

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE HOUSING & REGENERATION SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2022

**COMMITTEE ROOM ONE - TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present in Person:

Councillor Marc Francis (Chair)
Councillor Andrew Wood
Councillor Amina Ali

Co-optees Present in Person:

Anne Ambrose Tenant Representative

Officers Present in Person:

Mark Slowikowski (Senior Strategy and Policy Officer)
Joel West (Democratic Services Team Leader, Committees)

Officers In Attendance Virtually:

Karen Swift (Divisional Director, Housing and Regeneration)
Una Bedford (Strategy and Policy Officer (Place))
Shalim Uddin (Partnerships Officer, Strategy and Policy)

Others In Attendance Virtually:

Andrea Baker (Director of Housing Poplar Harca)
Tony Hughes (Head of Home Management, Southern Housing Group)
Adrian Lewis (Operations Manager, Southern Housing Group)
James Price (Snr Manager and Project Lead, Southern Housing Group)

Apologies:

Councillor Victoria Obaze
Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Ehtasham Haque

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

Councillor Marc Francis asked the subcommittee to note that his wife is Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the Sub Committee held on 2 December 2021 were approved as a correct record of proceedings.

3. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Social Housing Landlords Performance Report

Shalim Uddin, Strategy and Policy Partnership Officer, introduced representatives from Southern Housing Group (SHG) to give an overview on their current business model. Tony Hughes, Head of Home Management, Adrian Lewis, Operations Manager and James Price, Senior Land Manager / Project lead gave a brief presentation which included; the KPI performance data for quarter 3, the reactive and planned repairs, compliance details and new development updates in Dace Road and Herald Street respectively. Further to the presentation, the subcommittee welcomed the positive contribution SHG has made to the borough.

Following questions from subcommittee members, SHG representatives:

- Explained that the move from reactive to planned repairs from 20-80% will be achieved by encompassing the organisations building information modelling. A holistic approach including investment over a sustained period, will manage current assets and stock condition data, to develop new and existing properties with the integration of technology, to alert faults in boiler systems and eventually book service appointments for tenants.
- Noted the 100% affordable new homes will target low- and middle-income families, incorporating both the Section 106 shared ownership scheme and the GLA income cap.
- Explained that routine repair performance had suffered during the Covid 19 pandemic, due to staffing and furlough but recent performance had showed signs of returning to pre-pandemic levels. Repair waiting times have now reduced and improvement data will be provided.

- Indicated that performance review details for the 216 emergency repairs will be submitted by the Heating and Hot Water team for review.
- Explained that the customer satisfaction details submitted relate to SHG's direct labour maintenance contract. Data is collected from a broad range of services including gas, tenancy and ASB issues, as well as reactive repairs. Full details will be provided.
- Explained that although full details were not available regarding complaints, around 40-45% of stage one complaints are fully upheld or upheld in part. SHG has a compensation tariff rate and a review process related to service disruption and a pragmatic approach is taken to manage customer expectations.

The chair requested Shalim Uddin introduce the landlords performance report on the 14 registered providers (RP's) for quarter 3. Shalim noted that performance will now become a standing agenda item going forward for THHF review, which is hoped will improve accuracy of data in the quarterly report.

Following questions from subcommittee members, Shalim:

- Noted further details on Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) for Nottinghill Genesis' properties over 18m will be provided to clarify the 11% decrease in completion.
- Explained that external factors such as decant issues, property disrepair and the pandemic halting viewings resulted in poor re-let figures. Details on whether RP's are currently undertaking major work programmes are not covered in this report.
- Indicated that RP's will be reminded to provide percentage details on repair appointments kept, rather than the raw number of appointments kept.
- Explained that Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) repairs performance has dropped more than other RP's, due experiencing a labour and trade shortage. THH are in the process of reprocurring the repairs contract, and this may account for the data provided. Discussions will take place with THH to establish the drop in performance figures.

Following the presentation, subcommittee members:

- Requested that THH are invited to attend the first Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee of the 2022-23 municipal year to discuss performance.

RESOLVED

1. That the presentation be noted.
2. That Tower Hamlets Homes be invited to attend the first Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee of the 2022-23 municipal year.

