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London Borough of Islington

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 22 March 2017

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held on 22 March 2017 at 6.00 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Greening (Chair), Jeapes (Vice-Chair), Chowdhury, O'Halloran, Wayne and Champion

Councillor Richard Greening in the Chair

333 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)**

Councillors Gantly, Russell, Gallagher and Doolan

334 **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)**

None

335 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)**

None

336 **MINUTES (Item 4)**

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the addition of Councillor Rowena Champion in the list of Members Present for the meeting of the Committee on 8 March 2017, the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 18 January and 8 March 2017 be confirmed and the Chair be authorised to sign them

337 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Item 5)**

None

338 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 6)**

The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions and filming and recording of Public meetings

339 **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 7)**

The Chair reported that the Committee would be holding meetings with OFWAT on 20 April and Thames Water on 4 May to consider the independent report that is being produced for Thames Water on the recent major bursts across London.

The Chair stated that Members of the Public, residents and businesses affected were welcome to attend both meetings

340 FLOODING SCRUTINY - RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES - VERBAL (Item 8)

The Chair stated that the meeting had been convened to consider any issues that residents and businesses wished to raise with the Council as a result of the flooding in Upper Street. Residents of Devonia Road and Charlton Place were present together with businesses affected by the flood, together with Jackie Ambrosini of the Angel BID.

During discussion the following main points were raised –

- A number of businesses were still closed and were still not likely to open again before June
- Some residents could not return to their properties and were still living in temporary accommodation and some were not expected to return until June/July
- Residents and businesses expressed concern that despite promises made by Thames Water that no residents or businesses would not lose out financially as a result of the flood little progress had been made in resolving claims and in paying for losses, although it is now well over 3 months since the incident
- The Committee noted that residents and businesses were extremely concerned that the promises made by Thames Water at the meeting on 1 February were not being honoured and only a few claims had been settled. Only a few number of people had received any payments and were being 'stonewalled' by the loss adjustors and there is no single contact point in Thames Water who could be spoken to about claims
- Concern was expressed that flood victims are finding it difficult to get answers in relation to their claims, or any interim payments, which were important to businesses in coping with the aftermath of the flood
- It was noted that enquiries and e mails about claims were going unanswered and it is unclear who in Thames Water is taking overall responsibility for resolving these issues
- The Committee were of the view that Thames Water should provide a timescale for dealing with these claims and appoint a named person who residents and businesses can contact should they need to escalate issues that are not being resolved
- The Committee were also of the view that Bob Collington should attend the meeting on 29 March at 7.30 p.m. that Thames Water had arranged and noted that many Members of the Committee had not been notified of the date of this meeting and that the time had been set that was not convenient to businesses and Thames Water had been advised of this
- Residents and businesses expressed the view that they would wish the Council to play more of a co-ordination role with Thames Water on assisting with residents and businesses insurance claims and the Chair stated that he would raise this matter with the Executive
- The Committee were also of the view that Thames Water should provide details of properties that have put in insurance claims as the Council did not maintain this information
- Scepticism was expressed at the promises made by Thames Water that nobody would be worse off as a result of the flood that had been made would be kept and

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noted that businesses in Herne Hill had waited for over 3 years for claims to be settled by Thames Water. A business owner stated that she had a recording of the promises made by Thames Water at a previous meeting

- It was stated that Thames Water should be asked to provide details of the progress of the claims, the numbers that they have received, how many had been resolved or partially resolved, how many had resulted in full or interim payments and how many requests for interim payments are still outstanding. In addition in respect of unresolved claims when it is anticipated that these will be resolved
- The view was expressed that the local media should be made aware of the meeting with Thames Water on 29 March
- A resident of Devonia Road stated that she would provide a list of questions for Thames Water in respect of outstanding issues for the meeting on 29 March
- Reference was made to the fact that the Committee had been informed that a total of 44 businesses and 54 residential properties had been affected and that this information needed to be obtained from Thames Water in order to check on progress of these claims
- The view was expressed that concerted pressure needed to be maintained on Thames Water to ensure that they met their obligations and promises made regarding the flood
- Reference was made to the previous flood in Upper Street in 2005 and that this had been in the same location as the recent flood but the Council did not have records of the flood in 1999 as they had no emergency responsibility at that point
- Discussion took place that Thames Water needed to provide the Council with details of the main trunk mains in the borough and that there needed to be better co-ordination of street works between TfL, Public Utilities, Thames Water and the Council to ensure that there is minimum disruption to residents and commuters. This issue should be raised with the GLA
- Members stated that as many Councillors as possible would attend the meeting with Thames Water on 29 March and the Chair stated that he would write to Bob Collington at Thames Water on the issues raised above and requesting him to attend the meeting on 29 March
- Residents also raised issues of electricity charges and that there had been problems with Thames Water in this regard re: the use of humidifiers
- In response to a question the Chair stated that he was liaising with other London Boroughs that had been subjected to major bursts in the past 12 months and the GLA to investigate a Pan London approach to making recommendations to Thames Water
- The Chair stated that he would ensure future meeting dates of the PPS Committee were circulated to Angel BID for distribution

RESOLVED:

That the Chair request Bob Collington to attend the meeting at the Business Design Centre on 29 March and to provide the information requested above

The Chair thanked residents and businesses for attending

The meeting ended at 8.15p.m.

CHAIR