



South area Housing Services Forum

***Minutes of the meeting of 24 July 2013
Room F4/F5, Croydon Town Hall, Katharine St.***

Residents:

Syed Ahmad	John Piper
Sebastian Andrew	Stephen Pollard
Peter Collier	Marilyn Smithies
Beryl Cronk	Sandra Sullivan
Jean Dunstan	Kim Wakely
Lawrence Kennedy	Donna Cocker St Hill
Peter Mason	Driss Bouhmala
Alex Odam	Mustafa Abdi
Suzanne Parker	Stephanie Maun
Donald Macauley	

Apologies:

Cllr Terry Lenton	Cllr Carol Bonner
Emily Murrain	John Hyde
Theresa Letts	Cheryl Mendez

Officers:

Tim Nash	Resident Involvement Co-ordinator
Rose Marie Louis	Resident Involvement officer
Liz Collins	Resident involvement officer
Sylvie Saunders	Senior Involvement Support officer
Gemma Smith	Involvement Support officer
Dave Sutherland	Managing Director Croydon Landlord Services
Bob Richardson	Head of Planned Maintenance and Improvements
Lorraine Smout	Head of Responsive Repairs
Yvonne Murray	Head of Tenancy and Neighbourhood Services
Colin Alexander	Head of Income and Lettings
Mahmut Aydogan	Head of strategic programme and projects
Judy Pevan	Service Manager Stock Investment
Carol Ibbott	Leasehold and Transaction Services Manager

Ref	Subject	Action
1.0	Welcome, introductions & apologies	
1.1	Apologies were given as listed above	
1.2	Tim Nash welcomed everyone and introduced the panel. He then went through the meeting rules and agenda for the evening.	

2.0	Housing Services Forums structure and ways of working.	
2.1	Tim then explained that the aim of these forums is to enable residents living in properties managed by Croydon Council to talk with officers, about new proposals and existing housing management services in Croydon. The forum will enable residents to discuss proposals and to think about ways we can improve those services.	
2.2	The forum will also develop working relationships with residents and other partners from within the affected areas, in order to work towards improving the local environment and general quality of life on our housing estates.	
2.3	Reports will be presented to the forum for discussion such as performance reports on local services and recommendations can be made by officers or members where appropriate.	
2.4	There are two forums, one looking at services in the North and the other for those living in the South of Croydon. The forums are constituted – which means they have a set of rules, which should be read, understood and agreed by anyone wishing to become a member of the forum.	
2.5	Any residents from the area can attend but we will be encouraging people to become members, this will allow them to be involved in voting and actively take part in discussions more effectively. All those who wish to be members must complete a Forum membership form and register their details on the Housing Sounding Board.	
2.6	Forums will be managed by the Resident Involvement team who will also service the meetings but these are resident meetings and will normally be chaired by a resident, elected by the members.	
2.7	The agendas are put together by the resident chair and vice chair. If members wish to suggest agenda items, we will be asking for these at the end of each meeting or you can advise us of items prior to the next meeting.	
2.8	As the name suggests, these are ‘forums’ – which means a place for discussion, so we are hoping that they will provide an opportunity for residents to discuss key issues with officers and hopefully agree ways to improve housing services. The main focus will be on the delivery of housing management services from the council in each of the two geographic areas.	
2.9	A one hour surgery will precede all meetings and these will be staffed by local officers, during the surgeries we encourage any personal issues to be discussed as these issues will not be discussed in the main meeting.	
2.10	Meetings will be arranged quarterly and will initially take place in central Croydon venues and in the evening but as time progresses, meeting times and venues may be altered.	

3.0	Croydon Landlord Services - Structure & Q&A	
3.1	Please see presentation which is included with the minutes.	
3.2	Q&A	
Q	Do people on estates get priority over garage applications compared to those who do not live on the estate?	
A	This is not a policy at the moment as garages are normally not oversubscribed but this comment will be taken back to the office for review. The policy has recently changed allowing storage of dry goods in garages, which it is hoped will help to let more garages.	CA
Q	Can people carry out repairs in garages?	
A	This is not allowed and specified in the garage rental agreement and tenancy agreements. Any deviation from this could result in eviction.	
Q	How long do garage repossessions take?	
A	They can be as quick as two weeks, some cases can take longer as the council need to gain evidence of breach of contract in order to give a notice of eviction.	
Q	Leaseholders pay for works to their blocks, does this money then directly finance the Stock Investment programme?	
A	This is not the case, leaseholder service charges are charged retrospectively and the money received goes into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which pays for the provision of all housing services. At the beginning of the financial year the HRA fund is then divided out to all the appropriate service areas within housing.	
Q	The roads of the Croftleigh Road estate are in poor condition, can something be done about this?	
A	This does not come under the housing remit but we will take details and pass this to the Highways section.	
Q	Can signs be added to estates stating that carrying out repairs is not permitted in the garages?	
A	This is an option, although signs have limited effect with residents. Also this rule is stated in the tenancy agreement and terms & conditions.	
Q	Do the same rules apply for non-tenants?	
A	Yes same rules apply	
Q	What are the council doing about untidy gardens on the Waddon estate?	
A	Tenancy has been working on this for two years focusing on Waddon especially. Tenancy conditions do state that tenants are responsible for their gardens maintenance/upkeep, however it is very difficult to gain an eviction order from the courts just based on this. The council works closely with tenants that may not be able to maintain their gardens due to health issues and works with its partners to gain help for those individuals. Warnings to tenants do get issued by local tenancy officers reminding tenants of their responsibilities if their gardens are not maintained.	

Q	A tenant asked if the council could look at community gardening schemes where local residents get together and help those less able with the assistance of the council, maybe borrowing equipment required that they would not be able to purchase themselves.	TN
A	Both officers and the panel liked this idea and Tim Nash from the resident involvement team will be taking this suggestion back to his team and sustainable communities' team to develop further.	
Q	What is the caretakers' role? A tenant reported that in their block the caretaker does not report communal repairs issues to the contact centre and such repairs are left for residents to report.	
A	All caretakers should report any communal repairs issues they see, door entry systems would be included in this. Caretakers are also responsible for communal cleaning and maintenance to the bin area.	
Q	How can the council justify the costs of service charges when some elements of the charges, for example loft maintenance are not being carried out?	
A	Any queries with regards to individual service charges should be put in writing to the service charges team. Service charges for communal repairs are charged per block, based on the cost of works actually carried out during the previous financial year.	
4.0	Repairs Re-procurement - presentation & Q&A	
4.1	Please refer to presentation which is included with the minutes.	
4.2	Q&A	
Q	With regards to the repairs contact centre, will this still be in the UK?	
A	Yes the contact centre will remain in the Croydon area.	
Q	Will the new contractor use sub-contractors?	
A	Some sub-contractors will be used but tenants should see no difference in service or appearance, the sub-contractors will still have to pass the same requirements/rules as the main contractor. If sub-contractors do not meet expectations the council will have the right to request they be removed from the contract.	
Q	Will sub-contractors like Melray (who deal with door entry systems) be put into the new contract?	
A	Some specialist contractors will remain outside the main repairs contract.	
Q	Will the out of hours services be improved?	
A	Yes, the new contractors have been asked to make recommendations for improving the evening and weekend call out service.	
Q	Will the repairs line be on a Freephone number?	
A	No, the repairs number will remain the same, so the cost will remain the same as it is now to tenants and leaseholders. However, anyone phoning the number should receive a faster service as the repairs operatives will only be taking repairs calls. Currently in house operators	

<p>Q A Q A</p>	<p>can take a variety of calls across the whole of the housing service.</p> <p>Will penalty clauses be monitored and applied? The proposal has included very strict KPI's (key performance indicators) and these will be monitored by the council. The new contractors charges are linked to these KPI's, so if they do not perform they will not be able to charge as much to the council. Ultimately if the contractor does not perform they could lose the contract, although the council will only take this action as a last resort. Many other interactions with the contractor would take place before that stage.</p> <p>According to a recent survey, customer satisfaction with the grass cutting service is at 100%. I do not understand how that can be, as our area has regular issues with this service? This service is assessed by tenants and as a rule across the borough is of a good standard. Some residents do complain but specific problem areas are generally dealt with quickly. Issues can be due to tenants having high expectations of the service and perhaps more could be done to explain to tenants about what the service is expected to provide rather than what the tenants thinks they should provide.</p>	
<p>5.0 5.1</p>	<p>Future agenda items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on repairs re procurement • Estate inspections (especially highways on estates) • Dog ownership by tenants/fouling • Recycling & Veolia (environmental) • Street light issues (new lighting) • Grounds maintenance • Councillors to attend the meetings 	
<p>6.0 6.1 6.2</p>	<p>Chair and Vice Chair Elections</p> <p>Nominations for Chair – Marilyn Smithies / John Piper Written ballot results –Marilyn Smithies 8 votes / John Piper 3 votes</p> <p>Nominations for Vice Chair – John Piper / Peter Mason Written ballot results – John Piper 5 votes / Peter Mason 6</p> <p>Chair confirmed as Marilyn Smithies & Vice Chair confirmed as Peter Mason – Congratulations.</p>	
<p>7.0 7.1 7.2</p>	<p>Date, Time and Venue of Next meeting</p> <p>A discussion took place about the preferred venue for the next meeting. By a show of hands, most members felt that Rooms F4 and F5 was a more suitable venue for this meeting than the Council Chamber.</p> <p>The next meeting will be on 20th November 2013 at 7.00 to 9.00pm in Room F4/F5, with a surgery at 6.00 to 7.00pm in Room G4, both in Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon.</p>	