3.2 Housing Strategy 2016-21 Refresh

Karen Swift, Director of Housing, provided a brief presentation on work to date to prepare to refresh the Council's Housing Strategy since the expiry of the 2016-21 strategy annual delivery report on the Council's function was presented to Cabinet in February 2022, which highlighted the key achievements and priorities. Karen explained the strategy has been updated to include Brexit and the pandemic which impacted housing delivery, costs, materials and labour supply.

Following questions from subcommittee members, Karen:

- Explained that work is currently being undertaken with THH to identify areas in the borough suitable for regeneration. This work will look at asset management, improving fire and building safety, improving the energy efficiency of homes.
- Explained in more depth how the Intermediate Housing Register works. The scheme enables low-income residents the opportunity to access Registered Provider shared ownership or intermediate rent homes. Prior to the register, the majority of homes were only available through the London-wide GLA portal. Under this local scheme local residents registered will be marketed the homes for 3 months before they move to the GLA portal.
- The strategy requires collaboration with all with all Registered Providers to improve performance, as it appears to be sector-wide issue and Tower Hamlets Council are unable to regulate standards.
- Noted that a Members briefing paper was provided to the Mayor and the Cabinet Member for Housing, which gave a brief overview of work undertaken by the Council to date to resettle Afghan refugees.

Karen introduced Andrea Baker, Director of Housing Poplar Harca, and newly appointed chair of the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum (THHF). Andrea explained that due to issues raised, RP's performance requires more scrutiny, hence now becoming a standing agenda item in the THHF meeting from 18 March 2022 onwards. This will elevate residents' concerns, promote best practice and establish the sector-wide issues related to performance levels. Details from the Executive meeting will be provided to subcommittee members. The vice-chair congratulated Andrea on her appointment as chair of THHF.

Following the presentation, subcommittee members:

- Expressed concern that performance has fallen within RP's in recent years and requested that a revised Housing Strategy include consultation with social housing residents directly, as residents are often excluded from governing bodies of housing associations.
- Asked that any consultation provide an opportunity for tenants to have their say in addition to social landlords.

RESOLVED

1. That the presentation be noted.

3.3 H&R Scrutiny Action Plan Update

Mark Slowikowski, Senior Strategy and Policy Officer provided a brief overview on both the Housing Open Spaces Action Plan (HOSAP) and the Homelessness Reduction Act Action Plan (HRA) which were both considered by the subcommittee. Mark explained that the former update was delayed due to the pandemic but completed in March 2022. A summary was also given on the Fire Safety Review recommendations by the Fire Safety Group (FSG) and will be submitted to Cabinet after the election.

Following questions from subcommittee members, Mark:

- Indicated that although THHF and Homelessness Transformation Programme will be assuming responsibility for the outstanding items noted, the subcommittee can be provided with progress updates on these and by the FSG if required.

The chair introduced Una Bedford, Strategy and Policy Officer (Place). Una explained that the recommendations have been reviewed by the FSG and a structure will be put in place for implementation in July, after the election.

Following the presentation, subcommittee members:

- Recommended that THHF review the progress on outstanding HOSAP items during the next six months of the new municipal year.
- Requested that an update on Homelessness Reduction Act Action Plan's outstanding actions be included in the subcommittees 2022-23 work plan for consideration early in the year.
- Suggested the FSG submit the draft action plan for review to the subcommittee before Cabinet in July 2022.

RESOLVED

1. That the presentation be noted.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The chair noted that a letter signed by the chair of the subcommittee has been sent to the Mayor containing a formal request for Spitalfields Housing Association to be investigated following performance concerns raised by residents.

A letter signed by the chair is a formal request for Clarion Housing's chair and Chief Executive to investigate decant concerns raised by residents of Clare House. Details will be provided to subcommittee members.

As this was the last Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee meeting of the year, the chair commended the elected Members and co-optee Anne Ambrose, who will all be standing down. Thanks was also given to the officers for all their work to support the subcommittee.

The meeting ended at 8.34 p.m.

Chair, Marc Francis
Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee