

CARE SERVICES PDS COMMITTEE
14th November 2017

WRITTEN QUESTIONS TO THE CARE SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Written Questions to the Care Services Portfolio Holder received from Mrs Susan Sulis, Secretary, Community Care Protection Group

1. With regard to Item 9b: Homelessness Strategy:
 - a) When will the Council produce its new Housing Strategy?
 - b) In addition to 'Affordable Housing', does the Council intend to build new Social Housing for rent, at prices that local people on low wages can afford?
 - c) Has the Council produced any estimates of need for Social Housing, and identified potential sites?

Reply:

- a) *Work has commenced on the new Housing Strategy. The final strategy is due to published in the Summer of 2018, subject to final public consultation. This timeline has been set to ensure that the new Housing Strategy supports Bromley's emerging Local Plan.*
- b) *The Council does not directly develop or manage social housing, but works closely with partner registered providers (housing associations) and developers to secure the full range of affordable housing products across developments. This includes properties for rent to those on low incomes.*
- c) *Regarding estimates on housing need:*

Yes, estimates of the need for housing (including affordable housing) were undertaken as part of the sub-regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). Ongoing estimates take place using the data from homeless and housing register applications.

Identifying potential sites:

The local plan identifies potential sites for residential development – these include a proportion of affordable housing. We also work with housing associations to identify potential sites for new affordable housing. As land availability is limited we also look at other options such as refurbishment of buildings, sites for modular developments and purchase of existing properties.

2. When adults facing homelessness or already homeless approach the Council for assistance are they given:
 - a) Written information explaining the Council's procedures?

- b) A hard copy of the online Application Form to complete if requested, and completed copy as standard?
- c) At the end of the interview, a copy of the Interviewer's Assessment?

Reply:

- a) *Clients are provided with a leaflet – Your Guide to Homelessness. Where applying for inclusion onto the housing register, a scheme summary and full policy document is provided. We also have a range of leaflets concerning a number of housing options and support services. All leaflets can also be accessed via the Council's website and Bromley Homeseekers website. Literature is currently being updated to reflect the new duties and procedures arising out of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which comes into force in April 2018.*
- b) *Hard copies of the online form are not available as standard; however officers can assist clients to complete the form over the phone or in person. Clients are provided with a hard copy of the completed form to sign. A new housing IT system is currently being implemented which will enable all applicants to receive full printed copies and access their application on-line.*
- c) *Applicants receive full written confirmation of all housing advice and options discussed, together with a decision in respect of their homeless application. All clients also have the right to request access to their file.*

3. In considering the Interviewer's Assessment:

- a) What evidence is required to enable the Assessor to decide if the Applicant is deemed a 'Vulnerable Person'?
- b) If the Applicant is not considered 'Vulnerable' are they given the reasons for this in writing?
- c) Are Applicants told of their Appeal Rights and given guidance on how to appeal?

Reply:

- a) *The homeless legislation clearly sets out those categories of persons who fall into a priority need group for housing. This includes those who are deemed 'vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness, or handicap, or physical disability or other special reason'*

In assessing whether a person falls into this category the local authority must carry out a full assessment of need having regard to both the statutory code of guidance, statutory instruments and relevant caselaw.

- b) *Yes - this is a legal requirement and provided for all homeless decisions.*
- c) *Yes – this is a legal requirement. All decisions letters include full details of an applicant's right to request a review and how to do so.*