

Subject: Rapporteur Review into Overcrowding in London's Social Rented Housing

Report to: Planning and Housing Committee

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 29 March 2011

This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks formal agreement for the final report of the rapporteur review into overcrowding in London's social rented housing.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Committee agrees the report, *Crowded houses: Overcrowding in London's social rented housing*.**

3. Background

- 3.1 On 22 June 2010 the Committee approved Andrew Boff AM as rapporteur to carry out a review of overcrowding in London's social rented housing.
- 3.2 The review sought to test the hypothesis that "increasing the supply of larger family homes would effectively tackle the housing problems of more Londoners in overcrowding."
- 3.3 The evidence base used for the investigation included nearly 50 written submissions from a wide variety of stakeholders and 9 meetings with housing experts, including one full meeting of the Planning and Housing Committee on 13 October 2010.
- 3.4 The Scrutiny Manager has confirmed that the review was conducted within the agreed procedures for rapporteur investigations and that the report and conclusions are within the review's terms of reference.

4. Issues for consideration

- 4.1 A full list of the report's recommendations is attached as **Appendix 1** and the draft copy of the final report is attached as **Appendix 2**. The report has been attached to this agenda for Members only. It is available on the Assembly's web site at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/who-runs-london/the-london-assembly/publications/housing-planning>

4.2 Following agreement of this report it will be sent to a range of stakeholders. A future meeting of this Committee will receive a report of the comments made on the report's recommendation.

5. Legal Implications

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

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Financial implications for individual programme of work in 2011/12 will be dealt with separately in reports to the Committee as and when the Committee is required to make relevant decisions.

List of appendices to this report:

Appendix 1: Report recommendations

Appendix 2: Final draft report: *Crowded houses: Overcrowding in London's social rented housing*

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers:

Agenda reports and transcripts of the Planning and Housing Committee meeting 13 October 2010:
<http://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=158&MId=4166&Ver=4>

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Appendix 1: Report recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Government should use its forthcoming social housing reform legislation to make the bedroom standard the statutory requirement for measuring overcrowding.

Recommendation 2

London boroughs should commit to collecting more accurate data to measure overcrowding. The Mayor and London Councils should work together so that, by 2012, there should be an agreed common method that local authorities use for collecting data on overcrowding in London's social rented housing.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should review the level of grant rates in London with the aim of incentivising the building of larger homes. He should specifically consider the impact of providing grant on a per person basis rather than unit basis.

Recommendation 4

In his forthcoming housing strategy review the Mayor should include an assessment of the role that flexible rents could play in incentivising the provision of larger homes and work towards a policy that would give boroughs a degree of flexibility to vary rent levels according to property size - if that would assist in encouraging the provision of larger homes.

In considering flexible rents there needs to be a careful consideration of how this could act as an incentive to build larger homes but balanced by the impact it would have on larger families in terms of their ability to pay these rents.

Recommendation 5

The Mayor should change the headline housing target in his housing strategy to the number of new bedrooms provided rather than simply the number of units. He should also introduce a new measure of housing success i.e. "the number of Londoners taken out of housing need".

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should change his target for family sized housing in his housing strategy so that 42 per cent of new social rented housing should be 4+ bedrooms as this reflects actual housing need.

Recommendation 7

London local authorities should consider reviewing the requirement for housing associations to accept nominations from the waiting list as soon as vacancies occur so as to allow housing associations the ability to more effectively manage under occupation and so free up larger homes.

Recommendation 8

London boroughs will be reassessing their housing allocation policies in response to future Government proposals and as temporary accommodation targets come to an end. In doing so they should consider prioritising overcrowding wherever possible and should include rehousing under-occupiers as a further priority where this would assist addressing overcrowding.