

Overview & Scrutiny

Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

All Members of the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission are requested to attend the meeting of the Commission to be held as follows

Wednesday, 19th February, 2020

7.00 pm

Room 102, Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, London E8 1EA

Contact:

Tom Thorn

☎ 0208 356 8186

✉ thomas.thorn@hackney.gov.uk

Tim Shields

Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney

Members: Cllr Sharon Patrick (Chair), Cllr Sade Etti (Vice-Chair),
Cllr Anthony McMahon, Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone,
Cllr Penny Wrout and Cllr Anna Lynch

Agenda

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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| 4 | Evidence gathering for review - Housing Associations' work with the Council to best meet housing need in Hackney | (Pages 1 - 2) |
| 5 | Evidence gathering for review - Development of new homes by Housing Associations and approaches to existing stock | (Pages 3 - 4) |

Access and Information

Getting to the Town Hall

For a map of how to find the Town Hall, please visit the council's website <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/contact-us.htm> or contact the Overview and Scrutiny Officer using the details provided on the front cover of this agenda.

Accessibility

There are public toilets available, with wheelchair access, on the ground floor of the Town Hall.

Induction loop facilities are available in the Assembly Halls and the Council Chamber. Access for people with mobility difficulties can be obtained through the ramp on the side to the main Town Hall entrance.

Further Information about the Commission

If you would like any more information about the Scrutiny Commission, including the membership details, meeting dates and previous reviews, please visit the website or use this QR Code (accessible via phone or tablet 'app')

<http://www.hackney.gov.uk/individual-scrutiny-commissions-living-in-hackney.htm>



Public Involvement and Recording

Scrutiny meetings are held in public, rather than being public meetings. This means that whilst residents and press are welcome to attend, they can only ask questions at the discretion of the Chair. For further information relating to public access to information, please see Part 4 of the council's constitution, available at <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/l-gm-constitution.htm> or by contacting Governance Services (020 8356 3503)

Rights of Press and Public to Report on Meetings

Where a meeting of the Council and its committees are open to the public, the press and public are welcome to report on meetings of the Council and its committees, through any audio, visual or written methods and may use digital

and social media providing they do not disturb the conduct of the meeting and providing that the person reporting or providing the commentary is present at the meeting.

Those wishing to film, photograph or audio record a meeting are asked to notify the Council's Monitoring Officer by noon on the day of the meeting, if possible, or any time prior to the start of the meeting or notify the Chair at the start of the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer, or the Chair of the meeting, may designate a set area from which all recording must take place at a meeting.

The Council will endeavour to provide reasonable space and seating to view, hear and record the meeting. If those intending to record a meeting require any other reasonable facilities, notice should be given to the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting and will only be provided if practicable to do so.

The Chair shall have discretion to regulate the behaviour of all those present recording a meeting in the interests of the efficient conduct of the meeting. Anyone acting in a disruptive manner may be required by the Chair to cease recording or may be excluded from the meeting. Disruptive behaviour may include: moving from any designated recording area; causing excessive noise; intrusive lighting; interrupting the meeting; or filming members of the public who have asked not to be filmed.

All those visually recording a meeting are requested to only focus on recording councillors, officers and the public who are directly involved in the conduct of the meeting. The Chair of the meeting will ask any members of the public present if they have objections to being visually recorded. Those visually recording a meeting are asked to respect the wishes of those who do not wish to be filmed or photographed. Failure by someone recording a meeting to respect the wishes of those who do not wish to be filmed and photographed may result in the Chair instructing them to cease recording or in their exclusion from the meeting.

If a meeting passes a motion to exclude the press and public then in order to consider confidential or exempt information, all recording must cease and all recording equipment must be removed from the meeting room. The press and public are not permitted to use any means which might enable them to see or hear the proceedings whilst they are excluded from a meeting and confidential or exempt information is under consideration.

Providing oral commentary during a meeting is not permitted.

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Living in Hackney Scrutiny Committee

Item 1:

How are Housing Associations supporting the council to best meet housing need and to fulfil homelessness duties?

