

Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

Meeting held on Tuesday, 11 February 2020 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Yaw Boateng (Chair);
Petra Johnson (Vice-Chair);
Marilyn Smithies, Binta Barry, Ishia Beckford, David Palmer, Guy Pile-Grey,
John Piper and Kim Wakely.
Councillors Patricia Hay-Justice and Lynne Hale

Also Present: Stephen Pollard, Ash Patel, Collin Wood and Councillor Alison Butler
Resident Involvement Manager, Head of Finance, Finance Manager, Asset
Team Manager, Asset Manager, Head of Tenancy and Caretaking Services,
Director of Housing, Waste and Recycling Manager and Director of Growth,
Employment & Regeneration.

Apologies: James Fraser and Monica Binns
Councillors Pat Clouder, Louisa Woodley, Richard Chatterjee and
Michael Neal

PART A

1/20 **Welcome and Introductions**

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

2/20 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from James Fraser, Monica Binns, Councillors Pat Clouder, Louisa Woodley, Richard Chatterjee and Michael Neal.

3/20 **Disclosure of Interest**

There were no disclosures at this meeting.

4/20 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2019 were agreed as an accurate record, with the addition that Stephen Pollard was also present.

The Resident Involvement Manager informed those present that application forms to join the Panel were available.

5/20

Update on the Waste Management Action Plan

The Waste and Recycling Manager introduced the item and informed the Panel that a 48% recycling rate had been reached, which was an increase of 7% on the previous year.

The Waste and Recycling Manager went through the action plan produced by the Waste and Recycling Task & Finish Group; the ability to report food recycling missed collections online was now functional, and reports should be submitted within two business days; caretakers could also now report on behalf of residents. No requests for communal composting had been received, but officers were ready to assist with any residents who were interested in setting this up.

Communications with residents on the correct ways to dispose of waste had improved; new videos on the council website showed the journey of recycling. The Waste and Recycling Manager emphasised that the council were keen to communicate with residents as much as possible and undertook roadshows with Veolia, distributed calendars, were active on twitter and were open to any other ideas from the Panel.

There had been no requests for signage on bin stores to be replaced, but residents were encouraged to contact the council if this was needed on any sites. A programme of checking bin signage was being implemented, but would take around a year, due to the volume of bins and the number of staff.

All planning applications were reviewed by Waste Services to ensure adequate and correct waste and recycling facilities; there was a dedicated officer in the team who dealt with this.

The Waste and Recycling Manager explained that all figures on waste and recycling were sent quarterly to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and published on the DEFRA website; if the Panel requested any additional figures they would be happy to provide them for a future meeting.

There had been no reports of any issues with collection frequencies, but these would be reviewed on a case by case basis. Waste Services worked closely with Housing to identify any issues.

In response to a question from a Panel member regarding whether new properties being built on their estate would have their own waste and recycling facilities, the Panel heard that they would.

In response to a question from a resident about broken and dirty bins on their estate, the Waste and Recycling Manager explained that there was a way to report this online, and that the bins may need replacing. There had been a change to the process of cleaning food waste bins, and these bins would be cleaned in the future. In response to a further question about whether recycling was being sent to Malaysia, the resident was assured that most recycling was sent to Essex to then sold on and sent to re-processors. The council always had the certificates of sale, and almost all recycling stayed in the country.

A Panel member commented that they had the same bins on their estate for 18 years, and were not sure they were clearly marked and because of this they may not be used correctly. They also commented that collection schedule changes had caused confusion. Another Panel member requested better signage for their bins to ensure cardboard was not going to landfill.

A Panel member stated that a public litter bin on the green space on Church Road would frequently be overfilled with dog waste, which had caused people to begin using the recycling bins. The Waste and Recycling Manager responded that they would check the frequency of collections and advise whether a new bin would be required. Another Panel member enquired as to whether dog waste bins could be requested for estates, and learned that this could now be disposed of in normal bins, and if it was felt a new one was needed Waste Management would look at the location and possibly offer an alternative.

The Resident Involvement Manager reminded the Panel that a Task & Finish Group had met with Waste Management and Housing departments and produced the Action Plan; the plan would be updated and circulated with these minutes. Report forms were available in the meeting to request meetings with or visits from officers.

The Chair explained that they felt there were recurring reports of residents reporting issues and no action being taken; this needed to be stopped. The Resident Involvement Manager suggested an additional meeting of the Task & Finish Group to look at this, with residents submitting any issues they wished to be looked at beforehand.

6/20

Housing Revenue Account Rent, Service Charge, Garage Rent and Budget Setting

The Head of Finance introduced the item and went through and summarised the figures in the report.

In response to a question from a resident about the value of service charges in relation to overworked caretakers and poor quality cleaning, the Head of Tenancy and Caretaking Services queried whether these issues had worsened due to nearby building works. The resident confirmed the issues and it was agreed that this would be picked up separately. The team had no

vacancies, being fully staffed with caretakers, with one Tenancy Officer role soon to be filled through secondment. The operational manager roles for caretaking and tenancy had been merged.

The Chair queried the normal process for reporting cleaning issues; the Head of Tenancy and Caretaking Services responded that noticeboards should state when caretakers would be on-site, and these attempted to mirror the Veolia schedule, although this was not always possible. If cleaning standards were not as they should be, then residents should contact the council and the operational manager; these contact details should also be on the noticeboards.

