

**ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH**  
**HOUSING & ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL**

**WEDNESDAY, 25 JULY 2018 AT 7.00 PM**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:**

**Members:**

Councillor Clive Mardner (Chair), Councillors Linda Bird, Leo Fletcher, Bill Freeman, David Stanley, Spencer Drury and Chris Kirby

**Under Standing Orders**

Councillor Chris Kirby, Cabinet Member for Housing

Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet for Adult's Social Care, Health, and Anti-Poverty

**Officers**

Director of Housing and Community Safety, and Corporate Governance Officer.

**Item**

**No.**

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Tonia Ashikodi, and Dominic Mbang.

**2 Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

**3 Declarations of Interest**

**Resolved –**

That the list of Councillors' memberships as Council appointed representatives on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies is noted.

## **4 Minutes**

It was noted that due to a change in chairmanship and membership of the Panel in the current municipal year, there was no Member present to confirm the Minutes of meeting held on 19 March 2018 as a true and accurate record.

### **Resolved –**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel held on 19 March 2018, be noted.

## **5 2018/19 Work Programme Schedule**

Members received and noted a report with activities for consideration by the Panel in relation to its work programme for 2018/19.

Commenting on the list of activities, Member enquired about the report on housing repairs scheduled for consideration at the meeting. In response, the Director of Housing and Community Safety advised Members that he had organised presentation slides for an oral report on how the review on housing repairs should be conducted.

In his introduction, the Director stated that the initial scope could include an assessment of current service performance, lessons learnt from complaints, and supported by benchmark exercise with known housing service providers. It was stated that the initial scope should inform an in-depth review, to commence with a site visit to Birchmere, in order to enable Members understand key progresses and enquire further about the Housing Repairs Service from staff. The Director suggested that possibilities for change could be initiated by a presentation by officials from Ad Esse Consulting to further support Members to make meaningful recommendations for service improvement based on best practice and principles.

Commenting on the oral presentation, Members expressed a disappointment that the lack of a published report on housing repairs meant that they could not possibly contribute at the meeting as they would have wished. Notwithstanding that, Members stated that it would be useful if future reports on the issue highlight what the Housing Service was doing well in relation to repairs, why performance was lagging in other areas, and what actions were in place to monitor for improvement. It was suggested that reports on performance should consist of comparative data over time for an assessment to be made about the effectiveness of the Council's housing repairs' service. Members were also of a view that benchmark activities

could also draw on examples of good practice with independent bodies, in addition to Charlton Triangle, Lewisham Homes and London Borough of Islington proposed by the Director.

In response to a concern, the Director stated that the reason why the scheduled report on housing repairs was not published with the agenda was due to a clash in priorities and series of meetings organised to progress with work on the Housing Capital Programme. Members commented that the response was unacceptable, and they enquired further from Councillor Chris Kirby, Cabinet Member for Housing. Councillor Kirby confirmed to Members that there had been an unprecedented pressure on the service, but that the Housing department was committed to deliver to the work of the Panel going forward. Councillor Kirby requested that a meeting should be organised between himself and the Chair of the Panel, Councillor Clive Mardner, in order to discuss and identify ways on how support to the scrutiny function on housing-related matters could be developed.

**Action: Corp. Governance Officer**

In addressing the meeting, Councillor Lekau, Cabinet Member for Adult's Social Care, Health and Anti-Poverty stated that a report on 'Fairness Commission' (FC) had been listed for consideration by the Panel at its meeting on 11 October 2018. Commenting on the activity in the work programme, Councillor Lekau informed the Panel that although over sixty recommendations were made at the conclusion of the FC review, the work streams on anti-poverty encompassed a much wider remit. Thus, the FC recommendations should be used as tracker against the Royal Borough of Greenwich's Anti-Poverty Strategy objectives. Councillor Lekau stated that she would discuss areas for reporting relevant to the work of the Panel with the Chair, Councillor Clive Mardner.

**Action: Corporate Governance Officer**

Continuing with their discussion, Members made further enquiry on aspects of the work programme and in response, the Director stated that priorities on tenants' engagement had not been formalised because work with tenants and leaseholders had not been completed. Councillor Averil Lekau added that a review on tenants' engagement took place in April 2017, but that the timing for progressing with the work was considered inappropriate due to the fire incident at Greenfell Tower that occurred shortly completion. Councillor Lekau stated that a decision was subsequently made to put implementation of the review outcomes on hold.

Members suggested that officers should use the output from the 2017 review on tenants' engagement as a baseline to inform the current work. Members also welcomed confirmation from the Director that an update on 'Right-to-Buy' Strategy would be circulated to them by the end of August 2018.

**Action: Director of Housing and  
Community Safety**

**Resolved -**

That comments on the report outlining activities for consideration by the Panel as part of its work programme for 2018/19, be noted.

**6 Cabinet Member of Housing Priorities**

Councillor Kirby, Cabinet Member for Housing gave an oral report to the Panel, advising that Cabinet, at its meeting on 24 July 2018, agreed funds to progress with the Housing Capital Programme up to 2020. It was stated that consideration of proposals by Cabinet on 'Langton Way' would be at a later date, however, the issue would be discussed at a meeting with members of housing panels in August.

Members expressed a disappointment that a report on the Cabinet Member's priorities was also not published with the agenda, commenting that it was difficult for them to scrutinise without prior preparation. Notwithstanding that, Members requested a regular update about the Council's dealings with housing panels, advising that they wished to assess value for money in regard to the allocation of public funds.

**Action: Director of Housing and  
Community Safety**

Councillor Kirby continued with his submission, advising the Panel that on 24 July 2018, Cabinet also agreed in principle to the disposal of three sites to Pocket Living Limited, subject to the outcome of consultations with tenants and leaseholders.

In response to an enquiry, Councillor Kirby advised the Panel that there should be no reason why the Panel could not undertake a pre-scrutiny on outcomes from the proposed consultation in regard to Cabinet's decision on proposals relating to Pocket Living Limited.

The Director of Housing and Community Safety also responded to a question, clarifying to the Panel that councils had to consult on significant changes to amenities by virtue of Section 105 of the Housing Act 1988. It was stated that the Council's timeline on consultation was 28 days from the start date.

The Panel requested that an additional meeting should be organised for it to consider outcomes from the proposed consultation in relation to the decision on Pocket Living. Councillor Kirby stated that any pre-scrutiny of the decision should take into account the Council's objective to deliver social housing at affordable rents to residents. Councillor Kirby confirmed that the next stage would require a submission of the decision to the Director of Regeneration and Skills, and the Director of Housing and Community Safety for implementation.

Councillor Kirby further advised the Panel that in the autumn of this year, a 5-year plan would be developed to provide a broader look at commissioning, with a view to maximise housing supply. Councillor Kirby stated that the Royal Borough of Greenwich had also commenced work in preparing bids for submission by September 2018 in response to the Mayor of London's plan that required councils to secure funds for affordable housing provision.

The Panel

**Resolved –**

That an oral update by Councillor Kirby, Cabinet Member of Housing, be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

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Chair