Hackney

London Borough of Hackney **Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission** **Municipal Year 2023/24** **Wednesday 22 November 2023**	Minutes of the proceedings of the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission held at Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, London E8 1EA

Chair:	**Councillor Soraya Adejare**
Councillors in Attendance:	**Cllr Joseph Ogundemuren, Cllr Sam Pallis, Cllr Zoe Garbett, Cllr Yvonne Maxwell and Cllr Sade Etti**
Apologies:	**Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone, Cllr Clare Joseph, Cll Ali Sadek and Cllr Caroline Selman**
Officers In Attendance:	**Rob Miller (Strategic Director Customer & Workplace), Jennifer Wynter (Assistant Director of Benefits & Housing Needs), James Goddard (Assistant Director of Strategy, Assurance and Private Rented Sector) and Beverley Gachette (Strategic Commissioning Lead, Rough Sleeping and Homelessness)**
Other People in Attendance:	**Dr Adi Cooper OBE (Independent Chair of City & Hackney Adult Safeguarding Board), Sally Caldwell (Strategy & Transformation Consultant) and Becky Rice (Research & Evaluation Consultant)**
Other People in Virtual Attendance:	**Cllr Sade Etti (Deputy Cabinet Member for Homelessness & Housing Needs), Anthony Simmons, (Service Manager at St Mungo's), Andrew Horobin (Deputy Borough Director for City & Hackney at East London NHS Foundation Trust) and Catherine McElroy (Mental Health Community Service Manager & Social Work Lead for City & Hackney at East London NHS Foundation Trust)**
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Councillor Soraya Adejare in the Chair

1   Apologies for Absence

1.1 The Chair updated those in attendance on the meeting etiquette and that the meeting was being recorded and livestreamed.

1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Sadek, Oszen and Joseph.

2   Urgent Items / Order of Business

2.1 There were no urgent items, and the order of business was as set out in the agenda.

3   Declaration of Interest

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4   Supported Accommodation for Rough Sleepers & Single Homeless People with Complex Needs

4.1 The Chair opened the item by explaining that the Commission was keen to hear about the current provision and future need in Hackney for supported accommodation for rough sleepers and single homeless people with complex needs.

4.2 The Commission saw this discussion as timely given the increasing levels of homelessness in Hackney and increased levels of support required for those faced with homelessness since the Council changed its model of housing related support for adults with complex needs in 2016.

4.3 As part of the scrutiny process, Commission Members undertook site visits to supported accommodation schemes in Camden and also planned to visit schemes in Hackney in the new year. The findings of these visits would inform any scrutiny findings and/or recommendations.

4.4 Representing London Borough of Hackney
- Cllr Sade Etti, Deputy Cabinet Member for Homelessness & Housing Needs
- Rob Miller, Strategic Director Customer & Workplace
- Jennifer Wynter, Assistant Director of Benefits & Housing Needs
- Beverley Gachette, Strategic Commissioning Lead, Rough Sleeping and Homelessness

4.5 External Guests
- Dr Adi Cooper OBE, Independent Chair of City & Hackney Adult Safeguarding Board
- Anthony Simmons, Service Manager at St Mungos
- Andrew Horobin, Deputy Borough Director for City & Hackney at East London NHS Foundation Trust
- Catherine McElroy, Mental Health Community Service Manager & Social Work Lead for City & Hackney at East London NHS Foundation Trust
- Sally Caldwell, Strategy & Transformation Consultant
- Becky Rice, Research & Evaluation Consultant

4.6 The Chair then invited the Deputy Cabinet Member for Homelessness & Housing Needs, Council officers and external guests to give a verbal presentation. The main points are highlighted below.

4.7 Levels of homelessness in Hackney were increasing rapidly, and the levels of support required beyond that provided for people in general needs temporary accommodation was increasing. Many of the households approaching the Council had multiple and complex support needs.

4.8 The support needs of households approaching the Council varied, but were often characterised by mental health issues, drug and alcohol use, physical disability and mobility issues and experiences of trauma and neglect.

4.9 In order to help these people to recover, thrive and not deteriorate further, they needed specialist accommodation provided alongside support and supervision to help them live as independently as possible in the community.

