

Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

Meeting held on Tuesday, 19 July 2022 at 6.30 pm. This meeting was held remotely. To view the meeting, please click [here](#).

MINUTES

Present: Yaw Boateng (Chair);

Councillors Adele Benson, Lara Fish, Clive Fraser, Lynne Hale and Ellily Ponnuthurai

Also

Present: Verna Francis (Senior Resident Involvement Officer), Katherine Monk (Resident Involvement Manager), Danielle Emery (Waste and Recycling Manager), Orlagh Guarnori (Acting Head of Finance), Justin Hunt (Interim Head of Tenancy & Resident Engagement), Susmita Sen (Corporate Director of Housing), Stephen Tate (Director of Housing - Estates & Improvement), Tariq Aniemeka-Bailey (Trainee Democratic Services Officer), Martin Wheatley, Monica Binns, David Palmer, Jill Arboine, Les Parry, Stephen Pollard, Marilyn Smithies, Kim Wakely, Sharon Swaby, Jamil Tarik, Ishia Beckford, Dave Mundy, Guy Pile-Grey.

PART A

1/22 **Welcome and Introductions**

The Panel Members, Councillors and officers in attendance introduced themselves.

2/22 **Disclosure of Interest**

There were no disclosures at this meeting.

3/22 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

The Chair informed the Panel that he would sign the minutes once the recent social distancing measures had been relaxed enough to allow him to do so.

Introduction by the New Cabinet Member for Homes

The Cabinet Member for Homes introduced herself to the Panel and detailed her role.

The Cabinet Member for Homes acknowledged that the housing department in Croydon was not in a good place and that housing would be a challenge for some time to come. The Cabinet Member for Homes stated that the pace of the work carried out at Regina Road had been too slow and decisions would need to be made around the future of those blocks and similar blocks across the borough.

The Cabinet Member for Homes then explained that both her and the Executive Mayor were deeply concerned with the previous administrations housing improvement plan and that a new plan would be drafted. The Cabinet Member for Homes informed the Panel that she was keen to see improvements take place as quickly as possible such as the grass cutting, deep cleaning and tidying across housing estates.

The Cabinet Member for Homes then explained that the Council would undertake a procurement process for the repairs contract which involved managing the exit of Axis until the new contract was in place.

The Cabinet Member for Homes stated that the administration wanted to start building council homes again; agree a new housing repairs contract which delivered a responsive service which proved value for money and met the needs of residents; better property management to reduce the amount of time that homes were left vacant; to produce a new homelessness strategy and to reintroduce estate walkabouts.

The Cabinet Member for Homes went on to note that the complaints process needed to be modified to make it easier to navigate and that the Housing Improvement Plan needed to be strengthened to build a more open and respectful relationship with residents, better oversight, and governance by Members.

The Cabinet Member for Homes stated that the Council was committed to collaborating with tenants and leaseholders to produce a resident's charter based on the charter previously written by the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel that would ensure that residents were at the heart of the decisions taken about the services that they receive.

The Cabinet Member for Homes informed the Panel that the Council had made a permanent appointment to the Corporate Director of Housing post and that there had been a deep dive into the repairs contract re-procurement.

The Cabinet Member for Homes stated that the administration had spoken to the Housing Improvement Board about the Housing Improvement Plan, and they would act as a 'critical friend' whilst the new plan was being drafted.

The Cabinet Member for Homes concluded by informing the Panel that officers would be expected to work more closely together to improve communication amongst different departments.

In response to a question from a Councillor, the Cabinet Member for Homes explained that the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee would have to determine whether they would like to establish a Scrutiny Sub Committee which focused on housing. The Cabinet Member for Homes stated that she would be in support of the creation of a new Scrutiny Sub Committee focused on housing however she expressed concerns about whether the Council had the financial resources to support another Scrutiny Sub Committee.

In response to a question from a resident, the Cabinet Member for Homes

The Senior Resident Involvement Officer conducted the election of the new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel. The Panel resolved to appoint Yaw Boateng as the Chair and Les Parry as the Vice-Chair of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.

5/22

Introduction by the New Corporate Director of Housing; Voids - Update on Action Plan to Address Voids Issues; Update on Plan to Determine the Future of Regina Road & HRA - Update on 30 - Year Plan

The Corporate Director of Housing conducted a presentation to the panel which provided

The slides of the presentation can be found via the following link:

<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=191&MIId=3177&Ver=4>

In response to a question from a Councillor the Corporate Director of Housing explained that officers had been tasked with working through the Councils database to check the records on void properties and welcomed any feedback from residents about any voids they had seen in the borough. The Corporate Director of Housing invited the Director of Housing, Estates and Improvement to speak, he stated that there were three parts to the improvement plan of the repairs service. The first part was resident engagement, which needed improvement for the Council to receive feedback from residents about the services being provided. The second part was the work with the contractor, a sustainment plan had been developed which ran through to the end of the contract with Axis. The third part was about mitigating issues, this involved having back up contractors in place for voids, disrepair, damp and mould as an alternative to the main contractor.

In response to a question from a resident the Corporate Director of Housing stated that the current day to day voids performance was 85 days and that the sheltered and long-standing voids performance was over 135 days. The

Corporate Director of Housing informed the Panel that the Council needed to turn around new void properties within 20 days before turning attention to the backlog.

In response to a question from a resident the Corporate Director of Housing stated that there had not been sufficient progress with the ARK Review and that while the Ark review detailed what happened, it did not clarify why it may have happened in detail. The Corporate Director of Housing informed the resident that she was happy to investigate the issue that the resident had experienced and invited them to make contact after the meeting. The Corporate Director of Housing concluded by stating that in future she wanted residents to be notified on the number of cuts per year and the standards for the waste service.

In response to a question from a resident the Corporate Director of Housing clarified that an action plan was on development and that she planned to bring an action plan to a future Tenant and Leaseholder meeting prior to the plan being presented to the Cabinet meeting in November.

In response to a question from a resident the Corporate Director of Housing stated that the Housing Revenue Account could be presented to the Panel and that there were two tranches, where the Council currently was and the rent increase next year. The Corporate Director of Housing acknowledged that residents were unhappy with the way that the rent increase was implemented and stated that the Council was committed to ensuring that they do better in future.

6/22

Update on Re-Procurement of the Repairs Service and Update on Capital Delivery Programme

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement to provide the Panel with an update on the re-procurement of the repairs service and the Capital Delivery Programme.

The Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement conducted a presentation to the Panel which detailed the story so far and the current service, the research that informed the direction, the Councils options, delivering the wider Council outcomes, costs and timeline.

This presentation can be found via the following link:

<https://civico.net/croydon/16363-Tenant-Leaseholder-Panel>

In response to a question from a Councillor the Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement explained to the Panel that when the Council undertook the stock conditions survey, they would assess all of their stock. Usually over a 5–7-year period the Council would survey all of their stock whilst prioritising particular areas that they would require more information such as external

buildings and areas which are in need of additional investment. The Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement stated that he would like to bring back the findings of the survey to a future Tenant and Leaseholder Panel meeting.

In response to a question from a resident the Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement explained to the Panel that the Councils investment plan considered parts of the borough which required minor works to be carried out as well as areas which require a lot more work and investment.

7/22 **Waste Management**

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Waste and Recycling Manager to provide the Panel with an update regarding waste management and fly tipping.

The Waste and Recycling Manager stated that she provided a verbal update rather than a written report because the situation with Veolia would change daily (sometimes weekly), so by the time a report was drafted the information would already be out of date.

The Waste and Recycling Manager informed the Panel that Veolia had a national HGV driver shortage and to combat this, Veolia had trained some of their loaders to become HGV drivers; however, there was still a struggle to get enough loaders and drivers which had left the Council struggling to keep up the schedule.

The Waste and Recycling Manager explained to the Panel that the work was still being completed by the end of each week as officers were working overtime and that there had only been one week in which they had not been able to complete all their rounds.

The Waste and Recycling Manager stated that when some of the problems had intensified the Council had attempted to collect some of the recycling when it built up, and they had asked the refuse crew to clear the rubbish.

The Waste and Recycling Manager explained that the bin stores on the blocks of flats had to be cleared as they could become a fire hazard and the waste management team have had to collect the recycling along with the refuse waste in order to clear the bin stores.