A Panel member stated that as a freeholder they had to pay VAT on their garage rent, which council tenants did not; the Panel member pointed out that this was not mentioned in the report. The Head of Finance apologised and promised future reports would correct this.

7/20 **Housing Capital Investment Programme 2020/21**

The Asset Team Manager introduced the item and went through the presentation appended to these minutes.

In response to questions about whether the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget would be used to maintain Brick by Brick properties, the Panel heard this would only be true for properties that were bought by the council from Brick by Brick.

One Panel member informed the Panel that they had been informed by some residents that repairs on bathrooms and kitchens would need to be done at the tenants own expense. The Asset Team Manager said this would only be true in the instance that the tenant had installed their own kitchen, and it had not been done by the council.

The Asset Team Manager informed the Panel that there were two standards for properties that the council worked towards. The first was the 'Lettable' standard, which was the standard properties were kept at to insure they were quickly rented to minimise housing waiting lists. The second standard was the government 'Decent Homes' standard which worked to a lifetime of 20 years for a kitchen and 30 years for a bathroom; it also insured adequate space and layout. Properties were checked via a condition survey every five to seven years.

8/20 **Fire Safety Videos**

The Resident Involvement Manager explained that the council had been approached by its insurer, Protector, who had been keen to provide the funding to create some fire safety videos to educate officers and residents.

These had been filmed around Croydon, but were not quite ready to be shown at the time of this Panel meeting. More tenant input on the videos was desired, and residents were invited to give their views at the next meeting of the residents' Health and Safety Panel on 3 March 2020. Ideas for the best ways to share the videos were requested, with the current plan being to share them via social media, Open House and screenings at local meetings.

In response to a question from the Panel regarding whether the videos would show cladding and sprinklers, the Resident Involvement Manager stated that they could not confirm this, but that they would make a note to ensure they were covered. The videos were being created at no cost to the council.

9/20 **Scrutiny update**

The Chair informed the Panel that a presentation detailing the findings of Scrutiny had been given to the council in January 2020, and this had been positively received. The full report would be on the council website from mid-February 2020.

The Resident Involvement Manager stated that this had been an excellent piece of work that had produced 28 recommendations, with the vast majority of these having already been agreed. An action plan was being produced and would be published, with complaints and the complaints response procedure being improved.

The Chair explained that some of the recommendations had already been implemented, and that this showed the council was moving in the right direction. In response to a question from the Panel about whether Scrutiny had focused on procedures, the Chair stated that it had; the recommendations concerned processes and not individual officers. Scrutiny had looked at the experiences of residents and how these could be improved.

10/20 **Resident Involvement Activity Report**

This report was for information only.

11/20 **Feedback**

The Panel were told that the Community Fund 2020/23 bids were detailed in the circulated agenda. CRY SAP were the resident's evaluation representative for 'outcome two'.

The All Ages Family Safety Challenge finals would take place in the Council Chamber on 19 February 2020. Any Panel Members wishing to attend were encouraged to contact Marilyn Smithies or Guy Pile-Grey.

No CVSA report had been circulated with the agenda, as it had only met earlier that day.

12/20 **Any Other Business**

A resident told the Panel that they had emailed senior officers several times over an issue, and had not received a response; they also stated that they had found it difficult to get in contact via telephone. The Head of Tenancy and Caretaking Services acknowledged the issue and assured that it would be looked into and responded that since September 2019 there had been a Duty Tenancy Officer in Access Croydon to facilitate more face to face interaction; Tenancy Officer surgeries had also increased in frequency. The Director of Housing stated that they would send the resident a staffing structure chart for housing, tenancy and caretaking (appended to these minutes).

A Panel Member stated that Church Road residents had been sent a letter regarding misuse of disabled bays, keeping dogs on leads and picking up after dogs. These letters had not been sent to the residents in the new Brick by Brick block. The Head of Tenancy and Caretaking Services responded that the officer who sent the letters had made an error, and the Brick by Brick residents had now received it. There would be a targeted approach to repeat offenders going forward, and work was being done to bring in Traffic Management Orders for the car parking areas so blue badges could be enforced in disabled bays.

The Resident Involvement Manager informed the Panel that the quarterly STAR surveys had shown that tenant satisfaction was high. Where tenants had been dissatisfied, officers had reached out for feedback.

The first ground source heat pumps had been installed at Chertsey Crescent; these pumped hot air from underground to heat properties, and were eco-friendly and cost saving for residents.

Sprinklers had been activated by a tenant doing DIY in a property; the water had seeped into a private and uninsured property below. This had been just before Christmas, and Mulalley had redecorated and changed the carpets for this resident as a goodwill gesture.

In response to a question about whether the council had a policy on foxes, the Head of Tenancy and Caretaking Services responded that it only discouraged the feeding of foxes and pigeons.

In response to a question about estate visits, the Panel heard that there was a full year schedule of visits, and that the Head of Tenancy and Caretaking Services also conducted a monthly walkabout with Councillor Hay-Justice. Councillor Hay-Justice stated that these took place on the last Tuesday of the month, and residents should contact her if there were any urgent issues that they thought merited a visit.

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The Chair asked if officers could provide the answer to two questions – what was happening with Westfield, and what was being done to bridge the gap in regards to social housing.

13/20 **Date of next meeting**

5 May 2020 at 6:30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Signed:

Date: