

Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee

Agenda

**Thursday, 14 December 2023 6.30 p.m.
Council Chamber - Town Hall, Whitechapel**

Members:

Chair: Councillor Abdul Mannan

Vice Chair: Councillor Shafi Ahmed

Councillor Musthak Ahmed, Councillor Saif Uddin Khaled, Councillor Marc Francis,
Councillor Asma Islam, Councillor James King and Councillor Kabir Ahmed

Co-opted Members:

Mahbub Anam ((Tenant representative)) and Susanna Kow ((Leaseholder representative))

Deputies:

[The quorum for this body is 3 voting Members]

Contact for further enquiries:

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<http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk>



Public Information

Viewing or Participating in Committee Meetings

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Please note: Whilst the meeting is open to the public, the public seating in the meeting room for observers will be extremely limited due to the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions. You must contact the Democratic Services Officer to reserve a place, this will be allocated on a first come first served basis. No one will be admitted unless they have registered in advance.

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A Guide to Overview and Scrutiny

The Local Government Act 2000 established the overview and scrutiny function for every council, with the key roles of:

- Scrutinising decisions before or after they are made or implemented
- Proposing new policies and commenting on draft policies, and
- Ensuring customer satisfaction and value for money.

The aim is to make the decision-making process more transparent, accountable and inclusive, and improve services for people by being responsive to their needs.

In Tower Hamlets, the function is exercised by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC). The OSC considers issues from across the council and partnership remit. The Committee has 3 Sub-Committees which focus on health, housing and grants.

Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee

The Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee will undertake overview and scrutiny, pertaining to housing matters. This will include:

- (a) Reviewing and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of the Council's housing functions;
- (b) Advising the Mayor, DCLG Commissioners or Cabinet of key issues/questions arising in relation to housing reports due to be considered by the Mayor, DCLG Commissioners or Cabinet;
- (c) Making reports and/or recommendations to the full Council and/or the Mayor, DCLG Commissioners or Cabinet in connection with the discharge of housing functions;
- (d) Delivering (c) by organising an annual work programme, drawing on the knowledge and priorities of the council, registered providers and other stakeholders, that will identify relevant topics or issues that can be properly scrutinised;
- (e) Holding service providers to account, where recent performance fails to meet the recognised standard, by looking at relevant evidence and make recommendations for service improvements;
- (f) Considering housing matters affecting the area or its inhabitants, including where these matters have been brought to the attention of the sub-committee by tenant and resident associations, or members of the general public.
- (g) The Sub-Committee will report annually to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on its work.

Public Engagement

Meetings of the sub committee are open to the public to attend, and a timetable for meeting dates and deadlines can be found on the council's website.



London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee

Thursday, 14 December 2023

6.30 p.m.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (PAGES 7 - 8)

Members are reminded to consider the categories of interest in the Code of Conduct for Members to determine whether they have an interest in any agenda item and any action they should take. For further details, please see the attached note from the Monitoring Officer.

Members are reminded to declare the nature of the interest and the agenda item it relates to. Please note that ultimately it's the Members' responsibility to declare any interests and to update their register of interest form as required by the Code.

If in doubt as to the nature of your interest, you are advised to seek advice prior to the meeting by contacting the Monitoring Officer or Democratic Services

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S) (PAGES 9 - 16)

To confirm as a correct record of the proceedings the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the held on 19th October 2023.

3. Outstanding Actions

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Social Housing Landlords Performance Report Q2

TO FOLLOW

4.2 Homelessness Strategy (Pages 21 - 38)

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting of the Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee

Thursday, 29 February 2024 at 6.30 p.m. to be held in Council Chamber - Town Hall, Whitechapel



Tower Hamlets Council
Tower Hamlets Town Hall
160 Whitechapel Road
London E1 1BJ

Agenda Item 1

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AT MEETINGS– NOTE FROM THE MONITORING OFFICER

This note is for guidance only. For further details please consult the Code of Conduct for Members at Part C, Section 31 of the Council's Constitution

(i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)

You have a DPI in any item of business on the agenda where it relates to the categories listed in **Appendix A** to this guidance. Please note that a DPI includes: (i) Your own relevant interests; (ii) Those of your spouse or civil partner; (iii) A person with whom the Member is living as husband/wife/civil partners. Other individuals, e.g. Children, siblings and flatmates do not need to be considered. Failure to disclose or register a DPI (within 28 days) is a criminal offence.

Members with a DPI, (unless granted a dispensation) must not seek to improperly influence the decision, must declare the nature of the interest and leave the meeting room (including the public gallery) during the consideration and decision on the item – unless exercising their right to address the Committee.

DPI Dispensations and Sensitive Interests. In certain circumstances, Members may make a request to the Monitoring Officer for a dispensation or for an interest to be treated as sensitive.

(ii) Non - DPI Interests that the Council has decided should be registered – (Non - DPIs)

You will have 'Non DPI Interest' in any item on the agenda, where it relates to (i) the offer of gifts or hospitality, (with an estimated value of at least £25) (ii) Council Appointments or nominations to bodies (iii) Membership of any body exercising a function of a public nature, a charitable purpose or aimed at influencing public opinion.

Members must declare the nature of the interest, but may stay in the meeting room and participate in the consideration of the matter and vote on it **unless:**

- A reasonable person would think that your interest is so significant that it would be likely to impair your judgement of the public interest. **If so, you must withdraw and take no part in the consideration or discussion of the matter.**

(iii) Declarations of Interests not included in the Register of Members' Interest.

