

Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

Meeting held on Tuesday, 12 February 2019 at 6.37 pm in Council Chamber - Town Hall

MINUTES

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

Councillors Clive Fraser, Lynne Hale and Patricia Hay-Justice.

Also Present: Patrick Weekes (Resident), Councillor Alison Butler, Interim Director for Council Homes, Districts and Regeneration, Director of Housing Assessments & Solutions, Acting Head of Assets and Involvement, Resident Involvement Manager, Senior Resident Involvement Officer, Finance Manager and Head of Finance.

Apologies: James Fraser, Grace Osoata, Councillor Pat Clouder, Councillor Felicity Flynn, Head of Service Development and the Head of Capital Delivery for Homes and Schools.

PART A

1/19 **Welcome and Introductions (Panel Members and Directors)**

The panel members, councillors and officers in attendance introduced themselves.

2/19 **Disclosure of Interest**

There were no disclosures at this meeting.

3/19 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

In regards to the Action Plan table that officers completed from the previous meeting, the Chair commented that the response to Action point six needed to be amended to reflect that the issue had been put on hold.

4/19 **Housing Revenue Account - Rent, Service Charge, Garage Rent and Budget Setting**

The Finance Manager reported that:

- Rent levels for council properties decreased by 1% in 2019/20 against the 2018/19 rate.
- Service charges, Garage rent and parking space charges would continue to be charged at 2018/19 rates.
- Heating charges would continue to be charged at 2018/19 rates.
- Due to the rent decreasing by 1%, rent income was reduced by £739,000
- The high value levy had been lifted and was no longer being implemented by the government.

It was also stated that:

- £38 million had been allocated for the HRA for 2019/20, approximately £27 million was for on-going maintenance and fire safety works
- £1.5 million to extend units in blocks to accommodate larger families

In response to questions regarding Thames Water charges, panel members were told that Thames Water was now collecting payment for water charges directly from tenants. The council was no longer collecting payments on their behalf.

A question was asked as to what the council would do in response to the potential increase of business rates. It was said that it was not entirely clear that this would occur, however more business rates going to local authorities would lead to the government taking away their grants. Members would be briefed in more detail of this at the next TLP meeting.

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

5/19

Housing Capital Investment Programme 2019/20

The Acting Head of Assets and Involvement reported that:

- The council had 13,494 homes and 2,392 leasehold homes that benefitted from works carried out on 1,104 blocks of the HRA.
- Section 2.3 of the report contained the aims of the capital investment programme which included providing houses that meet and exceed statutory requirements and minimising risk within properties to tackle health and safety issues.
- “Type 4” fire risk assessments had been commissioned and were being carried out.

- Section 3.1 of the report listed the council's 2018/19 performance which included the replacement of 61 roofs, modernised kitchens for 336 homes and the installation of 207 double glazed windows.

In response to questions the presenting officer stated that there was no statutory requirement for which level of assessment was used for fire risk checks. Type 4 was the most intrusive and required the compartmentalisation of individual dwellings and communal areas to be checked and secured.

Panel members were also informed that the council has made many requests to the government to provide funding for sprinklers. However, to date the government has not provided funding to any authority for the retrofitting of sprinklers. The council continues to lobby for funding for essential fire safety works.

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

6/19 **Review of Service Improvement Groups**

The Resident Involvement Manager reported that the Council wanted to continue to involve residents and improve the way they worked with each other.

Members were informed of a number of proposed initiatives that would help improve the delivery of housing services, these were listed within the report.

In response, each member of the TLP shared their thoughts on the report and its proposals. The main points raised were:

- The merging of Service Improvement Groups (SIGs) would leave little or no time for residents to discuss every important issue or ask questions.
- The Head of Services attending SIG meetings, which was supported by TLP members, it was emphasised how important it was for residents to hear from them.
- Useful Training courses for SIGs and the position of Chair needed to be available for residents because it's necessary for them to develop the appropriate skills and some had not been provided with the opportunity.
- Attendance and better engagement with residents in response to their feedback and suggestions was necessary if SIGs were to succeed.

The Resident Involvement Manager responded to the comments made by the TLP about training programmes and merging meetings amongst other topics.

It was recommended that panel members test the proposals for a few meetings to see how effective it would be and then it could be revised if members had problems with it.

The Resident Involvement Manager stated that a meeting outside would be arranged to discuss the matter of service improvement groups so the next step could be presented at the next TLP meeting.

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

7/19 **Celebrating 100 years of Council Housing**

The Resident Involvement Manager informed the members of the panel about the Council's plans to celebrate 100 years since Parliament agreed to build Council homes in 1919.

It was said that an exhibition would be held in the Croydon Clocktower, August 2019 to showcase the history of council housing. This would include old archived photos of tenants and anecdotes of former and existing Croydon tenants about their experience living in Croydon.

There was scope to take the exhibition to libraries and museums which would benefit young people who weren't aware of the history and origins of council housing. A task and finish group was being formed to help organise the exhibition and panel members were encouraged to participate and tell their stories.

Panel members expressed interest in the exhibition and were very supportive of the idea. It was emphasised that this was be good opportunity to disprove the negative stereotypes of tenants and demonstrate why being a tenant was a positive thing.

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

8/19 **Scrutiny Update**

Yaw Boateng informed the panel that:

- The Scrutiny Panel was dealing with the complaints process and collating their findings.
- There were delays in finalising this because of the Council staff restructure.
- Focus groups were being organised to understand resident's views and experiences of registering complaints.
- A written report would be produced outlining what had been completed so far.

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

9/19 **Resident Involvement Activity Report**

This report was attached for information only.

10/19 **Feedback**

a) London Tenants' Federation - Jamil Tarik

The panel was informed that:

- London Tenants' Federation (LTF) represented and supported social housing and affordable housing groups.
- Members were encouraged to go to the website to find important information - <http://www.londontenants.org/>
- Stop Press could also be found on the website which helped get residents' views across at the Mayor's Assembly and Parliament.

b) ARCH - Yaw Boateng

The panel was informed that:

- There were a lack of tenants at the last ARCH Conference
- Other ways for tenants to engage would be useful such as having the option to skype in to meetings if they cannot attend
- Benefit to Society campaign, which tackled stereotypes of social housing tenants was being re-established and members' support was encouraged.

The Resident Involvement Manager also informed panel members that the Council encouraged residents to attend the ARCH conference and were able to pay for their travel and accommodation. 5 people were needed for the next event.

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

The panel was informed that:

- CVSA were meeting next week and a report would be produced following this.
- Training for CVSA was also available and members would be notified if there was an opportunity to participate.

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

The panel was informed that:

- In Sian's absence, the Chair was provided with a document which outlined the updates of the All Ages and Youth Services.

The Chair read out the key points of the document which was published and circulated to panel members after the meeting.

11/19 Any Other Business

Panel members raised the following as topics of discussion:

- Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair to be held at the next panel meeting.
- Veolia's standard of performance - it was said that Veolia staff and the contact manager could be invited to respond to panel member's queries specifically regarding bin storage for homes
- Drug use in homes – the TLP heard that this could be investigated by the council in collaboration with the police if there was clear evidence of this.
- Responding to queries – the TLP heard that a report could be provided to assess reporting mechanisms such as the 'Don't Mess With Croydon' app, however the ground maintenance issues raised was not a housing service and would need to be addressed by other officers.

12/19 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 16 April at 6:30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX.

The meeting ended at 8.28 pm

Signed:

Date:

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