

Request ref. IGT FOI 01 2610 - Housing Plan gives hope to Overcrowded article

Request:

Dear Tower Hamlets Borough Council,

With regards to your article - Housing plan gives hope to overcrowded By Lee Lixenberg - printed in East End Life 11-17 May 2009 and found here also on the Councils website: http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/news/east_endlife/2009/11may/housing_plan_gives_hope.aspx

Here's a short quote from the article:

"One of the key elements of the strategy is an urgent £20 million package of Investment designed to help an extra 500 families escape overcrowded conditions.

The council will buy back ex-council properties, previously sold under the Right to Buy scheme, and work with registered social landlords (RSLs) Tower Hamlets Community Housing and Poplar Harca, to build new family-sized homes on surplus council sites."

I would like to know how the spending of this £20 million has gone so far.

Response:

Q.1. How much of this £20 million has already been spent/allocated etc.?

Answer: To date we have spent / allocated approximately £16 m on the right to buy-back. This includes all purchases, admin fees, surveyors and solicitor costs and estimated works costs etc

Q.2. How many ex-council properties has the council now bought back?

Answer: To date we have purchased 65 properties

Q.3. Could you list the address of each of these ex-council properties, and the size of each property i.e.; 3 bedroom maisonette/flat etc?

Answer: The address of each ex-Council property is exempt information under s.40 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This exemption is absolute. This exemption applies because the information requested is personal information, as defined by the Data Protection Act 1998, and the release of this information would breach the first principle, which states firstly that data should be processed fairly and lawfully. In the Council's view, disclosure of the information would be likely to cause damage and distress to the owners of these properties as it could facilitate an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

However, we can confirm as at the 02nd February 2010 we have purchased 4 x 4 bed properties and 61 x 3 properties.

Q.4. How many new-family sized homes have been built in conjunction with Tower Hamlets Homes & Poplar Harca? Please list the cost of each home, the size (bedrooms) type (flat/maisonette) and the site where they have been built or planned to be?

Answer: A report went to the Councils Cabinet in July 2009 outlining the details of the Local Homes Initiative scheme (<http://moderngov.towerhamlets.gov.uk/mgChooseDocPack.asp?ID=2760>) this report also outlined the prospective sites for the scheme. None of these sites have yet been finalised or developed because the programme is still in the planning stage.

- a) Bancroft Road Garage Site 1, E1
- b) Boyton Close Sites, E1
- c) Head Street North, E1
- d) Head Street South, E1
- e) Bancroft Road Garage Site 2, E1
- f) Walter Street, E2
- g) Brady Street, E1
- h) Sidney Street Library, E1

Q.5. How much of this £20 million been spent on admin or other charges not actually on the properties themselves? I.e. overheads/admin/lawyer/consultancy fees etc? Please breakdown as far as possible.

Answer: To date admin costs are approximately £155,000.00

Q.6. How many of the quoted (in the article) 500 families have been housed in these properties so far? Please break these down into bought-back homes & built on council sites

Answer: To date the RTB buyback has purchased 65, 3 & 4 bedroom properties. Of these 65 properties, 39 have been let to overcrowded families.

The rest are in the process of being advertised / allocated.

Q.7. How many of these came directly from overcrowded homes?

Answer: So far the RTB project has helped 39 overcrowded families and thus created a further 19 subsequent lets for other overcrowded families.

The rest are in the process of being advertised / allocated