Occasions may arise where a matter under consideration would, or would be likely to, **affect the wellbeing of you, your family, or close associate(s) more than it would anyone else living in the local area** but which is not required to be included in the Register of Members' Interests. In such matters, Members must consider the information set out in paragraph (ii) above regarding Non DPI - interests and apply the test, set out in this paragraph.

Guidance on Predetermination and Bias

Member's attention is drawn to the guidance on predetermination and bias, particularly the need to consider the merits of the case with an open mind, as set out in the Planning and Licensing Codes of Conduct, (Part C, Section 34 and 35 of the Constitution). For further advice on the possibility of bias or predetermination, you are advised to seek advice prior to the meeting.

Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992 - Declarations which restrict Members in Council Tax arrears, for at least a two months from voting

In such circumstances the member may not vote on any reports and motions with respect to the matter.

Further Advice contact: Janet Fasan, Acting Monitoring Officer, Tel: 0207 364 4800.

APPENDIX A: Definition of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

(Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012, Reg 2 and Schedule)

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vacation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by the Member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of the Member. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority— (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the Member's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the relevant authority; and (b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where— (a) that body (to the Member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE HOUSING & REGENERATION SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2023

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present:

Councillor Abdul Mannan (Chair)
Councillor Shafi Ahmed
Councillor Musthak Ahmed
Councillor Marc Francis
Councillor Asma Islam
Councillor James King

Co-opted Members Present:

Mahbub Anam (Tenant representative)
Susanna Kow (Leaseholder representative)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Kabir Ahmed (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive
Development and Housebuilding)

Officers Present:

Paul Burgess – (Project Officer, Corporate Strategy and
Equalities)
Daniel Kerr – (Strategy and Policy Manager)
Karen Swift – (Divisional Director, Housing and
Regeneration)
David Leslie – (Building Safety Lead)
– Principal Project Manager (Housing New
Development))

Officers Present Remotely:

Nicola Klinger - (Programme Lead, Housing Management
Strategic Review)

Invited Guests:

Andrea Baker - (Chair of Tower Hamlets Housing Forum
(THHF))
Lesley Owen - (Business Development & Information Manager
(THH))

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests, however, Councillor James King declared he is a Tower Hamlets Homes Leaseholder, Mahbub Anam declared he is a Tower Hamlets Homes Board Member and Tower Hamlets Tenant, Councillor Shafi Ahmed declared he is a Tower Hamlets Homes Leaseholder and Board Member and Susanna Kow declared she is a Tower Hamlets Homes Leaseholder.

The Monitoring officer considered the above statements and granted a dispensation for item 4.1 to be discussed by sub-committee members.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

The minutes of the Sub Committee meeting held on 11 September 2023 were approved as a correct record of proceedings.

Matters Arising

A vote was taken on 27 April 2023 to increase sub-committee meetings from five to nine for the municipal year 2023/24. On a vote of 5 for, 0 against and 1 abstention, the sub-committee agreed a formal note be submitted to the Chief Executive to increase the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee meetings from five to nine.

Paul Burgess, Strategy and Policy Officer, noted that the request was taken to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 18 September and a formal request was sent to the Chief Executive, to earmark additional resources to OSC. Details are pending.

3. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Paul Burgess updated sub-committee members on the following;

- Local Plan Update – 16 February 2023 meeting. The update from the Planning and Building Control department to be included in the HRSSC work programme for 2023/24. Paul Burgess informed sub-committee members that this will be picked up at OSC as part of the budget and policy framework.
- Swan Housing Presentation: 360 Report – 16 February 2023 meeting. Swan Housing to submit their 360 Feedback Report, resident's response and KPI's before the 27th July meeting. Details are still pending.
- Social Landlords Report – 27 April 2023 meeting: THH to submit a brief outlining contractor response times and general performance to the sub-committee for the first meeting of the municipal year 2023/24. This

item has been added to the work programme for the 14th December 2023 meeting.

- Homelessness backlog – 27 April 2023 meeting. To be brought to the sub-committee for municipal year 2023/24. This item has been added to the work programme for the 14th December 2023 meeting.
- THH Major Works Programme – 27 April 2023 meeting. A comprehensive report on THH Major Works Programme (with details on response times and general performance) to be included in the HRSSC work programme for 19th October meeting. Details are still pending.
- An Estates ASB Summer Action Plan – 27 April 2023 meeting. Action plan to be brought to the sub-committee for municipal year 2023/24. Details are still pending.
- Details on the number of properties bought by the council on the open market, for use as temporary accommodation. – 11 September 2023 meeting. Members were informed that 430 homes (up to September 2023) have been acquired for use as TA. 182 were purchased from existing LBTH leaseholders, 224 from Poplar Harca and 24 private purchases made on out of borough homes. 2 homes are still to be completed within the existing programme.

Karen Swift, Director of Housing, informed members that the 430 homes were acquired through a buyback scheme, over a four year period for around £173 million. The programme was paused to enable the money be used for direct delivery. Discussions to resume the program are ongoing, as well as discussions on a tenant incentive scheme for larger homes.

- A written brief of modular homes located in the borough – 11 September 2023 meeting. This will be circulated to members outside this meeting.
- A written update on Homeless referral figures, TA and placement details in and out of the borough. – 11 September 2023 meeting. Details including improvement measures were circulated to members outside this meeting.
- A written update on the number of families in bed and breakfast – 11 September 2023 meeting. A briefing note was sent to members prior to this meeting. Karen Swift informed the sub-committee that discussions are ongoing with a large hotel provider in Lewisham, to alleviate the current shortage of suitable accommodation. A second buy-back purchase has been completed on the Clichy Estate and further property discussions are ongoing following a decant.

