

Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission held on Thursday 13 July 2023 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Ellie Cumbo (Chair)
Councillor Barrie Hargrove
Councillor Jane Salmon
Cris Claridge (Co-opted member)

**OTHER
MEMBERS
PRESENT:**

Councillor Leo Pollak

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:**

Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Esme Hicks, Councillor Sam Foster, Councillor Emily Tester and Ina Negoita (Co-opted member).

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

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

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS.

There were no disclosure of interests and dispensations.

4. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2023 were approved as a correct record.

5. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AND LETTINGS POLICY FOR COUNCIL HOMES AND HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS.

The commission received a presentation from Deputy Cabinet Member Councillor Leo Pollak on housing allocations and lettings policy for council homes and housing associations around the following points.

- Extremities of the Housing Crisis and the evolution of the Housing Allocations Scheme
- Refresh of the Housing Allocation Scheme, maximising the supply of social housing
- Housing support for the elderly with caring needs, increase in the need for private rented housing post Covid.
- Effects of Overcrowding; Adult psychological issues, poor marital relationships and higher stress and anxiety amongst teenagers
- Effects of homelessness and living in Temporary Accommodation
- 57 extra new build care homes on social rent for elderly people built by Council in partnership with United St Saviour's Charity
- Categories of needs on Southwark's Housing waiting lists such as overcrowding and homelessness
- Impact of the change of housing needs post-Covid, on the housing allocation scheme refresh completion
- Feedback on the 2021 consultation of the Housing Allocation policy indicated issues of homelessness, domestic abuse, under-occupiers and overcrowding etc.
- Pressure on the lettings system due to surge in the increase of housing need; decrease in Southwark lettings turnaround from housing stock
- Pilot of chain maximising approach to lettings, based on detailed data of homes needed and vacated; occupancy analysis of a defined area can balance chain continuing (with priority cases addressed) with chain terminating (always with the highest priority chain-terminating need).
- Enhancing the offer for under-occupiers; Housing mobility schemes and right-sizing action plan in the current offer which includes bespoke offers and work with complex cases, mutual exchange platforms, promotional campaigns and £1000/room incentive
- Objectives under the refresh of the housing allocation and letting schemes; reducing under-occupancy and overcrowding, higher volume of lets by

reducing void homes turnaround times, savings in the Temporary Accommodation bill.

The commission then asked questions on the following themes

- Measures and indicators of success for housing allocation and lettings policy
- Measuring the wider effects of the Housing allocation and lettings policy on Southwark residents in social housing

Councillor Pollak explained to the commission that actively tracking the houses by no. of lettings in the local lettings (discounting new builds), rehousing numbers, and households' supported with downsizing would be a way of measuring success of the housing allocation and lettings policy.

The commission heard from Councillor Pollak that annual tenant surveys and tenancy checks would be a way to gauge success and resident satisfaction. The main objective of the scheme is to meet housing need. The implementation of the refresh of the Housing allocation scheme would need a few years to produce results.

The Chair addressed the commission with a possible recommendation to the cabinet to have a clear and comprehensible list of the success criteria for the Housing Allocations scheme and Letting policy including quantitative and satisfaction measures.

The commission then had discussions around the following points

- Lettings selection criteria, prioritising needs and management of chain maximising approach to lettings
- Accounting for changing circumstances of families with housing needs; risk within chain maximising approach to lettings that could lead to unsatisfactory outcomes for families
- Post-move tenant satisfactions surveys, repairs related issues within housing allocations and lettings and wider considerations of factors such as neighbourhoods and community aspects.
- Monitoring of housing allocations and lettings policy and consultation on the draft policies; nine months' to the end of municipal year being the timeline for the completion of the housing allocations scheme refresh.
- Future proof and regular audits of housing allocation over the years to come and accounting for strategic changes in schemes and policies as a result of a possible change in central government
- Policy changes for under-occupancies with regards to second homes, holiday homes and Airbnb's.

6. PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME 2023-2024

The commission discussed and agreed the items on the work programme 2023/24.

The commission also agreed to discuss the Resident Participation Framework only after receiving the Cabinet's response to the recommendations made by the Environment and Community Engagement Commission in the previous year 2022-2023.

The commission agreed to have temporary accommodation on the agenda for the next meeting on 12 October 2023 with a view to form recommendations on housing allocations and temporary accommodation by 14 December 2023 meeting.

The commission also agreed to consider having heating outages compensation scheme on the agenda at the next meeting.

Meeting ended at 9:05 pm

CHAIR:

DATED: