

Tenants Council Minutes

Lambeth Town Hall, room 8
 Thursday, 16 February 2006
 7:00 – 9:00PM

<p>Attendance Nominated Delegates and Deputies Rashmi Agrawal Bill Alison Denise Anderson Roberto Ballardini Hazel Barlow Cathy Butler Ray Farrow Rita Fitzgerald, Vice Chair John Frankland Robert Hall David Hart Jean Kerrigan, Chair Ros Munday, Vice Chair Graham Nicholls, Ex-Chair Ray Puckey Pat Scahill Chris Vaughan Bill Willingham Joyce Wilson</p>	<p>Brixton – Delegate Clapham and Stockwell – Deputy Clapham and Stockwell – Delegate North Lambeth – Delegate Streatham Area Housing Forum Chair Norwood – Delegate Norwood – Delegate North Lambeth – Delegate TMO Liaison Committee Brixton – Delegate Clapham and Stockwell – Deputy Brixton – Delegate Clapham and Stockwell – Delegate Streatham North Lambeth – Delegate Clapham and Stockwell – Delegate Leaseholders Council Clapham and Stockwell – Deputy Brixton – Delegate</p>
<p>Elected Members Cllr Jeremy Clyne Cllr John Kazantzis Cllr Keith Fitchett Cllr Robert McConnell</p>	<p>Leaseholders Champion Labour Liberal Democrat Liberal Democrat</p>
<p>Officers Chris Adamson Kevin Creed Michael Darby Stuart Dixon / Marilyn Proctor Mary Lynch George Marshman Ashley Parrette Tom Gillham Jackie Thomas Mike Wacha</p>	<p>Head of Housing Management Support Resident Participation Officer Area Operations Manager, Streatham Resident Participation Team Manager Division Director Housing Services Assistant Director Disabilities and Older Persons Home Ownership Services Manager Contract Management Manager Area Housing Office Manager, Norwood Area Housing Office Manager, Streatham</p>
<p>Apologies Susan deSwarte Jean Haley Marjorie Landels Beryl Saunders Chris Lee</p>	<p>Norwood – Delegate Norwood – Delegate North Lambeth – Delegate TMO Liason Committee Interim Executive Director of Housing Services</p>

	Action
<p>1.0 Welcome and introductions</p> <p>1.1 The chair welcomed everyone</p> <p>1.2 The chair then asked TC if they agreed to a change in the agenda to allow Councillor McConnell to make a statement, on behalf of the leader of the Council, regarding the resignation of Councillor Fitchett from the position of Executive Member for Housing. This was agreed. The amended agenda was agreed.</p> <p>1.3 Cllr McConnell stated that both Cllrs Truesdale and Whelan regretted that they couldn't be present. They will be taking over the responsibilities of the Executive Member for Housing. The working group that has been put in place will continue. Cllrs Truesdale and Whelan would like to meet with the Chairs of both Tenants and Leaseholders Councils very soon. Cllr. Fitchett was thanked for all of his hard work on behalf of housing.</p> <p>1.4 Cllr McConnell went on to address repair work on sheltered housing properties in the borough. He stated that repairs would continue to be done as usual. This was prompted by the suggestion by delegates at an earlier meeting that repairs had been halted.</p> <p>1.5 Cllr Keith Fitchett informed TC of the passing of Millie Chandler of China Walk TRA and of Molly Wallis' husband. He offered his condolences to both families. He then explained the reasons why he had decided to resign from the position of Executive Member for Housing. He was unhappy with the way Stewart Holton and other officers were treated following the Project Ruby investigation. He does want to ensure new financial procedures don't slow down the Capital Works programme. He stressed the importance of adhering to procedures in order to reduce any future fraud attempts. He wants to continue improvements in value for money. He then thanked both the Tenants and Leaseholders Councils for all of their hard work and said it was vital that they continue to have significant influence in the Council.</p> <p>1.6 The Chair thanked Cllr Fitchett on behalf of TC.</p> <p>1.7 TC agreed to send their condolences to Molly Wallis on her loss and to the family of Millie Chandler.</p> <p>1.8 Rita Fitzgerald suggested that the community hall on the China Walk Estate be renamed in Millie chandler's honour to recognise her for all the hard work she put into it. TC supported this suggestion.</p> <p>1.9 The Chair also thanked Stewart Holton for all of his hard work and for working with the tenants. TC agreed this.</p> <p>1.10 Ros Munday asked to have CEN added to AOB.</p> <p>1.11 Several papers were tabled at the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interim management arrangements for the Housing service • Letter from Ian McIntosh to Cllr McConnell regarding overspend in the repairs budget and sheltered housing. • Briefing from Phyllis Dunipace on the resignation as the Executive Member of Housing by Cllr Fitchett • Progress report from Professor Tomlins on the Tulse Hill performance indicators and community involvement project • Update on the London Tenants Federation 	<p>AHM North Lambeth</p>