4.10 The case study of a resident named 'Gabriel' was referenced. From 2012 to 2019 Gabriel was in supported accommodation where he was coping well and recovering. The accommodation was closed in 2019 and from that point onwards Gabriel had a number of hospital admissions and police arrests, and various temporary accommodation placements had broken down due to anti-social behaviour.

4.11 Not having Gabriel in supported accommodation led to increased costs to the public service system as a whole. There were increased costs to the Council, health and social care partners and the criminal justice system. Gabriel's needs would also likely have become more acute, eventually reaching the threshold for costly adult social care interventions.

4.12 As of June 2023 there were 443 single adults placed with one or more support needs in temporary accommodation, and this was expected to grow rapidly over the next few years. Hackney had only 179 supported accommodation bed spaces - this was low when compared with other London Boroughs such as Camden, which had 743 bed spaces.

4.13 Camden's approach was an example of good practice in this area. They had prioritised identifying and ring-fencing funding in supported accommodation units, as well as cohesive support pathways involving a number of different providers. They had also increased investment in this area to meet increasing demand where needed.

4.14 Modelling suggested that current supported accommodation capacity needed to increase by an additional 325 bed spaces to meet demand. Current provision directly funded by the Council comprised 125 with an additional 52 bed spaces funded through short term grants. Increased capacity would therefore need to deliver a total of around 250 bed spaces.

4.15 More capacity was needed to properly facilitate the recovery cycle of change. The current pathway was phased, built on personalised outcomes, trauma informed and focused on recovery. However, it was missing a stage with specialised interventions for people with high level, complex needs.

4.16 The National Housing Federation had recently commissioned research into how supported accommodation impacted homelessness, health and wellbeing. Applying this research to assessments of need in Hackney, an additional £7.6m per year of total costs to the local public service system were estimated were it not for the supported housing sector.

4.17 There were a number of risks associated with not increasing provision. These included needs becoming more acute with more people reaching the threshold for costly adult social care interventions, increased costs to the wider public service system, increased safeguarding incidents, anti-social behaviour incidents and health

deterioration in temporary accommodation, early death, more rough sleeping and street-based anti-social behaviour, increased likelihood of recidivism and, ultimately, the current pathway becoming overwhelmed.

4.18 A small-scale rapid research project had recently been commissioned by the Council to understand the challenges in accessing the right support for single homeless people from the service user and staff perspective. It involved desk and data review, one-to-one interviews with 15 service users and 15 members of staff, and a service design workshop with 14 stakeholders from across the Council.

4.19 Participants described a pathway under real pressure, too few supported hostel places, low move on rates and a high number of people with support needs in unsupported temporary accommodation placements for long periods.

4.20 They also spoke to the challenges of providing a space for recovery, with some hostel buildings limiting opportunistic and quick interactions, ineffective use of communal spaces and temporary accommodation being a suitable environment. Smaller projects were seen to provide more contact and feel less institutional.

4.21 Service users felt that the people most poorly served by the current pathway were those with severe and enduring mental health problems, those reducing drug and alcohol use, those wanting to work and those that were frail and/or vulnerable to exploitation.

4.22 In terms of providing the right support, it was felt that homelessness services were acting as mental health, health, offending and substance use services with increasing complexity being seen across the board. Some clients were experiencing barriers to accessing social care and mental health support.

4.23 Participants spoke about the role of positive activities in aiding recovery, with feedback around boredom and a lack of positive ways to spend time leading to some cases of depression and drug use. Staff felt that they would like to be able to do more activities but were restricted by staffing, space and budget. It was generally not considered feasible to work within hostels or temporary accommodation.

4.24 It was felt that there was an overall lack of move-on with all routes limited. Silting up impacted on the ability to rapidly house people in appropriate accommodation with support, and long stays resulted in higher support needs for some. Clients often felt there was no plan for them, and even those with potential move on options felt unsure, and poorly informed about their situation.

4.25 Speaking more generally, the national and local picture was changing with more recognition of 'multiple exclusion homelessness'. This term refers to people who had been homeless and had also experienced one or more domains of deep social exclusion, such as institutional care, substance misuse or street culture activities.

