	Housing Scrutiny Committee 06 February 2019
	Report from the Strategic Director of Community Wellbeing
Brent based Registered Providers (RP) delivery of social housing	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key Decision
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:	None
Background Papers:	None
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1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Housing Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the Registered Providers (RP)s operating in Brent. This will include:
 - 1.1.1 Examples of performance and how RP's contribute to the housing services' key priorities (see section 4)
 - 1.1.2 Member contact routes for RP's (see section 5)

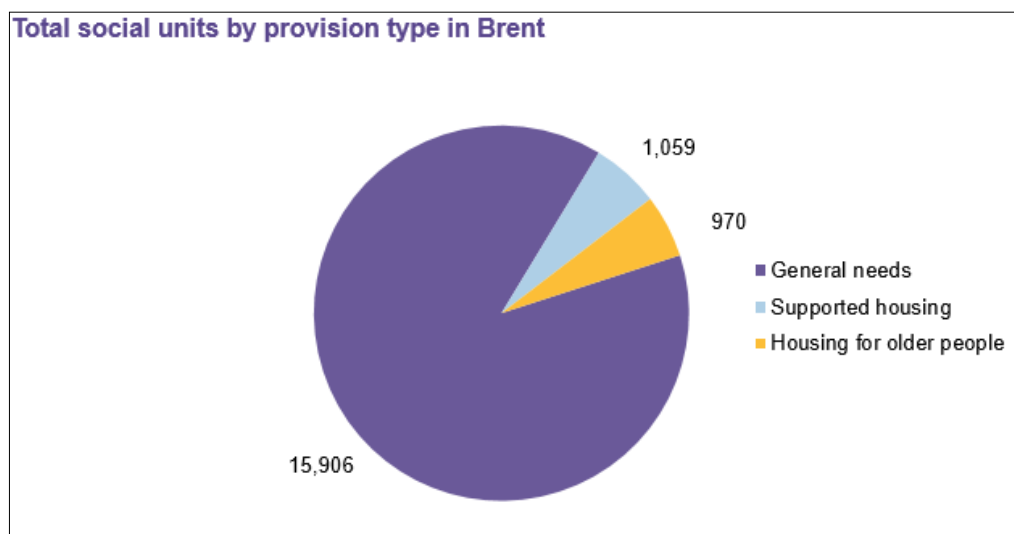
- 1.1.3 Delivery of shared ownership homes (see section 6)
- 1.1.4 How the Council and RP's work collaboratively to address issues such as welfare (see section 7)
- 1.1.5 How RP's have engaged with the Council or communicated changes in service (see section 8)
- 1.1.6 Performance strengths, challenges and risks of different RP's (see section 9)
- 1.1.7 How RP's communicate with our residents (see section 10)
- 1.1.8 An overview of social rented properties being converted to affordable rent as a result of stock transfers (see section 11)
- 1.1.9 Parking in RP managed blocks (see section 12)

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 Housing Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and provide comments on the issues it raises.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 In 2018, there were 55 RPs operating in Brent, managing 20,221 affordable homes for rent. According to the Regulator of Social Housing, the split in terms of type of homes, is as follows:



- 3.2 Of the 55 RPs, 25 are classed as small (less than 1,000 properties owned) and 30 large (more than 1,000 properties owned). Just under 92% of all properties for affordable rent are managed by large RP's. These are;

- 1 L&Q
- 2 Notting Hill Genesis
- 3 Metropolitan and Thames Valley Housing
- 4 Hyde Housing

3.3 To reflect the experience of most Brent residents with an RP landlord, this report will provide examples from large RPs. This is also the approach taken by the Regulator for Social Housing when capturing data on Brent.

4 Delivering key priorities

4.1 There are three key priorities that RPs are currently supporting the Council to deliver. These are:

- 4.1.1 Delivering genuinely affordable housing
- 4.1.2 Matching supply with demand
- 4.1.3 Delivering high quality services to existing tenants and leaseholders

4.2 RPs play a significant role in the delivery of affordable housing in Brent. As the main developers to date, providing them with the insight to build the right homes at the right rent levels has been essential. The table below provided by the Greater London Authority (GLA), shows a breakdown of affordable housing delivered in Brent by RP's.

