

Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Monday 20 March 2023

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Jacolyn Daly (Chair), Paul Alexander, Asif Siddique, and Adronie Alford

Other Councillors: Councillor Frances Umeh (Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness)

Guests: Neil Campbell (Partner, Architecture, BPTW), Onur Osman (Senior Associate, Architecture, BPTW), Andrew Yates (Partner, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Calford Seaden) and Emily Mansfield (Sustainability Consultant, Calford Seaden)

Officers: Richard Shwe (Interim Director of Housing), Jon Pickstone (Strategic Director for the Economy), Matt Rumble (Strategic Head of Regeneration and Development), Peter Cook (Head of Development) and Debbie Yau (Committee Coordinator)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor David Morton.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

Actions and officer responses

Councillor Paul Alexander appreciated the officers' response to outstanding issues raised at the last meeting. On item 1.1 relating to damp and mould, Councillor Alexander referred to the revised social housing regulation published in February 2023 which had over time lost connection to the Decent

Homes standard originally drawn up in 2006. Expressing concerns about the different standards adopted for disrepair and damp & mould, and none of them was based on the aforesaid Decent Homes standard, he considered it necessary to have a clear set of standards used for all the related works.

As regards item 4 on carbon emissions, Councillor Alexander noted that Council housing had emitted a total of 40,498 tonnes CO₂, with 12,161 tonnes emitted for electricity and 28,337 tonnes for gas. He considered it more realistic to measure the amount of CO₂ emitted on-site. Noting the heating target of 165 kWh/m²/year among 6 property types, Councillor Alexander queried the types of property involved as immediate actions might need to be taken for older property types in order to meet the target.

In response, Richard Shwe (Interim Director of Housing) undertook to take on board concerns expressed by Councillor Alexander and include these issues in the next Forward Plan. His office would also consult with the Climate Change team to ensure the information and hence corresponding actions were aligned with the Council's net zero goals.

ACTION: Richard Shwe

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January were agreed to be accurate.

4. INTRODUCTION BY RICHARD SHWE, INTERIM HOUSING DIRECTOR

Before inviting Richard Shwe to speak, the Chair stated the purpose, principal functions, and the role of the Committee.

NOTE: The Chair's statement is attached as Appendix 1

Richard Shwe (Interim Director of Housing) delivered his introductory remark. He highlighted the top priorities and associated tasks, with a strong focus on fixing repairs as the number one priority.

NOTE: Richard Shwe's introductory remark is attached as Appendix 2

Councillor Adronie Alford was concerned that the Committee had not received regular updates on repairs and associated improvements as agreed at the beginning of the year and her related questions on the subject were not addressed. As opposition, she considered it justified for her to hold the Administration to account and to scrutinise related issues, including regular updates on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), a more detailed update on voids, and regular updates on repairs.

The Chair reiterated that the principal functions of the Committee were, inter alia, to make recommendations to the Cabinet, review the impact of decisions, scrutinise policies in the interest of residents and monitor spending rather than reviewing the operational tasks. The role of the Committee was to monitor the policies and review their implementation. For instance, the Committee would review the void and repair strategies to see how they could

be improved. She added that while committing to review the HRA every January, the Committee could always scrutinise the costing behind a housing policy and its impact on the HRA.

Councillor Alford said she intended to find more savings by reviewing the HRA on a regular basis. She found it disappointing that her requests had not been actioned by senior officers. Richard Shwe assured members that the Housing team would strive to deliver what he had promised in his introduction.

Councillor Paul Alexander appreciated that the issue of repairs was given top priority. He requested awareness be raised to better coordinate between leaseholders and tenants to prevent their conflicting needs from escalating to becoming legal issues. He supported prioritising maintenance, including maintaining the standards for repairs. Councillor Alexander hoped to see that the improvement measures proposed by the senior management would be executed. He further urged that efforts should be made to resolve the problematic disrepair cases to obviate questioning by the Ombudsman.

Councillor Asif Siddique expressed concern about the circumstances of repairs faced by residents amidst the cost-of-living crisis. He asked whether special strategies or a tracking system were in place to deal with complaints on the delay of repairs.

Richard Shwe said that the Housing team had looked at the data and were addressing issues directly. For casework in the pipeline, the best approach was to work with contractors and fix them before they became a bigger problem.

Councillor Frances Umeh thanked members for sharing their reflections as well as Richard Shwe for his overview of housing work priorities, specifically the improvements of repairs work. She noted that in addition to improving works, there was a need for making investment in the housing stock which had been left wanting for many years and was aggravated by severe budget cuts over the last 12 years. She suggested that at the July meeting, the Committee consider scrutinising the work that had been done with residents to improve housing services.

Summing up, the Chair said that in face of significant challenges, the Committee would endeavour to scrutinise the housing strategies and policies to make a difference for the residents within the borough.

5. UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Matt Rumble (Strategic Head of Regeneration and Development) updated members on the following:

- Building Homes and Community Strategy and its underpinning principles;
- the Development Programme overview, including the direct delivery programmes and partnership delivery projects;

- the housing tenures in H&F, including genuinely affordable homes, intermediate homes and market sales homes;
- funding and financial performance, including negotiating affordable housing obligations in private development (Section 106); and
- partnership delivery of the Education City: the Ark Swift Primary Academy site and its phases of development.

Peter Cook (Head of Development) outlined the following:

- the principles of co-production: doing things with residents, not to them;
- the Defend Council Homes Policy;
- co-producing White City Central and the White City Estate Resident Advisory Panel;
- co-production with the community in numbers;
- response to Climate and Ecology Strategy; and
- the redevelopment of Hartopp and Lannoy site.

Neil Campbell (Partner, Architecture, BPTW) gave a detailed account of the Hartopp and Lannoy Point Project, including co-production with the Resident's Steering Group.

Emily Mansfield (Sustainability Consultant, Calford Seaden) introduced the Sustainability Strategy of the Hartopp and Lannoy Point Project, including the H&F's target under the Climate & Ecology Strategy, the benefits and values of net zero, and the reduction of running costs through passive design under the Sustainability Framework.

Andrew Yates (Partner, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Calford Seaden) briefed members on the low energy design under the Passivhaus Principles, including energy efficient design via fabric enhancement, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, the use of air source heat pumps for heating and hot water and the adoption of solar photovoltaic array to generate renewable energy.

Onur Osman (Senior Associate, Architecture, BPTW) outlined the Sustainability & Passivhaus Design Principles. He also noted the project summary and the next steps.

The Chair said she was interested to see how the constrictions and challenges presented by residents could be overcome by co-production. She requested for the sets of presentation slides be circulated to members after the meeting. (Appendices 3a and 3b)

NOTE: The presentations are attached as Appendices 3a and 3b

Councillor Paul Alexander asked if the residents had expressed any views during the consultation on the size of internal and communal living space, the window size and ceiling height, and the maintenance of heating installations.

Peter Cook noted that all the new builds were developed according to the national standards to accommodate modern living. The accessible units, co-produced with the accessible working groups, were bigger in size with larger

furniture layouts. Matt Rumble added that the provision and size of the balcony and outdoor space were also set out in the national space standards.

Councillor Alexander understood that the national standards allowed a range, and he was concerned whether the minimum was adopted by councils in London which might not meet residents' expectations.

Councillor Adronie Alford asked about the distribution of beds in the development. Peter Cook said there were 67 genuinely affordable homes made up of 28 one-beds, 27 two-beds, and 12 three-beds. There were 45 intermediate homes made up of 22 one-beds, 19 two-beds, and 4 three-beds.:

Noting the absence of 4-bedroom flats, Councillor Alford considered it necessary to provide more such units to cater for the needs of larger families to avoid overcrowding. Matt Rumble assured that a broader range of family-sized homes would be available across the borough under the other 16 projects based on a number of factors, including the plot of land in question, the local demand and residents' affordability.

On maintenance, Richard Shwe remarked that new maintenance contracts would be H&F-specific and resident-centric. Matt Rumble added that residents would be educated on how new homes and new technologies operated and how to maximise the benefits to keep the energy bills low.

The Chair asked about consumers' understanding of and demand for homes built according to Passivhaus principles given a number of the housing units would be for private sale. Peter Cook referred to the schemes implemented by Exeter City Council where a premium was added to the leasehold properties on the open market. Peter further noted about the 5-year process of monitoring the performance of the new homes where various living style might lead to different maintenance charges.

In response to Councillor Alford's concern on how to ensure residents would clean the filters of the new ventilation systems, Peter Cook noted that mechanical ventilation would be the standard going forward as it helped alleviate noise pollution of the heat recovery unit. The Regeneration and Development team might replace the filters on behalf of the residents and that cost would be reflected in the net rent itemised under repairs and maintenance.

Councillor Alford referred to the demolition and rebuilding of housing blocks in Munster ward, where no compensation had been made available to the residents remaining on the estate. Richard Shwe undertook to look into the matter and provide a response outside of the meeting.

ACTION: Richard Shwe

Councillor Asif Siddique thanked the comprehensive presentations and sought information about similar developments, if any, in the UK. He asked about the provisions of vehicle and bike parking and availability of electric charging points. Matt Rumble referred to the Council's policy in promoting

active travel away from car travel. As such, all residential schemes in the borough were 'zero car' and hence all new homes were built without additional parking except for people with blue badges. On the other hand, there would be significant amount of bike parking facilities for promotion of active travel.

In reply to Councillor Siddique's question about facilities accessible by disabled and elderly residents and their carers, Matt Rumble noted that for all projects under development, about 10% would fully be adapted for wheelchair use and the housing allocation team would match these properties with people on the housing register who needed them the most. Such matching and allocation would be extended to affordable homes developed by the private sector. He added that these units were built with adaptable standards which could be life-time homes to those even if their conditions might change over time. In terms of special support for elderly residents at homes, Matt Rumble said that while the primary focus was delivering affordable homes to meet the needs of those on the housing register, his team was exploring embedding social care in new homes to provide extra care housing for elderly residents, children leaving care, and people with learning difficulties etc. He noted that over the next 18 months, the team would look at all sites and land across the borough for further development and he believed those opportunities might then come forward.

Summing up, the Chair requested the officers address members' concern, including compensation for residents near the demolished elderly blocks, living space and population density, number of bike parking units and the number of genuinely affordable and social housing homes completed in the last couple of years and in the pipeline.

ACTION: Matt Rumble

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the content of the presentation.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the dates of future meetings:

- 25 July 2023
- 14 November 2023
- 30 January 2024
- 26 March 2024

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 9.14 pm

Chair:

Contact officer: Debbie Yau
Committee Coordinator
Corporate Services
Tel 07901 517470
E-mail: Debbie.Yau@lbhf.gov.uk

[Appendix 1: Chair's Statement](#)

[Appendix 2: Richard Shwe's Introduction](#)

[Appendix 3a: Development Programme Update](#)

[Appendix 3b: Hartopp and Lannoy Point](#)