

Subject: Action Taken Under Delegated Authority

Report to: Housing Committee

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 8 November 2017

This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out recent action taken by the Chair of the Housing Committee under delegated authority.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Committee notes the action taken by Sian Berry AM, the Chair of the Housing Committee, under delegated authority, following consultation with the party Group Lead Members, namely to agree any output arising from the discussion on Hidden Homelessness.**

3. Background

- 3.1 At its meeting on 28 February 2017, the Committee agreed to use its meeting slot on 23 March 2017 to discuss, with invited guests, the challenge of hidden homelessness in London.
- 3.2 At this meeting, the Committee discussed:
- Who might be considered 'hidden homeless';
 - How people come to be hidden homeless; and
 - What support is currently being offered to help 'hidden homeless' people re-establish more stable living arrangements.
- 3.3 A panel of guests was invited to discuss these issues with the committee, including:
- Nicola Harwood, Head of Nightstop, Depaul UK;
 - Bob Green, Chief Executive Officer, Stonewall Housing;
 - Dr Kesia Reeve, Sheffield Hallam University; and
 - Mary Mason, Chief Executive Officer, Solace Women's Aid.

- The Committee was also joined by a number of Londoners who had experienced hidden homelessness.

3.4 During this meeting, the Committee agreed to use its next meeting to continue this discussion, with new invited guests.

3.5 The Committee met on 27 June 2017 to discuss how to tackle 'hidden homelessness'. The Committee invited a panel of expert guests:

- Vincent Lawal, Housing Solutions Manager, London Borough of Southwark;
- Jennie Bibbings, Campaigns Manager, Shelter Wales;
- Jenny Barnes, Head of Policy and Research, Centrepoin; and
- Deborah Halling, Senior Policy Officer, Housing and Land, Greater London Authority.

3.6 During the meeting, the Committee discussed:

- Whether the homelessness system could be adjusted to take better account of particularly vulnerable groups who might currently not be accorded priority need;
- If so, how this could work;
- The extent to which the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 may make 'visibly homeless' people who are currently 'hidden homeless';
- How young people in particular could be made aware of their entitlement to homelessness support and the advice services open to them; and
- What more the Mayor could be doing to advance this agenda.

3.7 It was agreed informally that the output of these meetings should take the form of a short report outlining the current landscape of hidden homelessness in London.

3.8 Under Standing Orders and the Assembly's Scheme of Delegation, certain decisions by Members can be taken under delegated authority. This report details those actions.

3.9 At the Committee's meeting on 27 June 2017, the Committee resolved:

"That authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, to agree any output from the meeting. [hidden homelessness]."

4. Issues for Consideration

4.1 The Committee is recommended to formally note its report Hidden homelessness in London, as attached at **Appendix 1**.

4.2 After agreement from the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, the report was published on 27 September 2017.

4.3 This report makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

The Government should recognise the acute nature of homelessness in London and keep under review the funding to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act for London local authorities, to ensure that boroughs have sufficient resources to relieve and prevent homelessness.

Recommendation 2

The Mayor should lobby London local authorities to record the protected characteristics of those presenting at housing options services, following comprehensive training of staff about the sensitivity required in collection, and the purpose of such monitoring. This would create better understanding of London's homeless population.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should review the assessment of 'vulnerability', and advice given to non-priority need applicants across London to create best practice guidelines for local authorities and homelessness charities. This should make particular reference to advice and support for young and LGBT persons, as well as supporting vulnerable people. He should add this to the agenda for his No Nights Sleeping Rough Task Force.

Recommendation 4

The Government should rewrite the guidance around evidence required to reach an assessment of 'vulnerability' for those who have experienced domestic violence and abuse to make it easier for authorities to identify victims accurately. They should ensure that staff know that police crime reference or risk assessment numbers are not required in order to validate an application.

Recommendation 5

In light of the Homelessness Reduction Act's introduction, and new data gained from prevention services, the Government should look to review the list of those who meet the criteria for 'vulnerability' under the legislation.

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should promote the use of existing homelessness advice and support services using the London.gov.uk website and TfL advertising space.

Recommendation 7

The Government should ensure that any future legislation on domestic violence and abuse gives survivors of domestic violence and abuse priority in tenancy law. This would mean that survivors are able to remain in their homes following an incident of abuse, if they wish, rather than the perpetrator.

Legislation should seek to formalise the use of reciprocal housing agreements between local authorities (and housing associations) to ensure that people who experience domestic violence and abuse can maintain their housing eligibility band across London.

4.4 Officers confirm that the report and its recommendations fall within the original terms of reference proposed at its 28 February 2017 meeting.

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 to the Greater London Authority arising from this report.

List of appendices to this report:

Appendix 1 – *Hidden homelessness in London*

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers: Member Delegated Authority Form 825 (Hidden Homelessness)
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