

Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

Meeting of held on Tuesday, 10 October 2023 at 6.30 pm in Room 1.01 and 1.02 - Bernard Weatherill House, Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

MINUTES

Present: Yaw Boateng (Chair);
Leslie Parry (Vice-Chair);

Councillors Adele Benson (online), Clive Fraser, Alisa Flemming (online),
Brigitte Graham (online), Lara Fish (online).

Also Present: Jill Arboine, James Fraser, James Gitau, Dave Mundy, Grace Osoata (online),
David Palmer, Marilyn Smithies, Jamil Tarik, Kim Wakely, Theresa French.

Apologies: Susmita Sen

PART A

58/23 **Welcome and Introductions**

59/23 **Disclosure of Interest**

- Councillor Adele Benson asked for clarification of her position on the panel as she was a tenant within the borough and a Councillor. Leslie Parry clarified that the Councillor was present in the capacity of a Councillor and therefore had no speaking rights as a tenant member.
- There were no other disclosures at this meeting.

60/23 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

61/23 **Damp & Mould Update**

Jerry Austin presented the damp and mould update. In response to questions the Officer explained:

- Mould and Damp specialists visited properties within 6 days of a reported mould issue to treat the mould at first instance.

- Subsequent visits were arranged at the 3-month and 6-month mark to investigate reoccurrence; and should the mould reappear further investigation was undertaken.
- Where further investigation was required, the resident was kept informed by the specialist team.
- The objectives of the damp and mould team included isolating structural issues; checking condensation around properties; and ensuring that properties were sufficiently ventilated to prevent reoccurrence of mould.
- The mould treatment was expected to kill spores however other contributing issues were also addressed such as moisture levels to ensure that mould did not return at the same level. Where the mould had returned, additional analysis was completed rather than reapplying treatment.
- Guidance to residents was provided on how to minimise reoccurrence of damp and mould to during visits.
- The officer commented that the feedback from the Panel on establishing a 9-month or change of weather review of properties would be taken forward as an additional measure to ensure that spore levels were reduced to an acceptable level.

62/23 **Customer Repairs Call Centre**

Michael Nlewedim presented the customer repairs call centre update. In response to questions the Officer explained:

- Blue flags were incorporated within the new repair's platform. The flags were visible to all customer care advisors and contractors so that vulnerabilities in properties were noted on the job details.
- A complimentary text message should accompany each repair request to allow residents to track contractor progress on the day of repair. Some issues with the receipt of text alerts had been recorded and flagged with the digital team.
- Call waiting times were influenced by fluctuations in weekly call volumes.
- The department were conducting research to understand call patterns and identify pinch points so that resourcing could be increased to support availability and service levels.
- The call statistics were also impacted by under resourcing such as absences and holidays.
- Residents could email repair issues via "My Account" for the contact centre to raise repair jobs.
- The customer care team worked closely with the repairs team to allow information sharing on data and properties. This has improved the quality of information provided at the first point of contact with residents and reduced misdiagnoses of landlord and leaseholder responsibilities.

- Weekly knowledge sharing sessions were planned with the repairs and customer support teams to improve the knowledge, information, and data provided at the first point of contact.
- There were 23 members of contact centre staff; of which six were permanently employed and the remaining were temporary workers, mostly employed from an agency.
- All staffing costs were taken from the Housing Revenue Account however there were no agency costs i.e., a recruitment fee, for using the agency. The workers were paid hourly, and the agency took a portion from the hourly rate paid.
- Following the assessment of resources, priorities, and expectations, a better understanding of service demands had been established to inform recruitment decisions on what was required to create a core of permanent staff.
- Contractors could raise safeguarding issues with the Contact Centre.
- The digital team had been tasked with amending the appointment request form to increase the appointment waiting time from 48 hours to 72 hours (3 working days).

63/23 **Repairs Contact Centre Update**

The Vice-Chair asked the officers to circulate the update on the repairs service via email to the panel.

64/23 **Rent Increase (including Consultation)**

Orlagh Guarnori and Mary Larby gave the presentation on the rent increase. In response to questions, the officers explained:

- For the year 2024/25, there was a social rent policy in place therefore the rent increase would take effect.
- However, from April 2024 onwards, there was no social rent policy in place or any guidance as the government were yet to launch consultation on what the guidance on rent increases should be. Therefore, for the period 2025/26, no predictions could be offered on the possibility of further rent increases.

65/23 **Social Value**

Gurpal gave the presentation on social value. The panel expressed support for the programmes and initiatives undertaken. The panel also agreed that the

Sheltered Accommodation Garden Clear Ups (Cedar and Beech House (New Addington)) had been successful projects.

66/23 **Update on Housing Strategy**

Simon James presented the report on the housing strategy. In response to questions, the officer explained:

- A minority of up to 15% of individuals some of whom were likely to be involved in criminality and ASB were returning to the streets voluntarily whilst others were doing so because of issues such as mental health or drugs and alcohol abuse.
- The strategy would look at repurposing and modernising existing housing stock to increase the capacity of properties available to house homeless people and those in temporary accommodation.
- A Regeneration and New Homes Policy would be produced setting out the Council's plans for providing more affordable and social housing.
- There was ongoing assessment of the affordability of rents given that the term "affordable housing" raised concerns during the period of consultation.
- The panel were supportive of the report and the strategies in place.

67/23 **Report from resident representatives**

Yaw Boteng delivered his report on the ARCH conference and the Stop Social Housing Stigma (SSHS) committee meeting. The Chair announced that the SSHS would be launching a few pilot projects with further details becoming available by the next Tenants and Leaseholders' Panel.

Marilynn Smithies gave an update on the Resident Voice Meeting held on Thursday 31 August 2023. The Member advised on an opportunity to support the Commissioning Tender Evaluation and confirmed their attendance to a one-hour online session on Thursday 12th October on this matter.

68/23 **Any Other Business**

69/23 **Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 6 February 2024 at 6:30pm in Room 1.01, Bernard Weatherill House, 8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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