The National Housing Summit meeting took place in September 2023 and negotiations are now taking place with regard to releasing void, shared ownership and unsold properties to the council. Requests to registered providers (RPs) via the Tower Hamlet Housing Forum (THHF) for void properties are frequently made.

- A Housing Options briefing note will be recirculated to members outside this meeting. Members were informed that a HR grievance investigation and not a police investigation occurred.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Fire Safety Action Plan

Karen Swift, the Director of Housing, informed members of the action plan, developed from recommendations made by the Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee, which followed a Fire Safety Scrutiny Review conducted in May 2021.

The action plan detailed the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the review, which were approved by the Mayor and Cabinet in November 2022. Actions were categorised as 'Ongoing Business as Usual (BAU)', 'Completed' and 'Actions which cannot be progressed due to resource and legal implications'. The sub-committee were asked to note the progress made and give approval to close down the action plan.

Further to questions from the sub-committee, Karen Swift and Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding;

- Clarified that the review and subsequent action plan related to the remediation of private sector residential tall buildings, following the fire at New Providence Wharf in May 2021.
- Confirmed that a review of the licensing policy within Houses in multiple occupations (HMO) various other workstreams and housing stock is underway.
- Observed that landlords are encouraged to work with the council to re-house residents in emergencies, as landlords should have insurance. The TA officers work to locate accommodation and support residents in these instances.
- Confirmed that both the Environmental Health and Small Fire Safety teams can issue improvement notices to landlords who breach building safety regulations. The Building Safety Act 2022 allows for a Remediation Order to be issued by the council and individual residents, to ensure defects to a building are rectified. See item 4.3 for further details.

- Noted that details on the progress and implementation of the Building Safety database, including its expected benefits for resident safety and wellbeing are currently being transferred onto a new system. A briefing note will be circulated to the Chair for review once completed.
- Confirmed that 'Ask the Mayor' sessions no longer exist as they were conducted during the previous administration. Mayor Lutfur Rahman conducts two surgeries a week by appointment. The council engages with residents on fire safety issues involving the landlord, agent, or developer and officers are currently inspecting all stock to ensure that fire safety measures are in place. Additional investment in surveys and audits will be undertaken.

Further details on long-term building safety requirements for residents in tall buildings are discussed in item 4.3.

RESOLVED that

1. A briefing note on the progress and implementation of the Building Safety database, including its expected benefits for resident safety and wellbeing, to be brought to the Chair for review once details are completed.
2. The presentation be noted and the closure of the action plan **AGREED**.

4.2 Bringing Housing Management Services (THH) back in-house

Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding, Karen Swift and Nicola Klinger, Programme Lead, Housing Management Strategic Review, provided an update on the THH insourcing programme, outlined approaches to monitor service performance and requested feedback on two submitted proposals for improved resident engagement.

Councillor Kabir Ahmed discussed the phased programme of delivery, beginning with the transfer of THH back in-house on 1st November 2023. A Board of council officers and members will oversee the winding down of Tower Hamlets Homes.

Lesley Owen, Business Development & Information Manager, Tower Hamlets Homes (THH), also briefed the sub-committee on the resident engagement options and other structures used by neighbouring local authorities.

A proposal for a third hybrid option, which includes the sub-committee, was presented by members, to link the operational and strategic aspects of engagement. The requirement for residents to take the lead with support was stressed, and the level of sub-committee involvement would require further discussion. A proposal for a mixed panel to include a resident's panel and a Board was also presented, as a resident's panel cannot make recommendations to Cabinet.

Further to questions from the sub-committee, Karen Swift, Nicola Klinger and Lesley Owen;

- Confirmed that THH staff have now relocated to the town hall, contracts have been transferred to council contracts and HR details are currently being transferred, as minimal disruption for residents to access services is essential.
- Explained the key principles include a 'lift and shift' approach to transferring services, initially under two divisions to reduce the timescale, and five services will be relocated to back office administration and support functions. A review will then be conducted for integration alongside ongoing resident consultation.
- Clarified that the THH resident consultation took place in November and ended in December 2022, with the Cabinet decision taken in February 2023. 550 THH staff will integrate into the Housing and Regeneration directorate and both directors will report to the Corporate Director. Discussions are ongoing regarding the implementation of current governance procedures within THH.
- Noted that concerns around anti-social behaviour, customer service contact and estate facilities will be addressed and improved during phase two of the transition.
- Confirmed that an interim Corporate Director for Housing and Regeneration will be appointed on 06 November. Further details will be announced shortly.
- Explained that the proposed panel members will be advertised and details on the board's scope and review periods will be incorporated in the usual manner. The new strategic engagement model will go 'live' from March 2024.

RESOLVED that

1. This item to be brought back to the sub-committee for further discussion on progress at a later date.
2. The presentation be noted.

4.3 Building Safety Update

Karen Swift, Director of Housing, introduced David Leslie, Building Safety Lead, and Enamul Goni, Principal Project Manager, Housing New Development, who gave a brief overview of the governance and accountability arrangements in preparation for the New Build Compliance and Regulator. In

November, all existing structures in the THH housing stock will be transferred to the Council and are currently being evaluated to ensure compliance.

Details of the new gateway requirements applicable to tall buildings from application, pre-construction to after completion were presented.

