

Minutes of the Leaseholders Council Meeting on Thursday, 2 March 2006 in the Council Chamber, Lambeth Town Hall

Delegates

Brixton Area

Irena Kowalewska
Joan Francomb
Hermia Henry-Esezobor
Elizabeth Osei

Patch

Effra
Effra
Fernview
Rush Common

Clapham & Stockwell

Chris Vaughan (Chair)
Beryl Jones
Julie Hansen
Angelita McKenzie
Peter Maloney

Patch

Clapham Common
Clapham High Street
VMW Plus
Springfield
HMS

North Lambeth

Barry McCalla (Vice Chair)
Rosa Almeida
Phoebe Ejimbe (Secretary)
Don Cook

Patch

Kennington
Ashmole
Ashmole
Brahmah Green

Norwood

Rod Brown

Patch

Norwood

Streatham

Nina Roberts
Hazel Evans
Thomas Davies

Patch

Rookery
Rookery
Reservoir

Tenants Council

Jean Kerrigan (Chair)

Elected Members

Cllr Jeremy Clyne
Cllr. John Kazantzis

Leaseholders Champion
Labour Housing Spokesperson

Officers

Chris Lee
Chris Adamson
David Thompson

Interim Executive Director of Housing
Interim Head of Housing Management
Interim Div. Director of Performance, Strategy
& Regeneration
Head of Community Safety
Home Improvement Agency Manager

Simon Harding
Stephanie Brann

Ashley Parrette
Keith Hardy
Nazrul Islam
Marilyn Proctor

Home Ownership Services Manager
Major Works Manager
Leasehold Management Officer
Resident Participation Manager

Guests:

Superintendent Paul Wilson
Gary McFarlane
Shane Randall
B Hartwell

Metropolitan Police
Morrison
Morrison
Morrison

Observers:

Ella Lewis
Pauline Francis
Ron Francis
Nora-Anne Sheely
Kathleen Derrig
A Halloran
T Hayes
P R Hayes
G Harvey
T Durant
Mr De Earl
J Hefferman
Pat Smith
Joe Marreiros
C Marreiros
Thomas Hallaner
Rose Ikolodo

Apologies:

Tracey Gregory (Secretary)

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Councillors and Officers to introduce themselves.

Chris Lee, Interim Executive Director of Housing, said a few words about the new interim senior management structure and said he looked forward to working with and supporting Leaseholders Council.

2. Crime and Community Safety

The Chair introduced Superintendent Paul Wilson who gave a brief overview of his role based at Brixton Police Station, which includes responsibility for

Partnership. He highlighted the work currently in hand in the Brixton area to combat drug dealing and emphasized that in carrying out their duties officers are often confronted by violence.

A delegate raised concerns about the length of wait she had experienced at Brixton Police Station in reporting an incident of fraud. The Superintendent agreed that this level of customer service was unacceptable and advised delegates about a volunteer programme that is being introduced that will involve residents in assisting the police and hopefully lead to reduced waiting times for reporting crime.

Paul Wilson gave details of his e-mail address should delegate wish to make contact with him in the future. paul.wilson5@met.police.uk

Simon Harding, Head of Community Safety, told delegates about the work of his team of 40 staff which includes looking at crime statistics, youth crime and working with various agencies to combat drug abuse. He also mentioned the Safer Lambeth Partnership which is a bi-monthly forum involving the Police, Primary Care Trust and Brixton Prison looking at various aspects of crime in the borough.

Simon explained that he is developing an Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy for the borough, not just Council housing.

Wardens are currently operating in eight of the Council's wards. This will now be rolled out to cover the whole borough from April. This will require the recruitment of 40-50 additional staff. The work of the wardens covers both enforcement and re-assurance and they will be happy to attend local meetings and get involved in community activities.

A delegate asked whether wardens have the power of arrest. It was confirmed that they do not. However, the wardens will work closely with the Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

3. Home Improvement Agency

Stephanie Brann advised delegates of the work of the Home Improvement Agency. If you are on a low income a number of grants may be available to help you pay for any work that needs doing including Home Repairs Assistance and Energy Efficiency Grants. She also talked about House Proud, which is a loan scheme available for the over 60's who do not qualify for grants or in cases where a grant would not cover all of the costs. Stephanie added that if any leaseholder wanted further information they should call the Home Improvement Agency on 020 7926 4444 or 020 7926 4247.

