

## TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 3rd February 2016 at 6:30pm in The Council Chamber, The Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

**Present:** Michael Hewlett (Chair), Marilyn Smithies (Vice-Chair), Syed Ahmed, Yaw Boateng, James Cassidy, Peter Cooper, Bernard Daws, Sheila Howard, Peter Mason, Guy Pile-Grey, John Piper, Stephen Pollard, Sharon Swaby, Kim Wakely, Colin Wood

**Councillors:** Lynne Hale, Maddie Henson, Oliver Lewis, Joy Prince and Manju Shahul-Hameed and Alison Butler, Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Cabinet Member for Homes & Regeneration

**Observers:** Sian Foley (Head of Service Development), Judy Pevan (Service Manager, Stock Investment), Paul Ratcliffe (Head of Community & Street Safety), Bob Richardson (Head of Planned Maintenance and Improvements), Keith Robbins Business Partner, Finance & Assets), Chris Stock (Resident Involvement & Scrutiny Manager), Stephen Tate (Director of District Centres & Regeneration), Elaine Wadsworth (Head of Housing Strategy & Commissioning), plus the Neighbourhood Safety Management Team: Patrick Manet (SW Croydon), John Sampson (SE Croydon), Daniel Guildford (Central Croydon), Dermot Linehan (NE Croydon), Chris McAvoy (Enforcement team), Stanley Enyinnaya (NW Croydon) and Ken Constantine (Community Engagement); Miss Jill Arboine (Resident), Ms A Savage (Longheath Gardens) and David Gardener (Resident)

**Absent:** Councillors Dudley Mead and Michael Neal; Aishnine Benjamin, Marion Burchell, James Cassidy, Sylvia Fletcher, James Fraser, Jim Mansell, Edita Meier, Julian Paine, David Palmer, Paul Phillips, Maureen Symes, Jamil Tarik and Laurence Taylor

**Apologies:** Aishnine Benjamin, Jamil Tarik, Julian Paine, Maureen Symes and Laurence Taylor; Emily Colinsbeare and Mark Meehan (Head of Housing Need)

### **A1/16 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest at this meeting.

### **A2/16 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair, Michael Hewlett, welcomed all to the meeting.

### **A3/16 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 13TH OCTOBER 2015**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 13 October 2015 were agreed as a true record of the proceedings.

## HRA RENT, SERVICE CHARGE, GARAGE RENT & BUDGET SETTINGS FOR 2016/17

Keith Robbins (Finance Lead) introduced the report and apologised for the lateness of its distribution. A number of changes had to be made and it was only finalised on the morning of this meeting.

- First major change from previous years - setting for rents based on Government guidance but this year there is no discretion as rents are being set by statute and are to be reduced by 1% each year for the next 4 years
- Croydon needs bigger reductions in expenditure to match the reduced rents
- Service charges to remain unaltered
- Garage rents will increase by 2%
- Car parking spaces to be £7pw for tenants and £10pw for non-tenants
- Disposal of high value homes - government proposes to extend the right to buy to housing association tenants, with funding to come from selling high value council houses
- Pay to stay - government proposal for market rent to be paid by tenants with a household income in excess of £40,000
- The 1% rent reduction will result in shortfall of circa £13million over the next 3 years
- Planned maintenance & improvements expenditure reduction from £30m+ to £27m

The following concerns were raised:

- Impracticality of cutting rents whilst still providing adequate maintenance with an increased minimum wage
- How secure is Croydon's safeguarding of IT information and databases?
- Lack of repairs to garages
- Distribution of caretaking costs - salaries paid to caretakers
- Housing benefits eligibility of service charges
- Harmonisation of rents between Council tenants and housing associations
- Disabled people's parking permits - cessation of discount

Responses:

Through London Councils there has been strong lobbying on the issue of reduced rents. The long term impact is a massive loss of income. IT security is a very important issue and the Council continues to look at systems to ensure the best is in place.

Please report any outstanding garage repairs to the Council and we will look into it.

Caretaking expenditure is the total cost for the whole service, not just the caretakers' salaries.

Service charges - depends on circumstances and how housing benefit is assessed. The government ended harmonisation of rents between tenants and housing associations and we had not achieved it by that time.

We will look into disabled parking permits and come back to you.