The Building Safety Regulator will oversee the planning application stage, which now requires a fire safety statement. Local Authority Building Control and the Fire Service will ensure that there is sufficient access for fire engines to park and sprinklers to use in the event of a fire, prior to commencement to the next stage. A Health and Safety Executive will be appointed as a statutory consultee.

Building control approval must be sought from the Building Regulator, prior to any building work and a 12-week determination period from receipt of an application including key documentation is now mandatory. If approved, inspections will be conducted during the construction phase and a certification application and a final inspection are required to ensure the building conforms to the approved design following completion.

In October, both Gateways two and three were implemented, and full details are pending as these processes have not been completed for the following schemes: Edward Mann Close, HAP (Harriot, Apsley and Pattison Houses respectively) and Caxton Grove. Indicative costs and timelines were also included, as were the Building Control Enforcement penalties available for any non-compliance.

Further to questions from the sub-committee, David Leslie and Enamul Goni;

- Confirmed that secondary staircases for new buildings over 18 metres will be considered as a mandatory requirement by the government. The current threshold is 30 metres. The council's new build programme is now being reviewed, as three developments noted will be effected and extra costs may be incurred.
- Explained that consideration is given to lighting and safety issues caused by hoarding and scaffolding used for major works. Engagement with contractors and Tenant Residents Associations (TRA) routinely takes place.
- Clarified that necessary requirements for existing and new housing stock are being taken to ensure that borough properties are complying with the Building Safety Act 2022.
- Explained that once a development is completed, the stock is transferred to the THH team and a 20-week process is followed to ensure protocol is implemented. A working group has been established with THH's handover team to ensure all necessary details are included.

- Noted that the New Development team are currently incorporating the employers requirements and contract with the Building Safety Act 2022, to ensure compliance with Gateway two and three.
- Confirmed that the indicative costs outlined in the presentation should not compromise unit size, although developers have not yet completed Gateway two and three, as details were published in October. Full costs will be determined once the project is fully complete.
- Explained that the 64 THH housing stock requiring major works will be registered and an intrusive survey to identify any remediation work required. A workshop will begin to undertake risk assessments and determine the compliance requirements once the transfer is completed.

RESOLVED that:

1. The presentation be noted.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Paul Burgess reminded members of the 'Ask The Housing Ombudsman' event scheduled for Monday 23 October 2023 in the Council Chamber.

Councillor Marc Francis informed the members of the potential merger with Tower Hamlets Community Housing (THCH) and Poplar Harca and requested representatives attend the next sub-committee to discuss performance concerns raised by residents. The Chair noted the request and will establish if there is adequate space for the item at the next meeting on 14 December 2023.

The meeting ended at 8.40 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Abdul Mannan

Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee

Scrutiny Action Log

Name of Committee: **Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

Municipal Year: **2022-23**

Reference	Action	Assigned to	Scrutiny Lead	Due Date	Response
Insert date	Insert agenda item title and the action requested by the committee	Insert name of director	Insert scrutiny lead	Insert Date	Response provided by the service/ witness
27.04.23	Swan Housing to submit their 360 Feedback Report, resident's response and KPI's before the 27 July meeting. <i>(Meeting moved to 11.09.23)</i>	Swan Housing		11.09.23	
	A comprehensive report on THH Major Works Programme <i>(with details on response times and general performance)</i> to be included in the HRSSC work programme for 223/24.	THH		TBC	
	An Estates ASB Summer Action Plan be submitted to the sub-committee for municipal year 2023/24.	THH		TBC	
	Homelessness backlog to be brought to the sub-committee for municipal year 2023/24.				Will be picked up with the HRSSC work programme
27.04.23	confirmed that Clarion will provide data for the next quarters report, as they are still dealing with issues related to the cyber-attack.	Clarion Housing		19.10.23	This should be in the Social Landlord's Report.
	Conceded that further work with the eight RP's unable to provide data to establish their performance levels is required. Some RP's do hold stock outside the borough, which means data may be manipulated to produce details for Tower	Eight RP's		19.10.23	This should be in the Social Landlord's Report.

Scrutiny Action Log


Page 16	Hamlets. The forthcoming Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) should create more accurate details.				
	Requested that an extra column is created within the KPI's to denote repeat ME's for the same enquiry, to understand the responses given and also specific categories that the most common ME's fall under to establish if these queries relate to emergencies.	All RP;s		19.10.23	This should be in the Social Landlord's Report.
	lastly, Councillor Nathalie Bienfait requested The Chair take a vote on increasing sub-committee meetings from five to nine for municipal year 2023/24. This was seconded by Councillor Marc Francis. On a vote of 5 for, 0 against and 1 abstention, the sub-committee agreed a formal note be submitted to the Chief Executive to increase the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee meetings from five to nine.	Chair		19.10.23	This will go to OSC on 18.09.23 in the first instance. If agreed then to the CEO to discuss resource implications on all other committee meetings.
11.09.23	The request to increase the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee meetings from 5 to 9 for 2023/24	OSC		19.10.23	As above
19.10.23	Karen to provide update on fire safety database and how to contact the team.			14.12.23	Briefing note provided
	THH in house arrangements – review resident engagement to give residents more opportunity to contribute and not just putting the emphasis on residents board.	THH		14.12.23	

Scrutiny Action Log

	THCH merger with Poplar HARCA. Request update on the merger. Chair to review.	Chair		14.12.23	

Insert attachments as appendices where applicable

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<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p>Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee</p> <p>14th December 2023</p>	 <p>TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of: Karen Swift, Director for Housing</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Review of Homelessness Strategy</p>	

Originating Officer(s)	Paul Burgess, Corporate Strategy and Communities
Wards affected	All wards

Summary

This cover report accompanies the presentation on the development of the Homelessness Strategy.

