

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE HOUSING & REGENERATION SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.33 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2020

MP701 - TOWN HALL MULBERRY PLACE

Members Present:

Councillor Dipa Das (Chair)
Councillor Eve McQuillan
Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Andrew Wood

Co-opted Members Present:

Anne Ambrose Tenant Representative

Other Councillors Present:

None.

Others Present

Sandra Fawcett – Chair of THHF

Officers:

Mark Slowikowski – Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer
Karen Swift – Divisional Director of Housing & Regeneration
Michael Ritchie – Strategic Planning Officer
Rupert Brandon – Interim Head of Housing and Supply
Sripriya Sudhakar – Place Shaping Team Leader
Becky Mumford – Planning Officer
Lucia Cerrada – High Density Development Officer
Rushena Miah – Committee Services Officer

1. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 H&R Action Log-21-1-20

RESOLVED:

To note the actions log.

3.2 HOUSING SUPPLY AND DEMAND

The committee received the report and presentation of Karen Swift (Divisional Director of Housing & Regeneration).

In response to the report the following discussion took place:

- Officers agreed to provide the committee with the number of under occupiers. They estimated the figure would be around 400-500 but would confirm the figures post meeting.
- There was a discussion on buy back and how many were being purchased from private and social landlords. It was noted that some buy backs were from Poplar Harca. Officers agreed to provide further details on buy backs.
- There was a discussion that shared ownership was unfeasible for most working people. Officers said they were working with developers early on to negotiate an intermediate rent offer. Members urged officers to continue their efforts for more affordable rents.
- There was a discussion on London boroughs setting up social letting's agencies. Capital Letters was a London wide attempt to change the housing dynamics in London. 28 million was sourced in LHGH funding. Thirteen London boroughs signed up to the initiative and had secured around 160 private let properties in the last year. 38 million in funding has also been sourced by capital letters to encourage collaborative working between boroughs.
- It was noted that the billingsgate market site was leased to the City but there were plans for CBI to procure the space in 60 years' time. Members said this was a potential site to deliver thousands of new homes and asked if the council could intervene in future development of the site. Officers said it may be out of their remit, but they would investigate.
- Members agreed that the bidding process was inefficient, and it was agreed that a spotlight scrutiny session on bidding should be included in the committee's forward plan.
- Members wanted to know how much housing has come from the council's own effort and how much of it was from S.106 money. Officers said they could provide the figures.
- Members wanted to know how many homes were expected to be built by 2023 and a list of providers expected to build the developments. Members also wanted a definition of what 'affordable' meant. Officers

summarised that rent was a complex issue due to the three different tiers of rents. There was the GLA target rate and the Tower Hamlets Living Rent which was sometimes slightly higher. They said rates varied to enable a range of incomes to bid.

- A member of the public made a statement to the Chair that the housing bidding process was unfair to single people as the number of single people had increased but homes were not planned for single occupiers. Concerns were raised that the situation was leading to more young single people being forced into the private sector and homelessness was a risk if they experienced job insecurity. An article on the topic was circulated to Members.
- A representative from Wellington Estate Tenants and Residents Association made a statement in opposition to the development of the Canal Club Site due to a loss of play, amenity and community gardening space and a further increase in the building density of the area. A statement was tabled. Members noted the statement.

ACTIONS:

Officers to provide:

1. A breakdown of the Housing Association supply slide by section 106 and Housing Association led development.
2. The number of under-occupiers on the Housing Register.
3. The split in acquisitions between ex council RTB and purchases of other housing provider stock.

RESOLVED:

To note the presentations and actions.

3.3 FINDINGS OF THE HIGH-DENSITY LIVING SURVEY

In response to the presentation Members wanted to find out if planners had taken into consideration school place planning and child yield. Officers said research had been conducted and they would share this with the committee.

ACTION: Michael Ritchie to share research on school place planning and child yield in planning and development in the borough.

RESOLVED:

To note the presentation.

3.4 HOUSING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2020-2021

The committee briefly discussed topics to add to the next municipal year's work plan. The following suggestions were made:

- A scrutiny review session in the work programme on the housing bidding process.
- Damages to new builds post-handover and the common housing register.
- Efficiency of common allocation.
- Site visits and mystery shopping.
- Housing Options looking at issues.
- Explore mixed ownership on estates and potential equalities impacts.

RESOLVED:

To note work programme suggestions.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members raised a concern from their constituents that Tower Hamlets Homes were conducting mental health assessments alongside fire safety assessments which tenants were unhappy about. Karen Swift said she would contact THH to explore the issue and feed back to the committee.

The committee RESOLVED to take the following action:

ACTION: for Karen Swift to Contact THH for an explanation on how fire safety assessments were being conducted.

**5. UNDER OCCUPATION SCRUTINY REVIEW - TRACKING
RECOMMENDATIONS**

RESOLVED:

To note the document.

The meeting ended at 20:05

Chair, Councillor Dipa Das
Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee