



Performance Advisory Group (PAG)

Monday 6 March 2017 Board Room 4th floor Barnet House

Main Meeting 6:30pm until 8:30pm

Present:

John Davies	(JD)	Chair Person
Aletah Drake	(AD)	Member
Angela Shine	(AS)	Member
Elizabeth Fitzgerald	(EF)	Member
Amlan Ghoshal	(AG)	Member
Norah Fallon	(NF)	Member
Maxwell Doku	(MD)	Member
Aruna Bhatt	(AB)	Member
Adanna Oji	(AO)	Member

Deborah Beckford	(DB)	Community Engagement Officer
Ian Helcke	(IH)	Housing Service Manager
Nkechi Ihesiene	(NI)	Allocations & Decants Manager
Evelyn Gruber	(EG)	Voids & Lettings Manager

Item	Title	Action
1	Apologies and welcome Apologies received from Hazel Mensah and Rachele Davidson. Introductions were made around the table	
2	Minute Approval All agreed the minutes were a true reflection.	Minutes to be published on website
3.	Matters arising DB No matters arising	
4.	Delivering a homeless service	
4.1	IH introduced himself and gave the group an overview of what his team covered. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing assessment and triage 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment • Medical assessments • Homelessness investigations and decision making • Procurement and management of temporary accommodation (including let2barnet) • Owners of supply and demand models • Temporary placements • Nominations and appeals (allocations) • Special projects – TA reduction • Regeneration decanting • Voids and lettings 	
4.2	IH then touched briefly on the legal frame work covering part 5/6 of the Housing Act 1996.	Action DB to send out the presentation to all members
4.3	<p>He then went on to talk about Our Local Framework</p> <p>Housing Allocation Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines how the council allocates its housing stock and other forms of long term accommodation • Determines priority by placing housing applications in one of four bands, with band 1 for those with the most urgent need to move and band 4 for those who have had their preference reduced (e.g. if no local connection) • Community contribution increase priority <p>Placement and Procurement Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines the households who should be considered for allocations of private rented and temporary accommodation in borough, out of borough and out of London • Governs the making of private rented sector offers to fully discharge a homeless duty <p>Tenancy Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines the type of tenancy that a housing applicant will be allocated • Barnet has adopted a flexible tenancy strategy – most cases will be for a minimum of 5 years 	
4.4	<p>Barnet Homes Challenges include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing supply and demand • Further welfare reform and other changes that affect Barnet's residents • Lack of affordable local supply • Cost pressures/General Fund impact 	
4.5	Another area that will affect IH team and stretch their resources is the introduction to the Homeless Reduction Bill.	

<p>4.6</p>	<p>The introduction of the Welsh model into the English Homelessness law is currently at committee stage in the House of Lords</p> <p>The model places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide homelessness prevention and relief assistance to all households threatened with homelessness, including those without a priority need.</p> <p>Demand</p> <p>In 2015/16 the team assisted an average of 437 customers over the phone and 296 customers in person at the office. They assessed 2788 applications from customers who had a housing problem. Accepted 683 households onto the scheme and arranged moves for 163 non-secure residents from regeneration estates. Arranged a form of temporary accommodation for 1404 households, which gives you an idea of the demand in Barnet.</p> <p>Currently we have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 179 households living in emergency temporary accommodation • 2654 households living in another form of temporary accommodation • 295 Barnet residents affected by the benefit cap (by an average of £40 per week) • 877 households who need to be rehoused (32.3% - 1 bedroom need, 30.9% 2 bedroom need, 27.1% - 3 bedroom need, 7.5% - 4 bedroom need and 2.2% - 5 bedroom plus need) <p>4.7 Our response to this demand means that we put a greater focus on prevention and increasing our supply. So in 2015/16 we also prevented 280 households from becoming homeless. Assisted 493 households to move into affordable private rented sector housing with the Let2Barnet landlord incentive scheme. We reduced the number of households in emergency temporary accommodation to 249 and assisted 151 of Barnet's residents affected by the benefit cap get into employment. Finally we launched a new domestic violence refuge and one stop shop.</p> <p>4.8 Future Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the Homeless Reduction Bill • Welfare reforms • Delivering a statutory service from Burnt Oak Library • Austerity <p>4.9 The Future Vision 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention not providing • Empowering customers to create their own housing solutions • Growing talent for our services and business 	
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Questions and Answers

Q. If someone who is in T/A is appealing an offer made to them are they allowed to stay in their temporary accommodation throughout the process?

A. Yes they can stay in the T/A while the appeal is being heard.

Q. Do we have a legal obligation to rehouse people who are eligible?

A. Yes we have a legal obligation to house people who present with children and who are vulnerable in some way. Each case is assessed on an individual need in line with the legal and local framework.

Q. How does it work under part 6 of the legal framework when deciding to move people outside of London if for example they have a commitment such as work?

A. Each case has a suitability assessment which looks at employment, medical needs, and children's needs and takes all of this into consideration. There is a very in-depth assessment carried out before a decision is made to move people out of Barnet.

