this was a priority on both central and local government's agendas.

3.7 Officers briefed members on the specific impact of the policy on care leavers. The committee questioned which processes were in place to ensure that care leavers were placed in the right housing environment, and the checks being carried out to ensure the suitability of the offered properties. Members were given assurance by officers that significant work was being undertaken to support care leavers, including individually assessing the suitability of each offer, carrying out financial assessments and monitoring of any potential issues such as eviction to ensure adequate prevention/support.

3.8 Other areas of discussion focussed on income thresholds and prioritisation of housing needs, allowing households in Band D homes to retain accrued waiting time if they become homeless or placed in temporary accommodation, prioritising households in need of transfer to bid for accommodation that becomes available on current estate and a review of quotas.

3.9 The committee also considered a report on **Grounds Maintenance on Estates**, providing an overview of the grounds maintenance and contract management arrangements across the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land. The current contract was carried out by Veolia and co-managed by Environment and Housing Management Services.

- 3.10 The committee raised the issue of inconsistency of standards of service, and officers explained that improvements were being made and the level of service was regularly monitored, which included the recently-introduced CRM system. The committee also commented on the effectiveness of the local environment quality checks programme which was introduced in 2007, as a way to incentivise residents to maintain the grounds in their estates by giving them a sense of ownership and engagement. Discussion followed on the number of contracts in operation and contract options.
- 3.11 The committee also received a report on **Landlord Licensing** from the Head of Private Housing services. It outlined the key points of the landlord licensing scheme within the context of private housing in Brent, its financing, impact on landlords and tenants as well as challenges. In welcoming the expansion of the selective licensing scheme, a number of questions were raised by the committee, centred mainly on issues with cost, enforcement, standards and liaison with tenants.
- 3.12 Members asked about work being undertaken with landlords to avoid the need for enforcement actions. They heard that there was no requirement to inspect properties before a license was granted and other mitigation processes were in place, including carrying out compliance inspections, removal of landlords from the landlord licensing system and imposing GLA database banning orders. Whilst management orders were not the norm, officers noted that periodic inspections were carried out to ensure compliance from landlords.
- 3.13 Members also raised questions on the information available to tenants and estate agents, raising the point that this was insufficient when compared to information provided to landlords. Members also raised concern about the complexity of the process to ascertain if a landlord is licensed. Officers outlined improvements being made in this area, and stated that regular liaison takes place with estate agents including the issuing of newsletters.

4.0 Other activities and future meetings

- 4.1 In terms of visits undertaken during this period, on October 26th, the Chair attended a presentation at South Kilburn followed by a site visit, with the Lead Member for Housing & Welfare Reform and Councillor Abdirazak. This was to learn about the plans for the fire safety work on low rise residential properties (up to five storeys in height), and see the completed work to a street property converted into three flats. Further presentations for councillors are planned.
- 4.2 As part of Local Democracy week a scrutiny café focused on housing standards was held on Tuesday 16 October. This offered an opportunity for those who live in the borough to discuss housing issues with the chair over a tea or coffee. The main points raised were the cost of the private rented sector, repairs by housing associations, enforcement of landlord licensing, overcrowding and anti-social behaviour.

4.3 There are four further meetings of the committee scheduled for 2018/19. The work programme for these meetings is included below as an appendix.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications.

7.0 Equality Implications

7.1 There are no equality implications.

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon

Director of Performance Policy &
Partnerships

Appendix A

Housing Scrutiny Work Programme 2018/19

Thursday, 29 November 2018

Agenda	Item	Objectives for Scrutiny	Cabinet Member/Member	Attendees
1.	Asset Management Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Scrutinise use of existing assets2. Explore the future strategy for Brent	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – 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. Sean Gallagher, Head of Property Services;4. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance
2.	Fire Safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Evaluate progress on recommendations from the Task and Finish Group (17/18)2. Improved awareness of the mitigation measures in place for civil emergencies;3. Responding to wider public interest	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform/Cllr Janice Long – Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director Community Wellbeing;2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing;3. John Magness, Head of Housing Supply and Partnerships;4. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance

