

ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH

HOUSING & ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2018 AT 7.00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Members:

Councillor Clive Mardner (Chair), Councillors Tonia Ashikodi, Dominic Mbang, David Stanley, Spencer Drury and Chris Kirby.

Under Standing Orders

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

Officers

Director of Housing and Community Safety, Interim Assistant Director (Repairs & Investment), Assistant Director (Employment & Skills), and Corporate Governance Officer.

Item

No.

1 Apologies for Absence

The meeting noted apologies for absence received on behalf of Councillors Linda Bird, Leo Fletcher, and Bill Freeman.

Apologies for leaving early advised by Councillors Tonia Ashikodi and Dominic Mbang were noted by the Panel.

2 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Tonia Ashikodi declared a personal interest as a Council tenant in relation to Item 5, “Project Statement on Housing Repairs”, and Item 8, “In-Depth Housing Service Review: Statement of Intent Report”.

Resolved -

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

4 Minutes

Matters that arose from the Minutes were as follows:

- Paragraph 4 on Page 2, under Item 5 “2018/19 Work programme Schedule”:
The Chair, Councillor Clive Mardner stated that the concern by Members about non-submission of report on housing repairs for consideration at the last meeting was raised with the Chief Executive. It was stated that the matter was resolved, and the outcome would be circulated to Members of the Panel.

Action: CGO

- Paragraph 1 on Page 5, under Item 6 “Cabinet Member of Housing Priorities”:
The Director of Housing and Community Safety advised the Panel that additional time would be required to undertake pre- and post-preparation work for a meaningful outcome in regard to the proposed consultation on the disposal of three sites to Pocket Living Limited. Members considered a request on the matter, and agreed that consideration of the outcome should go to the Panel’s meeting on 6 December 2018, but that would require prior information about the scope of the consultation, and process to be followed.

**Action: DH&CS
CGO**

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel held on 25 July 2018, be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

5 Project Statement on Housing Repairs

Councillor Tonia Ashikodi declared a personal interest as a Council tenant in relation this Item.

The Panel received a report introduced by the Interim Acting Assistant Director (Repairs and Investment) detailing a Project Statement and timetable for the proposed deep-dive review on housing repairs, and an Asset Management improvement Programme.

Commenting on the report, Members enquired why a significant element of the work listed in the Asset Management Programme since 2014/15 were outstanding. In response, the Acting Assistant Director stated that the pending priorities continue to form part of the department's objectives for progress, and that some elements were partially completed or ongoing.

The Director of Housing and Community Safety also clarified to Members that as part of the plan to develop an improvement methodology in relation to housing repairs, the Panel would hear evidence from other organisations about their experiences. However, an additional resource would be required for a technical policy assistant in housing to lead the proposed deep-dive review. The Cabinet Member for Housing requested that a meeting should be organised with himself and key staff to identify the required resource.

Action: CGO

Continuing with the discussion, Members welcomed the proposed visit to Birchmere. However, resident's perception as service users was fundamental to the exercise. Therefore, an equality impact assessment to capture the experiences of tenants should be undertaken. Members suggested that a focus group of tenants, in particular the disabled and elderly, should also be set up to gauge satisfaction and feedback in regards to housing repairs service provision.

Action: Actg. Asst. Director

The Panel also suggested that a Members' Review Task Group to progress with the review should be convened.

Action: CSO

Resolved –

That the report detailing the Project Statement Housing Repairs, be noted.

6 Corporate Employment and Enterprise Programmes

The Assistant Director (Employment and Skills) introduced the update report on progress and key achievements on projects relating to the Corporate Employment and Enterprise programmes to the Panel.

The Cabinet Member, Councillor Averil LeKau commented on the presentation, advising the Panel that the activities were related to the Greenwich Local Labour Programme (GLLP) and the Highways Improvement Local Labour Schemes (HILLs). The Cabinet Member stated that the GLLP and HILLs schemes were fundamental in the implementation of the Council's anti-poverty initiatives.

The Panel noted the report, and welcomed information that the Corporate Employment and Enterprise programmes were providing economic and social mobility benefits to disadvantaged residents in the Royal Borough of Greenwich (Royal Borough), who would have otherwise experienced poverty.

In response to questions raised, the Cabinet Member advised the Panel that when the Council moved away from Manpower recruitment service to in-house provision, a substantial saving was realised. Thus the £2m underspend highlighted in the report would continue to be used to provide capacity for sustainability and growth to deliver efficiencies, including the funding of the second phase of the Council's E-Business Support Programme to support businesses to increase turnover, create new jobs and safeguard existing jobs.

The Assistant Director also responded to questions, confirming to the Panel that the introduction of the GLLP Apprenticeship levy had proved beneficial. However, the money should only be used on apprentice training schemes, and therefore inflexible. Thus, efforts continue to ensure effective implementation of the levy via the Greenwich Direct Apprenticeship Programme, in order to target new entrants into the Council workforce who required additional support they would not have otherwise been able to secure in the highly competitive recruitment process.

The Panel was further advised that with HILLs project, applicants who completed the accredited training on construction safety at Level 2 had opportunity to secure work placement within the Royal Borough of Greenwich's Highways Service. The Assistant Director stated that successful applicants also had opportunity to secure placement with the Royal

Borough's partners in relation to highways maintenance or street lighting work.

The Panel also received clarification by the Cabinet Member that application of the Universal Credit (UC) would likely impact adversely on the livelihood of residents employed on low pay, and those out of work. Thus, GLLP and HILLs initiatives would support the roll out of UC.

The Panel thanked the Cabinet Member and the Assistant Director for their contribution and

Resolved -

That the report on progress and key achievements of the Corporate Employment Projects – Greenwich Local Labour Programme, and the Highways Improvement Local Labour Schemes, be noted.

7 Troubled families update, including supporting adults into work and financial management

Resolved -

That consideration of the report on troubled families be deferred for consideration at the next meeting of the Panel, which is scheduled to take place on 28 November 2018.

8 In-Depth Housing Service Review: Statement of Intent Report

Councillor Tonia Ashikodi declared a personal interest as a Council tenant in relation this Item.

The Interim Acting Assistant Director (Repairs and Investment) introduced the report to the Panel, detailing a Statement of Intent specific to the proposed in-depth review on housing repairs.

Members noted the report, and that there was a dedicated Complaints Team within the Repairs and Investment Service. They welcomed plans to initiate a targeted review on how to manage claims effectively. However, the report had no definition of what would constitute a “complaint”.

In response to questions raised, the Assistant Director stated that an issue becomes a “complaint” when residents contact the Service and state that they wish to make a complaint. Thus, although complaint handling was below target at the point of reporting, the quality of responses had improved.

The Assistant Director further advised members that the parameters of indicators in appendices to the report represented a mixture of local and national categories. However, benchmarking exercise had not been undertaken since the changes to log formal complaints were introduced in October 2017.

Members suggested that benchmarking of on complaints should form part of the improvement plan going forward. It was also the view of Members were that the quality of service delivered to residents was of essence. Therefore, an analysis of post-repair inspections should form part of the targets for improvement.

Action: Actg. Asst. Director

The Panel

Resolved –

That the Statement of Intent relating to the in-depth review on housing repairs, be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm

Chair