<p>2.0 Minutes from 24 November 2005</p> <p>2.1 On point 8.3 (savings from reframing) an action was not recorded; ACTION: TC would like a report on the savings made to-date from the reframing exercise.</p> <p>2.2 Minutes agreed with above change.</p>	<p>Div. Dir. Hsg. Mgmt.</p>
<p>3.0 Minutes from the rent consultation meeting 19 January 2006</p> <p>3.1 On point 5.9 (garage rental criteria) further clarification was requested, it will include: criteria on who is entitled to use the garages.</p> <p>3.2 On point 5.10 (sheltered housing) Sheltered Housing Committee needs to be changed to read Sheltered Housing Commission.</p> <p>3.3 On point 5.12 (meeting-of Lambeth Council on 22 February) <i>delegates of Tenants Council</i> needs to be changed to read delegation from Tenants Council</p> <p>3.4 Minutes agreed with above changes.</p>	<p>Div. Dir. Hsg Mgmt.</p> <p>RPU</p> <p>RPU</p>
<p>4.0 Matters arising</p> <p>4.1 From 24 November 2005</p> <p>4.2 Pat Watson requested a formal reply from the Chair to her letter (concerning attendance at local contract meetings) from last September. Chair stated that at a previous Tenants Council Meeting it was agreed officers would respond she would chase their written response.</p> <p>4.3 On point 4.4 (decommissioning of gas fires) one delegate pointed out to officers that she is aware of at least one case where a tenant has been left without heating of any kind. Chris Adamson requested details from anyone who has this kind of information. Delegates also pointed out to officers that sometimes only expensive electric heaters are supplied. They also questioned why tenants had to inform the council; shouldn't that be the contractors' responsibility? ACTION: Delegates mentioned the additional 50p charge when a fire is installed additional to central heating. Will residents be reimbursed when the fire is removed? Chris Adamson will investigate. It was suggested that some elderly residents worry about high costs of central heating. The Chair recommended officers look into educating about the most economic use of central heating.</p> <p>4.4 On point 4.5 (Community Safety) Ros Munday said the borough commander is happy to attend a future meeting. ACTION: RPU to arrange this special meeting of TC for later in the year.</p> <p>4.5 On point 4.6 (Streatham Community Rangers area expansion) TC was updated and informed that the rangers are now operating on Cheshire Estate. The Streatham Area Housing Manager was thanked.</p> <p>4.6 On point 7.4 (Brixton Joint Service Centre) the Chair is working with Charlotte Evans on arranging a meeting to discuss this project. Any information gathered will be passed on to TRA representatives.</p> <p>4.7 From 19 January 2006</p> <p>4.8 The lateness of the papers was again raised and stressed that this was unacceptable. Chris Adamson reported that he would be sending a letter to Gerard Caulker in response to the investigation into the lateness of the rent consultation papers. He also reported on his investigation into the post room.</p>	<p>Div. Dir. Hsg Mgmt.</p> <p>Head of Housing Mgmt. Support</p> <p>RPU</p>