The Waste and Recycling Manager informed the Panel that the waste management situation was in a similar position to earlier this year and the Council were awaiting Veolia's response on what their plans were.

The Waste and Recycling Manager stated that the Council had issued Veolia with a service improvement notice concerning several areas in which they were failing in their contractual obligations. The Executive Mayor had asked Veolia to provide a more comprehensive response as he was unhappy with their

initial response and action plan following being issued with the service improvement notice.

In response to a question from a Councillor, the Waste and Recycling Manager explained that Croydon required 47 rounds to go out daily, Veolia were providing the same number of HGV drivers as they were in other locations and there were not enough drivers to meet the demands in Croydon. The Waste and Recycling Manager informed the Panel that if Veolia were to raise the salary for their drivers, then part of the additional costs would be passed on to the Council.

In response to a question from a resident, the Waste and Recycling Manager explained to the Panel that the household waste and recycling centres were fully open and functioning however the Council has had to limit vans going to the site as there were several external people depositing waste. The Waste and Recycling Manager informed the Panel that the Council did not want to go to a booking system as they did not feel as though it would provide residents with the access that they required. The Waste and Recycling Manager stated that the Council were in the process of drafting a plan to deal fly tipping and as soon as the Executive Mayor had signed off on the plan, she would be happy to circulate the plan to the Panel.

In response to a question from a resident, the Waste and Recycling Manager stated that the current contract with Veolia was an 8-year contract which will finish in 2024.

In response to a question from a resident, the Waste and Recycling Manager explained to the Panel that Veolia had a policy of only doing ground floor collections due to health and safety concerns however operatives had not always followed their policy and had done waste collections from first floor properties. The Waste and Recycling Manager informed the Panel that when Veolia environmental managers discover this happening on site they make the necessary changes to prevent first floor collections from occurring. The Waste and Recycling Manager stated that this was an industry standard and was no different to other operating procedures in other companies. The Interim Head of Tenancy & Resident Engagement then went on to explain that the housing department had not responded swiftly enough to the challenge of the refuse collection at the site, and that once the Council had finished developing options, they would then provide a full consultation to residents.

In response to a question from a Councillor, the Waste and Recycling Manager explained to the Panel that all the Veolia staff are provided with training on the devices that they use. The Waste and Recycling Manager stated that the Council were aware that the Veolia staff were not returning the bins to where they originally were, and the Council was trying to work with Veolia to resolve this issue.

In response to a question from a Councillor, the Waste and Recycling Manager explained to the Panel that if bin collections were not made then the missed collections would need to be reported to the Council through a contact

form on the Council's website. This would enable the Council to track the vehicles to check whether the bin collections had been made. The Waste and Recycling Manager stated that the Council had asked Veolia to ensure that they are clearing the floor after the waste was collected and they were working closely with the caretaking team for them to report any issues with the collections.

In response to a question from a Councillor, the Waste and Recycling Manager informed the Panel that the current contract with Veolia was an 8 + 8 + 8 contract, with an option for an extension after 8 years rather than a break clause. The Waste and Recycling Manager explained that there was an options appraisal that had been prepared to go to Cabinet for Members to decide on the way forward.

8/22 Reports from Other Resident Representatives

The Chair introduced the item and invited Panel members to ask questions regarding the reports from other resident representatives.

The Chair explained to the Panel that ARCH (association of retained council housing) submitted a report on 'stop social housing stigma'.

9/22 Update on Housing Improvement Board

The Chair informed the Panel that a member of the Housing Improvement Board had stepped down and they would need a member to replace them on the board.

10/22 Elections for Chair & Vice Chair (facilitated by Verna Francis)

The Panel voted to appoint Les Parry as the Vice Chair of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.

11/22 Any Other Business

The Resident Involvement Manager informed the Panel that the Council was now a Member of TPAS and an email had been circulated to the Panel members on how to register an account. The Resident Involvement Manager told the Panel that the Council was also members of the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) and there was a conference in September that would cover issues such as the new regulatory framework, the new tenant satisfaction measures, complaints and building safety.

12/22 **Date of next meeting**

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on 11 October 2022 at 6:30pm, the venue would be confirmed closer to the meeting date.

The meeting ended at 9.10pm

Signed:

Date:

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