

Housing Service Improvement Forum notes

Lambeth Town Hall, room 125 at 7pm

Monday, 22 May 2006

Attendance

Nominated Delegates

Rashmi Agrawal	Brixton AHF
Cathy Butler	Norwood AHF
Rita Fitzgerald	North Lambeth AHF
Jean Haley	Norwood AHF
Jean Kerrigan	Brixton AHF
Pauline Lewis	Streatham AHF
Graham Nicholls	Streatham AHF
Ray Puckey	North Lambeth AHF
Pat Scahill	Clapham and Stockwell AHF
Chris Vaughan	Co-chair Leaseholders Council

Elected Members None

Officers

Tom Bremner	Head of Housing Management
Caroline Doyle	Service Development Officer
Earl Ray Neil	Monitoring and Service Development Manager
Marilyn Proctor	Manager Resident Participation Team
Jackie Thomas	Area Housing Manager, Norwood

Apologies None

1.0 Chairing

Action

1.1 Delegates proposed and agreed that Jean Kerrigan should chair the meeting.

2.0 Notes of last meeting were agreed with no changes

3.0 Matters arising and the action sheet

3.1 Mystery Shopping: It was confirmed that Ros and Graham are still interested in getting involved.

**Frank
Fonton**

3.2 Repairs awaiting inspection: delegates queried the large number of variation orders being issued. **This will be raised at the Clapham and Stockwell Area Housing Forum on 30 May and brought back to Tenants Council or Housing Service Improvement Forum if not resolved.** There are many backlogs with communal repairs: for a future meeting the following topics to be reported are:

- The use of maximisers
- Reporting of communal repairs
- Delays in progressing orders

TB

In the meantime officers were asked to ensure that communal repairs are progressed in all areas.

3.3 Action sheet: Delegates were of the opinion that these should be sent out with the agenda packs and not tabled. **RPU**

3.4 Water tanks and lighting: many areas have access problems to water tanks and lighting is not being checked regularly. **It was agreed that detailed reports would be made available at AHFs on these two items.** **TB**

3.5 Home ownership costs: Officers gave a commitment to make this information available at a future Housing Finance Meeting. **TB**

4.0 Tenancy Conditions and Tenants Handbook

4.1 Officers gave a presentation outlining the necessity to change the Tenancy Conditions and handed round examples of handbooks produced by other boroughs. Options for future consultation were also discussed.

4.2 It was proposed that officers consider local meetings in each area as many residents are not keen to visit the Town Hall. Areas to be looked at include:

- Absentee landlords
- Introductory tenancies
- Welcome packs
- Inter-estate transfers
- Internal and external inspections prior to transfer registration
- Rights of entry for officers
- Conduct of children and visitors

4.3 Delegates expressed a preference for a small ring binder, similar to the one produced by Lewisham. **Rashmi Agrawal and Jean Haley volunteered to assist officers with further discussion on the handbook and conditions.** **ERN**

5.0 Housing management inspection

5.1 Officers presented the main findings from the Audit Commission inspection and put this in the context of recent inspections carried out in other boroughs. An action plan is currently being drawn up to address the recommendations made in the report and it is intended that the Housing Service Improvement Forum will monitor the progress of this plan.

5.2 It is anticipated that the action plan will address many of the queries raised following the presentation. **ACTON: If delegates are concerned that any important matters have been omitted then these can be added.** **TB**

6.0 Review of income collection services

6.1 Officers presented a brief paper outlining proposals to review income collection and set up a centralised service to improve collection performance. Many local authorities now have centralised teams. Lambeth currently operate from the five Area Housing Offices with central legal teams and former tenants arrears teams.

6.2 It was proposed that residents will be invited to accompany officers on visits to other local authorities that currently operate centralised collection services. The three key issues to be considered are:

- How will the service be accessed by residents?

- Will services improve as well as performance?
- Will value for money be achieved?

6.3 Officers were also asked to consider how the Joint Service Centres will fit into these proposals. Look at the amount of debt that accrued previously in the borough when the service was centralised and look into the performance of the Housing Benefit Service.

6.4 This item will be brought back to a future meeting of the Housing Service Improvement Forum.

JT

7.0 AOB

7.1 July meeting

- Update on income collection
- Update on new IT systems
- Update on tenancy conditions
- Update on communal repairs
- Services for non-English speaking residents
- Estate cleaning and estate services
- Parking

7.2 Future Item remaining from last set of notes: Nuisance best practise