

Minutes of North Lambeth Area Forum
Held on Tuesday 19 July 2005 at Pedlar's Acre Hall, 1 Opal
Street, SE11 4HQ

Attendance

Residents

Irene Bateman, Ashmole Estate TRA
Edna Jarvis, Ashmole Estate TRA
Steve James, Dolland House TRA
G Harvey, Ethelred Estate TRA
A Early, Matheson Lang and Munro TRA
Sylvia Lucas, Matheson Lang and Munro TRA
Janet Benjamin, China Walk TRA
Gordon Smith, Vassall Gardens TRA
B Gordon, Tanswell Estate TRA
Steve Chinamaya, Tanswell Estate TRA
Eileen Tanner, Cotton Gardens TRA
Rita Fitzgerald, Dolland House TRA
Ray Puckey, Matheson Lang Munro House
Julia Amanshia, Dolland House TRA
Barry McCalla, Ethelred Estate TRA
Sameul Townsend, Wincott Street

Officers

Judith Franklin, Area Manager, North Lambeth
Ray Fallon, Deputy Area Manager, North Lambeth
Carmen Pinnock, Housing Services Manager, North Lambeth
Liam Kelly, Resident Participation Officer, North Lambeth
Heenal Rajani, Executive Support Officer, North Lambeth
Peter Fish, Borough Responsive Repairs
Bob Keaveney, Housing Property Services/Major Works

Members

Cllr Marietta Crichton Stuart, Oval Ward
Cllr Geoffrey Bowring, Oval Ward
Cllr Andrew Sawdon, Oval Ward
Cllr Liz Atkinson, Vassall Ward

Apologies

Marjorie Landalls, Calais Gate & Coligny Court
Elizabeth Brack, Cotton Gardens TRA
Maureen Dulieu, Tanswell Estate TRA
Cllr Keith Fitchett, Prince's Ward
Lily & Jim McElvogue, Briant Estate TRA
Dreenagh Lyle, Wimborne House RA

2.0 Minutes of last Area Forum meeting (24 May 2005) and special HOF meeting and matters arising

2.1 Digital TV (item 2.1)

Irene Bateman asked if there was any progress on this. JF said that Peter Hall is looking into the possibility. Their first priority is sorting out the ongoing problem of the Bannerman House aerial. It may well prove economical to move straight to digital. RP asked about the problem with NTL and JF said that Peter is looking into that too.

Bert (Matheson Lang) asked if this applied right across the area. JF replied that it applied right across the borough.

Judith - do you have any update about Peter Hall's report? Also, you said in the agenda setting meeting that you would get papers from Irene Bateman and pass them on to Peter Hall. Have you spoken to her? Do you want me to contact her?

2.2 LSTM for Waterloo (item 2.2)

JF says we've moved ahead with dealing with the retirement of Daniel Botchway. She expects someone to be offered that post this week.

Paul Beale has now been employed as LSTM for Waterloo (LN1).

Also, Barry Fitzgerald has transferred to another area and Gabriel Akinfoyeka has started as LSTM for Kennington (LN2).

2.3 Window cleaning (item 2.4)

RP said that their windows were cleaned, although not satisfactorily. JF added that she had heard that Briant estate had been done and asked other people about their blocks.

Steve (Tanswell) said that their windows were not cleaned. Nor were Matheson Lang, Cotton Gardens or Ethelred. JF pointed out that Ethelred wasn't part of the window-cleaning contract and this needs to be sorted out.

Cllr Bowring asked for window cleaning to be added to the list of things to check on the estate walkabout.

Bert asked if when the contract is renewed we could consider the cleaning of the outside of windows right the way up which can be cleaned from the inside. JF said that the contract was up for renewal soon and this would be discussed.

Winnie/Pauline (is one of you the expert on window cleaning?) Is there an update on this? Have any problems been identified or default procedures implemented? Also, has the question been considered about cleaning the outside of all windows that can be cleaned from the inside? I understand that we can ask them to do this for a price. Has it been investigated and has any decision been made about whether it is too expensive?

2.4 Parking (item 5.0)

Janet asked if there would be a charge for permits. RP replied that there won't be.

Irene asked about disabled parking – she thought that people with disabled badges shouldn't be allowed to park in bays without having a permit for that estate. RP said that his understanding was that Lambeth wouldn't clamp vehicles with disabled badges. JF said there had been some discussion about having disabled badges for Lambeth estates so that people

could still park when they visit friends and family on different estates. Irene felt that there should be a restriction near sheltered housing units to stop strangers parking there. RP suggested we take this up with Michael Adu.

Debbie - can you clarify this? Do residents with disabled permits also need permits for the estate?

