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Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

To: Yaw Boateng (Chair)
Leslie Parry (Vice-Chair)
Debra Pring, Theresa French, Ian Leonard, Jill Arboine, Ishia Beckford,
Monica Binns, James Fraser, James Gitau, Dave Mundy, Grace Osoata,
David Palmer, Guy Pile-Grey, Marilyn Smithies, Sharon Swaby, Jamil Tarik
and Kim Wakely
Councillors Adele Benson, Lara Fish, Alisa Flemming, Brigitte Graham,
Lynne Hale and Chrishni Reshekaron

A meeting of the **Tenant & Leaseholder Panel** will be held on **Tuesday, 9 January 2024** at **6.30 pm** in **Room 1.01 and 1.02 - Bernard Weatherill House, Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA**

Katherine Kerswell
Chief Executive
London Borough of Croydon
Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

Tariq Aniemeka-Bailey
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www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings
Friday, 29 December 2023

Please note that this meeting is being held remotely. You can view the webcast both live and after the meeting has completed at <http://webcasting.croydon.gov.uk>

The agenda papers for all Council meetings are available on the Council website www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings

If you require any assistance, please contact Tariq Aniemeka-Bailey as detailed above.

AGENDA

- 1. Welcome and Introductions**
- 2. Apologies for absence**
To receive any apologies for absence from any members of the Committee
- 3. Disclosure of Interest**
Members will be asked to confirm that their Disclosure of Interest Forms are accurate and up-to-date. Any other disclosures that Members may wish to make during the meeting should be made orally. Members are reminded that unless their disclosable pecuniary interest is registered on the register of interests or is the subject of a pending notification to the Monitoring Officer, they are required to disclose relevant disclosable pecuniary interests at the meeting
- 4. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 3 - 8)**
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 October 2023 as an accurate record.
- 5. Rent Consultation (Pages 9 - 16)**
To be presented by Orlagh Guanori.
- 6. Any Other Business**
To discuss any other business at the discretion of the Chair.
- 7. Date of next meeting**
Tuesday 6 February 2024 at 6:30pm in Room 1.01, Bernard Weatherill House, 8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA.

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.
- Additionally, 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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HRA Rents 2024-25

Tenants & Leaseholder Panel

9 January 2024

Rent increase proposal 2024/25

- In 2022 government agreed, following a consultation, to cap rents at 7% with the option to cap again in 2024/25 should the Consumer Price Index (CPI) remain at the high levels (10.1%) seen in September 2022
- This was a suggested variation to the current government rent policy to increase by CPI+1% taking the value of CPI in the September of the prior year
- Bank of England September 2023 CPI inflation was 6.7% therefore the recommendation to cabinet is for a tenant rent and service charges increase by 7.7% from April 2024 in line with the established policy

Revenue Expenditure 2024/25

The request to agree social rents and tenants service charges increase of 7.7% would result in circa £6.7m income increase is required to fund the growth required in six key areas:

1. To respond to the significant increase in repair requests (cica 1,500 increase per month) since the mobilisation of the new responsive repair contracts in August 2023.
2. To respond to reports of damp and mould from tenants, and the significant work undertaken to date to address these repairs.
3. Enhancing the capacity to meet the needs of The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, including the changes from “Awaab’s Law”. The New rules will form part of the tenancy agreement under which residents can hold landlords to account if they fail to provide a “decent” home. To support this work, we are increasing the number of stock condition surveys we undertake each year so that we have robust stock condition data to support future budget setting for planned works.
4. To support our work to clear historic long-term voids (c120) and to ensure we complete void works in line with our new lettable standard and achieve our void turnaround target. Additionally, during 2024 we will be developing new processes and enforcing tenancy conditions linked to the condition properties are left in when tenants terminate their tenancy, or transfer to another property.
5. To tackle legacy legal disrepair cases (c500) and address new cases within 4 months. The increased budget is made with a commitment to clear the current backlog by 31 August 2025.
6. Estates caretaking & Ground maintenance – increase of resources required to manage the SLA’s, review the service provided to our tenants and increase the standard of caretaking

Current Revenue & Capital Expenditure Pressures

November (period 8) forecasting shows

Revenue overspend of £12m

Capital overspend of £5.7m

Largely made up of :

- Increased responsive repair costs due to increased volume of reported repairs
- Increase in legal Disrepair & associated settlement costs
- Increase in cost of voids

An Improved Responsive Repairs Service Provision

- The 3 contracts went live in August 2023 and to date we have noted:
- Significant increase in call volume (c2,000 additional calls per month)
- Significant increase in repair orders raised (c1,500 per month since August 2023)

Key Performance Indicator	Bigger or Smaller is better	Target	Croydon Position (Nov 2023)	Croydon Position (Oct 2023)
Average contact centre call wait time (Repair call centre only)	Smaller is better	20 secs	9mins 20secs	3mins 49s
Average contact centre call handling time (repair contact centre only)	Smaller is better	5mins 30 secs	8mins 9 secs	5mins 20 secs
% of residents that ended the call before we spoke to them (repair call centre only)	Smaller is better	5%	31%	16%
% of all Responsive Repairs completed within target times	Bigger is better	98%	88.00%	62.12%

Tenants response to November 2023 survey: 832 Returns

- Outcome of the survey show the priorities of tenants are:

1- Repairs

2- ASB

3- Caretaking

4- Planned Maintenance

5- Ground Maintenance

6- Parking

Commitment to support tenants claim their entitlements

- To date our Welfare Officers identified in excess of 100 residents to claim additional support
- The 2023-24 HRA Hardship Fund – a specific discretionary fund to assist households experiencing financial difficulties has made payments to 97 residents
- We will continue to collect statistical data of our tenants to allow us to directly support those not currently receiving Universal Credit or Housing Benefit
- For tenants not currently in receipt of any funding will be our priority, following which we will review the details of tenants who are already receiving housing benefit, to check that they are receiving other benefits, to which they may be entitled.
- These tenants will be contacted prior to the increase taking effect and offered support.

Average Rents & Tenants Service Charges Increase

Bedroom Size	Average rent 2023-24	<u>7.7%</u> - Average rent 2024-25	Increase vs 2023-24
	£p/w	£p/w	£p/w
0 Bedsit	85.82	92.43	6.61
1	102.76	109.95	7.19
2	122.34	130.90	8.56
3	147.71	158.05	10.34
4	167.43	179.15	11.72
5	183.16	195.98	12.82
>5	205.10	219.46	14.36

Property Type	Tenants charge 2023-24	<u>7.7%</u> Average charge 2024-25	Increase vs 2023-24
	£p/w	£p/w	£p/w
Flats	11.74	12.64	0.90
Estate Houses	2.41	2.60	0.19