

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

CABINET – 13 SEPTEMBER 2012

REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18 JULY 2012

Scrutiny Review Report – Private Sector Rented Housing in Harrow

The Committee received a report of the Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance which set out the findings of the review of private rented sector housing in Harrow.

The Chair welcomed the Chair of the Review Group, Councillor Marilyn Ashton, to the meeting. The Chair of the Review Group outlined the content of the report. In terms of the recommendations, she advised that members of the review group had expressed differing views but that she hoped that the report would be useful to both this and any future Cabinet. She indicated that she was happy to provide the Committee with a briefing note on dealing with the proceeds of crime / planning enforcement. She also made reference the suggestion that had come out of the review that there be a landlord kite mark.

The Chair of the Review Group stated that if the residents of Harrow were provided with excellent, reasonably priced private rented sector housing it would prevent people from being housed in unsatisfactory accommodation.

Members then asked questions and made comments as follows:

- The Chair of the Scrutiny Review Group was invited to attend the Standing Scrutiny Review of the Budget meeting which considered the effective use of capital for regeneration of the borough.
- A Member questioned whether there had been any consultation with Estate Agents with a large rental market and was advised that there seemed to be an issue with the review group having access to this information, although it would have been useful.
- In relation to a query on Help2Let, the Chair of the Review Group advised that this was a partnership involving the Council but that it would be necessary for any details to be provided by Housing.
- A Member stated that the number of empty homes in Harrow, 60, and the number that would become family dwellings, was not significant.
- In terms of economic development and the benefit cap, the Chair of the Review Group confirmed that the correct information had been included in the report and made the case for the recommendation. The review made the observation that there could potentially be a problem for people to remain in Harrow.
- A Member stated that it was necessary for Cabinet to see the review report prior to the housing policy documents being finalised.
- The Chair of the Review Group undertook to circulate details of a recent court case to Members of the Committee.

Members congratulated the Chair of the Review Group on the report. The Chair thanked her for attendance and responses.

RESOLVED: That (1) **the report of the review group be agreed and be referred to Cabinet on 13 September 2012;**

(2) the findings of the private tenant survey be appended to the review report prior to its submission to Cabinet;

(3) Recommendation K of the review be accepted, and the Standing Review of the Budget consider the policy objectives of the Private Sector Strategy as part of its work in reviewing the council's use of capital.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Background Documents:

Report submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 July 2012

Draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 18 July 2012

<http://www.harrow.gov.uk/www2/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=276&MId=61150>

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