Also, is there a hot line to report vehicles that are causing an obstruction? Or is it necessary to call the call centre? Can the contractors be called directly?

Also, do motorcycles need permits? Has this been publicised?

Also, what is the policy about replacement permits?

2.5 Responsive repairs (item 7.0)

Bert asked about paragraph 3. He wanted to know why a caretaker couldn't carry out some work on his estate. Judith explained that we are in the middle of putting together a comprehensive system for getting these jobs done. In the meantime, PT has some screws and other equipment and will be able to ask caretakers to do some jobs.

Pauline/ Judith - are caretakers carrying out these repairs at Mateson Lang?

3.0 North Lambeth Area Office Report

Judith presented her report. We have been presented with a challenging target of 102.5% for arrears collection and have been doing quite well. At times we have been collecting over 100% of the current year's debit.

We have a number of old arrears cases with quite a high amount of arrears. We are doing well at collecting current arrears but the historic cases are often quite complex and we are find these harder to collect. Ingemar Castillo, team leader for housing officers dealing with rent, will be at the next meeting to explain how we go about collecting arrears.

Vacant properties turnaround time has been one of our big successes – down from 39.5 days in March to 27.6 days in June. We could still make some improvements on this. We're still having difficulty letting sheltered units, which is a problem across the country.

Our performance on ME's and complaints has slipped since the start of the year, but our June figures were up – 100% of complaints and 88% of ME's answered on time. We are of course aiming for 100% on both.

Our telephone answering stats are below target and we need to try to improve. Interestingly we get proportionately more calls than other areas.

Planned Maintenance Team

Gas servicing performance is up. JF encouraged people to inform their members of the importance of this and to let contractors in when they come round to service. It makes sense to get this done in the summer.

No cars were clamped in May and June due to problems with licensing. New legislation was introduced by the Home Office requiring contractors to be separately licensed. Licenses have now been issued and clamping is back in operation.

Pat Scott told the meeting that should let the Area Office know if they are unable to pay rent due to sickness, for example, since they are usually understanding in these situations as long as they are kept informed.

Cllr Bowring asked about the blank column for BV66a on page 12. JF apologised and said that she had the figures: March 88.5%, April 90.1%, May 88.5%.

Julia (Dolland) asked about the service charge arrears figures. She is always chased if she falls one month behind so is shocked to see the high amounts. JF explained that this is a cumulative figure. Carmen added that there is a similar procedure for collecting service charge arrears as rent arrears. If we take leaseholders to court they can lose their lease.

Irene asked why the number of unauthorised occupants hadn't changed over time. Judith explained that a lot of these are people who are living in a property after their partner has died and that cases can take some time to resolve. RP asked about tenancy checks. Judith said that we do tenancy checks when households are reported. We will do tenancy checks on a random sample of households to establish if we have a problem of unauthorised occupation and we won't be sending letters first.

Julia asked how frequently we are required to do tenancy checks. Judith said that we don't do routine checks at present as it's not a good use of officers' time but we do investigate where there are specific allegations of sub-letting.

Cllr Bowring asked what the target time was for the turnaround time of short cycle voids including those in sheltered blocks. Judith said she thought it was 35 days and apologised for getting the titles of the two tables mixed up.

Steve (Dolland) asked what the difference was between taking in lodgers and sub-letting. Rita explained that if you're not living there it's sub-letting. JF said that tenants would be allowed to take in lodgers with the Council's permission.

Bert asked how much tenants were allowed to charge lodgers. Carmen replied that the contract is between the tenant and the lodger and they can charge whatever they like.

Julia asked whether the nuisance cases reported on page 14 are to do with housing. JF replied that they are housing cases that the NASBO's are dealing with and cover the whole range of the NASBO's work. Julia said that Environmental Health didn't always pass details on to Housing. JF said we should receive regular reports from Environmental Health and work together with them. Julia asked what would happen after Environmental Health took someone to court and JF replied that each case would be dealt with on an individual basis. If someone is in breach of their tenancy conditions we can pass the case to our Legal section and possibly take action to evict the tenant.

Janet Benjamin (China Walk) asked why there is only one noise patrol car. JF said the noise patrol was a service provided by Environment. Cllr CS explained that it was a very time-consuming and expensive process. They don't just deal with housing but clubs and pubs too. Often they can't get somewhere in time to hear the noise and they are unlikely to have the manpower or the co-operation from police to stop the noise immediately.