Q. What would people need to be able to stay in Barnet?

A. They would need very high needs, support needs, children's needs, and medical grounds vulnerability.

Q. If a resident only has a 2 year flexible tenancy do we find that this deters them from looking after their property or behave well?

A. Before the tenancy comes to an end the flexible tenancy is reviewed taking into account the condition of the property and whether they has been an Anti-social behaviour (ASB) these conditions are very carefully explained at the commence of the tenancy .

Q. What happens if a tenant is evicted on the grounds of rent arrears, do we rehouse them if they present as homeless?

A. If they are homeless after the eviction they have a legal right to apply for housing, but cases are investigated to assess if they made themselves intentionally homeless, however if there are children involved it is often the case that we would rehouse them, otherwise social services may have to place the children in a home. This is the main driver in our work to improve prevention.

Q. What is affordable rent?

A. Affordable rent is 80% of the current market rent for that area.

6	<p>Overview of Voids Review and progress to date</p> <p>6.1 NI introduced herself and EG. She explained that the voids and letting team were responsible for bringing Barnet Homes properties back into use after a tenant has moved on. Their main aims are to minimise 'Void' time, this means the time a property is empty. Bring the property up to a required standard in a cost effect and timely way and let the property while creating a positive experience for the new tenants.</p> <p>6.2 Drivers for the void review 2014/15</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Area of interest for the TBG board, who expect to see continuous improvement 2. Internal audit of the voids work in 2014 recognised a reasonable assurance but highlighted issues with high void costs, low mutual exchange outputs and poor hostel turnaround times. 3. Reduced volume of lettings – an opportunity to make voids and lettings more efficient. <p>6.3 Key findings from the review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough coordination, control and robust processes in place • Quality is often overlooked • Customer experience could be better • Performance not reviewed or scrutinised as effectively as it could be • The capacity of the voids and letting team needs to be reviewed. <p>6.4 Where do we want to get to?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased controls around cost and quality 2. Streamlined and robust processes which increase efficiency and minimise risk 3. A positive experience for customers 4. Continuous improvement driven by effective scrutiny and joined-up working 5. Systems, staff and structures which enable the service to achieve its goals <p>6.5 Progress made to date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased surveying resources, completing 100% pre-and post-inspections, leading to reduced recalls • Performance rigorously monitored at voids project board • Reduced void works completed • Improved transfer assessment process, 18 days average • Enforcing notice periods have saved 597 days between September 2016-January 2017 • A lettings standard for customers has been produced 	<p>Action DB to send copy of the letting standard electronically</p>
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7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased focus on mobility initiatives • Joined up working between contractors and repairs team including co-location. • Voids functions centralised in one team • Increased admin resource in V&L team – to better track voids progress whilst QL is still being developed • BH voids turnaround time has been the best in London for quarters 1&2 2016/17 <p>Questions and answers</p> <p>Q. Do we have a problem with squatters in our empty properties</p> <p>A. No squatting is now a criminal offence and squatters don't have 'rights' any more. If a property is squatted the police have the power to remove them, however BH is tight on security and places steel doors on short term voids. In some regeneration schemes we employ the services of the guardian companies to protect the properties.</p> <p>Q. What was the main area identified by the internal audit which meant the costs were so high on the void turnaround.</p> <p>A. It was mainly the amount of work we carried out as standard like rewiring a void property that kept the costs high. B/Homes electrical standards were also generally higher than the industry standards. We now just do essential work that is agreed by the contractor and the Barnet Homes' surveyor at the joint inspection.</p> <p>Q. Why don't we take a deposit from tenants like in the private sector so that if they leave any repairs can be taken from this?</p> <p>A. It is an option that the V&L team are considering, however we have to consider that the majority of our customers probably could not afford a deposit and are on housing benefit (HB) which would make it difficult. Also administering this could be an issue.</p> <p>Q. When a new resident moves into a property are they informed of their responsibilities?</p> <p>A. Yes this is explained during the sign-up and they are given a copy of the letting standards. Few hard copies were supplied to PAG, and will be sent electronically.</p> <p>Q. Who does the void inspection and who signs off the work?</p> <p>A. The initial inspection is carried out jointly by the contractor's surveyor and Barnet Homes' surveyor and B/Homes' surveyor signs off the work.</p>	
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9	Members update	
9.1	No updates	
9.2	AOB	
9.3	DB reminded members about the RHH meeting with the board and exec team on the 28 March and urged as many to attend as possible.	
9.4	DB informed members that they were all expected to take part in the testing of the new customer portal – ihousing – a briefing will be sent out prior to the soft launch w/c 20 March	
9.5	DB reminded members who are interested in the role of deputy chair to let her know by the 17 March	
	DB informed the group that we have a vacancy for a service champion for Mears	
	DB reminded members that the V&L team would welcome them if they were interested in shadowing	
	Date of next meeting	
	Monday 24 April 6.30-8.30pm	
	Board room 4th floor Barnet House	

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