

Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

Meeting of held on Tuesday, 10 October 2017 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Marilyn Smithies (Chair);
Colin Wood (Vice-Chair);
Syed Ahmed, Jill Arboine, Yaw Boateng, Peter Cooper, Bernard Daws, James Frazer, Sheila Howard, Jim Mansell, David Palmer, John Piper, Sharon Swaby, Jamil Tarik, Laurence Taylor and Kim Wakely

Councillors Maddie Henson, Lynne Hale, Oliver Lewis and Wayne Trakas-Lawlor

Also Present: Mark Meehan (Director of Housing Need), Stephen Tate (Director of District Centres & Regeneration), Sian Foley (Head of Service Development), Yvonne Murray (Head of Tenancy and Neighbourhood Services), Kirsteen Row (Head of Partnerships and Engagement), Sylvie Saunders (Senior Involvement Support Officer), Chris Stock (Resident Involvement & Scrutiny Manager), Oriel Weekes (resident) and Margot Rohan (Committee Manager)

Apologies: Councillor Pat Clouder, Aishnine Benjamin, Sandie Fernando, Sheila Mitchell, Guy Pile-Grey

37/17 **Disclosure of Interest**

There were no disclosures at this meeting.

38/17 **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

39/17 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2017 were agreed as an accurate record. Proposed by John Piper and seconded by James Fraser.

40/17 **Fire safety update (including sprinkler installation programme)**

Kirsteen Roe, Head of Partnerships and Engagement, gave a verbal update and showed a video of the work being carried out:

- Sprinklers are being installed;
- They are activated by heat;
- Contractors are finding the most unobtrusive places to put the ducting, which is boxed in;

- The sprinkler heads are covered with a white disc. This cannot be painted. However, the boxing can be painted by the resident if desired;
- There is engagement with residents to ensure all questions about the installation are answered;
- Q&A sheet has been prepared and shared;
- Basic Q&A is on the website;
- More detailed questions will be in a booklet given to residents having works carried out;
- There has been press interest and interviews have taken place;
- There remains a zero tolerance policy regarding inappropriate storage of items which block exits and the majority of residents are taking this on board but there have been some complaints and threats against staff;
- Finding solutions for storage elsewhere;
- Leaflets have been put up in properties about what to do in a fire situation;
- Fire safety chart produced – easy to understand and pictorial – will be in all new tenant packs and is being displayed in communal areas of blocks.

Marilyn Smithies reported:

“On Monday 9th October myself and Colin Wood were invited by Croydon Council to visit 98-176 College Green in Upper Norwood as it is the first block to receive a sprinkler system. This block was chosen as Mulalley is already on site delivering other works.

The flat we visited was on the 9th floor.

I must say I was very impressed by the completed work. It was so well done that it was not obvious to the eye and blended in with the existing walls in the rooms and hallway (excluding the bathroom).

We were taken round the flat by Ralph Ede who is a Project Manager at Mulalley’s and who will be project managing the sprinkler programme going forward. Mr. Ede was very helpful and explained how the sprinkler system works and clarified the following questions I put to him:

1. If there are no Wardens on site, how are residents in sheltered blocks informed of the set hours and any other information regarding the work?

The contractors work from 8am-5pm and residents are informed personally by a Mulalley Resident Liaison Officer who will go to each flat with a leaflet containing all the necessary information and will let the resident know when the work will commence and what it will entail.

The work takes approximately three days and the resident does not have to move out during this time. The contractors will provide suitable protection to the property and move items of furniture carefully to accommodate the works.

2. Again, if there are no Wardens on site, how are residents in sheltered blocks cared for during the three-day's work e.g. oxygen if required, meals, medication, rest, etc.?

Residents who require medication, etc. will be cared for in the communal day room. If, however there is no such facility in the block, Mulalley will provide a facility on site until the work has been completed.

Colin Wood also reported that the work was "done to perfection". Nothing was obtrusive.

The following questions were raised:

- Why are only high rise blocks getting sprinklers? A block on Shrublands estate had a fire which erased the whole block, because someone left something on the stove. Could we have fire/smoke alarms in communal areas?