<p>ACTION: Chris Adamson stated that he will have to go back and look into how post is going out without sufficient franking on them. Delegates pointed out that the post office is also changing rules on pricing and hope that the council is keeping up with the changes.</p> <p>4.9 On points 4.1 and 5.12 (supporting the parliamentary motion to allow councils direct investment into building houses) TC was told that a number of delegates did go to Parliament on 8 Feb to show their support.</p> <p>4.10 On point 5.9 (garages) Mary Lynch reported that a full audit of all garages would be carried out this year; the process has yet to be determined having only been discussed at an Executive meeting last week. It will take between six months and a year to complete and will include on-site inspections.</p> <p>4.11 On point 4.6 (smooth running of Capital Programmes) Mary Lynch gave a verbal update. There is a review of the entire programme from tendering to payments. This has resulted in some degree of slow-down in order to investigate thoroughly. The Road Map is also being reviewed. Value for money and proper standards of work are also being looked at. In the next few weeks, officers should know exactly how every programme is running. Some programmes will go into the next financial year. Delegates explained it is the lack of information that has most angered residents and reminded officers that they accepted the Road Map, which was a huge piece of work, in good faith. However, to-date, there is no evidence that suggestions and information fed to officers has been taken into account. TC feels if the Road Map had been kept up-to-date, officers would know how each of the programmes is progressing. Mary Lynch assured delegates that information provided by residents has been taken into account. She stated part of the slow down in payments was due to necessary procedural changes to the financial system (e.g. giving people new authorisation abilities on Oracle) which took a few days. The majority of the Capital Programme is being worked on presently. Delegates again stressed their desire for clear communication from officers – major works and planned maintenance need a better working relationship; it was suggested that serious training might be necessary. ACTION: There will be a meeting of TC Executive with Mary Lynch in two weeks to review her report on the Capital Programme. TC also agreed for the Chair to take up with Cllr Truesdale all of the current delays due to the recent ‘staffing changes’. Cllr Kazantzis would like to see clear direction in the housing department and an improvement in the sharing of information (on the Housing Opportunities Fund, the repairs overspend, and the Road Map).</p> <p>4.12 On point 5.3 (three-year rent consultation process) the Chair requested an update and confirmation of this.</p> <p>4.13 On point 5.5 (communal heating) A delegate informed TC that a block of 50 flats went without hot water for a week. Mary Lynch asked for details. It was also stated that there is no plan and no money to install individual controls on communal central heating leading to a waste of energy resources.</p> <p>4.14 On point 5.6 (rent consultation) Delegates suggested that discussion for next year’s rent consultation start earlier this year. The Chair reminded TC on this year’s success: lowering the increase on service charges and keeping rents on garages unchanged until after a complete and thorough audit.</p>	<p>Head of Housing Mgmt. Support</p> <p>Div. Dir. Hsg Mgmt.</p> <p>Dir. Hsg. Resources</p>
<p>5.0 Referrals</p> <p>5.1 Clapham and Stockwell: Deep-cleaning of estates in North Lambeth</p>	