ONS Code		Affordable Rent	Social Rent	Intermediate Rent	Affordable Home Ownership	Total Affordable Completions
2018-19	<i>April 2018 - September 2018</i>					
E09000005	Brent	23	8	-	15	46
2017-18	<i>April 2017 - March 2018</i>					
E09000005	Brent	36	33	-	59	128
2016-17	<i>April 2016 - March 2017</i>					
E09000005	Brent	191	-	-	24	215
2015-16	<i>April 2015 - March 2016</i>					
E09000005	Brent	174	28	-	-	202
2014-15	<i>April 2014 - March 2015</i>					
E09000005	Brent	510	165	-	641	1,316
2013-14	<i>April 2013 - March 2014</i>					
E09000005	Brent	128	37	-	107	272
2012-13	<i>April 2012 - March 2013</i>					

4.3 Whilst this table shows there has been a decline in the number of affordable homes in Brent after 2013/14, improved relationship and increased effort will see a total of 579 new affordable homes delivered in 2018/19.

4.4 A review of planning applications indicates that the Council will deliver its target of 1,000 new affordable homes each year for the next five years. This is due to large developments being delivered by RP's (including s.106 agreements) combined with the Council's own development programme.

- 4.5 The GLA has entered into “strategic partnerships” with a number of G15 RPs, which are; L&Q, Genesis Notting Hill, Clarion, Network, Optivo and Peabody. The Council has developed strong relationships with a number of these and would be looking to develop them further with our own strategic partnership agreements. This has successfully led to number of RP’s investing significant amounts of GLA grant funding alongside their own resources into the borough.
- 4.6 The relationships held with the larger RP’s have further supported the Council to deliver new homes. The Council is currently utilising RPs’ development expertise to deliver the Council new build programme which will result in 817 new Council homes over the next three years.
- 4.7 When new developments are in the process of planning, the Housing Supply and Partnerships are using data supplied by the Housing Needs service outlining current demand and using this to inform property sizes. For example, there are currently 1,003 households in Temporary Accommodation requiring a 3-bedroom property. RPs have been asked to review proposals to maximise the number of 3-bedrooms in the development offering a minimum of 35% larger properties within a scheme. This information is provided to RPs quarterly.
- 4.8 The Housing Supply and Partnerships service also review complaints received relating to RPs. There have been a total of 32 members’ enquiries or complaints received since April 2018. The main source of complaints for tenants are repairs.
- 4.9 Recently, the Council was asked to support a Resident Association and RP meeting to discuss leaseholder charges. The Council was satisfied the RP had followed the correct processes however reinforced the need for service charge statements to be correct and reflective of the services provided. The issue has now been resolved.
- 4.10 One of the biggest challenges is where multiple landlords are operating in a single block or neighbourhood.
- 4.11 As an example of good practice, Housing Supply and Partnerships team recently brokered an agreement for the Council’s Responsive Repairs and Voids team to coordinate joint visits with RP’s repairs teams in blocks where we both have tenants. This is primarily to address the issue of leaks into properties, where coordination between landlords helps to resolve the issue quicker.
- 4.12 With the potential redevelopment of South Kilburn, the Council has established a group with RP’s operating in the area to develop a consistent design and set of service standards for that area. The intention is to support the ambition of place making and to guarantee residents living in neighbouring properties a certain level of service regardless of their landlord as part of the offer.
- 4.12.1 Whilst the relationships between the Council and RP’s are strong and deliver for the borough, the Council is keen to develop this further and will be introducing the following as part of the Housing Supply and Partnerships 2019/ 2020 service plan:

- 4.12.2 Establishing regular meetings with RP complaints teams to review trending issues raised by residents and Members
- 4.12.3 Engaging smaller RP's within the development programme to deliver specialist housing e.g. adapted units
- 4.12.4 Identify opportunities to link up engagement activity so improvements are made for communities or blocks rather than individually
- 4.12.5 Establishing data sharing protocols to introduce joint targeted interventions within neighbourhoods
- 4.12.6 Identify opportunities to share good news stories on behalf of RP's where development of new homes has benefited Brent residents.