4.26 Historically homelessness had been seen as a housing issue, however increasingly opportunities for interdisciplinary social care interventions are being explored particularly for those who may be on a 'cliff-edge' and not qualify for statutory support despite multiple and complex vulnerabilities and needs.

4.27 One of the issues faced in this regard was encouraging vulnerable people to engage with services, which in many cases was logical when considering their life

experiences. Solutions therefore need to be built on personalised outcomes, trauma informed and focused on recovery.

4.28 Recent research in relation to Safeguarding Adult Reviews where homelessness was a factor had recognised that agencies may have missed opportunities to protect adults at risk. Locally, this had led to a positive shift in culture and practice in terms of the interface between the various needs of vulnerable adults and the risks they faced.

4.29 It was therefore important the local system worked collaboratively to prevent the needs of vulnerable adults and the risks they faced from escalating. Ultimately, this approach needed significant funding commitments but the impact on system-wide costs further down the line, as well as on mortality needed to be recognised.

4.30 On mental health, Hackney had the highest number of people with severe mental illnesses in North East London but the lowest proportion of commissioned support in the region. This gave mental health services very little flexibility to offer supported accommodation to anyone other than those with the highest levels of needs, and with demand rapidly increasing, even this cohort had to be put in costly out of borough placements.

4.31 Currently mental health staff were reporting that the biggest challenge in delivering care was people presenting to services with complex needs and the lack of appropriate accommodation available to meet those needs. Generally, there was a positive interaction between housing, mental health services and adult social care but this was being limited by a lack of suitable accommodation.

4.32 Hackney had the highest number of people presenting to A&E in mental health crisis across North East London, and these presentations were often complicated by health and social care issues. There was a significant bed crisis locally and a lack of suitable accommodation was impacting on safe discharge.

4.33 There were also a range of challenges facing supported housing providers locally. One of the biggest challenges facing providers was the reduction in funding over time, in the context of wider cuts across the public sector resulting in social care resources being concentrated on the highest need individuals.

4.34 The complexity of need of those living in supported housing had also continued to increase locally, within a wider context of reduced availability of statutory services. Meeting these needs was challenging because of the complexity of people's circumstances and histories, and it had become difficult to appropriately manage or support clients.

4.35 Clients were spending increasing amounts of time with supported accommodation providers because there was a lack of suitable move-on options, limited by a lack of affordable housing, barriers faced in securing private housing and complexity of need and access to external services.

4.36 Providers were also facing staff recruitment and retention challenges, finding it difficult to pay staff adequately despite asking them to manage increasing levels of risk and complexity.

4.37 In terms of next steps, there was a need locally to enhance the preventative approach by introducing diversity in terms of support and support providers, and

develop a whole system approach working in partnership with health and other anchor institutions.

4.38 There was also a need to prioritise and identify funding for much needed provision with partners in health and across the wider public service system, and for a programme of accommodation to be included in the Housing Strategy with delivery plans for minimum number of units per annum.

Questions, Answers and Discussion

4.39 *A Commission Member asked what some of the barriers had been in developing effective local partnerships to develop supported accommodation provision in Hackney.*

4.40 The Assistant Director of Benefits and Housing Needs explained that, historically, health partners had often been less involved in homelessness prevention work. Since the pandemic, the link between health outcomes and homelessness had become more apparent and was now more universally understood across the local partnership.

4.41 There were now quarterly Homelessness and Health Forum meetings which brought together a number of health agencies across City & Hackney. The Council also met with North East London Integrated Care Partnership on a monthly basis through the Housing Directors Forum.

4.42 The strategic focus across the partnership had moved on from those who were currently rough sleeping, as it was felt that the response in this area was now robust. More focus now needed to be given to those that move between services, such as health, offending and substance use services, and supporting their needs.

4.43 *A Commission Member asked what some of the challenges in commissioning supported accommodation and housing-related support were, and for more information on the supported accommodation pathway model in Camden.*

4.44 The Assistant Director of Benefits and Housing Needs explained that there were a few key reasons why the Camden pathway had been successful. The first was that there were a number of providers in Camden, one of the largest being the Council itself. This gave rise to improved quality and partnership working, and the Council itself setting a high standard for providers to follow.

