

Lead Officer: Executive director of adult services, health and housing

Wards: All

Agenda Item: 9

Subject: - PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO HOUSING SERVICES FORUMS

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to agree this proposal.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report summarises a proposal, developed in partnership with members of the resident involvement group, for the existing two housing services forums to be merged into a single, borough wide body.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Currently, there are two housing services forums, one to serve residents living in properties in the North of Croydon and the other for those living in the South of the borough. Meetings are arranged on a quarterly basis and are open to any Croydon Council tenant or leaseholder.
- 3.2 Membership is available to council residents living in the relevant geographic area. Each of these two forums has met twice, since their inception a year ago and meetings have been reasonably well attended.
- 3.3 The forum meetings provide residents with an opportunity to engage in an open dialogue with officers about the services they receive and presentations etc., are kept to a minimum.

4. DETAIL

- 4.1 As noted above, 2 meetings have taken place of each of the 2 forums, i.e. a total of 4. Attendance is shown below for each meeting. Figures include all resident attendees but not councilors, staff etc.:

Forum Name	Round 1	Round 2	Total
North	39	22	61
South	19	12	31

- 4.2 It should be noted that both the meetings for the North area were also attended by residents from the South area; 5 in the first round and 3 in the second. These residents are included in the table in each case.
- 4.3 All 4 meetings were well publicised, using the website, e.news bulletin, Open House and comprehensive use of posters in the relevant areas. It is generally agreed that the North / South split has created some degree of confusion – both for the officers and residents, resulting in posters not being displayed in the correct locations and possibly impacting on overall attendance.
- 4.4 Officers have also found the current split problematic as the forum areas do not accurately reflect existing housing management service areas. For example, some senior tenancy officers areas are split across both forums, as are income officer patches.
- 4.4 In addition, it is already proving difficult to identify specific agenda items that relate to each area (North or South) and that are of sufficient interest to residents. The majority of discussions and issues raised at the two forums have been very similar.
- 4.4 At the first two meetings, presentations were provided to attendees about the work of the housing management service and the procurement of the repairs contract, with time to ask questions after each presentation. At the end of each of these meetings, residents were asked to suggest agenda items for the next meeting. The suggestions for the main topics for both round 2 meetings were very similar and officers found they were repeating much of the same information. In addition, both residents and officers commented that the majority of information provided at each meeting would be of interest to all residents.
- 4.5 When the responsive repairs contract goes over to a single borough wide provider, in April 2014, all routine housing repairs services will be delivered under a borough wide contract. Tenancy, income and other teams already deliver services that are consistent across the borough, where any issues relating to those services are the responsibility of the whole service. It is therefore felt to be more productive to invite residents to discuss service delivery on a borough wide basis.

5. PROPOSAL

- 5.1 It is therefore proposed to merge the two housing services forums into one single forum, covering the whole borough.
- 5.2 The new single forum will meet 6 times each year, i.e. bi monthly and for the time being, all meetings will be held in a central Croydon venue. The meetings will continue to take place in the evening.
- 5.3 Each meeting will run for approximately 2 hours with a pre meeting surgery lasting one hour which will be attended by staff from all key housing management service areas: Tenancy and neighbourhood services, responsive repairs, planned maintenance / stock investment and leaseholder service charges. These will enable residents to speak face to face with officers about issues that relate to them or their property as opposed to an area of service.
- 5.4 The constitution (appendix A) has been revised to reflect the key changes relating to the geographic area covered by the housing services forum and the revised number of meetings each year. However, the meetings will otherwise operate in very much the same way as the previous two area based forums.
- 5.5. The meetings will continue to be chaired by a resident, selected annually from the membership. The chair and vice chair will meet with officers to agree the agenda and arrangements for forthcoming forum meetings. The agenda will vary for each meeting but the agenda will always focus on the delivery of housing management services. Members of the forum will be invited to suggest agenda items.
- 5.6 To align the housing services forum to the other borough wide panels, the constitution now provides that 5 local councilors be nominated (3 from the majority and 2 from the minority group) to act as non voting members. Their key role will be to feed back residents' concerns to their groups and provide advice to aid discussions of the forum.
- 5.7 Minor amendments were also made relating to the representation of the forum to other bodies. Previously, resident members were elected to the tenant and leaseholder panel (TLP) from each forum. The TLP is now open to anyone who is eligible and can demonstrate they have the capacity to participate, so selection of representatives in this way is no longer valid.

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