Keith Robbins was retiring, so the chair and panel members gave him a round of applause for his work over the years.

**A5/16**

## **UPDATE ON EYES & EARS PROJECT**

Paul Ratcliffe (Neighbourhood Operations Manager) summarised the report:

- Implementation going well at this stage of the service
- Officers are now more visible on estates
- Uniform provides easy identification of officers
- Feedback report from officers - will be circulated with the minutes (see attached)
- The team is working with the youth outreach service and community engagement
- New channels of information sharing are being developed to provide evidence of outcomes
- A more detailed reporting mechanism is being developed, tied in to neighbourhood enforcement officers
- A bespoke service database - corporate standard system for Croydon - will give real time data and responses to jobs - to be rolled out late Feb/early March
- The team is working on youth congregation, cannabis smoking, engaging with local business owners, attending schools and ASB in various locations. There is a lot of multi-agency working, covering patrolling and monitoring. We are starting to engage more with community groups.
- In future, reports will be sent out with agendas.

### **The management team was introduced:**

- Patrick Manet - SW of borough - Sanderstead, Purley, Kenley, Coulsdon East, Coulsdon West
- John Sampson - SE - Shirley, Heathfield, Selsdon & Ballards, New Addington & Fieldway
- Daniel Guildford - Central - Addiscombe, Broad Green, town centre, Fairfield, Croham, Waddon
- Dermot Linehan - NE - Upper Norwood, South Norwood, Woodside & Asbhurton
- Chris McAvoy - enforcement team
- Stanley Enyinnaya – NW - Norbury, Thornton Heath, Bensham Manor, Selhurst, West Thornton
- Ken Constantine - Community Engagement

### **The following comments were made:**

- At the New Addington Neighbourhood Policing Panel meeting, Ken Burgess, representing traders in Central Parade, said how much better Central Parade is now - a lot of work is being done with young people and ASB has been reduced.
- Drug and drinking problems are increasing as warden visits around estates are not so regular. Youths are hanging around, smoking dope, drinking and smoking.

- In South End 2 or 3 safety officers visit regularly but they were looking out for spitting and dropping of cigarette ends.
- Spitting spreads disease

Responses:

Paul Ratcliffe: At court last week, offences occurring across tenures were dealt with. Fines were high for spitting, as magistrates took the view that it is not just anti-social but also a health issue. The Council accepts that 100% provision will no longer be provided but we disagree that 31% coverage over last 3 months is not good enough. There have been good outcomes on estates. There are things going on that you may not see. We are working in Monks Hill to reduce fly tipping and ASB.

We cannot provide the same service but have much better co-ordination between other services - police etc. At the next meeting perhaps we can get feedback from the Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panels. There needs to be a meeting between all the services so they can work together to deliver a whole service.

An issue of mopeds being ridden across Shrublands estate was raised and it was pointed out that this should be reported to the local police team.

Cllr Shahul-Hameed: I go on estate inspections every month. Most of the response has been quite positive. People are pleased with the amount of work officers are doing. There might be specific issues. On Heathfield there were issues with clearing of rubbish but that has been dealt with. Please thank all the officers for their work.

Cllr Oliver Lewis: Young people riding mopeds is a big issue. Perhaps there is a role for the neighbourhood safety teams to engage more with these young people - working with residents on estate walkabouts.

Paul Ratcliffe: We are trying to co-ordinate with other agencies and other parts of our own services. Co-patrolling is not a problem. There is a role for tenancy officers as well and also the youth outreach team. We are spreading the workload.

## **A6/16 VILLAGE WASTE COLLECTION - UPDATE**

Barry Lambton was unable to attend due to illness so this item was deferred to the next meeting.

## **A7/16 RE-PROCUREMENT OF PLANNED MAINTENANCE**

Bob Richardson (Head of homes and schools improvements) gave a verbal update:

- General building contract - Mulalley awarded the contract - high quality bid at cost which will save the Council at least £2m pa
- Session held with resident group covering outcome of bids - thanked for time and energy put into this work

- Mobilisation of contract started just after Christmas
- Number of residents involved already
- Some additional residents selected - carried out choices - colour range of bathrooms and kitchens - identified 6 pilot properties to have new kitchens and bathrooms fitted - standard quality and process test
- Price Kitchens - near Fiveways - make kitchens - local company - generating additional jobs for Croydon people
- Other contracts - Lift contract - advanced stage but reviewing outcome of tenders - need to update resident group in terms of recommendations - not yet concluded - thank residents who worked on that
- Electrical contract - looking to publish this shortly but formed steering group of residents to work on that procurement - first meeting on 18 February
- Window replacement contract - will follow procurement for electrical

The following issues were raised:

- What happened about the mechanical contract?