5 Contact routes for Members

- 5.1 Each RP operating in Brent has a generic mailbox for members to report issues. These mailboxes help RPs monitor response times and keep track of issues being investigated.
- 5.2 The Housing Supply and Partnerships service are in the process of cataloguing RP contact details, to present in a single location for easy access by members.
- 5.3 It is advised members support affected residents to report first time incidents directly to their landlord. Follow up complaints can then be taken up as members' enquiries.
- 5.4 Where a member has made an enquiry directly to the RP's mailbox and they have not received a response, this can be reported to the Council via the members' enquiries mailbox. This is then assigned to the Housing Supply and Partnerships service to review and chase.

6 Delivery of shared ownership homes

- 6.1 The Council's ambition to build 1,000 new affordable homes each year includes a target of 30% of these new homes to be shared ownership. The Council recognises that shared ownership is not the only or perhaps most desirable affordable housing option and that it is not affordable to many, it however remains a popular housing option for people in employment. The majority of demand is created by younger working professionals whose only housing option is to live in the private rented sector.
- 6.2 For the years 2018/19, 128 shared ownership properties have been completed. There are a further 1,382 known shared ownership homes planned for delivery between 2019 and 2023. The demand for shared ownership is growing significantly in places like Brent where house prices are high. The Chartered Institute of Housing reported to meet demand, 25,000 new shared ownership properties per year are needed. This is a result of the growing gap between

house prices and incomes, high mortgage deposit requirements and high demand of affordable housing.

- 6.3 The Council is in the process of developing a shared ownership policy in line with the GLA requirements for allocating shared ownership properties. This policy will inform the approach RPs will take and ensure shared ownership properties support the Council's priorities e.g. key worker accommodation. The aim is to have this policy in place by August 2019.
- 6.4 Once the policy has been finalised, any associated section 106 requirements via the nominations agreement will be updated to reflect the Council's expectations for Shared Ownership properties.
- 6.5 Where shared ownership properties have been developed with grant funding from the Greater London Authority, it is a requirement they are advertised via the Homes for Londoners portal. Share to Buy also advertise shared ownership properties. There are currently 93 shared ownership properties being advertised in Brent.

7 Means, methods and areas of collaboration between the Council and RPs

- 7.1 To coordinate the RPs' response to issues such as welfare reforms that impact Brent residents, the Council host a series of networks, committees and boards, each focusing on a different topic.
- 7.2 The Housing Strategy and Delivery Board, brings together senior officers, usually Director level, from a range of RPs to discuss strategic issues impacting residents in the borough. The most recent meeting held in January 2019 included the roll out of Universal Credit, matching RP supply to the needs of households living in Temporary Accommodation (TA) and a common approach to Tenancy Strategy. Another area discussed was the review of Nominations Agreements and data provided during this process. All RPs agreed with the Council a need to establish a data sharing protocol so applicants' vulnerabilities or current support packages are known at the point of sign up.
- 7.3 The Housing Sub-Group engages operational managers and focuses on sharing best practice. This provides an opportunity to explore growing trends in specific neighbourhoods such as anti-social behaviour and coordinate a joint response. Additionally, services offered by other areas of the Council e.g. public health are showcased in this forum.
- 7.4 The Fire Safety group was established following the tragedy at Grenfell Tower. The aim was to ensure all RPs operating in the borough had the required processes in place to keep Brent residents safe. The fire service also attends to give advice and guidance via this forum.
- 7.5 In addition to the regular forums, the Council works alongside RPs in task and finish groups e.g. South Kilburn and wider Council run networks e.g. Welfare Reform Network.

