

TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER PANEL
12 February 2019

Lead Officer: Kirsteen Roe, Director of council homes, districts and regeneration

Wards: All

Agenda Item:

Subject: - Celebrating 100 years of council housing

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to support the proposal to celebrate 100 years of council housing with an exhibition of the history of council housing in Croydon and seeks further ideas and assistance from Panel members in marking this occasion.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report outlines a proposal to celebrate the history of council housing in Croydon. In particular this will involve capturing stories from current or former council tenants, exhibiting photos and documents from the museum's and council's archives. An exhibition can take place in the Clocktower complex during August and September and then tour some of the libraries during the Autumn. Other options include publishing a special edition of Open House and dedicated pages on the council's website.

3. Background

- 3.1 The end of the First World War in 1918 created a huge demand for working-class housing in towns throughout Britain. In 1919, Parliament passed the ambitious Housing Act which promised government subsidies to help finance the construction of 500,000 houses within three years. As the economy rapidly weakened in the early 1920s, however, funding had to be cut, and only 213,000 homes were completed under the Act's provisions.
- 3.2 The 1919 Act - often known as the 'Addison Act' after its author, Dr Christopher Addison, the Minister of Health - was nevertheless a highly significant step forward in housing provision. It made housing a national responsibility and local authorities were given the task of developing new housing and rented accommodation where it was needed by working people. Often referred to as 'Homes fit for Heroes'.
- 3.3 Further Acts during the 1920s extended the duty of local councils to make housing available as a social service. The Housing Act of 1924 gave

substantial grants to local authorities in response to the acute housing shortages of these years. A fresh Housing Act of 1930 obliged local councils to clear all remaining slum housing, and provided further subsidies to re-house inhabitants. This single Act led to the clearance of more slums than at any time previously, and the building of 700,000 new homes. Under the provisions of the inter-war Housing Acts local councils built a total of 1.1 million homes.

- 3.4 Some of the earliest council houses in Croydon were built by the London County Council in 1918 in Norbury (including Northborough & Tylecroft Roads) and later these were transferred to the council. Croydon's housing stock sustained considerable bomb damage during the second world war and a large building programme took place during the 1950's. The total housing stock was over 25,000 in the 1970's. The introduction of the Right to Buy in 1980 resulted in many properties being sold to existing tenants. The total stock today is 13484 General Rent HRA properties, excluding leaseholders.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 The museum service can reserve an exhibition space in the Clocktower during August & September. An exhibition can be designed to display photos of council homes and their tenants throughout the hundred years, plans for the building of some of our estates, old documents such as rent books, tenancy agreements and housing committee reports. Most importantly we would want to capture stories from existing and former council tenants. These can be recorded or videoed and form part of the exhibit and retained in the museum's archives for future reference. It is also proposed that the exhibition will tour some of the Borough's libraries during the rest of the year.
- 4.2 Other ideas include the publication of a special edition of an Open House newsletter containing some of the photos and tenant stories, and dedicated pages on the council's website & Facebook site.

5. The Next Steps

- 5.1 If this proposal is agreed by the Panel, the resident involvement team will work with the museum team to prepare the exhibition. Key to the success of this venture will be input from existing & former tenants. Publicity will invite residents to provide stories, photos and documents and we will target our long standing tenants and some of our sheltered housing schemes for their memories.
- 5.2 Ideas and input from members of this Panel would be welcomed. A small task & finish group will be established to progress this work and resident volunteers are sought.
- 5.3 The costs associated with the development of the exhibition will be met through sponsorship by Axis/Mulallay (this is to be confirmed)

Report Author: Chris Stock

Contact Person: As above