

Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

Meeting of held on Tuesday, 8 February 2022 at 6.30 pm. This meeting was held remotely. To view the meeting, please click [here](#).

MINUTES

Present: Yaw Boateng (Chair);

Councillors Jade Appleton, Nina Degrad, Lynne Hale, Patricia Hay-Justice, Michael Neal and Louisa Woodley

Also

Present: Councillor Clive Fraser, Councillor Pat Clouder, Councillor Patsy Cummings, Councillor Maddie Henson, Verna Francis (Senior Resident Involvement Officer), Orlagh Guarnori (Acting Head of Finance), Justin Hunt (Interim Head of Tenancy & Resident Engagement), Dan Kujawski (Senior Regeneration Manager), Danielle Emery (Waste and Recycling Manager), Stephen Tate (Director of Housing - Estates & Improvement), Yvonne Murray (Director of Housing - Resident Engagement & Allocations), Chris Stock (Resident Involvement Manager), David Padfield (Interim Corporate Director of Housing), 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.

Apologies: Peter Mitchell, David Padfield (Lateness) & Martin Wheatley (Lateness).

PART A

14/21 **Welcome and Introductions**

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

15/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Peter Mitchell, David Padfield (Lateness) & Martin Wheatley (Lateness).

16/21 **Disclosure of Interest**

Councillor Appleton informed the panel that she previously worked with Martin Wheatley at the Local Government Association (LGA), currently worked with Eloise Shepherd who was on the Housing Improvement Board and worked closely with Councillor Darren Rodwell of Barking & Dagenham who also sat on the Housing Improvement Board which would be mentioned during the meeting.

17/21 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the minutes from the meeting held on 12 October 2021 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.

18/21 **Capital programme 2022/23**

The Interim Head of Asset Planning & Capital Delivery conducted a presentation to the panel which provided a stock summary, explained the general process for standard works, the non-standard work process, annual process, 2022/23 capital programme, asset management and changes to legislation/standards.

This presentation can be found via the following link:

<https://civico.net/croydon/14374-Tenant---Leaseholder-Panel>

In response to a question from a resident the Interim Head of Asset Planning & Capital Delivery explained to the Panel that the staffing budget in the presentation covered the general salaries of staff within the HRA. The Interim Head of Asset Planning & Capital Delivery clarified that the Housing Revenue Account and the general fund were ring fenced and held completely separate to ensure that one did not affect the other.

In response to a question from a resident the Interim Head of Asset Planning & Capital Delivery informed the panel that some elements of the works being carried out at Regina road were included in the Capital Programme outlined in the presentation. There were some elements that the Council were waiting for pricing for, there were also fire safety cladding replacement works at the ground floor level that were being checked by quantity surveyors.

The Interim Head of Asset Planning & Capital Delivery then went on to explain that the Council had a reserve list, if projects could not be delivered the Council would look to fill those gaps. In the event that there were elements that required additional funding beyond what had been allocated in the yearly budget, he would make a request to Cabinet for additional funds. The Interim Head of Asset Planning & Capital Delivery also stated that he was still waiting for reports on pricing to come back for urgent cases such as the replacement of the ground floor cladding at Regina road and a number of other high rise blocks that required additional cladding.

In response to a question from a resident the Interim Head of Asset Planning & Capital Delivery explained that the 94 vacant garages mentioned in the presentation were initially passed to Brick by Brick and had been earmarked for demolition. These garages were then passed to him by the HRA, moving forward he needed to assess the garage strategy as part of the asset management plan in order to ensure that the garages were fit for purpose, self-fulfilling financially and that there was a strategy in place to determine what best to do with the garages that they were no longer needed. As part of the Councils garage strategy, they had to ensure that the garages were fit for purpose, a repairs scheme was in place to improve their condition where necessary and that the income generated from the garages could generate enough money to cover the cost of repairs and maintenance.

The Director of Housing, Resident Engagement & Allocations informed the panel that there was a new officer would pick up the duties for the task and finish group from the former head of service, these duties included an audit of the garages and they were in the process of starting this work again.

