

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission held on Monday 12 July 2021 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Gavin Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Jon Hartley
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Richard Livingstone
Councillor Jane Salmon
Basseyy Basseyy (co-opted member)
Cris Claridge (co-opted member)
Ina Negoita (co-opted member)

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Stephanie Cryan, Cabinet Member for Council Homes and Homelessness

OFFICER SUPPORT: Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies absence were received from Councillor Anood Al-Samerai (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Lorraine Lauder MBE.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were no urgent items of business which the Chair deemed urgent

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2021 be approved as a correct record.

5. INTERVIEW WITH CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL HOMES AND HOMELESSNESS [NEW COUNCIL HOMES]

Councillor Stephanie Cryan Cabinet Member for Council Homes and homelessness introduced the briefing paper in relation to the progress made on building new council homes, following the agreed council commitment to build 11,000 new council homes by 2043. Councillor Cryan informed the commission that progress made so far is on track to reach 2500 new council homes by May 2022.

Councillor Cryan highlighted the housing crisis in Southwark and nationally which depicts the lack of truly affordable housing. Councillor Cryan felt another factor that exacerbated the social housing crises was the loss of available social housing through Right to Buy – there were currently 17,000 right to buy homes in Southwark.

Councillor Cryan also spoke about the human cost of over 15,000 households on the council's housing waiting list living in inadequate accommodation, especially with almost half of these households including children with no separate bedrooms and overcrowded families, leading to issues with health and well-being. Councillor Cryan emphasised the approach taken by the council's home building programme with regards to meeting the needs of families and local communities in matters of housing capacity, education and health.

Councillor Cryan briefed the commission on the council's wide range of building programmes where they had acquired sites from PC world and B&M, in addition, Ledbury and Tustin estates are undergoing regeneration where parts of the estates are being refurbished and some areas are being demolished to build new homes, 50 percent of these new homes would be council homes.

Following the presentation, Councillor Cryan answered questions of the commission. Questions and discussion were held around the following:

- Definition of viability in the context of the housing briefing paper
- Community engagement issues and challenges facing the development at Brenchley Gardens
- What factors are considered to determine the types of houses and flats being built? Is the Council Housing waiting list a factor?

In responding to some of the questions Councillor Cryan informed the commission that viability in this context meant the impact of the delivery of houses in developments like Ledbury and Tustin would have on the Housing Revenue Account internally in terms of rental income. The consultation process was followed for the development at Brenchley Gardens, however roof-top developments which was the cause for issues has now been removed and learnings from the consultation process would be revised and incorporated into future processes. The Chair expressed an interest in looking at such examples as a part of this commission's work programme

Councillor Cryan informed the commission that factors such as family sizes and individual family needs were being considered as part of the consultation to match local housing needs. Larger houses were also being built in certain areas which would mean families moving from flats which in turn would free up flats and smaller houses to be opened up for others on the waiting list.

- Loss of green spaces at Bourbon and Folkestone developments
- Impact of 'right to buy' legislation on council housing
- Zero-Carbon Housing progress

Councillor Cryan reported that she would be meeting residents of Bourbon and Folkestone on these matters at upcoming development meetings to hear their views and engage with them to find solutions to some of the issues raised.

Councillor Cryan explained that the Council faces challenges with the building of houses which are carbon neutral but there are models from some other developments that can be used as a framework for Zero Carbon Housing which has been included in housing strategy papers presented to the Cabinet.

- Community Infrastructure (Green Spaces) for resident tenants and market tenants
- Building and maintaining properties under Fire Safety Act 2021

Officers will continue to ensure that such community infrastructure areas would be for the whole community and not just for private

developments and their tenants as these projects make their way through the planning system. Current funding would ensure Fire Safety Act 2021 is followed and keep the projects going till 2025 beyond which further funding applications will have to be made to Greater London Authority, one of the other challenges is the lack of expertise within the building safety managers to undertake this work.

The Chair relayed a request for information from the Vice-Chair Councillor Anood Al-Samerai on empty homes statistics.

6. WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Chair in relaying this year's work programme felt that it was important that agendas are not too extensive and that the objective should always remain to get clear and concise recommendations from Scrutiny to Cabinet backed up by evidence in reports. The Chair's suggestions below:

- Case study/report on Brenchley Gardens development's consultation process.
- Private Sector housing and costs of renting.
- Policy & Practice on mutual exchange, housing options.

The Commission made the following suggestions:

- Community engagement structures.
- Establishment of new Tenancy Management Organisations (TMO).
- Strategy and Implementation of the Fire Safety Act 2021.
- Council plan on building Zero Carbon houses.
- Impact of the pandemic on Southwark Housing and measures needed.

Meeting ended at 8.38 pm

CHAIR:

DATED: