

Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

Meeting held on Tuesday, 3 July 2018 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber - Town Hall

MINUTES

Present: Marilyn Smithies (Chair);
Colin Wood (Vice-Chair);
Jill Arboine, Aishnine Benjamin, Yaw Boateng, Peter Cooper, Bernard Daws,
James Fraser, Sharon Swaby and Kim Wakely

Councillors Cliver Fraser, Lynne Hale and Patricia Hay-Justice

Also Present: Director of Housing Need, Director of District Centres & Regeneration, Head of Tenancy and Neighbourhood Services, Resident Involvement and Scrutiny Manager, Senior Involvement Support Officer, Oriol Weekes (Resident), Sanito Williams (Resident).

Apologies: Councillors Alison Butler and Pat Clouder
Head of Service Development, Head of Assets and Involvement, Ken Constantine, Sandie Fernando, Grace Osoata and John Piper.

PART A

13/18 **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked members to introduce themselves before asking their question.

14/18 **Disclosures of Interest**

There were no disclosures at this meeting.

15/18 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Proposed by Kim Wakely, seconded by Bernard Daws. The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2018 were approved as an accurate record.

16/18 **Overview from the New Administration: Priorities for the Housing Service for the next 4 years**

Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice made a presentation to the panel:

The panel were informed of the importance of having a place to call home and how determined the Council was in ensuring members of the community lived in decent homes.

The following was also stated in relation to affordable housing:

- Purchasing 250 additional homes for families in housing need
- Reintroducing wardens into all sheltered accommodation
- If there was a need to demolish any property a regeneration ballot would be held for residents

It was expressed by Councillor Hay-Justice that despite the provision of affordable homes being a great challenge for Croydon, efforts were still being made to supply homes for people in Croydon.

A member of the panel had asked what determined the affordability of a home and it was said that it needed to be 80% of the market rent as defined by the central government. However this was considered to not be attainable for many residents which is why Croydon Council aimed to reduce it to 65% of market rent.

An Officer informed panel members that the Government recently announced £500 million was available which London Authorities could bid on. This meant that there was an opportunity for the Council to receive a grant in September 2018.

A question was asked as to whether the lack of jobs within the local population would be resolved. The panel heard that contractors were being encouraged to put people first by providing apprenticeships which would help increase the availability of jobs. There was also many opportunities for employment in the private sector.

Members of the panel **NOTED** this presentation.

17/18 **The Hackett Review - Croydon's Response**

The Director of District Centres and Regeneration presented this report to the panel in the absence of the Head of Assets and Involvement.

The panel was informed that the report outlined key findings identified due to the Hackett Review.

The report demonstrated that:

- Fire safety remained a priority, this was important to the Council
- Engagement with people needed be maintained to ensure residents' views were and continue to be heard.

A question was asked as to how these findings would be dealt with between now and the next T&L Panel in October 2018. An Officer stated they would be contacting residents to hear their views, with the findings of the Hackett Review being the main focus.

Members of the panel **NOTED** this report.

18/18 **Scrutiny Report on Responsive Repairs**

Yaw Boateng (Tenant Scrutiny Panel) reported that the Tenant Scrutiny Panel visited Access Croydon and had a session with the access operators employed by the Council. It was emphasised that Access repairers and Access Croydon referred to two different things and a distinction had to be made to avoid confusion. The report highlighted that:

- There were 3 focus groups used to assess responsive repairs
- Other desktop reviews in boroughs such as Bromley and Southwark showed that residents can make reports on repairs without MY Account.
- Residents visited Axis and had conversations with various operatives about this function
- The Croydon MyApp was limited and could only be used to inform on others
- There were inconsistencies with the delivery of service including a lack of communication for residents.
- Since meeting with access operators, an effort was made to improve communication between residents and operators so that tenants knew when repairs would be complete.

It was stated that the recommendations in the report had already been made or were in the process of being actioned.

The Officer involved in finalising this report and working with residents added that there was an existing service approval plan and residents cannot report repairs on MY Account for security reasons. Although other boroughs could use MY Account for this purpose, Croydon Council could not because of data protection agreements. An officer stated that the MY Account could be used to book appointments and pay bills amongst other functions.

The panel heard that the Council was recruiting for Chief Digital Officer.

Members of the panel **NOTED** this report.

19/18 **Staffing Restructure of Housing Needs: Who's Who and What it means for residents**

The Head of Tenancy and Neighbourhood Services informed the panel:

All the services had been brought together under a new structure since April 2018.

The presentation slides demonstrated that there were Operational managers for:

- Tenancy and Caretaking Service (7, there were 3 vacancies)
- Service Development (3)
- Income and Lettings (5)

It was intended for officers to report to their operational managers and having them across all services made it easier for staff to collaborate and ensure the delivery of their services was co-ordinated well.

The Officer stated that this new structure would help improve customer experience and organising resident improvement groups for each service would help further this.

It was noted that a new role for a Handy Person had been created in the Tenancy Service to assist with minor repairs. Interviews were held for 3 vacancies shown on the chart and an update would be provided on this in due course.

A panel member asked whether there were still Resident Involvement (RI) Officers and it was said that they were still supporting resident associations.

Members of the panel **NOTED** this report.

20/18 **Resident Involvement Refresh: Update and future proposals**

The Resident Involvement and Scrutiny Manager informed the panel that the RI framework and future of the T&L Panel had been considered and it was highlighted that:

- Attendance of members was decreasing
- There needed to be more people to attend for fair representation of the community

- There should be clear outcomes for the panel, should be feeding back views of services
- Newcomers had expressed interest in the panel and at least 10 people wanted to join

Panel members were informed that they had to stand down and re-apply to sit on the T&L panel if they wished to join again. The next meeting in October 2018 would be when the revised panel were expected to convene.

The presenting officer also stated an associate membership was being pursued for the T&L panel so that anybody interested who could not attend meetings could still participate.

In order to encourage interactivity amongst panel members, it was proposed that:

- Members could submit questions which could be recorded and responded to by officers
- Could watch the meeting via Skype and Webcast in the long-term

The person specification form was made available in the agenda of this meeting which people could fill out.

The Vice-Chair stated that he had been a panel member for 15 years and stood down as Vice-Chair. He expressed that he would like to become an associate member and agreed that introducing new members would help the panel. Councillors, Officers and members of the panel were thanked for their support and involvement.

Other updates included:

- A review of the service improvement groups
- The RI team was now responsible for residents with major works to homes
- Using new technology and being cost effective to benefit the restructure

Members of the panel **NOTED** this report.

21/18 **Resident Involvement Activity Report**

This report was attached for information only.

22/18 **Scrutiny update**

Yaw Boateng informed the panel that The Tenant Scrutiny panel would be reviewing the housing complaints process over the coming weeks. A key question raised within the panel was how to define a complaint since it tends to differ amongst people.

The Chair had asked for clarification as to whether or not the Vice-Chair of the T&L panel was allowed to be a member of the Scrutiny panel which was raised in January's meeting. An officer replied that anybody could be a member of both groups.

Members of the panel **NOTED** this update.

23/18 **Feedback**

a) London Tenants' Federation - Jamil Tarik

Absent.

b) ARCH - Yaw Boateng

Panel members were told that it had been a very busy period for ARCH. Yaw also stated:

- Fire safety was going to be a standing item on their agenda
- Housing pre-paper was intended to be sent soon

The Benefit to Society Campaign was briefly explained to the panel:

- This campaign was sponsored by organisations and landlords
- Stated to be important for the Council to get involved
- The campaign was aimed at the media, landlords and politicians
- The negative perception of tenants needed to be resolved

A copy of this slide presentation was circulated via post and email to members of the panel.

The Eshare Health Conference was also scheduled for 18th September 2018.

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

Absent.

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

In Sian Foley's absence, the Chair informed the panel that there was a focus to commission providers and expand advertising which was a priority to members.

Members of the T&L Panel were asked to promote these efforts in their local areas. Furthermore members were told that more social events were taking place, including Active lifestyle sessions which had expanded. Anyone interested in participating was encouraged to contact Sian Foley.

Members of the panel **NOTED** this feedback.

24/18 Any Other Business

A resident asked whether there were any provisions in place for housing members of the armed forces and police officers.

In response, the panel heard that stating in accordance with the Housing Allocation Policy 2002, they are eligible for housing as long as they worked and lived in Croydon.

The Chair thanked everyone for their involvement in the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel and also thanked the Council for their support.

25/18 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 16 October 2018 at 6:30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX.

The meeting ended at 8.22 pm

Signed:
Date: