

Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

Meeting of the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel held on Tuesday, 16 October 2018 at 6.35 pm in Council Chamber - Town Hall

MINUTES

Present: Marilyn Smithies (Chair);
Jill Arboine, Binta Barry, Ishia Beckford, Yaw Boateng, Peter Cooper, James Gitau, Petra Johnson, Desmond Ojumu, David Palmer, Guy Pile-Grey, John Piper, Sharon Swaby, Jamil Tarik and Kim Wakely

Councillors Alison Butler, Pat Clouder, Clive Fraser, Patricia Hay-Justice and Lynne Hale.

Also Present: Director of District Centres & Regeneration, Head of Tenancy and Neighbourhood Services, Head of Assets and Involvement, Head of Capital Delivery for Homes and Schools, Resident Involvement Manager and Asset Manager.

Apologies: Teresa Cox, James Fraser, Oriel Weekes, Colin Wood and The Head of Service Development.

PART A

26/18 **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked members to introduce themselves before asking their question.

27/18 **Disclosure of Interest**

There were no disclosures at this meeting.

28/18 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2018 were agreed as an accurate record subject to the following changes being made:

- Item 18 - The bullet point which described the 'My Croydon App' was removed.
- Item 18 - The wording found in the last paragraph of page 7 was amended to *'repairs could only be reported via 'My Account' if residents were registered and signed in to an account. Although it was said other boroughs could report repairs without an account, Croydon Council could not because of its data protection agreements.'*

29/18 **Welcome to relaunched panel**

The Resident Involvement Manager welcomed the newly formed Tenant and Leaseholder Panel (TLP) and its members and each panel member introduced themselves.

30/18 **HRA Business Plan**

The Asset Manager explained to the panel that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan was created and updated annually to ensure the HRA continued to be financially viable. This included incorporating legislative reform such as the Welfare Reform's introduction of Universal Credit which impacted the council's rent collection rates.

Members were informed of other changes which affected the HR such as the annual right to buy sales and balancing the budget for the HRA in line with the borough's borrowing cap.

The final business plan was going to be submitted to Cabinet in January 2019 and the TLP would be updated of its outcome at the next meeting.

Members of the panel **NOTED** this verbal update.

31/18 **Fire Safety Update**

The Head of Capital Delivery for Homes and Schools and The Head of Assets and Involvement reported that:

- Live testing of residential blocks had been commissioned and was scheduled to take place on 1 November 2018
- Return visits to homes would be arranged to ensure alarm systems were operating properly, any fault in the alarm system would be detected and relayed to a designated alarm centre.
- Thames water were notified to provide additional water tanks for residential properties.
- Safety measures were completed in schools and were being carried out in homes.
- New tenants were being briefed on fire safety and evacuation plans in their homes
- A new resident safety panel is being established in response to the Grenfell tragedy and the Hackitt review.

Officers were asked about the robustness of procurement for fire safety and contractor performance. It was said that the council identified areas that needed to be worked on in schools to implement fire safety measures including dynamic spaces and corridors. Engineers were being contracted to carry out drill work to ensure the installation of fire safety systems was secure. Members were also informed that the work of Axis, a service contracted to carry out responsive repairs was regularly being reviewed as well.

Members of the panel **NOTED** the update.

32/18 **Asset Management Update**

The Asset Manager updated the panel on the following:

- The council was allocating £26.7 million pounds of capital expenditure annually to maintain the housing stock. £1.1 million pounds will be used for annual servicing, such as gas servicing, legionella testing and lift servicing.

Spending for housing investment and maintenance services would be done through six main contractors (excluding responsive repairs as it is classified under a different service).

The asset management strategy is being developed in order to define the priorities for each year's capital expenditure.

As part of the asset strategy development, officers met with residents so that tenants could provide their views on the priorities for expenditure.

The key themes discussed were:

- Residents' views
- Lifecycles of building components
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System

The Asset Manager explained that Croydon are looking to standardise building components across contracts to increase the efficiency of repairs and reduce costs. There was a good level of energy performance for homes within the borough. The number of social homes which could be increased through extension and intensification were being assessed.

Officers aimed to present the Asset Management Strategy for approval at the next Cabinet meeting in January 2019 and another update would be provided at the next TLP meeting.

Members of the panel **NOTED** the update.

33/18 **The Social Housing Green Paper**

The Head of Assets and Involvement gave an overview of the Social Housing Green Paper and explained to the panel that the aim of this document was to

provide a simplified summary of the paper to assist TLP members in providing feedback on the policies and regulations that were being proposed for social housing. The five principles that underpinned the green paper were highlighted to the panel and listed in section 4.3 of the report.

