

London Borough of Islington

HOUSING EXECUTIVE – TUESDAY 22 APRIL 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the **Housing Executive** held at the Town Hall, Upper Street, London, N1 2UD, on **Tuesday 22 April 2014 at 6.00pm.**

PRESENT: Councillors: Barbara Sidnell and Claudia Webbe

Members: Jim Rooke, Theresa Coyle, Lawrencia Frempong, Llana Sparks, Rose Marie MacDonald, Sheila McBirnie, Jennifer Rooney

Councillor Barbara Sidnell in the Chair

113 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Terry Stacy and Jim Rooke for lateness.

114 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Theresa Coyle declared an interest in agenda item B7 Environmental Improvements programme as she was CEO on the Andover Community Centre

115 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

NONE.

116 MINUTES (Item A3)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 March 2014 be confirmed as a correct record of the proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

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117 PRESENTATIONS – BARNSBURY HOUSING ASSOCIATION AND HYDE HOUSING ASSOCIATION (Ag.Item B1)

The Committee received presentations from Ziggy Crawford, Chief Executive, Barnsbury Housing Association and Nazir Hafezjee, Head of Housing at Hyde Housing Association, copies of which are interleaved.

During consideration of the presentations the following main points were made –

- Barnsbury HA was a small community association with 250 homes and were committed to providing good quality general needs rented homes for people on low incomes

- Barnsbury HA were committed to an on going programme of repairs and 70% of the budget was spent in keeping homes in good condition
- Barnsbury HA were committed to lifetime tenancies
- In response to a question it was stated that with regard to trying to reduce the cost of heating in properties there were problems with the high level of Georgian stock and the difficulties that these involved in insulation and the fact that some of the 1970's stock was not particularly well built, however where possible heating was addressed when cyclical maintenance was carried out
- 40% of tenants were on fair rents and social rents were set to Government guidelines and were not exceeded. Service charges were set at a reasonable level
- There was a good service provided from the Council in assisting tenants from the HA in accessing advice on welfare reforms
- Hyde Housing Association was a Member of the G15 group
- The majority of Hyde properties in Islington were in the N7 area and the Packington Estate and Hyde provide the housing management service as a partner within Partners for Improvement in Islington
- An additional 14 staff had been created to deal with the problems related to the introduction of Universal Credit for tenants
- Hyde outlined the governance arrangements and that they were making efforts to involve more young people and BME communities but there was high resident involvement
- The level of complaints was low and there were four complaint stages
- The main issues of concern across estates were noise nuisance, nuisance caused by Children/Youths, rubbish/littering/fly tipping. A multi agency approach with Islington and other agencies is being taken to tackle estate wide ASB
- Hyde is a member of the Islington Housing Group and works in partnership with Islington Council and local partners
- Members queried the relationship between Hyde and Partners and whether the repairs service Hyde carried out was used by Partners. It was stated that this was not the case. Only the housing management service was provided by Hyde to Partners and a separate repairs contract was entered into by Partners. A structure chart showing details of this relationship would be circulated to Members
- In response to a question it was stated that Hyde paid the London Living Wage to all directly employed staff
- Hyde were fully committed to the Council's Housing strategy
- In regard to the Packington Estate it was currently in Phase 3 of Phase 8 of redevelopment and there was a rolling decant of residents. Residents were rehoused temporarily on the estate when work was taking place and this usually involved only one move before moving in to their new property

RECOMMENDATION:

That the information requested above in relationship between Hyde and Partners be circulated to Members of the Housing Executive for information.

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118 UPDATE FROM RESIDENTS CHAMPION – RESIDENTS IMPROVEMENT TASKFORCE (Ag.Item B2)

Theresa Coyle, Residents Champion provided an update for the Housing Executive on the work of the Residents Improvements Taskforce.

During the update the following main points were made –

- Discussion had taken place with the Housing Disability Forum and a number of issues had been identified
- The full report would not now be submitted to the Housing Executive until July 2014
- The support from Islington Council to tenants was generally good however there were issues around support for tenants following the initial period of support from the Council's transition officer and this was an area that the recommendations would address
- There had been 5 sessions held with different groups of staff and two focus groups with new tenants and telephone interviews with tenants who have downsized
- Discussion took place on the tenants handbook and that a copy of this should be circulated to Members prior to the next meeting in order that Members were aware of its contents prior to consideration of the report
- Councillor Webbe enquired whether there had been any consideration of TMO's/TMC's and it was stated that this had not formed part of the review however it would be useful if other examples of information that is given to new tenants is provided to the Committee

RECOMMENDATIONS:

(a) That a copy of the Tenants Handbook be circulated to Members prior to the next meeting of the Housing Executive

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(b) That Members of the Housing Executive be circulated with examples of other Tenants Handbooks in order that they can be assessed for comparative purposes

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The Chair thanked Theresa Coyle for her update

119 PROPOSED ESTATE GREEN SPACE POLICY (Ag.Item B3)

Hannah Bowman, Head of Housing Partnerships and Communities was present and outlined the report.