4.45 Another was that the pathway was consistent across all providers. This meant that the journey was the same for all people that go through the pathway, and monitoring and reporting across the pathways were the same allowing for joined-up partnership working. Ultimately this led to consistency in outcomes for service users.

4.46 The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act had now been introduced which affected supported housing providers by introducing changes to how the supported housing sector was regulated. This had been introduced to improve the quality of the accommodation, care and support, but there were also concerns that this may drive up costs for providers and some may exit the market as a result.

4.47 The Strategic Commissioning Lead, Rough Sleeping and Homelessness added that the supported accommodation pathway in Camden was well funded, and that much of the funding had been ring fenced to support its continued delivery.

4.48 The supported accommodation market generally was facing financial pressures, especially in light of funding cuts and more recently the cost of living crisis, which made the variety of providers across the pathway and the Council Itself providing its own accommodation even more important.

4.49 *A Commission Member asked how immediate progress could be made in this area, and what it may realistically look like.*

4.50 The Assistant Director of Benefits and Housing Needs explained that the Council had a role to play in influencing partner agencies to recognise the challenges that exist in the supported accommodation market, and the risks associated with not increasing provision.

4.51 It was important that health partners began to more widely understand the health costs associated with not increasing provision, and ultimately the increased likelihood of early death for homeless people if these interventions were not available. Other partner agencies, such as those across the criminal justice system, needed to understand the increased costs associated with not taking action too.

4.52 One of the key takeaways from the research project recently commissioned by the Council with providers and service users was the need for increased collaboration between agencies. One suggestion was that the Council had a convening role in this regard, and that thought should be given to increasing or diverting resources to allow for this to happen.

4.53 The Council had meetings arranged with North East London Integrated Care Board on this issue, and would be exploring some of the associated challenges and funding opportunities at the City & Hackney Neighbourhood Health and Care Board in 2024. It would also be taken to the Adult Safeguarding Board in the near future.

4.44 The Deputy Borough Director for City & Hackney at East London NHS Foundation Trust added that there was a significant bed crisis locally and a lack of suitable accommodation was impacting not only on safe discharge, but also on preventing people from needing psychiatric beds.

4.45 The Assistant Director of Benefits and Housing Needs went on to explain that further exploratory work was needed to look at delivery options as part of the new Housing Strategy, and engagement with providers of social housing to understand any opportunities for developing provision within their existing stock.

4.46 *A Commission Member asked what role community safety partners might play in unlocking funding opportunities to develop supported accommodation provision locally.*

4.47 The Assistant Director of Benefits and Housing Needs explained that conversations were ongoing with the Community Safety Partnership to explore funding opportunities, but at present this had been limited to interventions for those experiencing domestic abuse and sex workers.

4.48 It was noted that not increasing provision would likely lead to increased costs across the Community Safety Partnership in terms of anti-social behaviour and crime, as well as the criminal justice system.

4.49 *A Commission Member asked how the Council could engage directly with the borough's registered social housing providers to explore the opportunities for developing supported accommodation provision within their existing stock.*

4.50 The Assistant Director of Benefits and Housing Needs explained that conversations were being had with specific registered social housing providers where development opportunities had been identified. This was specifically around bringing empty sites back into use, and involved adult social colleagues and health partners.

4.51 The Assistant Director Strategy, Assurance and Private Sector Housing explained that the Better Housing Partnership was the forum through which the Council and registered social housing providers met to discuss key issues and was split into two sub groups, namely development and management. This would be reviewed in 2024 to ensure it was focused and well attended.

4.52 The Hackney Registered Provider Compact was recently introduced and outlined shared priorities and commitments, however it was not enforceable and relied on good working relationships.

4.53 *A Commission Member asked about the particular needs of the Orthodox Jewish community in regard to supported accommodation, and what discussions had taken place with community leaders to address them.*

4.54 The Assistant Director of Benefits and Housing Needs explained that the level of need within the Orthodox Jewish community was low, and that it was rare for a member of that community to present as homeless with complex needs.

4.55 Having said this, there was a need to explore demographically and culturally informed interventions more widely going forward. For example, there was a clear need for gender specific accommodation for women who were unsuitably housed, and for Black and Global Majority residents who were more likely to be affected by homelessness and health issues.

