

Housing Repairs Panel Notes

Lambeth Town Hall, room 125
 Wednesday, 14 December 2005
 7:00 – 9:00PM

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| <p>1.0 Attendance Nominated Delegates Rita Fitzgerald Jean Kerrigan Irena Kowalewska Patricia Scott</p> | <p>North Lambeth AHF Brixton AHF Leaseholder Patch Rep (BR4: Effra) North Lambeth AHF</p> |
| <p>Elected Members none</p> | |
| <p>Officers Candace Bloomfield Kevin Creed Mike Dickenson Keith Hardy Sandra Lewis Ian McIntosh Scott Scarrow</p> | <p>Contracts Compliance Manager Resident Participation Officer Electrical Engineer Major Works Manager Repairs, Planning & Performance Team Manager Responsive Repairs Manager Maintenance Team Manager</p> |
| <p>Apologies Jacqui Alexander Cathy Butler Laura Gibbon Jean Haley Will Manning Graham Nicholls Diane Skidmore Chris Vaughan</p> | <p>Planned Maintenance Manager Norwood AHF Leaseholder Patch Rep (CS5: Orchard) Norwood AHF Head of Housing Property Services Streatham AHF deputy chair Brixton AHF Leaseholders Council chair</p> |
| <p>1.0 Welcome and introductions 1.0 The chair welcomed everyone 2.0 Two papers were tabled: Thames Water Pressure Reduction Issues and Gas Fire Policy 3.0 The agenda was agreed</p> | <p>Action</p> |
| <p>1.0 Matters arising 1.0 On point 3.7 (Equalities and Diversity requested the information in the presentation to the HRP by Professor Richard Tomlins) in the previous minutes: Keith received information just the day before and said he would provide more information at the next meeting in February. There will be an update to the Equalities Panel in April. 2.0 Delegates asked that officers look into why generally BME residents return lower satisfaction replies. Action – Vivien McKnight to be invited to attend and explain</p> | <p>KH</p> |

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| <p>3.0 Ian spoke about how contractors need to monitor the make-up of their employees. He also mentioned changes in Jan 2006 to EU directive on hiring which should encourage local employment and then maybe contractors' employees will then reflect the local area.</p> <p>4.0 On 2.2 it was requested that the minutes reflect that the £30m would be available from central government if the TMOs receive two stars for their TALMO.</p> <p>5.0 Delegates wanted to ensure that there were ways out of the proposed longer contracts with partnering. Officers confirmed that there would be several break clauses built into all the contracts perhaps: at the end of the first year; at the end of Decent Homes programme and one more before the end of the contract.</p> <p>6.0 On 4.11 with regards to water pressure, delegates mentioned incidents where even the pressure to the first floor has noticeably reduced. It was explained that it could be as a result of where the building is (i.e. at the top or bottom of a hill).</p> <p>7.0 A discussion transpired about the differences between condensing and combination boilers and which the lower pressure affected. Delegates requested some printed information on each of these so they could more fully understand the differences. Some washing machines seem to be affected, especially during the rinse cycle. Officers stated that condensing boilers are LBL standard and a legal requirement when there is sufficient space.</p> <p>8.0 ACTION: Delegates requested officers to investigate specific issues occurring at Dolland House in Vauxhall Gardens</p> <p>9.0 Combination boilers are installed when there isn't sufficient room for a boiler</p> | <p>SS</p> |
| <p>2.0 Moving forward with repairs partnering</p> <p>1.0 Candace Bloomfield delivered this presentation.</p> <p>2.0 Officers gave a brief overview about the way contracts are currently done, on a one-by-one basis and the costs of doing contracts this way was also explained.</p> <p>3.0 Benchmarking states that the council should have a few contractors in each area, not just one.</p> <p>4.0 Delegate feedback on suggestion to partner with other boroughs or housing associations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This must be done very carefully; could be quite complex; is it really necessary and has it been costed? • Are we sure this will save money? – Lambeth is currently paying lots of money for tendering lots of little, individual contracts, and longer contracts allow for more time for the contractor to recover their costs of tendering; also the cost of legal fees could be shared between partners • What happens if one of the parties withdraws from the contract? – Lambeth should be protected as each party would have individual contracts • What ways can we get rid of contractors if they fail to perform? – Several exit strategies would be worked into the contracts • This may allow for some extra funding as the ODPM is very keen on this type of partnering • This would only be for repairs and major works? – Yes, the environmental side is | |

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| <p>more risky; would start with Housing Property Services first</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of controls will there be on our needs for resources versus those of our partners? – Currently looking at Merton where there are only 8,000 homes versus Lambeth’s 35,000 • Why is the ODPM so keen for this kind of partnering? • Concerns about sub-contractors (especially in light that now Morrison has their sub-contractors wearing their uniforms) and the labour force of all contractors – All subcontractors will have to be approved • Concerns that contractors won’t be around for the long length of these proposed contracts • Delegates want to be assured that all these new windows being installed will actually be cleaned • Desire to use sustainable materials – officers shared that there is a policy paper being drafted and would be shared when ready • Agreed that two contractors for communal boilers and at least three for individual boilers is a good way to go • Expressed desire to look into directly employing people who have the knowledge of consultants; they are expensive • Also would like the handymen to more small jobs on the estates; some of the minimum charges from contractors are very expensive for small jobs (e.g. setting just a few bricks) • The timetable looks very tight • What is the savings potential? – It is more about the predictability and stability of prices, ensuring that the effects of the Olympics and Thames Gateway are minimised <p>5.0 A proposal to complete the outstanding £6m worth of repairs on Central Hill Estate is being considered as a trial run for future partnering agreements. This would be a four-year contract to test the system. This would be a contract to complete all works to upgrade Central Hill to Decent Homes. This would provide lessons for future contracts.</p> <p>6.0 Officers have determined that single-trade companies are more reliable and give better quality.</p> <p>7.0 Any partnerships would only work if the standards were collectively agreed and where the objectives were the same</p> <p>8.0 On gas servicing: it is proposed that this is divided into communal and individual boiler servicing. Two contractors for the communal and at least three for the individual boilers.</p> <p>9.0 Other contracts being looked into include: lifts, communication aerials, consultants.</p> <p>10.0 ACTION: Delegates requested a copy of the presentation</p> <p>11.0 Candace said she would come back in February. She invited anyone with a query to contact her directly on 020 7926 5253.</p> | <p>CB</p> |
| <p>3.0 Gas fires</p> | |