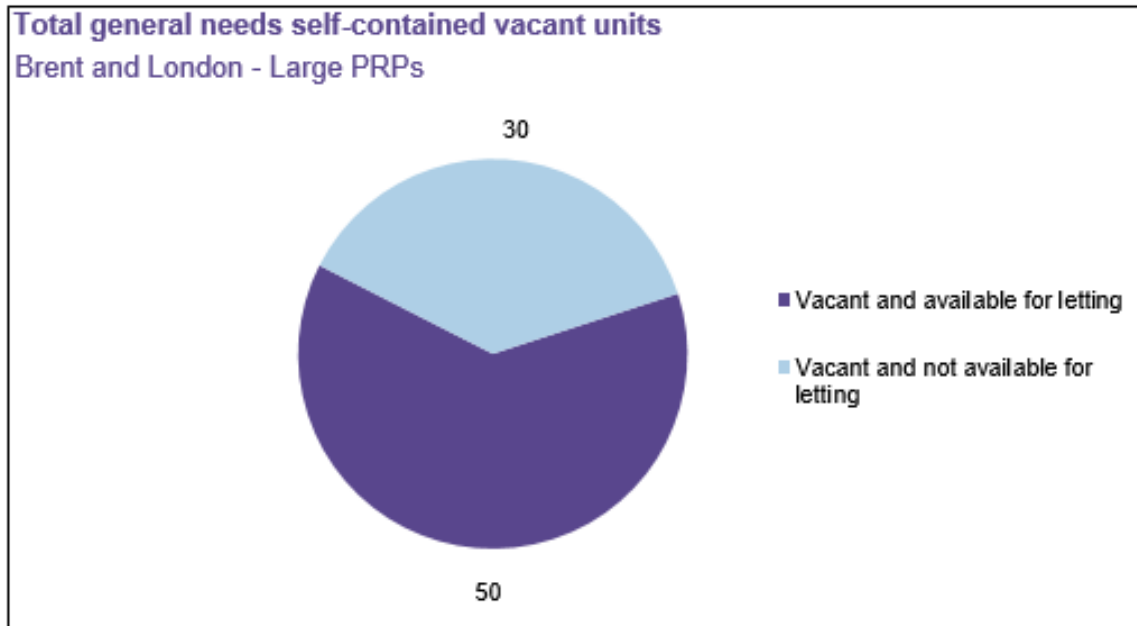
8 Engagement with RPs on changes to services

- 8.1 The Housing Supply and Partnerships team has invested in energising the relationship the Council has with RPs. It has set up engagement channels between the Council and RPs operating in the borough at both strategic and operational levels. As part of this, the Cabinet member for Housing and Welfare Reforms, the Strategic Director of Community Wellbeing and the Operational Director of Housing meet on a quarterly basis with Chief Executives of key RPs and their executive teams. A number of other operational meetings also take place between Council officers and RPs. The purpose of these meetings includes but is not limited to:
- 8.1.1 Relationship management to encourage delivery of affordable housing in Brent.
 - 8.1.2 Strategic relationships to deliver, either jointly or through a commission to deliver new affordable homes and estate regeneration.
 - 8.1.3 Contractual relationships to ensure agreed nomination rights are fulfilled.
 - 8.1.4 Contractual relationships whereby the RP is managed against performance indicators.
 - 8.1.5 Strategic partnerships whereby ownership of issues impacting Brent residents are jointly tackled.
 - 8.1.6 Delivery of temporary accommodation where the RP is a managing agent on behalf of the Council.
 - 8.1.7 Sharing knowledge and expertise.
- 8.2 Updates from RPs on changes to service are communicated via the boards and committees outlined in section 7 above. This includes details of mergers.
- 8.3 Where an RP wishes to discuss a change that is commercially sensitive or has a direct impact on the Council, this is managed by the Housing Supply and Partnerships service along with any other service area likely to be impacted.
- 8.4 There have been examples where an RP opted to reduce the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation within its stock resulting in residents living in Temporary Accommodation being evicted. This was poorly managed and the Council were not notified ahead of this decision being carried out. The impact of not working with the Council and failure to communicate was raised with the responsible head of service for the RP.
- 8.5 When mergers are taking place, or there is a change in senior staff, RPs are asked to inform the Housing Supply and Partnerships team so contacts can be updated. This is via the generic mailbox; housingpartnerships@brent.gov.uk.

9 Performance strengths, challenges and risks associated with RP's

- 9.1 The Regulator for Social Housing reported 0.8% of affordable rented properties in Brent did not meet the Decent Homes Standard. This is in line with performance across London and higher than the England average at 0.4%.

9.2 The performance of empty homes was reported at 0.6% of properties being vacant and available for letting in Brent compared to 0.8% in London and 1.1% average England. This suggests performance for vacant affordable rent properties is good. The chart below presents a further breakdown.



9.3 One strength of RPs operating in the borough is a willingness to work in partnership with the Council to tackle issues such as tenancy fraud. There is an ongoing review of the Tenancy Strategy by the Council and RPs have been asked to also ensure their tenancy policies are up to date. These policies include a requirement for all landlords to outline their approach to tackling tenancy fraud including their approach to tenancy audits.