RESOLVED: That the Panel agreed to note the presentation.

19/21 **Waste Management & Fly Tipping**

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

The Waste and Recycling Manager stated that Veolia had struggled to retain HGV drivers over the past year. This was part of a national shortage in which the drivers were attracted by other companies who offered higher salaries.

The Waste and Recycling Manager informed the panel that Veolia had prioritised refuse collection over the collection of recycling as the recycling was clean and dry, which meant that it could be left for a longer period without collection than waste. Veolia had focused on communal bin stores and had provided an additional round of communal collections, this had been in place since October 2021. In order to provide the additional service, the council had used streets staff to help with the collections as loaders and drivers which has led to a slight deterioration of the condition of the streets.

The Waste and Recycling Manager explained that if a round of collections could not be completed, the collection would be left until the weekend with the refuse collection prioritised over the recycling. The Waste and Recycling Manager also stated that Veolia were upskilling some of their loading staff into drivers to address the driver shortage.

In response to a question from the chair the Waste and Recycling Manager stated that the communications team had been tweeting about the issues regarding waste collection and Veolia had been trying to raise awareness of the driver shortages in order to get people interested in the industry.

In response to a question from a resident the Waste and Recycling Manager informed the Panel that there were 22 service performance indicators that Veolia were required to meet on a quarterly basis. If these service performance indicators were not met then Veolia would be financially penalised for failing to meet those targets however targets did not relate to their number of drivers.

A resident informed the Panel that they raised an issue at the performance monitoring group regarding bin collection from the 1st floor flats on an estate. The residents on the 1st floor were no longer having rubbish collected directly and had to bring their rubbish downstairs due to health and safety concerns. The resident stated that they had yet to receive a response from the Council and the Waste and Recycling Manager ensured the resident that they would get a response for them.

A resident raised the issue, stating that the crews came to collect the waste needed to ensure that they had FB1 keys as he was aware that they had been to several locations and were unable to empty the bins as they did not have a standard fire brigade key. These keys could be purchased by Veolia so the drivers could have the necessary access to empty the bins.

In response to a question from a resident the Waste and Recycling Manager stated that there was no correlation between the ceasing in the service and increase in fly tipping, this was due to the fact that fly tippers do not investigate how to safely dispose of bulky waste.

In response to a question from a Councillor, the Waste and Recycling Manager explained that contaminated waste could include recycling that was placed within black bags as these bags were considered a contaminant. The waste collection crew would log that they were unable to collect the waste, this would raise a ticket for the refuse crew to come and empty the bins. The Waste and Recycling Manager also stated that there was one recycling officer in Croydon, which had made communication difficult between the waste department and residents.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Waste and Recycling Manager informed the Panel that the council had done their best to educate residents whilst possessing one Recycling Officer across the borough. The Waste and

Recycling Manager stated that the data that she had seen in regards to the amount of fly tipping once the charges for bulky waste collection had been introduced indicated that there had not been an impact.

RESOLVED – That the Panel agreed to note the verbal update.

20/21

Welcome David Padfield & Justin Hunt and Recruitment Update

The Interim Corporate Director of Housing offered his apologies for lateness.

The Interim Corporate Director of Housing informed the Panel that the Council was in the process of recruiting a permanent Corporate Director of Housing, the Interim Corporate Director of Housing anticipated that he would be working at the Council until around the middle of May due to the likely notice period of the successful candidate.

The Interim Corporate Director of Housing then went on to explain that there were a few gaps in the senior management structure, and he would seek recruit more managers on an interim basis to solve this issue. The Interim Corporate Director of Housing informed the Panel that he would hire an extra Director to take on some the duties assigned to the Director of Housing, Resident Engagement & Allocations, which would enable her to focus more on homelessness. The Interim Corporate Director of Housing also stated that he wanted to recruit a Temporary/Interim Director of Tenancy Services.