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- The new policy would require any changes to green space to be consulted upon
- The view was expressed that it was unfortunate that there had been the necessity of a court case to lead to the introduction of the new policy
- The view was expressed that there were a number of communal areas on estates that were neglected especially in relation to tree maintenance and that there was also the issue of where there were new developments adjoining or crossing Council estates there was the need to designate responsibility for maintenance of greenspace etc. The Chair stated that this could be looked at by the Residents Taskforce as part of a future Service Review
- It was stated that the Council did have a service agreement with Greenspace to maintain trees on estates and where there were new developments Greenspace were asked to identify maintenance costs as an addition to the service agreement it was stated that if there were any estates that were identified where there were problems these should be notified to Housing
- It was stated that the report should be submitted to the next meeting of the TMO Liaison Committee on 7 May and there was a need to consult with residents to build support for the policy. It was suggested that the policy be offered to the tenants and residents panels if further resident consultation was recommended

RECOMMENDATION:

That the introduction of the proposed greenspace policy, as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report, be welcomed and the report be forwarded to the TMO Liaison Committee on 7 May and to the next meeting of the Tenants and Residents Panels

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120 HOUSING OMBUDSMAN (Ag.Item B4)

Ivan Connolly, Corporate Complaints Officer was present and outlined the report.

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- There was a backlog of complaints with the Housing Ombudsman which was taking some time for the Ombudsman to deal with
- The report was recommending that Tenants Panels were not set up to review complaints or refer them to the Housing Ombudsman as generally residents tended to want to take their complaints directly to the Housing Ombudsman
- Theresa Coyle expressed the view that Tenants Panels should be set up and she knew of a number of residents who were not happy with the complaints process or the compensation offered
- It was stated that the current system appeared to be working effectively and that there were costs in setting up Tenants Panels and residents could go to the Housing Ombudsman after 8 weeks in any case
- Councillor Webbe expressed the view that she felt that there was a need to look at the whole complaints process before deciding whether Tenants Panels should be set up
- Councillor Webbe also referred to the fact that Councillor Murray was the designated lead Member however all Councillors need to be briefed that they could be a designated person. It was stated that there had been a briefing for Members arranged for the previous year but if further training was needed this could be arranged. The view was expressed that the briefing should be recirculated to all Members of the Council following the municipal elections
- The view was expressed that when this matter had been considered previously it had been agreed that the report should come back within 12 months for further consideration, however this report contained no views for the setting up of Tenants Panels and this was needed in order for the Housing Executive to make a decision

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (a) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee with advantages and disadvantages of setting up of a Tenants Panel
- (b) That the briefing previously circulated to all Members relating to the responsibility of being a delegated person, as referred to above, be recirculated to all Members of the Council following the municipal election

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121 RESIDENTS SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS (Ag.Item B5)

Hannah Bowman, Head of Housing Partnerships and Improvement was present for discussion of this item and outlined the report.

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- It was stated that three providers had been submitted to undertake the surveys and the most cost effective option chosen
- Reference was made to the number of people that had responded to the survey and it was stated that this information would be circulated to Members of the Committee
- There would be a review of the types of questions asked when the survey was next circulated
- There was a need to look at setting up more representative focus groups. Including residents of Partners properties

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and information on the number of respondents, as referred to above, be circulated to Members

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122 UPDATE ON ACTION PLANS ARISING FROM COMMUNAL REPAIRS TASKFORCE REVIEW (Item B6)

David Salenius, Principal Housing Manager, Estate Services, was present for discussion of this item and outlined the report.

Members expressed the view that when further updates were submitted they expected more of the actions to be implemented.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted with the comments above

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123 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS BUDGET 2014/15 (Item B7)

David Salenius, Principal Housing Manager, Estate Services, was present and outlined the report.

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- Reference was made to the fact that there had only been one scheme agreed from St.Mary's and this was similar to the previous year. It was stated that the new ways of working agreed would allow Housing Association representatives to attend meetings of Area Housing Panels where schemes were put forward
- It was noted that the vast majority of scheme referrals came from Tenants and Residents Associations
- There was £500k allocated for Environmental Improvements across the borough annually

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (a) That the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services be requested to investigate the reasons for the low submission of schemes in St.Mary's ward compared to different wards in the borough
- (b) That Members be informed at a future meeting of the list of schemes that had had environmental improvement works carried out in the previous 5 years and details of where these monies had not been spent
- (c) That the prioritised schemes put forward by the 6 Tenant and Resident Panels be agreed

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124 AGENDA PLANNING SCHEDULE (Ag.Item C1)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and a presentation from Voluntary Action Islington be added to a future meeting of the Committee.

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125 VOTE OF THANKS

The Chair stated that she would like to thank the Committee staff and Housing officers for their assistance during the time she had been Chair of the Committee.

The Chair added that although it was her last meeting she hoped that following the municipal elections that the Housing Executive would continue to evolve.

It was moved by Theresa Coyle and seconded by Councillor Webbe and -

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That a cordial vote of thanks be accorded to the Chair, Councillor Barbara Sidnell, for the services rendered by her to the Committee for the current municipal year

126 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 3 July 2014 – 6.00p.m.

The meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.

CHAIR