Summing Up

4.56 The Chair thanked Commission Members for their questions and all witnesses for their responses and engagement with the scrutiny process.

4.57 It was explained that, after the meeting, the Commission would reflect on the evidence heard and may invite colleagues from across Housing Delivery & Regeneration and health and social care partners to an additional meeting to explore the issues raised further.

5   **Draft Housing Strategy & Private Sector Housing Strategy: Evidence Base**

5.1 The Chair opened the item by explaining that the Commission was keen to hear about the evidence base for the draft Hackney Housing Strategy & Private Sector Housing Strategy.

5.2 The Commission saw this discussion as timely, giving members an opportunity to challenge assumptions and the robustness of evidence-gathering at an early stage.

The Commission planned to come back to these strategies later in the municipal year to look in detail at their emerging priorities and how they might be delivered.

5.3 <u>Representing London Borough of Hackney</u>
- James Goddard, Assistant Director Strategy, Assurance and Private Sector Housing

5.4 The Chair then invited the Assistant Director Strategy, Assurance and Private Sector Housing to give a verbal presentation. The main points are highlighted below.

5.5 The Council had recently commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to provide an analysis of the full housing needs within Hackney and the future scale and mix of housing requirements. This would inform the evidence base for Selective and Additional Licensing, the Private Sector Housing Strategy, the Housing Strategy and the Local Plan.

5.6 Development of the new strategies must respond to a number of strategic priorities and issues, such as the Social Housing Regulation Act & Housing Ombudsman, Renter Reform Bill provisions, higher interest rates, mortgage affordability and private landlords exiting the market, rising homelessness and rough sleeping, inflationary pressure and impact on development and viability, the pathway to net zero and the refugee and migrant crisis.

5.7 The Council managed a wide range of building types and different tenures, and there were specific challenges for the local authority as a landlord. This included fire safety and compliance, decarbonisation, major works, damp and mould, repairs performance, pressures on the Housing Revenue Account, the introduction of the new housing management system and resident engagement.

5.8 The introduction of new consumer regulation such as the Social Housing Regulation Act (passed in July 2023) and the new social housing regulatory regime (to be introduced in April 2024) posed challenges for the Council as a landlord too. Increased oversight may potentially lead to fines, short-notice inspections and orders to carry out repairs. Local authority landlords were also increasingly being subject to regulatory judgements and/or Housing Ombudsman maladministration findings.

5.9 A number of evidence gathering exercises were undertaken to produce the SHMA. This included secondary source evidence data review, a household survey, strategic documents review, agent review, stakeholder review, officer discussions, community consultation and focus groups.

5.10 In respect of the community consultation, seven young residents were trained to carry out face-to-face research across key areas in Hackney and linking in with existing projects and activities. Five focus groups were also scheduled, co-facilitated by young researchers trained in community consultation and attended by residents who were reflective of the borough's demographics.

5.11 The quantitative evidence gathered suggested that Hackney would see a pronounced rise in its older population and slight fall in the child population over the next 20 years. In terms of household types, there was also projected to be significant growth in single and cohabiting adults compared to families.

5.12 As of 2022, Hackney had 119,090 dwellings, of which 83.8% were flats. 15.9% were houses and 0.2% were bungalows. There were 106,087 households across the borough, of which 24.6% were owner occupiers, 32.4% private renters and 43% lived in affordable housing.

5.13 Hackney had one of the lowest percentages of private sector stock in London. Having said this, the absolute number was very high with around 32,000 privately rented homes across the borough. Outside of Glasgow, Hackney has had the highest increase in private rented stock across the UK over the past 20 years.

5.14 Having said this, Hackney did have the highest proportion of social affordable housing in London and the highest target for new affordable homes delivery across all London Boroughs.

5.15 The size of the private rented sector was higher than the England average in all wards but King's Park, and higher than the London average in many wards. The minimum threshold for property licensing was the England average - meaning a licensing scheme King's Park ward would not be able to operate in the ward.

5.16 Build to Rent units were properties that had been built to provide rental accommodation to tenants. Build to Rent tenures are more secure, and are typically more professionalised than standard private rented sector properties. In total there were 1,413 Build to Rent units advertised across London of which 2.3% (32) were in Hackney.