The Interim Corporate Director of Housing was looking to recruit more staff at Head of Service level, interviews were scheduled for the Head of Responsive Repairs position and for a Head of Policy and Performance. The Head of Policy and Performance would oversee the work around performance and work with the Housing Improvement Board. The Interim Corporate Director of Housing expressed the need for additional managers to assist with the homelessness service and would be looking to appoint 3 Change Managers to help on the change agenda.

The Interim Corporate Director of Housing informed the Panel that the Council had recruited an Interim Head of Tenancy and Resident Engagement who was Justin Hunt, who then introduced himself to the panel.

In response to a question from a resident the Interim Head of Tenancy & Resident Engagement stated that it was a key objective for him to undergo recruitment for a number of roles within the service as there was a need for additional capacity in order to ensure that they were able to meet expectations.

In response to a question from a resident the Interim Head of Tenancy & Resident Engagement explained that the immediate priority for the service was dealing with the backlog of reactive work, including complaints, Member

enquiries and basic case work. This why recruitment was a priority within the service.

The Interim Head of Tenancy & Resident Engagement then went on to inform the Panel that he was passionate about grounds maintenance and estates services and was keen to gain an understanding of the relationship between the service charges and the services that were being delivered and how these may be reviewed with the Panel. The housing management software was being renewed and this was hugely important to the service, as this represented a huge opportunity to rebuild the services in a more efficient and modern way.

In response to a question from a resident the Interim Corporate Director of Housing stated that the agreed structure of the department includes two Directors who would report to him and beneath those positions there would be three Heads of Service positions.

RESOLVED – That the Panel agreed to note the verbal update.

21/21 **Regina Road Update**

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Interim Corporate Director of Housing to provide the Panel with a verbal update regarding Regina Road.

The Interim Corporate Director of Housing informed the Panel that most of the worst affected families had been moved away from the estates and had been re-housed, he also stated that other residents had been offered the mould wash and the plumbing MOT. The Interim Corporate Director of Housing then went on to state that significant works had been done such as repairs, fire safety works and work on residents heating systems.

The Interim Corporate Director of Housing explained that the Council were using one of the empty flats as a repair's office, which was open every weekday morning to allow residents to speak to the repairs staff and the housing officers about issues on the estate.

The Interim Corporate Director of Housing also stated that there was a resident's reference group in place which had met to discuss the extent of the refurbishment works required on the estate.

RESOLVED – That the Panel agreed to note the verbal update.

22/21 **Update from the Housing Improvement Board**

The Chair introduced the item and invited a resident from the Panel to provide the Panel with a verbal update from the Housing Improvement Board.

The Panel member informed the Panel that the Housing Improvement Board consisted of seven individuals and that there had been two meetings to date. The meeting that took place on the 7th December took place at Stanley Halls in South Northwood.

In between the two meetings, members of the board were required to undertake projects. Members of the Panel who sat on the board were invited to deal with culture and sub-headed that into 'respect by council staff towards tenants, leaseholders and freeholders'. They had planned to conduct estate visits however they were unable to do so due to the restrictions which had been implemented due to a new variant of Covid-19. Instead of conducting estate visits, they decided to strategically contact different areas within the borough for feedback on the issues to be discussed in their project.

The Panel member stated that Steve Reed MP had launched a South Northwood tenant, leaseholder and freeholder residents group which also provided feedback to them.

The feedback that had been received was included in a report which had been submitted to Housing Improvement Board meeting on the 20th January. The report was now with Senior Management and the Cabinet Member for Housing, and the Panel can expect a response to the report at the next meeting.

The Panel member went on to explain that they had been presented with a draft housing improvement plan by Senior Management within the Council and had been asked to provide initial feedback in the Housing Improvement Board meeting.

The Chair introduced Martin Wheatley as the Chair of the Housing Improvement Board and invited him to make comments.

The Chair of the Housing Improvement Board explained that the board had been appointed by the Council although none of the members worked for the Council. The Board was implemented to act as an external critical friend to the work that was being carried out within the housing department to improve the service. Members of the board could provide a great insight into what it was like to be a resident in the borough.