We will find out what the advice is.

- Where does the water go?

There is water damage potential but it is no different from the fire service spraying water.

- Could we have additional signage to deter people from leaving bulky items etc?

This can be done.

Councillor Oliver Lewis asked about the timeframe for installations and the reliability of sprinklers – whether they might leak...

Kirsteen Roe explained that works at College Green are due to start by 23 October. Communal area work will be done first and this will vary depending on where in the borough. The work is scheduled to finish in spring next year. The sprinklers are very reliable, tested and BS standard.

- Are you installing block by adjacent block?

We plan to do that. We want to try to move forward as quickly as possible, without inconveniencing residents.

- What are the covers made of – plastic or wood?

They are not plastic and are fully fire retardant.

- Are instructions being issued in different languages?

We are liaising on different sites to ensure this issue is covered.

- If the sprinklers are activated and cause damage, who pays?

This will be covered by insurance. We advise all residents to have contents insurance.

- At the Leaseholder meeting, the insurance contract coming up for renewal was discussed – could residents view responses so they could comment?

Information provided following the meeting:

All the tender returns have been received and the first stage evaluation has been done. 5 responses have been received, all of which are very competitive and do not reflect large increases that were indicated pre tender.

The process of evaluating further will now begin, then final discussions with the winning bidder.

Once this is done, stage 2 notification letters will be sent out, informing the Leaseholders of annual premiums and giving them the opportunity to view the 5 responses.

41/17 **Review of Tenant & Leaseholder Panel**

Chris Stock, Resident Involvement & Scrutiny Manager, summarised the report:

- The Tenant & Leaseholder Panel has been running for 20 years;
- Need to make the panel work better;
- A meeting took place in September with 10 people from the Panel and there was a lot of discussion;
- 20-30 residents' associations formed the original panel to discuss issues across the borough;
- Resident involvement want to engage in a wide range of activities – monitoring services, mystery shopping etc;
- The Panel should now be looking at the Council's Housing Policy Strategy;
- Concerns raised about a lot of meetings wasting time about service delivery issues, which are not the role of this panel;
- Residents' associations and Service Improvement Panels can raise these issues;
- Attendance has been dwindling and membership ageing;
- Before the meeting a survey was carried out to ask why people came to meetings and what people wanted to get from them;
- Some responses were about wanting to hold officers to account over service delivery – but that is not the role of this panel;
- Role of panel is to generate ideas to improve services;
- Phil Morgan led a session – leading expert in the UK on best practice:
 - Strongest message was accountability;
 - Answers to queries and action plans are wanted;
 - Concern about why some members attend but do not contribute;
 - Need to look at the whole resident engagement framework;
 - Panel should focus on more high level work, such as sprinklers – this what we are planning to do, what do you think?

- Need to do a number of things:
 - Short term – get Resident Involvement group to meet between now and December to look at how the panel operates;
 - Immediate actions to address some of the concerns raised at the meeting;
 - Issue report forms at all meetings for members to report issues (to save time in meetings) – these will then be followed up;
 - RI Activity report informs about all the other panels but more information about Service Improvement groups – Repairs, Tenancy, Income, etc – is wanted and this will be done in the future;
 - Minutes with Action Plan – listing action, lead officer and deadline;
 - Recruitment drive – to get young people along;
 - Look at membership criteria – and have a form like a job application;
 - Point people in other directions according to their interests;
 - Doing more things online.

- What timeframe would there be for action points?

This would depend on the type of action but it would be up to panel members to decide.

- How will Panel members be informed of any changes in policy, in advance of meetings?

The Chair and VC will be consulted during the year when we are considering changes in procedures. The Tenant & Leaseholder Panel (TLP) will have proposals for comment before they are implemented.

- There are 3 months between each TLP meeting – could there be a surgery for personal issues, prior to each meeting?
- When issues are raised then answers are needed but things get forgotten.
- Need right officers to answer personal issues –not always here for meeting.