5.17 House prices in Hackney had outgrown the London average and were more than double the national average. As of 2022, average house prices were around £600k in Hackney, £510k in London and £260k across England.

5.18 There were various challenges in regards to housing affordability in the borough. If a resident was on a lower or median quartile income in Hackney, there were no private rented properties which could be considered affordable to them in 2022.

5.19 The only tenures which could be described as genuinely affordable in Hackney were social rent (of which only the most in need qualify) or London Living Rent (of which few were available). Home ownership remained unaffordable to almost all households on low to median incomes, except Share Ownership for some.

5.20 There was a huge gap between affordable housing demand and supply, with a net need for 1,780 affordable dwellings in Hackney per year. There were over 8,500 households on the Council's social housing waiting list - with a rising number in priority need (increased from 18% in 2014 to 34% in 2021). The average wait time for 1 bed was three years, while 2-4 bed units were 13 years and 5 bed units were 39 years.

5.21 Lettings turnover between 2018 and 2022 was particularly high in wards such as Hoxton East & Shoreditch (over 70%) and Hoxton West (over 65%). Many others were around the 40% mark, which was still relatively high when compared to other London Boroughs.

5.22 Lower, upper and median quartile rents all increased significantly since 2021. Since 2018 there had been a significant shift towards higher value rents, particularly over 2021/22. There were also significant geographical differences between the cheaper north of the borough and more expensive south.

5.23 In Q4 of 2022 there were 15,827 properties listed as short term lets in Hackney, of which 1,532 were active - only Kensington & Chelsea and Camden had more, and Tower Hamlets and Westminster were around the same level. The Council had little power to regulate this market in order to alleviate the pressure they put on the availability of local housing.

5.24 Hackney was the 22nd most deprived borough across all English Districts and the 2nd most deprived area in London behind Barking & Dagenham. It was below the national average for fuel poverty but one the most affected boroughs, likely owing to property age and household income.

5.25 The qualitative evidence gathered through the household survey suggested that 21% of households across all tenures had an average income of £101,400 or more annually. The second highest percentage of household income across all tenures was £26k to £39k at around 12%.

5.26 In terms of support needs for residents under 65, the survey suggested that 36.9% of respondents felt that company/friendship was their biggest need. This raised important questions around the suitability of housing for older people and community cohesion.

5.27 Newly forming households were asked what their housing plans were over the next five years. 27.7% of respondents believed they would own an affordable home, 39.9% believed they would be in social housing and 54.6% felt they would be in the private rented sector. This was clearly not in line with the housing options available.

5.28 The number of people aged 65+ was expected to increase by 24% by 2037. The survey suggested that more specialist accommodation and co-housing was desired over the next five years. Similarly, the survey suggested that there was at least one person with an illness/disability in 32% of households, and stakeholders had reported difficulty in obtaining the capital investment to deliver new supported housing schemes. Further work to explore housing options in these areas would be undertaken in the coming months.

5.29 47% of respondents identified financial security as one of the top issues that impact on their health and wellbeing and reducing the cost of living was identified as the top priority that would have the biggest impact on health and wellbeing.

5.30 In terms of stakeholder feedback, 88% of residents considered improving repair services as important or very important. Stakeholders identified a need for all forms of affordable housing, but particularly for social rented homes which are in very short supply. 55% of residents considered building new council and housing association homes for social rent to be "important" or "very important".

5.31 77% of residents are satisfied or very satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. 32% consider their neighbourhood has got better in the past two years and 21% think it has got worse. 17% said they do not feel safe because of the high volume of crime, and especially serious crimes happening in their area with no visible police presence, no lighting and not enough CCTV.

Questions, Answers and Discussion

5.32 *A Commission Member asked for further information on the number of empty homes in the borough, and any plans to bring them back into use.*

5.33 The Assistant Director Strategy, Assurance and Private Sector Housing explained that the Council was aware of just below 1k long-term empty properties (properties left vacant for six months or more) across Hackney. This excluded all council-owned properties but included all private housing and registered social housing provider stock. Having said this, the vacancy rate in Hackney was 2%, which was on the lower side when compared to other London Boroughs.

