

Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

Meeting held on Tuesday, 11 October 2022 at 6.30 pm in Room 1.01 and 1.02 - Bernard Weatherill House, Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA. To view the meeting, please click [here](#).

MINUTES

Present: Yaw Boateng (Chair);

Councillors Adele Benson, Lara Fish, Clive Fraser, Lynne Hale, Ellily Ponnuthurai and Chrishni Reshekaron

Also

Present: Verna Francis (Senior Resident Involvement Officer), Katherine Monk (Resident Involvement Manager), Orlagh Guarnori (Acting Head of Finance), Susmita Sen (Corporate Director of Housing), Stephen Tate (Director of Housing - Estates & Improvement), Lara Ashley (Housing Transformation Lead), Tariq Aniemeka-Bailey (Democratic Services Officer), Jayde Watts (Trainee Democratic Services Officer), David Palmer, Jill Arboine, Stephen Pollard, Marilyn Smithies, Kim Wakely, Sharon Swaby, Jamil Tarik, Ishia Beckford, Guy Pile-Grey.

PART A

13/22 **Welcome and Introductions**

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

14/22 **Disclosure of Interest**

There were no disclosures at this meeting.

15/22 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 19 July 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

16/22 **Housekeeping and Refresher on Tenant & Leaseholder Panel Constitution**

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Vice Chair to address the Panel.

The Vice-Chair informed the Panel that they should not bring any personal business to the meeting and that there was a form that members could complete if they had any personal issues.

The Vice-Chair reminded the Councillors present that Tenant and Leaseholder meetings were for tenants to deal with the reports and proposals drafted by officers, the Chair would invite Councillors to speak if time allowed.

17/22 **Update on the Repairs Re-Procurement**

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement to provide the Panel with an update on the re-procurement of the repairs service and the Capital Delivery Programme.

The Director of Housing, Estates & Improvement conducted a presentation to the Panel, which can be found via the following link:

<https://civico.net/croydon/16943-Tenant-Leaseholder-Panel>

In response to questions from members, officers informed the Committee that:

- There were several contingency plans in place, the biggest part of this was the project management process and the risk assessments that were in place.
- The Council had a program office who met monthly to assess the progress of the procurement process.
- Officers were going to allow an external organisation to conduct regular audits of their procurement process and they would undergo a mid-way review to ensure that they were on course to achieve the desired outcome.
- The Council were at the last stage of procurement for back-up contractors for voids and there was a back-up contractor in place for general repairs.
- The Council had looked at ways in which they could split the contract that they had with Axis.
- The Council assessed their housing stock and decided to subcontract the repairs and voids contracts for the properties at New Addington and Monks hill out to another client. This portion represented around 30% of the Councils housing stock.
- The Council wanted face to face discussions with their contractors whilst asking them difficult questions which needed to be addressed.

- The Council had set out their standards which have been created from residents' feedback, any potential contractor would have to meet these standards before the Council agrees a contract with them.
- When it came to the evaluation of a contract the focus would be on quality ahead of the value. This was because when assessing the market, there would be a lot of variation on the quality of a clients work but not a lot of variation in the price they would charge.
- The process in which the Council charges for the services carried out for leaseholders is in accordance with legislation.
- Tenants paid for service costs through their rent, whereas Leaseholders pay for the actual cost of what was spent in their block and spent on the estate as set out in their lease.

18/22 **Report on Housing Revenue Account**

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Corporate Director of Housing and Acting Head of Finance to address the Panel.

The Corporate Director of Housing and Acting Head of Finance conducted a presentation to the Panel, which can be found via the following link:

<https://civico.net/croydon/16943-Tenant-Leaseholder-Panel>

In response to questions from members, officers informed the Committee that:

- The HRA staff capitalisation was accounting terminology which meant that the Council could pay the staff members from a different fund which in turn, would provide more income for the HRA.
- The Council had a debt of £322 million, the bulk of which was inherited debt that was a product of the Council buying itself out of the funding scheme that was provided by the government. In order to service this debt, the cost each year was £12.2 million in interest charges on the debt that had been inherited.
- The debt was made up of a 'portfolio of borrowing'. The rates for most of the Council's loans were not up for renewal, these loans were taken out as a long-term debt which enabled the interest rates to remain relatively low and they were at a fixed rate.
- The HRA business plan policy was that the Council were to only pay the interest on the debt and once the debt matured, they would refinance the loan in the hope that the interest rate that was secured was at a similar or a lower rate.
- There had not been any draw-down from the reserve fund and the reserve at the end of March 2022 was still on the balance sheet.
- Officers had procured the stock conditions survey which would begin at the start of November.
- Officers would present their thoughts on stock investment to cabinet for 2023 onwards.

- The last full stock conditions survey on the Council's housing stock was conducted in 2014.
- Officers planned to discuss the Councils asset management strategy with residents.

19/22 **Rent Increase Consultation**

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Corporate Director of Housing to address the Panel.

The Corporate Director of Housing conducted a presentation to the Panel, which can be found via the following link:

<https://civico.net/croydon/16943-Tenant-Leaseholder-Panel>

In response to questions from members, officers informed the Committee that:

- The Council needed to gain an understanding of the profile of their tenants, so that they could provide them with suitable debt advice.
- The Councils rent arrears were around £5 million and the former tenant arrears were around £4 million.
- The Council had never written off any of their former tenant arrears.
- Officers would liaise with children's and adult's services to discuss the impact of the rent increase and the cost-of-living crisis could have on their department.
- A report on the rent consultation would be presented to Cabinet in January and officers hoped to come back to the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel in November with more information.

The Chair informed the Panel that there would be an emergency meeting held to discuss the rent increase before the next official meeting in February.

20/22 **Vision and Mission Workshop Feedback**

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Housing Transformation Lead to address the Panel.

The Housing Transformation Lead conducted a presentation to the Panel, which can be found via the following link:

<https://civico.net/croydon/16943-Tenant-Leaseholder-Panel>

In response to questions from members, officers informed the Committee that:

- The Council had advertised the workshop in open house and emailed the tenants and leaseholders, emailed the chairs of resident

associations and resident forums despite the low number of residents who attended.

- The workshop was a space for residents to vent their frustrations about the service provided.
- Officers would look to hold online sessions to provide residents who were unable to attend in person.

21/22 Any Other Business

The Corporate Director of Housing informed the Panel that officers were keen to update residents on the findings of their surveys and explain how these findings would be used to improve the service provided to residents.

The Vice Chair explained to the Panel that he stepped in on behalf of the tenants and leaseholders to join the projects team on voids. The project manager would welcome an additional member from the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel to join on the project.

22/22 Date of next meeting

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on 7 February 2023 at 6:30pm, in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX.

The meeting ended at 8.04 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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