Recommendations:

The Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Review the presentation topic to help inform the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee discussion.

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HRSSC

Emerging priorities for an updated Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

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Karen Swift, Director of Housing
Una Bedford, Senior Strategy & Policy Officer



Why the review and new strategy?



- The council has a duty as a local housing authority (Homelessness Act (2002)), **to carry out a periodic review of homelessness in its District (borough) and to publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy based on the results at least every five years**
- The strategy must set out:
 - how services will be delivered in the future to tackle homelessness; **and**
 - the available resources to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- Current version of strategy was published in December 2018



The review



- The Homelessness Code of Guidance (2018) provides clear guidance on what a review of homelessness in the borough must concentrate on:
 - current and likely future levels of homelessness within the local area.
 - the activities carried out for preventing homelessness.
 - securing accommodation for those who are, may become or have become homeless.
 - providing support for those who are, may become or have been homeless; **and**
 - resources allocated to carry out these activities.
- The review was a desk top exercise using a sizable evidence base - drawn from data published by DLUHC, collated from the council's Housing Options Services, the Census 2021 data and a variety of other sources and is a snapshot of homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough over the last 5 years up to March 2023.



Homelessness & Rough Sleeping – Review Findings (1)



People

- **Single people (single males and mothers with children)** are largest proportion of all presentations (**relief and prevention**)
- **More approaches for assistance made at relief** than the prevention stage
- **More single people with dependent children** are owed a relief duty
- **Couples with dependent children** more likely to be owed a prevention duty
- Q1 22/23 **50% of homelessness applicants were under the age of 35.** (25–34-year-olds the highest numbers of those owed a duty, followed by 18-24 and 35- 4 age groups)
- Ethnicity reflects the overall demographics of LBTH **Asian/British are the largest ethnic group (45%)** owed a housing duty. The Bengali population is owed the highest percentage of duties (37%)

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Reasons

1. **Family/friends no longer willing to accommodate** (37% of all approaches)
2. **End of a PRS tenancy** (28%)
3. **End of a social rented tenancy** (15%)
4. **Domestic Abuse** (more common at relief stage) (5%)
5. **Non-violent relationship breakdown** (3%)



Homelessness & Rough Sleeping - Review Findings (2)



Support needs

1. History of mental health
2. Physical ill health and disability
3. Offending history
4. Drug dependency
5. History of rough sleeping

Rough Sleeping (Q2 2022/23)

- **72%** under 45 years of age,
- **36-45 age range being the most represented age group (38.5%)**. Least common age group are those aged between 18–25-year-olds.
- **87% male 11% female & 1.6% non-binary** (remainder unknown).
- **White British 28% largest group**, White other (25%), Black /Black British African (10%), Asian British Bangladeshi 6%.
- **58%** have more than one support need (alcohol, drugs, mental health).
- Only **12%** without any support needs.
- **56%** of rough sleepers have experienced prison.



Landscape



- **Homelessness Reduction Act** (effective April 2018) brought additional assistance for those at risk of homelessness increasing the number of applicants qualifying for assistance.
- **Rising rents and resurgence in demand for PRS accommodation** - post pandemic the London PRS recovering but **housing costs have increased along with the cost-of-living crisis, inflation, food costs and energy bills.**
- **Small buy to let landlords exiting the market** - factors include **tax and regulation, higher maintenance and borrowing costs** = contraction in the supply of PRS accommodation and rising rent costs .
- **Demand for temporary accommodation is increasing** as a wider range of people are owed interim housing duties.
- **Moving people onto settled sustainable accommodation become increasingly difficult - the gap between LHA rates and rent has widened which presents a significant and rising cost implication for the council.** *Although LHA rates will rise from April 2024 to the 30th percentile of local market rents, this will not alleviate the ongoing and current financial pressure on struggling low-income renters and the council for the remainder of this financial year – and no commitment from Government beyond April 2024 to continue to uprate LHA rates.*



Operational Challenges



- A Pan-London agreement between boroughs exists preventing boroughs competing with each other. LAs now having to compete with Clearsprings, a Home Office contractor who are finding properties to house asylum seekers. The Home Office has the ability not only to pay higher rents but also higher incentive payments to encourage landlords to co-operate.
- Chronic shortage of move on affordable properties is leading to more households being housed in B&B accommodation for longer periods of time (mainly outside of the borough to the East of London).
- Customer satisfaction harder to achieve - fewer prevention options = more applicants presenting at crisis, longer waits for a scheduled appointment, more reliance on TA, but less available to meet needs and preferences. More legal challenges.



On the horizon...



- **Renters Reform Bill (2023)**

- End of s.21 'no fault' evictions however abolition of s.21 is likely to be delayed due to reform of court system (no date given by the government to complete this project).
- There will however be increased Grounds for eviction under s8 for ASB, the landlord wanting to sell the property or move their family in, may be manipulated by landlords to evict tenants
- **Renters Reform Bill Preparation Group** has been established to assess impacts for council (Environmental Health, Housing advice, and other services) and financial impact.