4. **Update from Morrison**

Garry McFarlane advised delegates that the pilot scheme for leaseholders is now in its last month. Whilst the scheme was slow to take off, requests for work have now picked up. Eighty jobs have so far been completed and satisfaction levels are high for both appointments being made and standards of workmanship. A large amount of money has been invested in promoting the scheme and a **request was made to continue the pilot for another six months. This was agreed, but will need to be confirmed by senior management.**

In the future Morrison representatives will attempt to attend Leaseholders' Patch meetings to promote the scheme further. Delegates were also advised that Morrison have been approached by other London boroughs who are interested in running similar schemes.

5. **Decent Homes update**

David Thompson, Interim Division Director of Property, gave a brief update on Decent Homes.

Delegates were informed that as a result of the recent fraud discovery the progress of much of the work has been unavoidably delayed which will mean that some under-spend monies (about £15 million) will be carried forward to the next financial year. In 2006/07, out of a capital budget of £60m, around £30m will be spent on Decent Homes.

Once a comprehensive review has been completed officers will have a clear view of which works will be due to commence in the next financial year. Works will initially be concentrated on roofs, windows and walls. Officers will also be investigating the bulk purchase of material to make significant savings.

Cllr Kazantzis queried when an updated Road Map will be available. Officers advised that site visits are currently taking place to supplement the original surveys carried out and a revised plan of works should be available in May. In addition, local surveys will also be undertaken prior to works going on site to iron out any anomalies.

A delegate queried whether the delayed starts for some works will lead to increased costs. Officers advised that this will depend on the tender prices when they are received. Officers also confirmed that any structural works required to properties will be done as part of the Decent Homes Programme.

Many delegates queried delayed starts for works and officers confirmed that apologies would be forthcoming if it is felt residents have been misled. Letters will go out to residents explaining future programmes on their estates.

Action: Officers were asked to produce a report for the next meeting to clarify the position with regard to replacement windows for leaseholders as there has been considerable confusion surrounding this matter.

One delegate advised that some leaseholders may be forced to sell their properties if they cannot meet the huge bills they will receive for works. In some instances this will result in the break-up of communities, in particular where flats are being sold to agencies who then rent them out. Officers responded that the council is currently looking into the various payment options that may be available to leaseholders.

Officers also gave assurances that any bulk purchase schemes will be piloted before being rolled out.

David Thompson said he would be happy to return to the May meeting to give a further update.

6. Leaseholder representation at Area Housing Forums

The Chair introduced this item by stating that when the Area Housing Forum Terms of Reference were drafted, two places were offered to leaseholders. These were turned down because Leaseholders Executive wished for greater representation. The Division Director, Housing Management agreed to review the Terms of Reference in 12 months and Leaseholders Council will now be taking steps to open the discussion with a view to securing a 25% representation for leaseholders. A letter will be drafted and put before the Executive for agreement at their next meeting; this will then be forwarded to all interested parties.

7. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2005

The minutes were agreed; there were no matters arising.

8. Any Other Business

Officers drew delegates' attention to the report on window cleaning and estate cleaning which was included in the agenda pack for information. The report details proposals to extend the existing contract and commence negotiations with Environment for a joint contract for external cleaning.

A delegate raised a query concerning charges for the removal of bulk refuse. Residents living in private street properties can have bulk refuse removed free of charge (i.e. paid for from Council Tax), whereas tenants and leaseholders living on estates have to pay for this service.

Action: Officers to investigate and report back to the next meeting

A delegate queried the re-issue of statements due to the inclusion of un-related items. Officers confirmed that certified summary statements have been sent out together with an explanatory letter where there has been an adjustment.

Concern was expressed about the payment for services at the same time as major works are being undertaken. It was agreed that specific issues should be raised with the Head of Home Ownership.

9. Vote of Thanks

A vote of thanks was proposed for the work undertaken by Chris Vaughan in chairing recent meetings. This work will now be handed over to Barry McCalla for the following six month period.

10. The next meeting will be held on 18 May 2006.