Members of the panel were informed about some of the proposals in the green paper which included removing the requirement for the sale of high value stock by local authorities and allowing flexibility for the council's use of right to buy receipts amongst others.

Officers stated that right to buy receipts were valid for three years and would return to the treasury if they were not spent by the council. Thirty percent of the receipt's value was available for the council to use and this must be match funded. The remainder goes to the Treasury. A proposal to extend it to five years would benefit how money is allocated and used in the borough. However, the council has asked for even more flexibility in its consultation response.

Residents could submit responses to The Green Paper via online surveys, email or post as stated in the report.

A member of the panel asked what strategy the council would be using for social housing and what proportion of the new 1000 homes planned for 2023 would be affordable. The council established its own development company Brick by Brick in response for the need for housing. It was said that 50 percent of the housing developed by Brick by Brick would be affordable. The profits that the Council received from its shares in Brick by Brick could also be used to invest in local services in the borough.

Members of the panel **NOTED** this report.

34/18 **Tenancy & Caretaking Restructure**

The Head of Tenancy and Neighbourhood Services referred to the Tenancy and Caretaking structure chart to highlight that the new structure would help bring housing services together.

Members of the panel heard that the restructure was agreed based on feedback from residents spanning over a number of years and was operating well and its impact on services would be reviewed over time.

Queries such as vehicles being left idle in residential areas were addressed and the appropriate officers would be contacted to resolve this.

A member of the panel stated that the new restructure did not seem to work properly in areas such as Shrublands because residents did not know who to contact regarding bins and fly-tipping. Officers responded stating that tenancy and caretaking services were not necessarily responsible for these issues. Officers would raise this with Veolia and discuss how the time period for responses could be improved.

Members also heard that the 'My Croydon App' had been replaced by an improved 'Don't Mess with Croydon' app which was available to download.

Members of the panel **NOTED** this report.

35/18 **Resident Involvement Refresh Update**

The Resident Involvement Manager informed the panel on the following:

- 21 people had been registered as members after the TLP was revised at the meeting in July 2018.
- During a summer roadshow, 43 residents expressed an interest in getting involved in various ways.
- Information and training sessions could be arranged for residents who wished to learn more about topics surrounding social housing.
- The way TLP meetings had been held in the past could be changed to suit members and make meetings more effective, such as using roundtables to encourage more dialogue, rotating the chair or holding meetings within local neighbourhoods.
- An action plan would be produced for the TLP so queries could be logged and tracked.

It was said that some members wanted less meetings to be held for service improvement groups because they believed visiting and engaging with residents' in their homes was more successful for obtaining useful feedback.

A question was raised in regards to the website and how it may not be always kept updated. Officers stated that they could liaise with the corporate team within the council to improve it and make it more accessible for residents.

Members of the panel **NOTED** this update.

36/18 **Resident Involvement Activity Report**

This report was attached for information only.

37/18 **Scrutiny Update**

Yaw Boateng informed the panel that the Tenant Scrutiny Panel was currently working through council complaint procedures which were almost complete.

The process was being benchmarked against other boroughs such as Southwark and Bromley.

Members of the panel **NOTED** this update.

38/18

Feedback

a) London Tenants' Federation - Jamil Tarik

The panel was informed that the London Tenants' Federation supports residents by responding to housing policies on behalf of tenants.

b) ARCH - Yaw Boateng

Members were encouraged to communicate and be proactive when working with the Council to improve social housing. It was said that the Council did support tenants but residents needed to express their thoughts and ideas on the Social Housing Green Paper for there to be progressive change.

A slide presentation from Benefit to Society was circulated to members of the panel after the meeting.

c) Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance (CVSA) - Guy Pile-Grey

Nothing to report.

d) All Ages Inter-generational update and Youth Provision and Communities Fund - Sian Foley

The panel was informed that they would receive an update regarding the end of year reports at the next TLP meeting on 8 January 2019.

Flyers for 'Play Place's Our Space' youth activities were provided for the panel and the Residents Youth Services Panel (RYSP) were beginning a recruitment drive to increase resident representation across the Council's housing services.

Invitation flyers were being prepared to give members at the next TLP meeting to promote this.

Members of the panel **NOTED** this feedback.

39/18

Any Other Business

Members of the panel asked questions about whether or not estate inspections had stopped and how to report housing queries if people could not use My Account. A query was also raised in regards to the garage located next to Shrublands ball court. Officers stated that these issues would be recorded in the action plan and investigated.

It was also stated by a panel member that there should be conditions placed on tenants by the council to maintain their gardens. It was said that properties

were inspected on a monthly basis and that the council were looking at contractors to carry out inspections in other areas.

40/18 **Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 12 February 2019 at 6:30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX.

The meeting ended at 8.58 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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