

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

Report to: Housing Committee

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 23 February 2016

This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the background information for the Committee's final update meeting with the Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property on selected housing commitments.

2. Recommendation

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

3. Background

- 3.1 One year ago the Committee heard from the Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property, Richard Blakeway, on a range of housing issues which the Committee had investigated over recent years. As the end of the current Mayor's term of office approaches, it is a good time to consider how he has performed against some of his housing commitments. This meeting will also offer an opportunity to look forward, drawing on this Mayor and Assembly's experience, to the challenges which lie ahead for new office holders.

4. Issues for Consideration

Housing supply

- 4.1 It is widely accepted that London faces a housing supply crisis, with need greatly outstripping supply. Attempting to address this, the Mayor set out his long-term ambition in the 2014 Housing Strategy to see 42,000 homes delivered annually in London. This is around double the number of homes we have seen built in London in recent years. His 2013 Strategic Housing Market

Assessment, which informs the London Plan, indicated that between 49,000 and 62,000 homes are actually needed.¹

- 4.2 The Mayor committed to delivering 55,000 affordable homes for low and middle income workers in London by 2015 and has used his funding (some £1.8 billion to 2015) to support the delivery of this number of homes, in partnership with Registered Providers and others. His term of office has seen some significant changes in national housing policy, including the effects of a new financing regime for Registered Providers, and, recently, a government focus on building homes for ownership rather than rent.

Overcrowding

- 4.3 During his previous term of office, the Mayor made a commitment to halving the number of severely overcrowded households in London's social housing by 2016. The overall level of overcrowding within social housing (in terms of households with fewer bedrooms than they need according to the bedroom standard) has dropped, although the latest data from the English Housing Survey indicates that severe overcrowding is back at its peak over the decade of 2.2 per cent.

- 4.4 However, while overcrowding in social housing has been falling, overcrowding in the private rented sector has been growing rapidly, doubling since the 1990s, and currently stands at 13 per cent.²

Rough sleeping and homelessness

- 4.5 The Mayor is committed to ensuring that no one lives on, or returns to, the streets, and that no new rough sleepers spend a second night out. He also now aims to minimise the flow of new rough sleepers onto London's streets. He set up a Mayor's Rough Sleeping Group to oversee work in this area and commissions services and supports hostel development, with devolved capital and revenue budgets, to support rough sleepers to move off the streets and transition to settled accommodation. The approach adopted under the No Second Night Out programme, which establishes early contact with clients and coordinates assistance to them, has seen success in helping new rough sleepers off the streets. However, this success is not always sustained: those returning to or regularly rough sleeping represent a consistent third of all rough sleepers. And the number of new rough sleepers continues to increase, leaping up again in 2014-15 to over 5,000, a 17 per cent increase on 2013-14.³

- 4.6 The number of households accepted as statutorily homeless also continues to rise, doubling since 2010.⁴ By far the most common reason given for becoming homeless is now the ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, now accounting for more than two thirds of the increase in homelessness acceptances. This reflects our increased reliance on the Private Rented Sector for accommodating homeless people.

The Private Rented Sector

- 4.7 London's private rented sector has grown enormously in the last decade with almost as many Londoners now renting privately as buying a home with a mortgage.⁵ However, standards are very

¹ Depending on whether ten or twenty years is assumed as the timeframe for clearing the backlog of households in need.

² *ibid*

³ [CHAIN annual report, Greater London, GLA, Apr 2014 – Mar 2015](#)

⁴ In September 2015, 4,400 London households were statutorily homeless compared with 2,296 in September 2010. Source: Homelessness Dashboard, GLA

⁵ 28 per cent of Londoners are buying a home with a mortgage, compared with 27 per cent who are renting privately. Source: [Housing in London 2015, GLA, September 2015](#)

variable and enforcement of existing legislation is weak. In 2014 the Mayor launched his London Rental Standard, aimed at improving the private rented sector. His initial aim for the Standard was to see 100,000 landlords registered by 2016. This target has since been revised, and the Mayor now aims for 100,000 properties to be covered by the Standard by 2016.

4.8 The Committee may therefore wish to discuss with guests:

- the number and type of homes we have built during the Mayor's term of office, and how a new Mayor might ramp up development to make speedier progress towards meeting London's housing needs;
- the Mayor's record in tackling issues within the private rented sector and what a new Mayor needs to do to improve and make best use of it;
- what more can be done to reduce overcrowding in both social housing and the private rented sector; and
- whether the Mayor has done enough in support of rough sleepers and how a new Mayor might prevent growing numbers of Londoners becoming homeless.

Invited guests

4.9 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;
- David Lunts, Executive Director, Housing and Land, Greater London Authority;
- Neal Hudson, Associate Director, Residential Research, Savills;
- Matt Downie, Director of Policy and External Affairs, Crisis; and
- Pat Hayes, Executive Director, Regeneration and Housing, London Borough of Ealing.

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.

List of appendices to this report: None

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers: None
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