We are trying to cover this with the Action Plan. Personal issues should not need to be raised at TLP meetings but be dealt with elsewhere. If an issue is raised but is not getting feedback, then it will be raised at TLP.

- If people are not maintaining their gardens according to their tenancy agreement, what does the Council do?

Service Improvement Groups are working, looking at specific areas. They only discuss that area.

42/17

Scrutiny update

Yaw Boateng, a member of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, reported on the latest work of the Scrutiny Panel:

- Review of responsive repairs – STAR survey identified quite a few issues
- Issues relating to aspects of the service
 - Website?
 - What do new tenants say?
 - How easy is it to report issues?
 - How are customers treated in the contact centre?
 - Looked at Southwark, Bromley and another
 - Looked at getting things right first time
 - Carried out a desktop review
 - Complaints data is only figures without narrative
 - Focus groups were held in BWH with tenants
 - The Scrutiny group visited the Axis contact centre
 - Interviews were held with Axis (repairs contractor) and Council staff – operators deal with calls from all over the borough
 - Information – had to extrapolate data to go behind it to get a full picture
 - Ideas will be put forward for doing things better
 - Report to be ready shortly – to present to senior management
 - Report will be brought to the next TLP meeting

43/17 RI activity update

The attached report was for information only.

44/17 Feedback

- a) **London Tenants' Federation** - Jamil Tarik
 - Almost impossible to move into London
 - Resolutions – all information to be sent out
- b) **ARCH** - Yaw Boateng
 - Busy over past few months
 - Last month Conference – workshops – representation from DWP
 - 3 Universal Credit workshops
 - Affecting a lot of people – Birmingham created specific manager who liaises with tenants, explains and advises
 - Birmingham changing attitude towards taking tenants to court – looking at other ways of dealing with issues
 - DWP presentation on how rollout happening for Universal Credit – by 2018/19
 - Waiting times being reduced from 3 months – too many people getting into debt whilst waiting
 - Social landlords meeting arranged – to capture views on issues tenants face – 1 November
 - Next meeting 6 November

Mark Meehan: Croydon is a Universal Credit borough – can share experiences with TLP.

- c) **Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance (CVSA)** - Guy Pile-Grey
 - Not in attendance
- d) **Croydon Congress** - Marilyn Smithies
 - No meeting since November 2016
- e) **All Ages Inter-generational update and Youth Provision and Communities Fund** - Colin Wood
 - Resident Youth Services Panel – 18 Sep – agreed everyone happy with amendments to the TOR (Terms of Reference)
 - Discussed Resident Panels' contribution to the new Youth panel
 - Youth group is along similar lines to the youth TLP
 - Different roles – Sian Foley and Emily Collinsbeare
 - Sian's and Emily's services collaborate closely
 - Sian – want to ensure young people have access to good quality activities
 - Emily – youth engagement across the borough – Youth Voice, targeting community sessions and specialist programmes
 - Young people's budget - £200k from tenants' rents
 - Council confirmed investment of £900k over 4 yrs
 - 12 targeted services
 - Next meeting in couple of months
 - Play areas and derelict buildings – young people might get involved in improving existing playgrounds or buildings – can we take this forward?

Marilyn Smithies: I get minutes from officers for community meetings so we can take up the issues.

Other points raised:

- There is a lack of funding or not enough people with ideas.

Sian Foley: We are working with Emily's team to get a panel of young people to identify where we can work with them to provide more activities for them.

- Shrublands – nothing is done for the local youth – they are full of ideas but have no funding. They are told to be more realistic as their list is too costly. There's a derelict garage which could be turned into a boxing ring.

Sian Foley: We need to work with you and Emily Collinsbeare.

45/17 **Any Other Business**

Celebrating Age Event at St George's Church Hall on 11 October 12:30-15:30 – 80 coming from all estates.

Christmas event for tenants – afternoon tea at Jury's Inn Wed 13 December – invites to be sent out. The Mayor will be attending.

46/17 **Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 17 January 2018 at 6:30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX.

The meeting ended at 8.17 pm

Signed:

Date:

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