Summary

1.0 *What arrangements are in place between the Council and Housing Associations around the allocation of Housing Association Units?*

We have a nomination agreement in place, which sets out the contractual arrangements between Clarion and Hackney for the allocation of void units. In summary, the nomination agreement breaks down the relevant nomination quota for each bedroom size. The percentage of voids referred to the borough for letting to waiting list applicants is as follows:

The Association will refer to the council

- 50% of 1 bed properties and/or bedsits
- 75% of 2 bed or larger true void units

The remaining quota are available for direct letting by the Association via its agents or waiting list.

- 50% of 1 bedroom /bedsits
- 25% of 2 bed or larger

On reviewing the 12-month period, January 2019 – January 2020, Clarion let 20 void units, retaining one of these units to facilitate an urgent internal management transfer. The breakdown of void unit size is as follows:

- 11 - one bed units
- 6 - two bed units
- 2 - three bed units
- 1 - four bed unit

Looking at the data above the unit size with the greatest churn is one-bedroom. Of the 20 properties on offer, we recorded 22 nominee rejections. The refusal reasons ranged from, already securing an alternative home (rehoused), the property being too small, there was no right to buy, or the nominee failed to attend the scheduled appointment. This analysis of lettings shows a high failure rate at stage one of the process. This is unusually as the borough enforces tenancy offers. This is an area the team would like to explore further to identify the cause, reduce void loss and better understand what we can do to reduce the number of failed nominations.

2.0 *How are the arrangements working to best enable the meeting of housing need and homelessness duties in Hackney?*

In general, the current arrangements work well. Whilst all applicants can bid for a property via the choice based lettings scheme (CBL) only applicants with the highest housing priority are shortlisted.

In this financial year, we have referred 95% of vacant units to the borough for nomination, which is in excess of the requirements within the nominations agreement. In offering more than the agreement requires we are further assisting Hackney in meeting its homelessness duties. The merged organisations are now bedding in and going forward Clarion is keen to work with the borough on initiatives to support tenancy sustainment and reducing homelessness in the borough. We are pleased to be part of the Street Homeless Housing First Pilot, a joint venture with the Hackney and an external support agency to provide accommodation for the street homeless.

We are currently working on a new under occupation strategy to further support the release of larger family size accommodation. We actively encourage resident mobility across our national stock portfolio and offer a range of tenure choices to facilitate this.

3.0 *What approaches are in place to enable tenancy take up and sustainment in Housing Association units.*

At a time of acute housing crisis in London, we generally do not have any problems with receiving nominations and overall tenancy take up. Hackney is a Central London location where demand is high. That coupled with the CBL system means that we have a large pool of applicants/nominees at all times.

To support tenancy sustainment, Clarion offers a Tenancy Sustainment service across all of its properties.

This is a three-tier service:

1. Tier one – Gateway - triage via our customer support phone team or at sign-up
2. Tier two – First level sustainment
3. Tier three – Complex sustainment

Gateway and first level sustainment: Tiers 1 & 2 are delivered by our neighbourhood response officers as part of the first stage of our advice and support process, and would comprise of assistance with form filing, one off assistance, safeguarding, general advice, support and sign-posting. This is provided following a sign-up or if required and at any other trigger point in a tenant's tenancy.

In addition, within the tiers our Welfare Benefit teams deliver tenancy sustainment services through the work they complete assisting people to maximise their benefits. Generally, this includes assistance with any backdated claims, help navigating the Universal Credit process, and any other specialist benefit advice. Clarion Futures (Clarion's charitable foundation) delivers a Money Matter programme – which assists our tenants with charity applications or accessing cheap white goods.

Complex sustainment: If residents have been through the above and it is clear that as a result of more complex needs they require a bespoke longer-term intervention strategy, we have designated tenancy sustainment teams that take referrals for longer-term assistance. This is offered to residents who have accessed tier one and two services and these short-term interventions have not resolved resident issues. This service has a team of experienced officers, who engage with complex and challenging cases, often working across a range of disciplines to ensure we can prevent homeless for the resident(s). This can involve working with a number of key partners such as the mental health, children's services, Occupational therapy and social services.

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Item 2:

What is the scale and nature of development by Housing Associations in Hackney, and what approaches are providers taking to their existing stock?

Summary

1.0 *What approaches are Housing Associations taking to building new homes in the borough, what types of affordable homes are being delivered?*

Clarion has no current new developments in Hackney. Market conditions and the characteristics of Hackney's housing market make it difficult for Clarion to invest at scale in the borough and, as a result, Clarion's Development Team have not been successful in securing a pipeline since Clarion's formation in 2016.