The Housing Improvement Board would send their views on the housing improvement plan to the Cabinet meeting in March. Their feedback was focused on five areas, including the relationship with tenants, performance management, whether the service has the people it needs to be effective, how the politicians provide direction management for the service and what is happening at Regina Road.

The webcasts of the Housing Improvement Board meetings and all associated documents can be found on the council's website.

RESOLVED – That the Panel agreed to note the verbal update.

23/21 **Rent/Budget Setting 2022/23 (Finance)**

The Chair expressed his displeasure that this report went to a Cabinet meeting prior to the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel meeting taking place.

The Interim Corporate Director of Housing apologised that this item was being presented to the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel the day after it went to a Cabinet meeting. The Interim Corporate Director of Housing then informed the Panel that the decision to increase the rent was in accordance with the government's advice and this decision was taken at last year's full council meeting. The paper that went to the most recent Cabinet meeting was around the annual rent setting process.

The Acting Head of Finance for Housing conducted a presentation to the Panel which detailed the Housing Revenue Account Outturn. This presentation can be found via the following link:

<https://civico.net/croydon/14374-Tenant-Leaseholder-Panel>

In response to a question from a resident, the Acting Head of Finance for Housing explained that the bad debt at the end of the year sat on a balance sheet. The Council had not written off that debt and there were debt collections ongoing, the rent was classed as former rent when a resident was no longer a tenant of the Council.

The Acting Head of Finance for Housing then informed the Panel that there was a revenue line for the Councils income and some of this would be classed as bad debt so they would not receive that income. At the end of the year the Council put aside an amount into a bad debt provision, which was built up and used to cover any debt that had not been received.

RESOLVED – That the Panel agreed to note the verbal update.

24/21 **Axis Contract Management**

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement to provide the Panel with a verbal update on the management of the Axis contract.

The Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement stated that they have reinstated the contract review meetings, these are weekly meetings with Axis to discuss issues across all key areas. The core strategic meetings have also been put in place, which take place every other month. Across all their key performance indicators (KPI's) where they are not meeting the minimum level of performance, the Council have insisted that they produce action plans to bring those performance indicators back up to an acceptable level.

Generally, the performance indicators were heading in a positive direction, however, there were some areas in which more improvements were required.

The Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement explained that in the past Axis had conducted the satisfaction surveys themselves, however, the Council had employed a third party (Acuity) to assess their satisfaction. Data from November, December and January have indicated that overall performance had received 87% satisfaction.

In response to a question from a resident the Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement took on board the positive feedback for the work carried out by the Compliance Manager from residents.

In response to a question from a resident the Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement apologised for the service that they had received and asked the resident to email him, so that the matter could be investigated. The Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement stated that the Housing department wanted to implement a closer integration between the actions of the Council and the contractor. The Council and the contractor have now co-located the call centre with Council staff, this enables council staff to be on hand when an issue arises.

RESOLVED – That the Panel agreed to note the verbal update.

25/21 **Any Other Business**

The Chair asked officers to send through any presentation slides in advance of future meetings to allow Panel members time to prepare questions.

The Chair asked whether they could receive the minutes well in advance for the Panel members to absorb the content of the minutes.

The Chair stated that a 'tenant's charter' and 'a way forward' had been developed, this charter had been seen by several officers and there had not been any feedback. The 'tenant's charter' and the 'way forward' were created because of the issues at Regina Road.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Interim Director of Corporate Housing stated that he was aware of a report regarding voids work that would be fed into the housing improvement plan and a report on the work discussed at the last Housing Improvement Board meeting. The Interim Corporate Director of Housing said that he would speak to his management team and ensure that the Panel received a response on the 'tenant's charter' and the 'way forward' documents that had been drafted.

In response to a question from a resident, the Interim Director of Corporate Housing explained that the improvements that were being made to the

housing service should be captured in the housing improvement plan that would be discussed with the Housing Improvement Board.

Date of the Next Meeting

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on 26 April 2022 at 6:30pm, the venue would be confirmed closer to the meeting date.

The meeting ended at 8.58pm

Signed:

Date:

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