9.4 A key challenge to note is the Council's role in managing RPs in the borough is that RPs are not technically accountable to the borough unless specific legislation allows for enforcement action to be taken e.g. environmental health. If there are concerns with an RP and their management of services, this is the role of the Regulator for Social Housing.

9.5 There is however a role for the Council to play and this is influencing the outcome of services or developments so they align with the borough's strategic priorities. This is achieved through the development of good working relationships between the Council and RPs.

9.6 The risks associated with poor RPs' performance are as follows:

9.6.1 Residents homes being unfit for habitation

9.6.2 Residents in circumstances where they are unsafe

- 9.6.3 Increased levels of crime through poor housing management
 - 9.6.4 Affordable housing sites not being completed or delivered at poor quality
 - 9.6.5 Residents being evicted without the Council being notified when they are first placed at risk or being evicted as a result of poor rent account management
 - 9.6.6 RP's not mitigating risks introduced by National policy
 - 9.6.7 An increased demand on Council resource where legislation needs to be enforced against RP's e.g. environmental health
 - 9.6.8 An inability to deliver services that are value for money driving up rents or service charges for residents
 - 9.6.9 Resident satisfaction across the borough being impacted
 - 9.6.10 RP's financial or governance ratings being downgraded reducing ambitions or ability to build and invest in current assets
- 9.7 A further risk to note which is not directly linked to performance but does impact Brent residents is the risk of for profit RPs operating in Brent. Recently, Kinsman Housing Association who were associated with a Brent development was served a Regulatory Notice by the Regulator for Social Housing for selling shared ownership homes on the market.

10 Communicating with Brent residents

- 10.1 All RPs operating in Brent have an Engagement strategy or structure for communicating with residents.
- 10.2 Not all communications are tailored specifically to Brent residents with many of the large RPs instead opting for channels that reach their wider tenant and leaseholder population, particularly where updates on specific services are involved.
- 10.3 Network homes have recently launched a new approach to communicating with residents following the release of the Social Housing Green Paper. The aim is to increase transparency through communication and access to information.
- 10.4 There are also examples in the borough where RPs have supported the development of Residents Associations. Both L&Q and Octavia have taken this approach to ensure residents shape the RP's response to cladding on their building. This has helped to identify opportunity for the RP to reduce the impact of works to the tenant where possible and empowered residents in the block with the latest updates and information.
- 10.5 Other action identified includes exploring the joining up of engagement activity delivered by RPs. There is an opportunity to link this further with the Council's Brent Connects sessions.

11 Conversion of social rents to affordable rents

- 11.1 There are currently two contracts in place that result in social rents being converted to affordable rents once a property becomes void.

11.2 The Council has a Public Private Partnership contract with Hyde Housing. This contract requires Hyde to manage 324 properties including providing Housing Management and Facilities Management services. Once the property becomes void the new tenant then becomes a Hyde Housing tenant and this comes with a change in rent. The conversion of tenure and therefore rent is part of the PPP contractual requirements.

11.3 Additionally, the Council has a Trickle Transfer arrangement with Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH) for the Chalkhill estate. On this estate, Brent Council properties co-exist with MTVH properties, MTVH however are responsible for the communal areas. Once a Council property becomes void, the Council signs over the deed to MTVH.

12 Parking in RP managed blocks

12.1 There are no fixed parking policies on estates managed by RPs.

12.2 Any provision of parking is captured during the planning applications of individual buildings whereby the developer is required to demonstrate any parking provision meets planning requirements. In most cases this emphasises a need to provide alternative transport provision leading to many RP blocks in the borough including bicycle stores.

12.3 Most parking provided that is associated with a block is either accessed by a fob or a permit displayed. This is managed on a block by block basis. An example of the approach taken is Brent-Coefficient who manage the stock under the PFI arrangement, use MET Parking services to enforce parking restrictions for blocks such as The Mall, Ada Lewis and Willestone.

12.4 Where issues are caused between neighbours as a result of people parking in designated spaces, RPs' such as Origin state this is not considered to be anti-social behaviour.

Report sign off:

Phil Porter

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