<p>5.2 Delegates enquired why a promise to deep clean estates along with the roll out of the reframing programme only took place in North Lambeth. Delegates produced a reframing news article where Cllr Fitchett stated that everything North Lambeth had would be rolled out to all areas.</p> <p>5.3 Delegates questioned whether the proper tendering procedures were followed for this contract of about £60,000. Delegates believe it was just offered and given to the cleaning contractor. Delegates also want to know if this service was re-charged to leaseholders, if not, why not?</p> <p>5.4 ACTION: The Chair asked that the delegate allow officers to come back with these answers. ACTION: The Chair asked that the question of tendering procedure be taken up with the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>5.5 Officers stated that some estates in North Lambeth and Clapham and Stockwell had been deep-cleaned. Officers are not in a position to make a commitment to do this in every area. Areas may choose to do this if they have the money.</p> <p>5.6 Delegates stated that five of the six estates with the most need that were recommended for this cleaning in Clapham and Stockwell had been done.</p>	<p>Div. Dir. Hsg. Mgmt.</p>
<p>6.0 Update on the ODPM sponsored project on Tulse Hill Estate</p> <p>6.1 Professor Tomlins tabled a paper with an update on this project.</p> <p>6.2 He stated that 14 focus groups have already taken place. This has involved about 150 residents so far.</p>	
<p>7.0 The establishment of a commission into the future role of sheltered housing</p> <p>7.1 George Marshman delivered this paper.</p> <p>7.2 He stated that the views of tenants are the primary consideration to determine the way forward. He assured TC that all rights are being preserved. He stated that a recent stock survey of the sheltered units confirmed that a huge investment is needed to bring this stock up to current standards.</p> <p>7.3 Health and social care needs are very important, not just housing; that is why he is the lead officer.</p> <p>7.4 Those who may want to use the service in the future will be represented in the commission.</p> <p>7.5 The commission will also look into options for leaseholders who may want to use the service in the future.</p> <p>7.6 Delegates asked if the stock condition survey is available. George said it would be available to the commission.</p> <p>7.7 George stated that the commission's remit is to look into needs of a wide-range of vulnerability. Currently about 150 adults are housed out of the borough because Lambeth doesn't have the appropriate facilities (e.g. to meet specific mental and physical needs). He stated the commission would be seeking funding from all available sources as this is going to be a very expensive programme.</p> <p>7.8 Delegates asked if the ODPM was pushing for this to happen. They asked that officers re-use possible redundant property; they don't want to loose housing properties. They also suggested that commission meetings open to the public would slow down its work and suggested that some meetings be private with minutes made public to keep everyone informed.</p>	

<p>7.9 Delegates welcome new-build properties but worry that they would all be in the hands of RSLs. George said all possibilities would be considered to get the stock upgraded.</p> <p>7.10 George also stressed the importance of having a good strategy on re-housing residents affected by the upgrading programme.</p> <p>7.11 This led to a discussion about the amount of money that the council is able to retain and return to the local community if properties are sold. Under Right to Buy sales, the council only retains 25% of the proceeds. The council retains 100% of other sales.</p> <p>7.12 Delegates stressed that older people should be kept close to their friends and family, but should be given as much choice as possible.</p> <p>7.13 It was agreed that the Chair of TC would attend the commission until there is a vote at a future meeting of TC to select a delegate.</p>	
<p>8.0 Report on the sale of loft and other redundant spaces</p> <p>8.1 Ashley Parrette presented this report.</p> <p>8.2 These sales would predominantly be of spaces currently only accessible to one flat (e.g. attic spaces).</p> <p>8.3 Such sales would reduce the cost of upkeep to the borough.</p> <p>8.4 Sales would apply to any redundant space not needed by the council. If the space is communal this would be discussed and consulted on by everyone affected and would require 100% agreement. TRAs would be approached as well.</p> <p>8.5 The deed of variation to any of these properties would clearly state who owns and is responsible for what (e.g. the roof in the case of attic space or the foundation in the case of basements).</p> <p>8.6 Delegates questioned how officers intend enforcing these rules since they don't know who has taken over some of these spaces already. And they questioned what would happen with attics that have cables running through them and who would be responsible for moving them.</p> <p>8.7 It was pointed out that the responsibilities to the owner of these spaces are considerable and would put many off the idea of purchasing them.</p> <p>8.8 Delegates stated they don't have the confidence in officers to monitor and enforce these rules. They pointed out officers don't even know what property they have today.</p> <p>8.9 Mary Lynch said sales of this type are already taking place, but this would create a formal procedure. This would not be advertised, it would be guidance for officers when these cases come up. Each decision would be taken on an individual basis. Only bona fide leaseholders would be eligible.</p> <p>8.10 Tenants Council agreed not to accept the report but to leave it on the table.</p>	
<p>9.0 Report on the review of concierge services</p> <p>9.1 This report will be taken at a TC meeting scheduled for the end of March.</p>	
<p>10.0 Resident involvement in contract management</p> <p>10.1 This report will be taken at a TC meeting that is to be scheduled for the end of March due to lack of time.</p>	