5.34 Bringing empty homes back into use was a complicated process and it was estimated that around 200 of these properties would not be able to be brought back into use for various reasons, such as being subject to court cases or being included within wills. The Council was looking to support owners to bring properties back into use where viable, and planned to hire a dedicated Empty Homes Officer to support this work.

5.35 Where necessary, the Council would look to serve Empty Dwelling Management Orders, which allowed the Council to take over the management of the property, or Compulsory Purchase Orders, which allowed it to acquire the property. Both were time consuming and costly so were often used as a last resort.

5.36 Bringing empty homes back into use would be a key priority to be addressed within the new Private Sector Housing Strategy. Empty home cases were often complex and the service would likely require additional resources to keep numbers to a minimum.

5.37 *A Commission Member asked whether the Council had engaged with sustainable short term letting platforms such as Fairbnb in light of concerns around the growth of short-term lettings.*

5.38 The Assistant Director Strategy, Assurance and Private Sector Housing explained that the Council did engage with sustainable short-term letting platforms such as Fairbnb, but these platforms represented a small section of the market.

5.39 More generally, it was difficult to build a picture of the short term letting market locally as platforms such as Airbnb did not release their data easily for various reasons. Ultimately the Council needed greater powers to regulate this market locally in recognition of the impact that the market had on local housing supply and rental prices.

5.40 *A Commission Member asked whether the Council had an understanding of the amount of former council homes purchased through Right to Buy were now being in the private rental market.*

5.41 The Assistant Director Strategy, Assurance and Private Sector Housing explained that 9,118 properties had been sold through Right to Buy, of which 42% were now in the private rented sector. While the policy had clearly had an impact on the availability of social housing locally, it was a popular policy which may not be changed anytime soon.

5.52 *A Commission Member asked about the plans in place to hold private landlords accountable and protect private renters, considering the number of private rented properties in Hackney.*

5.53 The Assistant Director Strategy, Assurance and Private Sector Housing explained that the Council was looking to extend the requirement for the additional HMO licence and selective licence across the whole borough. This would need Secretary of State approval, and the Council was currently in the process of collating the evidence base for a decision.

5.54 *A Commission Member asked how much weight would be given to different elements of the evidence collected so far, for example around the need for family housing and supported housing.*

5.55 The Assistant Director Strategy, Assurance and Private Sector Housing explained that there were various ways in which the evidence collected could be viewed. For example, on the one hand there was clear demand for single and cohabiting adult households compared to families. However, there was clear demand for family housing from those in priority need on the Council's waiting list which did not match up with current supply.

5.56 Important policy conversations would need to be had around the type of housing market the Council wanted in Hackney, and the impact this might have on other areas such as the local economy and education. It was within the Council's gift to shape the local housing market if it wished to do so, rather than be reactive to it.

5.57 *A Commission Member asked what was meant by "affordable housing".*

5.58 The Assistant Director Strategy, Assurance and Private Sector Housing explained that central government defined what was meant by affordable housing. Affordable housing for rent included homes let at least 20% below local market rents (affordable rental properties) or let at rates set between market rents and social rents (intermediate rental properties).

5.59 Most of the affordable housing stock in Hackney was social rent (set at around 50% of market rents). The Council also offered rental properties at Hackney Living Rent - set at a third of the average of local incomes.

5.60 Affordable housing for sale included Shared Ownership, whereby homes are sold at a discounted rate (at least 20% below market value) and homes referred to as being 'Rent to Buy'.

5.61 *A Commission Member asked whether any housing for sale in Hackney was truly "affordable" for key workers living in the borough.*

5.62 The Assistant Director Strategy, Assurance and Private Sector Housing explained that the Council defined anyone residing in Hackney with an income of between £25k to £60k as a key worker. Shared ownership was available to anyone with an income of between £25k to £90k, and the SHMA suggested that this product was a realistic option for a considerable percentage of local residents.

5.63 However, the data did not account for the potential for associated costs. For example, some shared owners found that service charges can rise quite rapidly, that

they needed to pay estate charges and ground rents, and that they needed to pay all repairs and maintenance costs.

5.64 It was noted that the Council was in the process of commissioning an independent panel alongside Camden and Islington to look into the delivery of intermediate homes (affordable home ownership and intermediate rent). The interim findings of this piece of work would be reported to the Commission once ready.