- **Government's National Dispersal Policies on Asylum Seekers**

- The withdrawal of government support and the closure of Afghan Bridging Hotels at short notice is leading to increased demand on homelessness services with hotel occupants forced to leave at short notice without suitable affordable accommodation to move on to.
- Fast tracking of asylum applications.
- The anticipated surge in approaches will place additional pressure on an overstretched system



Emerging Priorities for Draft Strategy



As a result of these findings our suggested priorities are:

- 1. Preventing Homelessness through early identification and intervention to minimise the use of Temporary Accommodation**
- 2. Procure good quality stable accommodation options for people who are at risk of homelessness or who are homeless**
- 3. Improving the customer journey**
- 4. Provision of support services**
- 5. To ensure that homelessness and rough sleeping are prevented where possible and that where they do occur, that they are rare, brief and non-recurrent**
- 6. Enhance staff resilience and well-being**



Consultation



Length

- 4 weeks- 6 weeks

With

Public and neighbouring local authorities, voluntary organisations, service users, registered providers and any specialist agencies supporting homeless

How

- Launch event (Mayor)
- Focus Groups (residents and other bodies)
- Webinars
- 'Let's Talk' survey and dedicated email address for comments
- Paper questionnaires posted to residents in TA
- Paper surveys to drop-in centres supporting residents
- Case workers at Mayor's Surgeries (ipads/laptops)
- Survey of Residents' Hub visits



Timelines



Action	Date
Round table discussions with organisations/Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Steering Group members.	December 2023 – February 2024
Mayor and Lead Member agree priorities to consult via MAB	December 2023
Findings of review, priorities agreed with administration and approach to consultation presented to HRSSC	December 2024
Consultation Period	February 2024
Feedback and comments from residents collated by Assistant Housing Officers	March 2024
SPI Team prepare report detailing feedback from residents, prepare EqIA, Cabinet report and supporting documents	April 2024
Legal, Finance and Corporate Finance sign off (each service respectively requires 10 days minimum to review and sign off)	April 2024
DLT	May 2024 (TBC)
CLT	May 2023 (TBC)
MAB	June 2024
CPAP	June 2024
Cabinet	June 2024



Appendix



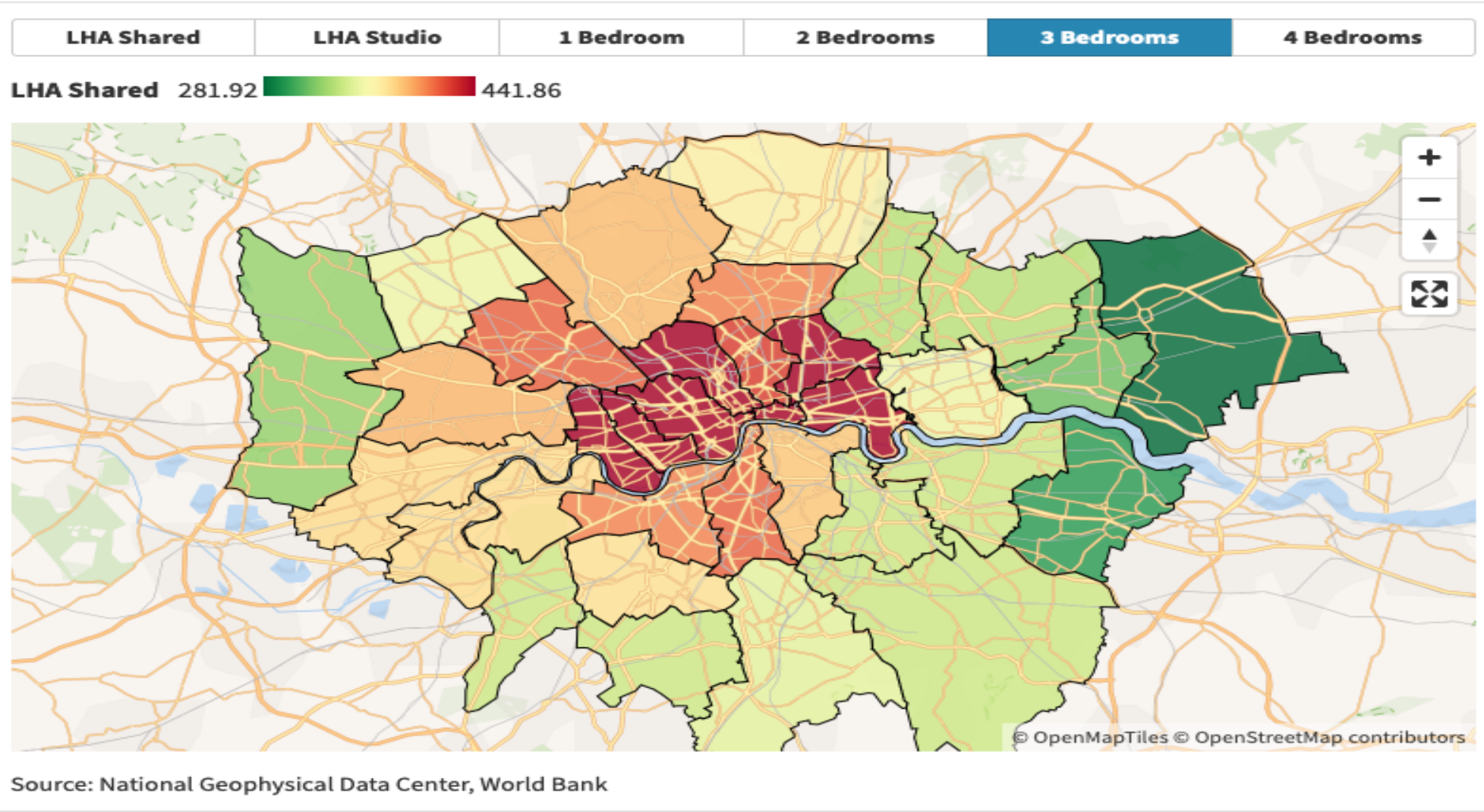
LHA rates across London



- The heatmap on the following page relates to 3-bedroom properties at the LHA.
- Tower Hamlets has a significantly higher rent than most boroughs, therefore making affordable family sized accommodation in the borough scarce