Clarion's Development Strategy sets out the Group's ambition to deliver 50,000 homes by reaching a national delivery target of 5,000 homes per year by 2030; of which circa 80% is expected to be affordable housing. We are committed to the delivery of high quality affordable housing with an emphasis on place making and community cohesion; this requires a focus on sites that offer volume and scale providing the means to create new vibrant and sustainable communities.

While London has some of the most acute housing needs in the country, it presents the greatest market challenges in delivering genuinely affordable homes. For developers high land prices, costly infrastructure, complex site remediation and rising tender costs combine to make residential development in London difficult.

Clarion is developing a long-term asset strategy, which includes our Clarion 2040 Standard, a suite of standards we expect all of our homes to meet by 2040. These standards include elements such as safety, energy efficiency and accessibility. We are currently going through a process of finalising the standard and understanding implications for our stock and will share these with the council as soon as we are able to. The intention is to develop plans for the next 20 years that outline how we will be treating all of our homes to achieve the standard, beyond the standard Planned Investment Programme.

2.0 *Planned stock investment within Hackney*

A key objective of Clarion's is improving the lives of residents. Integral to achieving this is providing an informed delivery Plan. To do this Clarion has a holistic approach to Asset Management and the long-term sustainability of its stock. We carry out a regime of ongoing stock condition surveys to refresh our stock condition data and appraise our stock, carrying out option appraisals where necessary. This drives our planned maintenance, regeneration and disposal strategy /programmes.

In London, our programmes of work are focussed on addressing the previous under investment by a partner organisation. It will take a number of years to deliver our plans and to recover the position, but we are working through priorities, whilst achieving best value for our business and residents. The current

financial year's delivery is c£17m in the London region, with particular attention being given to address the catch up on external redecorations and mechanical and engineering (M&E) improving g security works. Our planned work also covers compliance, for example fire safety and electrical testing.

In the last two financial years, Clarion has invested £1.8m in Hackney, carrying out component renewals and electrical testing on over 430 homes. We are planning to do c£12m of work between 2021 – 23, including renewing over 360 kitchens, 220 bathrooms, 200 boilers, 420 external doors, and windows to 300 homes. Planned works are delivered through our partnering contractors, who are well established in the social housing maintenance sector.

We have successfully delivered programmes of work since merger, yielding high customer satisfaction in excess of 90%. Our specifications have been put together with consideration for long-term performance and sustainability. As well as the physical building works, we deliver social value and through our in-house team Clarion Futures, we work with front line staff and key stakeholders to deliver community initiatives in the neighbourhoods we work.

3.0 *New Tenancy approaches*

In relation to issuing lifetime tenancies, we are currently reviewing our approach to fixed term tenancies. Our approach will be informed by how we can best support our existing residents and those with the greatest housing need.

Clarion's standard tenancy offer for general needs housing is a 6 year fixed term tenancy for new tenants. This includes a 12-month probationary period that can be extended up to a maximum of 18 months. For retirement housing and those over 65 years old, we offer a 1-year starter tenancy that converts to an Assured (non-shorthold) tenancy.

Existing housing association and local authority tenants with 'lifetime' tenancies who transfer to a Clarion general needs social rent property will be offered an Assured (non-shorthold) tenancy (with the exception of existing Clarion Secure tenants who will be offered a Secure tenancy). Those with protected rights (i.e. former large-scale voluntary transfer (LSVT) tenants) will have their preserved rights maintained.

All new tenants are contacted within the first 6 weeks of tenancy to see how they are settling in, to ensure they understand their tenancy conditions, have been able to adequately furnish the property, and to explain what will happen at the end of the probationary period. We also use this opportunity to discuss other Clarion services, refer or sign post for further advice and support, and explain opportunities for resident involvement.

4.0 *Stock disposals*

Clarion takes the decision to dispose of properties very seriously, and decisions are made in line with our governance process, we would consider all the alternative options before taking the step to dispose of a unit. We use sales receipts to invest in our current stock and to support the development of affordable housing.

Since August 2018, Clarion has sold three properties in Hackney that were all former Supported Housing tenure. A fourth was offered to the council, (as per the new Sales Protocol), and the council accepted the offer in January 2020. We expect completion on this sale to take place in April 2020.