

COUNCIL

12TH DECEMBER 2022

MOTIONS

(A) Digital Inclusion

To be moved by Cllr Chloe-Jane Ross and seconded by Cllr Julie Ireland

Council notes:

- At a high level, the digital divide is the gap between those with Internet access and those without it.
- As access to some public services is moved online some Bromley residents may have difficulty accessing them. In some cases, this may be an inconvenience and in others it may impact their quality of life.
- It has previously been estimated 18% of Londoners lack basic digital skills (ONS 2019), with at least 9% not having any (Lloyds 2019). Analysis also shows that 10% of Londoners do not own a smartphone (Ofcom, 2020). This could mean tens of thousands of Bromley residents are digitally excluded from accessing online services.
- The main reason people lack digital access is older age (Bromley has a higher-than-average older population). Disabilities, learning difficulties, ethnic origin, location, culture and language, and low income are also important factors.
- Some residents will always need an offline option to access services.

Council believes:

- “Bromley must be a fair and inclusive borough for everyone” (Bromley’s Equality Policy)
- Digital services have been beneficial to both the Council and local people as they are efficient, accessible and trackable.
- Increased accessibility and usage of digital services is desirable.
- There must be an alternate offline option for those unable to access digital services.

Council therefore calls for:

- The creation of a Digital Exclusion Champion to ensure there is support for local people who do not have digital access.
- The development of a Council Digital Inclusion Strategy which will help reduce the digital divide in Bromley.
- A review of non-digital service provision to ensure it is robust and accessible to those that need it, including scenario mapping for critical services.

- A commitment to use information the Council delivers to every house in the borough to include information that will improve digital inclusion and support those that are digitally excluded.
- All council policies to give specific consideration to people without digital access.
- All Council contractors and service providers have policies in place to improve the accessibility of their digital services and offline access to their services for residents that cannot access them digitally."

(B) Housing Associations

To be moved by Cllr Tony McPartlan and seconded by Cllr Kathy Bance

This Council recognises the important work Bromley's housing associations do, and the challenging environment they operate within.

This Council is however concerned about the increasing number of complaints and case work from housing association tenants. These complaints and cases include, but are not limited to: unsuitable living conditions, maintenance requests being ignored and general unresponsiveness to communications.

This Council is also concerned that Members acting on behalf of residents can also have difficulties in bringing resolutions to complaints in a timely manner.

Considering the above and the recent tragic death of Awaab Ishak, This Council will therefore:

- Ask housing officers to work with housing associations to establish a regular forum, meeting in public, through which members and residents can raise unsatisfactory cases and scrutinise housing associations to seek solutions in a timely manner
- Work with Bromley's housing associations to commit to the following:
 - A dedicated contact (or contacts) for Bromley's Councillor enquiries
 - An acknowledgment of each enquiry within two working days
 - A response to each enquiry within 7 working days, including a plan to resolve the issue
- Produce a directory of all Bromley housing associations, including their dedicated contact(s)