LHA rates across London



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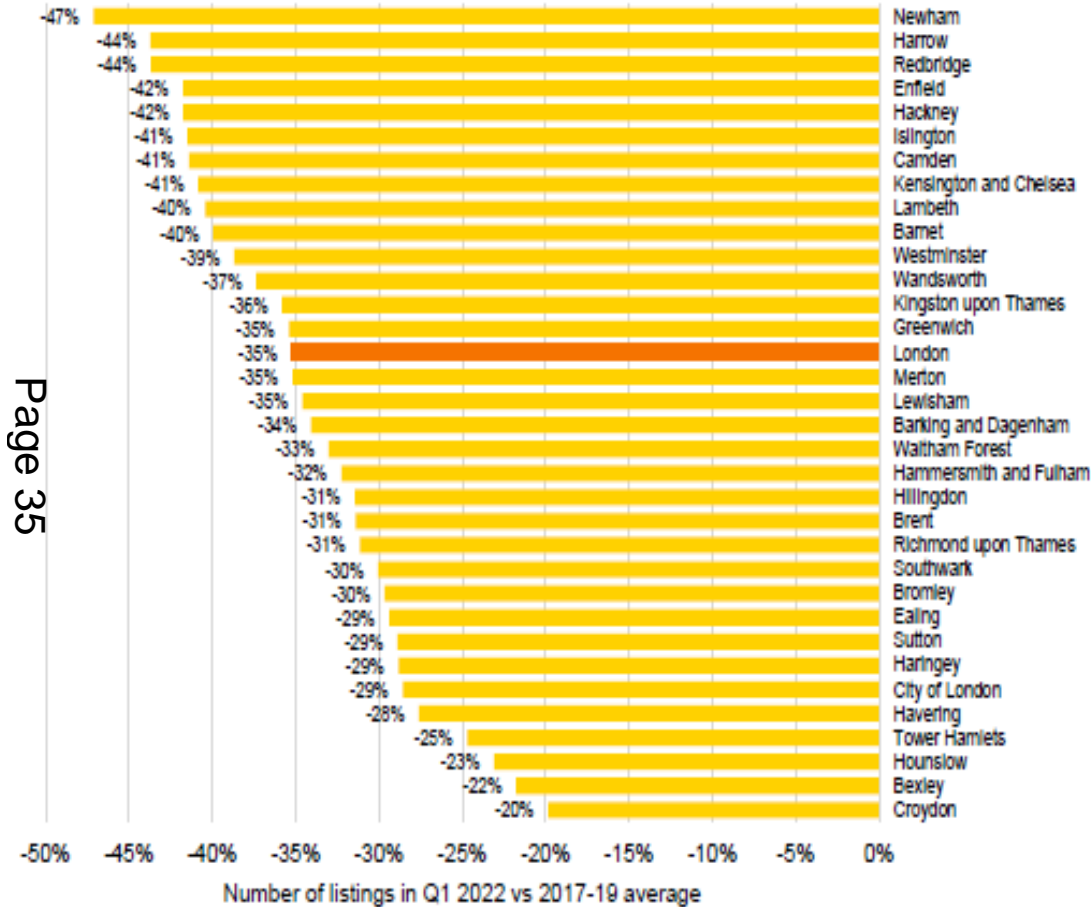