Bob Richardson: The Council made the decision to continue with the existing contract, as there was a 5 year extension clause. A benchmarking exercise showed it has the highest resident satisfaction of all contracts and at a very low cost. We felt it was not worth the cost of re-tendering in a time of austerity. At no extra cost we got the contractor to offer a lot of social value by extending their contract. They are developing some community engagement and also career paths. We welcome any suggestions from community and voluntary groups who think they might benefit from any of the contractors. We want to identify areas or groups leading to better outcomes for young people, disadvantaged groups etc, so please let me know.

- Kitchen, bathroom and window renewals - can they be extended to leaseholders at a cost?

Bob Richardson: We already do that for windows, as they are part of the fabric of the building so we look to do all windows. However, if a leaseholder wants to do their own, they can do that. Kitchens and bathrooms - the new tender touched on that. We requested some 'in principle' ideas to extend to leaseholders. All the contractors struggled with it because of issues around who would own the contract and how would payment be made? However, we have enough of an offer to develop.

**A8/16**

## **REVISED RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT FRAMEWORK**

Chris Stock (Resident Involvement Manager) explained the report:

- Plain English explanation of 1% reduction - a request to feedback by Friday was made, so it could go out with the rent letters

- Resident Involvement Framework - always looking to review the way we engage with residents
- Impact assessment is done annually
- Performance monitoring and Resident Involvement groups not working as well as they could
- Looking at service improvement developments
- Groups to meet quarterly
- Repairs Group - Lorraine Smout
- Resident Involvement Group - Chris Stock
- There will be one for each of the service areas - looking at performance data, cost of services, satisfaction and benchmarking with other providers, and areas where things are not going as well as hoped
- Proposal to set up a number of Service Improvement groups (12 on each group):
  - Income & Welfare - invitation to join will go out later this month
  - Repairs (already exists)
  - Letting Service
  - Planned maintenance & improvements
  - Tenancy & Neighbourhood Services
  - Leaseholders
  - Your Rent Your Say Group (Scrutiny group)

**A9/16**

## **OPEN HOUSE NEWSLETTER – FUTURE OPTIONS**

Chris Stock mentioned that Open House has been going since 1988. It is a regular newsletter to keep tenants and leaseholders up to date with things happening in the housing area - community activities, changes to services etc.

- Times are changing with the need to cut costs - printing and delivery expensive - 50p to post each one
- Many people now prefer to receive electronic copies
- Research has been carried out and the majority of residents find it of use
- Open House will continue to be produced
- Next issue out shortly
- After that, residents will get a choice - to have it emailed or to opt in to have it posted
- We hope the majority will opt to receive the online edition and this could save up to £50k pa
- We will ask people to contact us with their email addresses as we do not have all of them
- Hard copies will still be printed and some left in communal areas for people to pick up

Marilyn Smithies commented that the Council website is not user friendly. It is very difficult to find what you are looking for. Chris Stock assured the meeting that the housing pages should be up to date but that he will speak with colleagues to see how it can be improved.

Cllr Alison Butler suggested that it would be constructive for the Comms Team to come to the next meeting to have the difficulties local residents have with the website explained to them. She continued that it will be more cost effective and environmentally friendly to email the newsletter and that the Council is reaching out to people who are digitally excluded.

