**Waltham Forest’s Affordable Housing Commission**

Session 2 MINUTES

5:30-8pm Thursday 23rd Feb 2023

Waltham Forest Town Hall

**Attendees**

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| **Commission members** | **Council representatives** |
| * Geeta Nanda OBE (Chair)
* Nick Bowes
* Nicola Mathers
* Janice Morphet
* Rob Perrins
* Gavin Smart
* Melissa Tettey
 | * Cllr Ahsan Khan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing & Regeneration
* Ian Rae, Corporate Director – Regeneration, Planning & Delivery
* Joe Garrod, Corporate Director - Housing
* Jon Lloyd, Corporate Director – Strategy and Change

**External witnesses*** Chris Paddock – Director, PRD
* Will Temple – Senior Consultant, PRD
* Delia Beddis – Partner, Newbridge Advisors
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**Apologies**

* Fred Angole

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| **Timing** | **Item** | **Purpose** | **Lead**  |
| 5:30 – 5:40  | Welcome and Introductions | * Brief introduction of the focus for the session
 | Geeta Nanda OBE (Chair) |
| Clarification of a point made in the previous session: Link between housing and health* LBWF should look at the most vulnerable people in the PRS, and at how housing services can work together to improve health, resilience and wellbeing. Current initiatives could be extended to people in the PRS, especially in HMOs.
* There is an emerging trend of housing strategies combining housing and health explicitly
* **Action**: Look at best practices, especially in Brent
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| 5:40 – 6:10  | Review of the evidence – *What does the evidence tell us about the potential impact of changing financial climate on the construction of affordable housing?*  **(Paper 2)** | * Presentation by PRD of the relevant evidence on today’s topic
* Questions and clarifications, on evidence
* Identification of further information required
 | Will Temple – Senior Consultant, PRDDelia Beddis – Partner, Newbridge Advisors |
| * **Action**: Circulate the assumptions behind the estimated costing of retrofitting (Newbridge Advisors)
* **Action**: Share LBWF’s climate action plan, as it contains relevant content around retrofitting (3.9, 3.10, 3.19)

**Discussion following the presentation*** Underwrites and committed pipelines can support delivery
* Planning departments in LAs can be under-resourced, slowing down delivery – look at how to retain staff to have a good turnaround of applications
* Need to think about priorities, and not only rely on government grants. We can think of different actions involved in delivery (Local Plan, S106, RPs, etc.) as a flowchart against the Council’s priorities. Look at a one Council approach, with strategic considerations, and have each element make a difference to the final outcomes.
* Having broader perspectives would be interesting. **Action**: Asking evidence from a wider range of organisations
* Discussion around green rents based on energy costs and savings. While an interesting idea, we would need to understand the behavioural response before making a case.
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| 6:10 – 6:40 | Presentation – Housing Delivery Vehicles in Waltham Forest**(Papers 3)** | * Overview of the operation of Sixty Bricks, the Council-owned development company
* Summary of other development vehicles in Waltham Forest
 | Joe Garrod, Corporate Director – Housing |
| * Discussion around repurposing existing blocks to provide specialist accommodation, at a lower cost to the Council
* Question on how the Council makes decision on value for money on different sites, and on who takes them forward. The Council do business cases for each site.
* Question on S106 – this is generally a major housing pipeline. Big developments’ partner schemes all have RPs partners. LBWF could be more interventionist and develop relationships with developing RPs. The Council itself could have an RP.
* LBWF is one of the most active boroughs in terms of requiring Shared Ownership Homes. HRA borrowing capacity is a potential constraint. Safety, decency, commitment to retrofit and net zero are all pressure on the HRA.
* Discussion around stalled sites – is there a proactive approach to get S106 locked in them? Is the Council engaged in discussion to keep developments going? – LBWF is active in the government’s One Public Estate funding. In terms of stalled private ownership, the regeneration team is working on a number of sites, but there are not too many. The Council have helped developers navigating economic conditions, for example through rephasing. Stalled sites are mostly small / medium sites.
* How does the Council ensure value for money through Sixty Bricks? The Council get each delivery mechanism to produce viability appraisal, to ensure the Council is getting a good deal.
* Sites of interest for investors in Waltham Forest to build PRS sites – have one of those institutional investors as a delivery partner

**Summary of the main points*** Not siloing the Council’s approach but have a cross-cutting approach
* Look at getting further, wider evidence from others
* The three different delivery mechanisms might mean that talent is scattered around – Do a skills audit, looking at the skills and how they are deployed
* Stalled sites and giving flexibility – a recommendation could be around how we keep things going during this period. Larger land with no planning permission could also be a concern.
* Institutional investment – who could help with delivery
* Acquisitions policy – Where does that fit in adding to stock?
* Equality angle – who is benefitting should be an overarching theme, especially with the change in demographics the borough has experienced.
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| 6:40 – 6:50 | Comfort Break |  |  |
| 6:50 – 7:35 | Discussion – generating key lines of enquiry for the Council to consider | * Focusing on how we build homes and the mechanisms and partnerships we have in place, how far is Waltham Forest from achieving its goal of making the greatest impact for residents, particularly those facing the worst effects of the housing crisis?
* What are the main challenges?
* What are the main opportunities?

*Based on the challenges and opportunities, key lines of enquiry to be noted by the Council.*  | Geeta Nanda OBE (Chair)All |
| 1. Would a heightened focus on supporting the wellbeing of residents in PRS, particularly in HMOs, bring wider social and economic benefits to residents and the council?
2. Could a longer-term approach to PRS development, including looking at institutional investors and procurement pathways, give a more stable market within the borough?
3. Could the council be more creative in dealing with stalled schemes, including looking at guaranteeing underwriting schemes, having committed pipelines, and using S106 funding to unlock housing and keep developments going?
4. Would a 'one council' approach, bringing all aspects of housing delivery together into a single service with a focus on staff retention and having the right skills, have a greater impact on the delivery of affordable housing?
5. If the local authority borrowed over a longer period, could this increase the viability of certain schemes?
6. Could the Council have its own Registered Provider to widen the delivery approach and increase funding avenues?
7. Would repurposing existing accommodation, for example sheltered or specialist housing, better meet current priority needs e.g. temporary accommodation?
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| 7:35 – 7:55 | Reflections from previous session**(Paper 1)** | * Any reflections or comments on the lines of enquiry from session 1
* Any further evidence required to support
 | Geeta Nanda OBE (Chair)All |
| 7:55 – 8:00 | Closing | * Focus of the next session will be on *how* we can make the greatest impact for residents, in terms of allocating homes, and maximising the benefits of housing delivery for communities.
* Any specific evidence/information required for this next session to be highlighted
 | Geeta Nanda OBE (Chair) |