Contracting PRS supply in London

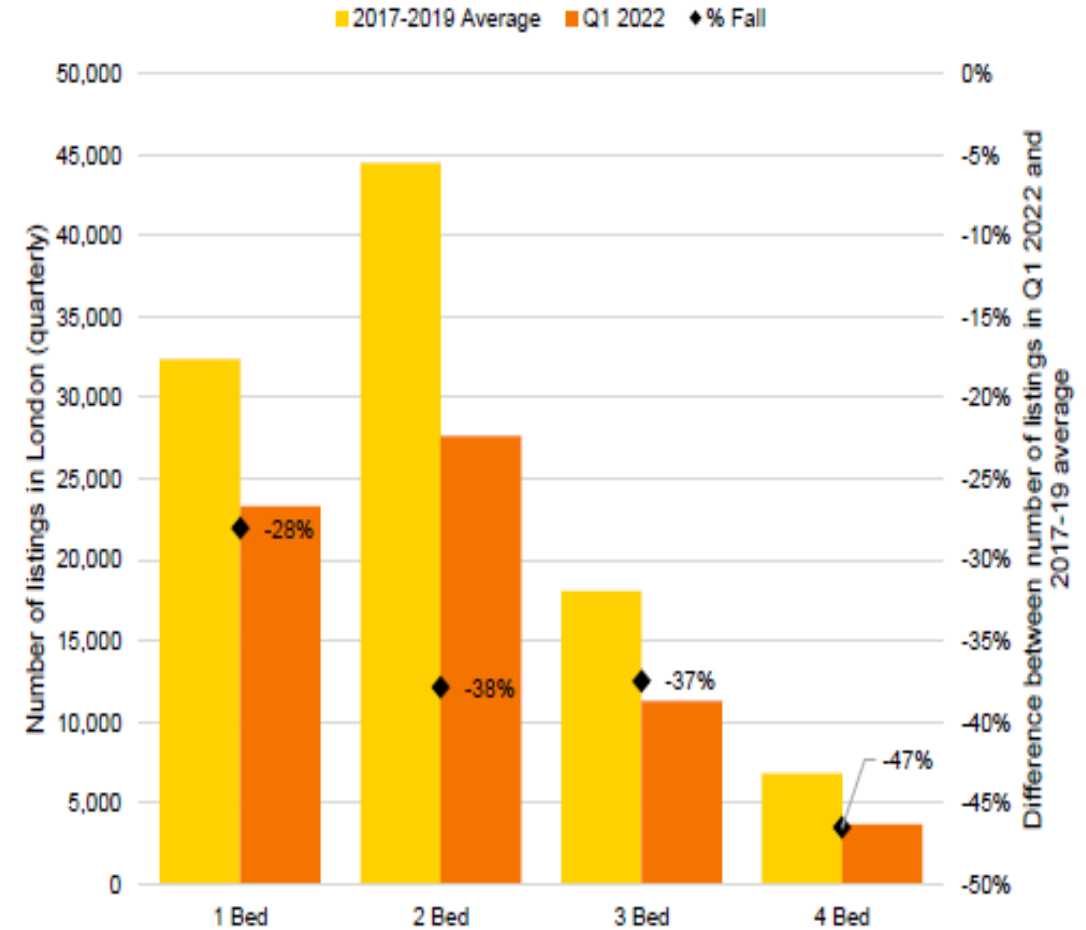


HAMLETS

Fall in total listings across London, Q1 2022 vs 2017-19 quarterly average



The fall in supply in London has been most acute for larger properties

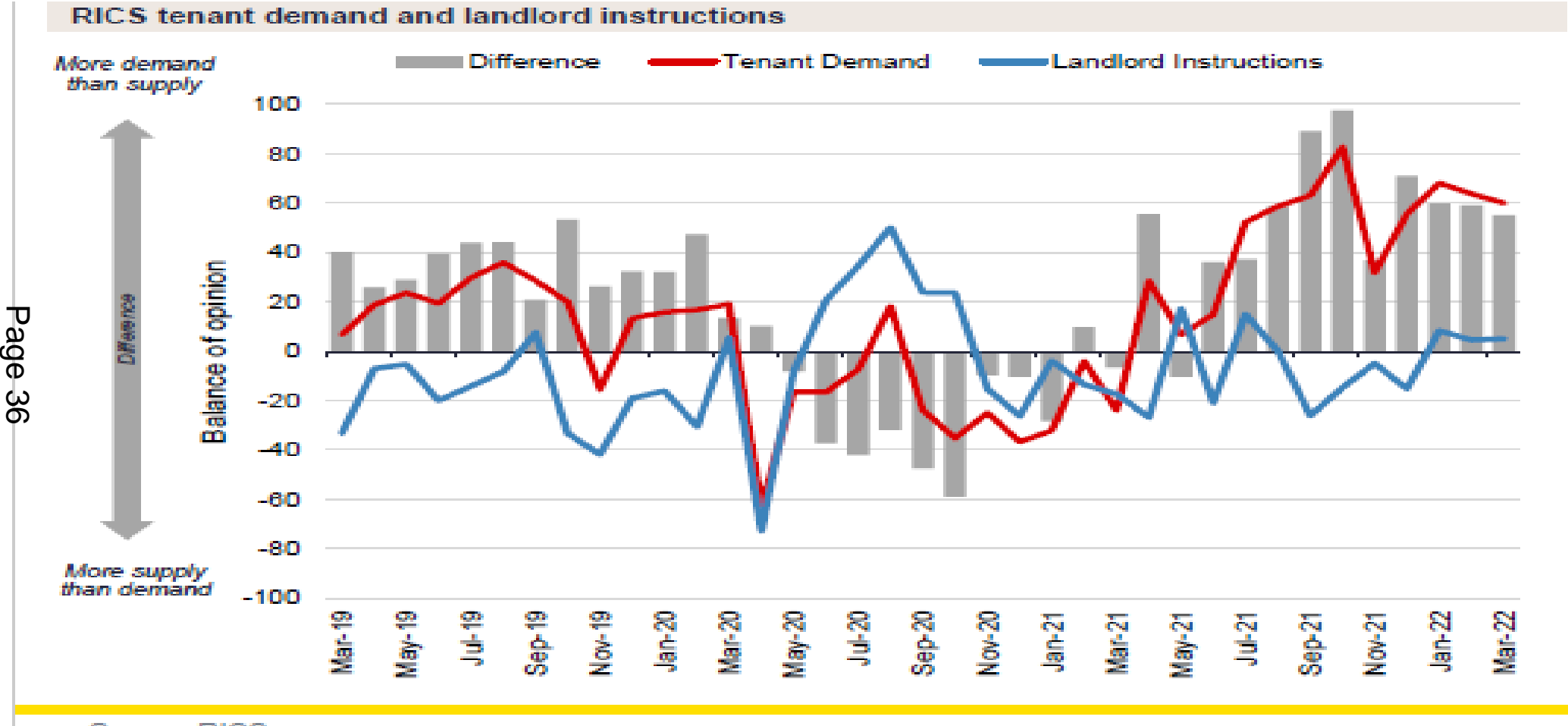


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(Source: Savills)



PRS Demand v. supply in London (1)



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(Source: Savills)