3.	Housing Revenue Account (alignment and rent setting)	1. Pre-scrutiny of decision	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director, Community and Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance
4.	Terms of Reference - Task Group Service Provision on Housing Estates	1. Terms of Reference to be discussed and agreed	Cllr Janice Long – Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director, Community and Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance
5.	Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2018-19	1. The report updates Members on the Committee's Work Programme for 2018-19	Cllr Janice Long – Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee	N/A
6.	Forward Plan	1. The Committee to review the Forward Plan (housing element).	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform/Cllr Janice Long – Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee	N/A

Thursday 6 February 2019

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. Gain an overview of the performance of Registered Providers based on the priorities of the service 2. Scrutinise welfare issues addressed by RP (methods, means, and areas of collaboration with LBB) 3. Review performance measures 4. Review conversions from social to affordable housing 	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – 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. Laurence Coaker, Head of Housing Needs; 4. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance
2.	Welfare Reform and Homelessness (including the Homelessness Reduction Act)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutinise the impact of Welfare Reform on Homelessness in the borough 2. Scrutinise the Council's readiness for the challenges presented 3. Scrutinise implementation and impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act in Brent 4. Review the Supported People budget 	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – 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
3.	Performance Update	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutinise performance across the service 2. Review strengths and areas for further improvement 	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – 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	Housing Complaints	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To scrutinise complaints relating to the Housing Service 2. To understand the strengths and gaps 3. To gain an overview of the work that is underway to close the gaps 	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phil Porter, Strategic Director, Community and Wellbeing; 2. Hakeem Osinaike, Operational Director Housing; 3. Troy Francis, Head of Housing Management Services; 4. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance
5	Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2018-19	1. The report updates Members on the Committee's Work Programme for 2018-19	Cllr Janice Long – Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee	N/A
6.	Forward Plan	1. The Committee to review the Forward Plan (housing element).	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform/Cllr Janice Long – Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee	N/A

27 March 2019

Agenda	Item	Objectives for Scrutiny	Cabinet Member/Member	Attendees
1.	Disabled Facilities and Small Works Grants Distribution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To scrutinise approach and outcomes delivered 2. To review how performance in this area is measured 	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – 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.	New CRM System	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutinise management and usage of the new CRM system 2. Review performance and customer feedback 3. Scrutinise links with the wider Housing Service 	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – 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. Troy Francis, Head of Housing Management Services 4. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance
3.	I4B	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutinise impact on housing 2. Review locations and quality of housing 3. Review the impact on the waiting list 	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – 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. Laurence Coaker, Head of Housing Needs 4. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance
4.	Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2018-19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The report updates Members on the Committee's Work Programme for 2018-19 	Cllr Janice Long – Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee	N/A
5.	Forward Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Committee to review the Forward Plan 	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – Lead Member for Housing	N/A

		(housing element).	and Welfare Reform/Cllr Janice Long – Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee	
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25 April 2019

Agenda	Item	Objectives for Scrutiny	Cabinet Member/Member	Attendees
1.	Tackling ASB	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutinise approach to tackling ASB on Estates 2. Review links to wider ASB challenges in the borough 	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – 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. Rep from Public Protection (tbc); 4. Minesh Patel, Head of Finance.
2.	Rent Arrears (including Registered Providers)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutinise the level of rent arrears 2. Review location and trends 3. Explore actions in place to tackle these arrears 4. Explore approach to evictions 	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – 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).
3.	Fire Safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate fire safety in council housing 2. Improved awareness of the mitigation measures in place for civil emergencies 	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – 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	Service Provision on Housing Estates Task Group	1. Scrutinise the findings and recommendations from the scrutiny task group – Service Provision on Housing Estates	Cllr Eleanor Southwood	<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
5	Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2018-19	1. The report updates Members on the Committee's Work Programme for 2018-19	Cllr Janice Long – Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee	N/A
6.	Forward Plan	1. The Committee to review the Forward Plan (housing element).	Cllr Eleanor Southwood – Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform/Cllr Janice Long – Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee	N/A