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| <p>1.0 Scott Scarrow delivered this paper.</p> <p>3.1 There is a danger of CO₂ poisoning from gas fires and they must be removed when found to be dangerous. Lambeth has a huge variety in use.</p> <p>3.0 Delegates asked what the policy is on removing fires when new boilers are going in to property. What are the criteria for removal?</p> <p>4.0 Some residents have the perception that central heating is more expensive</p> <p>5.0 What happens if a property doesn't have full central heating?</p> <p>6.0 What happens if the gas fire needs replacing? Is full central heating installed instead?</p> <p>7.0 Officers stated that there might still be some room for suggestions to the gas fire policy being drafted.</p> <p>8.0 Delegates asked about the control LBL has over leaseholders and putting in new fires and flues?</p> <p>9.0 Officers told delegates about the service offered to leaseholders and one leaseholder reminded the panel that it is a requirement of their lease that any modifications must be approved first by the council. Officers agreed that it is difficult to monitor modifications made by leaseholders; however, any installed fire would need to be cleared by a CORGI engineer and that would include checking the flues.</p> <p>10.0 ACTION: Panel would like Home Ownership Services to send out a reminder periodically to leaseholders about their responsibilities on these kinds of modifications. And to remind them about an annual gas servicing. Action – Refer to Ashely Parrette & Jacqui Alexander – Joint approach.</p> <p>11.0 ACTION: delegates requested an update at the next meeting and a report coving the costs, the criteria on replacement of gas fires and what about the vulnerable?</p> | <p>AP, JA</p> |
| <p>4.0 Effects of Thames Water pressure reductions</p> <p>1.0 Scott Scarrow delivered this paper.</p> <p>2.0 When will Lambeth be able to determine the cost of the lower pressure?</p> <p>3.0 Officers said it would take several months, hopefully by the summer. There is just one officer currently working on this.</p> <p>4.0 Delegates asked what 'one bar' means in real terms. Officers stated that one bar is sufficient for two to three floors and that current water pressure is anywhere between 1.5 and three bars. The building design takes the elevation into account; therefore buildings at the top of hills may not notice the reduced pressure as much as those at the bottom.</p> | |
| <p>5.0 Quality of repairs and unit costs</p> <p>1.0 Ian McIntosh presented this paper</p> <p>2.0 Ian mentioned that there is a list of borough wide responsive repairs that can be circulated</p> <p>3.0 He mentioned that there are currently several outstanding complaints against Morrison</p> | |

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| <p>4.0 Sandra share the unit costs to compare 2004/05:~£800 and 2005/06:£681</p> <p>5.0 Lambeth is looking to Wandsworth, Hackney, Westminster for benchmarking</p> <p>6.0 One delegate raised the high costs they see on their breakdown of service charges; some very concerning such as the minimum charge for a bricklayer for just laying a few bricks. Questions were raised why the handymen aren't doing these jobs.</p> <p>7.0 On post inspections, delegates asked how many have occurred? [IM to insert the number here] – Ian McIntosh to Action</p> <p>8.0 Officers said that any high variation, litigation, multiple visits or >£2K are usually followed up with an onsite post inspection.</p> <p>9.0 One delegate commented that there should be more communication between the repairs team and the residents so that the residents know what to look for and could possibly assist Lambeth if the works are being done correctly.</p> <p>10.0 There was general agreement that there Lambeth Service Centre has improved since it opened; however there is more work that needs to be done to improve repairs orders. Delegates reminded officers that this is supposed to be an always-improving service.</p> <p>11.0 Officers informed delegates that the LSC is now enforcing the six-month guarantee responsibility on contractors; the onus is on the contractor to prove why they shouldn't</p> <p>12.0 Delegates asked what percent of repairs under £2K are inspected? And how many this makes up of the overall post inspections?</p> | IM |
| <p>6.0 Housing inspection update</p> <p>1.0 Ian McIntosh gave a brief update to the group on the Audit Commission's visit. He said there had been positive feedback. The results should be announced in January.</p> | |
| <p>7.0 Any other important business</p> <p>1.0 Delegates requested to move the date of the next meeting from 15 Feb (conflicts with Lambeth First meeting) to 22 Feb. ACTION: This was looked into, due to difficulties in securing another room the meeting will remain as scheduled on 15 February.</p> <p>2.0 For the next meeting: 1. A clear explanation of the different kinds of boilers (combination, condensing and condensing combination) and the affects of lower water pressure on each type and some numbers of how many combination boilers are being installed; 2. Terms of Reference; 3. Delays in major works and the knock-on effects on meeting Decent Homes. Action – (1) Jacqui Alexander, (2) Sandra Lewis, (3) Keith Hardy</p> <p>3.0 For a future meeting (April) delegates requested information on solar panelling with performance and savings. Action – Jon Lissimore</p> | KC KH JL |