

## **Court of Common Council held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018**

### **Question from Common Councillor Rehana Ameer to the Chairman of the Community and Children's Services Committee:**

*My Lord Mayor,*

*At the start of this financial year, the City Corporation had 655 applicants registered on the housing waiting list. Of these 655 people, 53 have been waiting for suitable housing for more than 10 years, 91 have been waiting between 5 and 10 years, and some 231 people have been waiting between 2 and 5 years.*

*I have been provided with some additional statistics which break down these figures in more detail and which I would be happy to share with the Court after today's meeting.*

*I am sure Honourable Members will join with me in expressing shock that some people are having to wait as long as 10 years. I would therefore like to ask the Chairman of the Community & Children's Services Committee:*

- 1. What actions are in place to provide housing to these people;*
- 2. Do we have any target dates to achieve these actions; and*
- 3. How these actions and targets are aligned with the wider Housing strategy and plan of the Mayor of London?"*

#### **Supplementary question after the initial response**

- 4. How are the statistics in terms of the waiting periods compare with those in the surrounding boroughs?*

## City of London Housing Waiting List Statistics

**Figures correct as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018.**

### **Number of single persons and their waiting period**

- There are 270 single applicants registered for a studio
  - 15 applicants have been registered for more than 10 years
  - 36 waiting between 5 and 10 years
  - 101 waiting between 2 and 5 years
  - 118 waiting between 0 and 2 years
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- There are 101 applications for one-bedroom properties
  - 8 have been waiting more than 10 years
  - 12 have been waiting between 5 and 10 years
  - 29 have been waiting between 2 and 5 years
  - 52 have been waiting between 0 and 2 years

### **Number of families with children and their waiting period**

- Families with 2 bed need: 191
  - 7 have been waiting more than 10 years
  - 28 have been waiting between 5 and 10 years
  - 67 have been waiting between 2 and 5 years
  - 89 have been waiting between 0 and 2 years
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- Families with 3 bed need: 78
  - 5 have been waiting more than 10 years
  - 5 have been waiting between 5 and 10 years
  - 26 have been waiting between 2 and 5 years
  - 42 have been waiting between 0 and 2 years
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- Families with 4 bed need: 15
  - 4 have been waiting more than 10 years
  - 2 have been waiting between 5 and 10 years
  - 3 have been waiting between 2 and 5 years
  - 6 have been waiting between 0 and 2 years

### **Number of elderly people and their waiting period**

- 4 have been waiting more than 10 years
- 1 has been waiting between 5 and 10 years
- 7 have been waiting between 2 and 5 years
- 6 have been waiting between 0 and 2 years

### **Statistics according to need and priority band**

Band	Number of applicants	Studio need	One bed need	Two bed need	Three bed need	Four bed need
Emergency	10	0	7	1	2	0
Band 1	55	5	5	29	9	7
Band 2	410	137	56	144	65	8
Band 3 (lowest priority)	180	128	33	17	2	0
Total	655	270	101	191	78	15

### **Response by the Chairman of Community and Children's Services Committee**

The allocation of social housing is based on factors that prioritise those with the greatest need.

The factors determining priority are mostly defined by legislation and set out in the City's allocations policy, which is regularly reviewed by the Community and Children's Services Committee.

Priority is given to: people who are unintentionally homeless; people who have physical or mental issues that are made worse by their current housing situation; people experiencing domestic violence or in a situation which makes their current accommodation unsafe; people who are experiencing severe overcrowding.

Applicants who have high priority needs are almost always offered a property within a year and some within a matter of months.

We have a total stock of 2000 homes and only a limited number become vacant every year. In 2016-17 we had 86 vacancies and last year the figure was just 74. This is why we are committed to building more housing.

Anyone who is already adequately housed in accommodation that is not overcrowded, has a relatively low housing need. Applicants with low need are typically already housed within the private sector or are living with parents. In the City, we also accept applications from housing association tenants who have a connection to the City. This means that a number of our low priority applicants are residents of the Mansell Street Estate, who are already social tenants but would prefer to have the City as their landlord.

Once accepted to the list, applicants must bid for vacant properties. The property is then offered to the resident with the highest number of priority points. Of the ten households registered on the waiting list for the longest time: three have never placed a bid; five have made only a small number of bids; one will only consider properties on one estate and one has already been offered and turned down three properties.

I have asked officers to prepare a detailed paper for Committee on housing allocations.

We do have target dates on the new housing we are building and we believe our housing policy is well aligned with that of the Mayor. We have received funding from the Mayor to assist it's the costs of all of our projects that are in the planning process.

### **Follow on Answer**

The length of time it takes to house low-need applicants is a problem shared by all local authority landlords. The City Corporation's housing waiting list is London's smallest, and compares to waiting lists of 25,000 in Newham, 18,000 in Tower Hamlets and 12,000 in Hackney.

In terms of comparative waiting times, we have been able to acquire very little information in the time available, as authorities are not obliged to publish this information. We have been able to establish that, in the London Borough of Westminster, the average waiting time for a studio flat is two and a half years, a one-bedroomed property one year, a two-bedroomed property ten years, a three-bedroomed property 16 years. By comparison, in recent years, the average waiting time for City applicants was one and a half years for studio and one-bedroomed properties, 15 months for two-bedroomed properties and less than 3 years for three-bedroomed properties.

Most local authorities make extensive use of the private rented sector to discharge their homelessness duties, whereas the City still uses its social housing stock. Some boroughs have reduced their waiting lists, and the average wait for an allocation, by closing them to anyone in low need. A nearby borough recently removed 19,000 applicants in low need from their list, on the grounds that they would, in reality, never be housed. Other local authorities still accept applicants in low need, but do not allow them to bid for properties. We have not taken these steps, but do warn applicants in low need that, unless their circumstances change, they face a lengthy wait to be housed.

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