## **A10/16 HOUSING INFORMATION BUS – FUTURE USE**

Chris Stock gave an update about the Housing Information Bus:

- Pilot not gone as well as hoped
- Bad luck with the weather
- Photos (included with minutes)
- There was a lot of publicity - posters, flyers etc
- The purpose was to help people with any housing issues
- The bus had chairs, a computer, printer, wi-fi and a kitchen area
- There was also the opportunity to have private conversations
- There was a problem of branding - the bus was originally for health services - tried to disguise
- Visited New Addington, Waddon, Shrublands (where it rained), Thornton Heath (best turn out)
- Those who came were very positive - liked face-to-face information
- Now re-branded - 'Wellbeing Information and Advice in Croydon'
- Contract extended until September
- Housing negotiating - option to pay-as-you-go - £331 for each use (comes with driver)
- Asked to make use 9 times - £3,000
- Feedback requested

The following comments were made:

- It was decided at Resident Involvement Group that, if there is not a good reason to use the bus, it should only be hired when needed.
- Would be good idea to revisit Shrublands in July - could be profitable if better weather.
- In Thornton Heath, the siting is critical so does it not cause congestion.

The meeting decided that a deal should be negotiated on an 'as you want it' basis, not committed to 9 uses.

## **A11/16 SCRUTINY UPDATE**

Yaw Boateng explained that the group is still working on the issue of communications with residents. Resuming meeting tomorrow to continue. the website will be part of Scrutiny, working with the central communications team.

**London Tenants' Federation - Michael Hewlett**

- Crisis in housing in London
- Number of groups and universities getting money to research it
- LTF being approached to give advice - a grant will be available to do more research on behalf of residents in London

**ARCH - Michael Hewlett**

- Monthly bulletin now - will pass by email (hard copies available)
- In co-operation with National Federation of ALMOs, made presentation to House of Lords - Housing Bill still going through
- Questioned a lot of articles - next bulletin will have update

**CVSA - Guy Pile-Grey**

- 2 subjects over last year
  - Opportunity & Fairness Commission - challenges facing Croydon - life expectancy, inequality, education and diversity - issues around homelessness - eviction by private landlords. Consulting with voluntary sector
  - European Social Fund - Croydon won substantial amount of money specifically for priorities already set - ethnic diversity
  - Steve Phaure bringing lot of voluntary groups together
  - CVSA Meeting this morning - information at next meeting

**Croydon Congress – Marilyn Smithies**

- The 'say something if you see something' campaign is jointly run by Croydon Council, the Metropolitan Police and the London Safeguarding Children Board
- At the 26 Nov 2015 meeting, delegates were asked the important questions:
  - 'Can you see it, can you help stop it?'
- A film featuring local young people talking about their own experiences of sexual exploitation was shown, emphasising the devastating impact that this has on people's lives
- Following the last report on 13 October 2015, several people and Councillors stressed the importance of informing people in Croydon about CSE, so this report was promised for this meeting
- Unfortunately, the same question arises, as with the Congress meeting on 11 June 2015, highlighting the changing attitudes to domestic abuse and sexual violence and how the public, business, community, faith and voluntary sectors have a key role to play in shaping the borough's future safety - both meetings have highlighted areas of major concern, with keynote speakers and heartbreaking films, but what is the purpose of these meetings other than to shock, if Croydon Congress is not updating the attendees of any progress?

- Are these meetings merely 'tick box' exercises?

Cllr Butler: Aware reports back to Cabinet - reports should be forwarded

Marilyn Smithies: Cannot report what has happened since June 2015.

Stephen Tate: Serious subject - need to report back.

Peter Cooper: How much are the police involved.

### **All Ages Inter-generational Update - Sian Foley**

- Family safety challenge - fourth event - 30 groups - quizzes - final Fri 19 Feb at Fairfield Hall - covering fire safety

**A13/16**

### **FOR INFORMATION ONLY: RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY REPORT**

This report was for information only. There were no questions.

It was mentioned that 14 agenda items were too many and there was not enough time for residents to express themselves. Item 7 will go on the next agenda - a lot of questions need to be answered.

A request was made to Invite Safer Neighbourhood Teams to come to the next meeting to raise issues about ASB.

Chris Stock explained that these issues will be covered at the Service Improvement Groups as there is not enough time to cover them at TLP meetings.

A suggestion was made that questions could be posed in advance of a meeting, so that responses could be given at the meeting.

**A14/16**

### **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Future meetings are all in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Croydon at 6.30pm:

- Tuesday 26 April 2016
- Tuesday 5 July 2016
- Tuesday 4 October 2016
- Wednesday 18 January 2017
- Tuesday 4 April 2017

The meeting ended at 8:40pm