5.65 *A Commission Member asked whether there was any demand locally for community land trusts and co-operative housing arrangements, and whether the Council had any plans to explore housing options in these areas.*

5.66 The Assistant Director Strategy, Assurance and Private Sector Housing explained that there was demand for these types of housing arrangements in Hackney, and it was an area that the Council had been exploring alongside local stakeholders.

5.67 For example, the Council had been working closely with the London Older Lesbians Collective to explore potential sites for community land trusts and co-operative housing arrangements, however they had proved too costly.

5.68 It was noted these types of housing arrangements would be looked at as part of the scope of the independent panel reviewing the delivery of intermediate homes in the borough.

Summing Up

5.69 The Chair thanked Commission Members for their questions and all witnesses for their responses and engagement with the scrutiny process.

5.70 It was explained that the Commission would follow up by looking at any emerging priorities, how the strategies will be delivered, how the Council has considered key risks and key measures of success in the new year before the strategies are adopted.

6   **Draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-25: Recommendations & Findings**

6.1 The Chair explained that the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission held a discussion on the draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-25 on 18th September 2023. Prior to this, the Commission held a discussion on the provision of temporary accommodation in Hackney on 22nd March 2023.

6.2 The Commission had now brought together its findings and recommendations from these pieces of work and sent a letter to the Executive for response.

6.3 Members noted the letter to the Executive Response outlining the recommendations and findings of the scrutiny sessions held on 22nd March and 18th September 2023.

7   Resident Engagement for Estate Regeneration: Findings & Executive Response

7.1 The Chair explained that the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission held a discussion on the Council's approach to resident engagement for estate regeneration in Hackney on 20th April 2023.

7.2 Following the meeting, the Commission brought together its findings and sent a letter to the Executive outlining its findings and recommendations. The response from the Executive to the letter was received on 3rd October 2023.

7.3 In terms of following up this piece of work, the Vice-Chair suggested that the Commission may want to further understand why bespoke resident charters are not adopted for individual regeneration schemes and whether there is scope for this going forward.

7.4 Members noted the letter and Executive Response to the findings of the scrutiny session held on 20th April and the next steps for following up the recommendations and findings.

8   Overarching Scrutiny Panel Review into Net Zero: Executive Response

8.1 The Chair explained that the Net Zero Review was an amalgamation of work undertaken by the overarching Scrutiny Panel and three Scrutiny Commissions: Health in Hackney, Living in Hackney and Skills, Economy and Growth.

8.2 Following the review, a report was sent to the Executive outlining its findings and recommendations. The response from the Executive to the review was considered at the Cabinet meeting held on 23 October 2023.

8.3 In terms of following up this piece of work, the Scrutiny Panel would be responsible for tracking the progress of the recommendations themselves, and the Commission will retain a role in scrutinising any areas of concern relating to its remit where appropriate.

8.4 Members noted the Executive Response to the findings of the Net Zero Review and the next steps for following up the recommendations and findings.

9   Minutes of the Meeting

9.1 The draft minutes of the previous meeting on 18th September 2023 were presented.

9.2 Members agreed the draft minutes as an accurate record.

10   Living in Hackney Work Programme 2023/24

10.1 The Chair referred to the Commission's work programme and highlighted the discussion items planned for the remainder of the municipal year.

10.2 A Commission Member asked whether there was scope to include the voice of young people in the discussion on anti-social behaviour on council-managed estates and blocks in January 2024.

10.3 It was advised that the Chair was currently looking at the ways in which this could be incorporated and would update members accordingly.

10.4 A Commission Member asked whether there was scope to hold a follow up discussion on supported accommodation for homeless people with complex needs later in the year. This would be with the aim of discussing the opportunities and challenges in the sector with health and housing partners.

10.5 It was noted that this possibility would be explored following the meeting.

11   Any Other Business

11.1 Cllr Ogundemuren made a declaration of interest in relation to Item 4: Supported Accommodation for Rough Sleepers & Single Homeless People with Complex Needs.

11.2 He declared that his employer, Clarion Housing Group, was a corporate fundraiser for St Mungo's (in attendance for the item) and he had therefore raised money for them in the past.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 9.25 pm