

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 19 September 2022

Wards: All

Subject: Reference from the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – Housing enforcement and the Tenants Champion role

Lead officer: Rosie Mckeever, Scrutiny Officer

Lead member at the time of meeting: Councillor Aidan Mundy

Lead member now: Councillor Stuart Neaverson, Chair of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Contact officer: Rosie Mckeever, Scrutiny Officer, 0208 545 4035

Recommendations:

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1. The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel requests that Cabinet note its reference set out in paragraphs 2.6 to 2.21 below.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. At its meeting on 22 February, the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel received a feedback report from the then Tenants Champion, Cllr Nick Draper. The report detailed his experiences while undertaking the role and example case studies. Alongside this report, the Chair included a list of recommendations to support the ongoing work needed in this area. Please see Appendix A for the full report.

2 DETAILS

2.1. Scrutiny process

- 2.2. The Panel dedicated a large amount of their work programme to monitoring the performance of Clarion Housing's repairs and maintenance work. The panel welcomed regular attendance and engagement from Clarion's Senior Management Team, as well as the associated directorate and officers from Merton.
- 2.3. Cllr Draper described his work to follow the user journey and develop the complaints process with Clarion officers. In response to questions, Cllr Draper explained it was difficult to quantify the number of hours spent on the role, but he believed it to be a full-time job.

2.4. Scrutiny response

- 2.5. The Panel moved to a vote on the recommendations listed in the Chair's report
- 2.6. Recommendation A: Review full time equivalent support to the Housing Enforcement Team with the purpose of recruiting a minimum of one additional officer. This enacts the recommendation of our Tenant's Champion. To be completed by end of calendar year 2022.
- 2.7. There were six votes in favour of recommendation A.

- 2.8. Recommendation A was agreed by the Panel.
- 2.9. The Panel moved to a vote on an amended recommendation B worded as follows:
- 2.10. Recommendation B: Following confirmation from officers that the one-year trial and other conditions of the original full council motion have been met cabinet should decide to either resource or discontinue the tenants champion scheme
- 2.11. There were six votes in favour of recommendation B.
- 2.12. Recommendation B was agreed by the Panel.
- 2.13. Recommendation C: By end of 2022 review and update, as required, Merton's Housing Enforcement Policy 2019-2024 to enable clarity of scope, escalation and resolution for officer's responsibility to inspect and audit repairs reported by tenants of registered providers i.e., housing associations operating in the borough. (Note - This maybe through stronger dialogue or an audit of referred casework. A similar arrangement exists under Mitcham and Morden MP and Clarion Housing).
- 2.14. There were two votes in favour of recommendation C and two against, three abstentions.
- 2.15. Recommendation C was agreed with the Chair's casting vote.
- 2.16. Recommendation E: Identify and report back to scrutiny, options to engage local housing sector for the purposes of Merton's house building and housing enforcement policies e.g., MERHAG II
- 2.17. There were two votes in favour of recommendation E and five abstentions.
- 2.18. Recommendation E was agreed by the Panel
- 2.19. Recommendation F: Commission an internal and external communications strategy that will (i) promote the aims and objectives of Merton's Housing enforcement policy to both social and private tenants in an accessible and engaging format, (ii) streamline reporting of risks due to poor housing conditions (iii) targets and shares learnings with appropriate stakeholders to reduce common issues experienced by tenant's and increase confidence
- 2.20. There were two votes in favour of recommendation F and five abstentions.
- 2.21. Recommendation F was agreed by the Panel
- 2.22. Whilst there is a Recommendation D listed in the report, this item was not agreed by the Panel. However, it is included below for completeness.
- 2.23. Recommendation D: As part of the panels performance monitoring item report quarterly metrics on numbers of (i) private and social housing condition complaints (ii) inspections and category 1 vs category 2 hazards identified (iii) other metrics as appropriate to support the Housing Enforcement team convey the full scope of their work and responsibilities
- 2.24. There were two votes in favour of recommendation D, three votes against and two abstentions. Recommendation D was not agreed by the Panel

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. None – Cabinet is required under the council’s constitution to receive, consider and respond to references from overview and scrutiny.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. None for the purpose of this report.

5 .FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

5.1. None for the purpose of this report.

6 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Cabinet is required under the council’s constitution to receive, consider and respond to references from overview and scrutiny. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 requires Cabinet to respond to reports and recommendations made by scrutiny committees within two months of written notice being given.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

7.1. There are no human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications as a result of this report.

8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

8.1. These are no crime and disorder implications as a result of this report.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1. There are no risk management and health and safety implications as a result of this report.

10 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix A – Report presented to Sustainable Communities – 22 February 2022

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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