

# Subject: Questions to the Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property

Report to: Housing Committee

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 17 March 2015

This report will be considered in public

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the background information for the Committee's update meeting with the Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property on selected housing issues which the Committee has investigated over the past two Assembly years.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Committee notes the report as background to discussing with the Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property, and other invited guests, housing issues in London, and notes the subsequent discussion.**

## 3. Background

- 3.1 It was over a year ago that the Committee last heard from the Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property, Richard Blakeway, on the number of affordable homes built in London. The deadline for Registered Providers to complete homes part-funded under the Mayor's 2011-15 Affordable Housing Programme is 31 March 2015.
- 3.2 The Deputy Mayor last discussed rough sleeping and single homelessness with the Committee in Autumn 2013. The housing impacts of welfare reform in London were last discussed in December 2013.

## 4. Issues for Consideration

- 4.1 In the intervening period, the Government's programme of welfare reforms has had time to bed down. The Committee would now like to hear from the Deputy Mayor how the resulting conditions in London have changed, both in terms of impacts on housing providers and on their tenants.

- 4.2 London's buoyant rental market means that caps on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates have a far greater impact here than elsewhere. There is some evidence of movement by housing benefit recipients from inner to outer London, and from London to other parts of the country, as a result of changes to LHA and the overall benefit cap, despite the use of Discretionary Housing Payments to mitigate the worst effects.
- 4.3 Direct Payment of benefits to tenants has for some time been flagged as an issue for social landlords, because of fears that arrears would accumulate, potentially threatening providers' income streams and thus creditworthiness.
- 4.4 At the time of the Committee's investigation into welfare reforms, some contributors also indicated that there would likely be implications for homelessness and rough sleeping. The extension of the Shared Accommodation Rate, for example, was expected by some to increase the number of homeless under-35s.
- 4.5 The Committee's investigation into rough sleeping and single homelessness found that London's supply of hostel places is under considerable strain despite some capital funding to support hostel upgrades and new provision. Government revenue funding has also been used to support a range of services for rough sleepers, including the No Second Night Out and No Living on the Streets programmes. However, the investigation identified issues, for example with the quality and level of advice given to people at risk of becoming homeless, and the Mayor has since used a proportion of this revenue funding to develop a pilot No First Night Out project, intended to support improvements in this service.
- 4.6 The Mayor's 2012 manifesto promised he would "deliver around 55,000 affordable homes by 2015 for low and middle income workers".<sup>1</sup> In November 2013 the Deputy Mayor indicated that the Mayor's affordable housing target was "challenging." In 2014/15, the GLA forecasts 17,900 completions but by December 2014, only 5,200 had been completed.
- 4.7 The Committee may therefore wish to discuss with guests:
- the number of affordable homes completed to date in London and progress towards meeting the Mayor's manifesto commitments;
  - the latest evidence of the impacts of welfare reforms in London, on tenants both in the private and social rented sector and on social landlords; and
  - the latest data on rough sleeping in London, the provision of hostel places and housing advice services to Londoners at risk of homelessness.

#### **Invited guests**

- 4.8 A panel of expert guests has been invited to discuss these issues with the Committee, including:
- Richard Blakeway, Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property;
  - Jamie Ratcliff, Assistant Director, Programme, Policy and Services, Greater London Authority;
  - Pete Jefferys, Senior Policy Officer, Shelter;
  - Matt Downie, Director of Policy and External Affairs, Crisis; and

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<sup>1</sup> Better off with Boris (2012 manifesto), Growing the London Economy, page 34.

- Clarissa Corbisiero, Head of Policy, National Housing Federation.

## 5. Legal Implications

5.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in this report.

## 6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications to the Greater London Authority arising from this report.

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**List of appendices to this report:** None

<b>Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985</b>
List of Background Papers: None
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