4.0 Major Repairs update

Bob presented his report. The current situation hasn't changed much from the special forum a few weeks ago where the roadmap was outlined. The projects are underway and timelines and costings will be available soon. RP asked why three of the projects were "awaiting appointment of consultants" – why can't we have an in-house team? Bob said that the team was dismantled as part of reframing. RP asked if this led to performance problems. Bob said the reason we are waiting is because the previous contractor was not up to scratch and we are waiting to appoint a new one. The advantage of using consultants is that an in-house team can't deal with peaks and troughs in work. Bob anticipates that this consultant will be appointed within the next week.

Bob - has the consultant been appointed?

Irene said that lifts were on the last programme but aren't on this one. Bob replied that lifts come out of a separate budget and aren't technically a major repair. He accepted that it would make sense in future to include it on the same report.

Bob - will they lifts be on the same or separate programmes?

Glenna said that there was nothing about the windows at Brittany Point. Bob said the programme was a work in progress and they are still open to suggestions. All three Ethelred blocks were due to have work done on their windows and some external decorations. He can't say what year they will all be done but Elkington Point will be done this financial year.

Steve asked when we would have start dates. Bob said they would be filled in for the next forum, with the exception of Lawn Court and Elliot Road, where we are having difficulties with planning permission.

Bob - are start dates filled in?

Bert asked how many consultants will be working on Lambeth's projects. Bob said he would find out for the next meeting. John Pelling have been providing surveying services to Lambeth for over five years and have done a good job so far.

Bob - do you know how many consultants there will be?

5.0 Responsive repairs report

Peter Fish (Principal Building Surveyor) presented his report. 1345 jobs were ordered in June, of which 985 were completed on the first visit and 1241 were completed in target. 89% of appointments were kept and 90.1% of tenants were satisfied with repairs (these are Lambeth's figures not the contractor's). Saffron is duplicating jobs for some reason, requiring jobs to be manually cancelled.

Peter/Ian - Ray and Rita (Chair and Vice-Chair of the Forum) have asked if you have an analysis of the repairs that are not completed on the first visit. Do you know the reasons?

Steve said that there is a scheme at Axis where the girls in the office earn a bonus by getting the workers to complete as many jobs as possible within a day. Bob said he wasn't aware of this and Steve said he could provide proof. RP asked for a report back on this at the next forum. Cllr Atkinson asked for copies of reports to be ready for the next forum.

Peter/Ian - any more info about this alleged scheme?

PS reported that jobs were being signed off which had never been done. She said she would give Peter the addresses involved so he could chase them up. Rita asked what the 332 inspections proved. She asked for figures at the next forum of what the results of those inspections were.

Peter/Ian - what are the results of the inspections?

Eileen said that Axis often fobbed old people off and took two days to come back and finish a job. They were also sloppy and spilt paint in lifts. Peter asked for addresses and details so he can follow this up.

Rita asked what action Lambeth took if a tenant isn't satisfied with a job. Peter said that the service centre would note this, payment would be withheld and action would be taken. These statistics will be used to analyse the contractor's performance. JF said that the message was for people to return their cards and give an honest answer.

6.0 Letting of garages and parking spaces

JF presented her report. The number of parking spaces indicated are lettable parking spaces – they don't include parking spaces on estates where anyone can park.

Steve asked if we have appointed someone specifically to look at this problem. JF said that we haven't and we will work as a team to get garages and parking spaces let. RP was astonished at the amount of income that Lambeth was foregoing every year. JF appreciates that it's work that needs to be done.

RP said that his information from Michael Adu and Debbie Linden is that the new parking permits will be issued in August. It's essential that the letting of spaces is sorted out before the new scheme is introduced next year.

Cllr Bowring asked what we would do make people aware that there were garages and bays available. JF said that our first step would be to match people on the waiting list to available spaces. There are different numbers of people waiting for spaces in different areas.

Cllr Atkinson said she would like to see some sort of forward plan detailing when an assessment of spaces' viability will be completed. She would also like to see how vacant spaces are broken down by patch. JF said she would report back on this at the next meeting. Rita said it was good that North Lambeth have at least made a start on tackling the issue of parking.

Rita said she had the proposed residents' permit application form and it suggested that if you lose your permit you can get a new one. This is daft, since this is exactly how problems with parking arise – people claim they've lost a permit and give it to their friends; it's not the case that people create copies of permits, since they have holograms on which are hard to replicate.

Judith - what is progress of report on letting of garages and parking spaces? Will this be part of your report?

7.0 Attendance at patch sessions

Judith passed round a sheet which showed that attendance at these sessions is dropping.

8.0 A.O.B.

Steve (Dolland) said that he had reported the use of mini-motorcycles to Reg Morrison but had yet to hear back. He said they were illegal to use on private land. They also present a fire risk since they contain petrol and are often stored inside flats.

(I'm trying to get more info on these scooters - SV)

9.0 Date of next meetings

27 September and 22 November 2005.