

Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

Meeting of held on Wednesday, 17 January 2018 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Marilyn Smithies (Chair);
Colin Wood (Vice-Chair);
Jill Arboine, Aishnine Benjamin, Yaw Boateng, Peter Cooper, Bernard Daws, Sheila Howard, David Palmer, John Piper, Sharon Swaby and Kim Wakely

Councillors Richard Chatterjee, Lynne Hale and Oliver Lewis

Also Present: Councillor Alison Butler, Director of Housing Need, Director of District Centres & Regeneration, Head of Finance, Head of Service Development, Head of Tenancy and Neighbourhood Services, Head of Assets and Involvement, Senior Involvement Support Officer, Oriel Weekes (Resident).

Apologies: Apologies were received from James Fraser, Sheila Mitchell and Guy Pile-Grey

PART A

1/18 **Disclosure of Interest**

There were no disclosures at this meeting.

2/18 **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3/18 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2017 were approved as an accurate record. Proposed by John Piper, seconded by Bernard Daws.

4/18 **Housing Revenue Account Rent, Service Charge, Garage Rent and Budget Setting**

The Head of Finance presented the report to the panel:

Section 1 was about the level of rates all council properties would be subject to from 2018. Rent levels would be decreased by 1% against the 2017/18 rate. Garage, parking space rent and heating charges would remain the same as the 2017/18 rates.

Section 2 was a summary of the information provided in this report.

Section 3 outlined how current government legislation had impacted the Housing Revenue Account, the account used to pay for services provided to tenants and leaseholders. A reduction in rent levels by 1% would mean the HRA needed to save on expenditure. This would lead to a total save of £13m from 2016/17 to 2020/21.

The Borrowing Cap placed on the HRA showed Croydon had £11.4m left to borrow before reaching the limit. There was a possibility of additional funding to supplement this, however the amount of additional borrowing available was not yet clear.

Section 4 contained changes to the HRA income budgets in 2018/19.

Section 5 provided details on the HRA revenue budget. In 2017/18 the council increased tenant service charges by 2%, it was proposed that these charges would remain the same in 2018/19.

Section 6 provided details on 2018/19 expenditure and management savings to balance the HRA budget. The programme took into consideration repairs, planned investment programmes and housing supplies. Additional funds for fire safety and an IT database would also be allocated in the future.

Members of the panel NOTED this report.

5/18 **Housing Capital Investment Programme 2018/19**

The Head of Assets and Involvement presented the report to the panel:

The Housing Capital Investment Programme is reviewed every year around January in preparation for the next financial year.

The council had 13,567 tenanted homes within the housing revenue account (HRA) which were improved through the capital investment programme. The council also had 2,375 leasehold homes that benefitted from works carried out to the 1,101 blocks in the HRA. The management of 3 blocks (339 flats in total) had been taken over by the Council, these costs did not come under the HRA.

The Panel was asked to note that from 2017/2018 the council had:

- Installed 177 double glazed UPVC window replacements
- Modernised kitchen for 212 homes
- Installed boilers and upgraded central heating systems to over 600 properties

Other improvements included upgrades to bathrooms and the rewiring of properties. Targets for fire risk assessment had been met with a consistent 99-100% in the last seven years due to the Capital Investment Programme.

Resources for investment in 2018/19 should have been equal to the 2017/18 budget, assumed to be at 26.771m.

The Head of Service then stated an additional £5m had been allocated from HRA reserves for new sprinkler systems in 2018/19. The total investment amount for housing was expected to be £32,305,000. The Council's 2018/19 budgets, including the HRA, would be formally approved at the Council meeting on 19th February 2018.

A number of projects that were carried out in 2017/18 are now due to be delivered in 2018/19 because of a diversion of resources following the Grenfell Tower fire.

There are a number of major works which will benefit residents such as:

- Sprinkler Installation
- Roof and window replacement in College Green
- Rain screen cladding installation for Chertsey Crescent and Dartmouth House

A question was raised by a panel member as to how the Council would manage the budget for capital investment without additional funding from the central government. An Officer stated it will be maintained through a cut in spending and a change in the delivery of service if necessary. There was also money available in reserves which could support capital investment.

A question was raised by a panel member regarding the definition and function of rain cladding. Officers responded that this particular cladding stopped water penetration and improved the insulation properties of buildings.

Members of the panel NOTED this report.

6/18 **Fire Safety Update & Interim Review of Building Regulations**

The Head of Assets and Involvement reported on the following:

Members of the Panel were referred to a Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety produced by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in December 2017.

The key points identified in the review were:

- Explanation of building regulations are too complex.

- Roles and responsibilities of people involved in building and fire safety procedures are not explained well, this needs to be simplified.
- Competency of people working within this industry need to be monitored carefully.
- There are no differential skills and abilities for the construction of simple and complex buildings, this needs to be addressed.
- Compliance enforcement and sanctions are too weak.
- Robust change control, changes are not always documented.
- Residents didn't feel their concerns were being heard by their council which impacted private sector building and council homes.

An Officer stated that Croydon Council will be looking closely at interim reports published in the future.

Members of the panel NOTED this report.

7/18 **Review of Tenant and Leaseholder Panel**

The Head of Assets and Involvement updated the panel on the following:

The Resident Involvement and Scrutiny Manager brought forward a review of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel (TLP) in the last meeting on 10 October 2017. Further details of what will be proposed will be presented to members at the next panel meeting.

8/18 **Scrutiny update**

Yaw Boateng updated the panel on the following topics:

He recently met with Axis management about responsive repairs for homes on 4 January 2018. Axis management largely accepted what the group had to say in regards to recommendations for improvements. Queries that were not given a response will be addressed soon.

Both Councillors and Officers were encouraged to notify the Resident Involvement and Scrutiny Manager if they knew anyone that was capable of working in the scrutiny group. Young people especially will help promote diversity within the panel.

The Vice-Chair of the panel agreed as there were only 3 members in the scrutiny group. An Officer stated that ways of encouraging a culturally different group were being considered.

The Chair wanted it to be made clear to the panel what the restrictions were for joining the scrutiny group. In the past it was viewed as a conflict of interest to be the Chair or Vice Chair of the TLP and a member of the scrutiny group. However, the current Vice-Chair is in both of these groups.

Officers responded by saying this would be reviewed and reported back to the panel.

9/18 **RI activity update**

This report was attached for information only.

10/18 **Feedback**

a) London Tenants' Federation - Jamil Tarik

Absent.

b) ARCH – Yaw Boateng

- Met with the Housing Minister to hear views and opinions of tenants.
- Notified that questions primarily focused on central government funding for sprinklers and the relationship between tenants and landlords.
- Perception of social tenants is a serious concern, some landlord's do not treat them properly.
- Council should address this and reassess how it treats its tenants.

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

Absent.

d) Croydon Congress – Marilyn Smithies

Croydon Congress did not meet.

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

- Young people can voice their issues by participating in electing a

Young Mayor for the first time in Croydon.

- Publish and spread this information to benefit Young People, more information can be found on the Croydon website.
- Voting day was on Tuesday 13th March 2018.

11/18 **Any Other Business**

The Vice-Chair stated that he will be standing down from his position and the scrutiny panel at the next TLP meeting. He would like to attend meetings in the future to observe and contribute if permissible. He has been a member of the scrutiny panel for 16 years and is honoured to have represented residents.

A member of the panel believed the House and Disability panel should be independent from the TLP and not a sub-group.

The Chair noted this, stating that the TLP needed to learn from its mistakes and work co-operatively to make positive change.

12/18 **Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 24 April 2018 at 6:30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX.

The meeting ended at 7.23 pm

Signed:

Date:

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