

ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH
HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 1ST JULY 2021 AT 7:00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Members:

Councillor Clive Mardner (Chair), Councillors Pat Slattery, Dominic Mbang, Averil Lekau, Bill Freeman and Spencer Drury.

Tenant Representatives

Johnson Oyedeji

Officers

Director of Housing and Safer Communities, Assistant Director of Housing, Head of Repairs, Head of Customer Experience, Tenancy Services Support Manager, Community Participation Coordinator, Community Participation and Diversity Officer, Scrutiny Officer.

Others in attendance

Councillor Anthony Okereke (Cabinet Member for Housing)

The Chair made introductions and advised that the meeting was being held under emergency regulations and that some of the Council's procedures have been amended accordingly.

**Item
No.**

1 Apologies for Absence.

Apologies received for Cllr Mick Hayes, Cllr Leo Fletcher, Helen Ryan and Nilavra Mukerji.

2 Urgent Business.

There was no urgent business.

3 Declaration of Interest.

Resolved –

That the list of Councillors' memberships as Council appointed representatives on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies be noted.

4 Housing Voids Report.

The Director of Housing and Safer Communities introduced the report stating that there had been a steady improvement on voids turnaround despite the effected of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Head of Repairs summarised the report stating that post the first lockdown risk assessments were put in place and works were taking longer than usual because certain operatives had to wait for up to 3 days after a previous operative had gone in. He stated that after coming out of lockdown in the 4th of July 2021 another risk assessment took place which allowed for more efficient work.

The Head of Repairs stated that just before coming out of lockdown in July pre-works was 116 days and that was because of the effects of Covid-19 and the lockdown. He however revealed that after changes to processes pre-works were down to 4 days. He added that works time in June 2020 was 76 days but currently an average of 27 days on turnaround on a void, with post-works being 28 days but currently 4 days.

The Head of Customer Experience provided a summary stating that customer satisfaction was at 91 percent which indicated that majority of residents were satisfied with their homes. She highlighted that the dissatisfaction expressed by many residents were mainly cosmetic and not an issue of quality.

In response to questions from the Panel, the Director of Housing and Safer Communities and Head of Housing Repairs stated that the averages although high in certain areas were steadily on track to reaching optimal numbers. They explained that the high averages were because of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic but emphasised that emergency repair services were active during the period.

The Panel agreed to have the Cabinet Member for Housing circulate the Repairs Task Group Dashboard to the Panel in October.

Action: Cabinet

Member for Housing

The Panel agreed to nominate a member to join the Feedback Review.

Action: Chair

The Panel

Resolved -

That the Housing Voids Report be noted.

5 Update on new structure of Housing Panels and Resident Engagement.

The Assistant Director of Housing and the Tenancy Services Support Manager took the Panel through a presentation which highlighted the background and purpose of engagement within the borough, the traditional engagement approaches in place and the new engagement approach.

The Assistant Director for Housing stated that, the cycle of engagement involved listening to resident (using channels including walkabouts, repairs/caretaking surgeries, meeting and surveys), followed by acting on the feedback, recording actions and forwarding to relevant teams and lastly updating residents on what is being done using clear communication methods.

Regarding the traditional engagement approach, the Assistant Director of Housing stated that there are 9 Local Housing Panels which were set up in 2000/2001 to mirror a local neighbourhood office structure which no longer exists. He stated the average cost of running each Local Housing Panel to be £1,045.

The Tenancy Services Support Manager revealed that the new engagement approach was centred around four key areas namely the YourVIEW Membership, Digital Listening Campaigns, New Style Formal Estate Walkabouts and Housing Champions.

Shedding light on the four key areas, the Tenancy Services Support Manager explained the YourVIEW Membership as an online platform where tenants and leaseholders can help shape and improve housing services by taking part in engagement events online and in person, being made aware of the latest engagement events and training available as well as being part of a pool of residents who want to make a difference.

The Tenancy Services Support Manager emphasised that the Covid-19 restrictions had fast tracked the development of digital engagement having held a series of Zoom meetings in Summer 2020 with the Cabinet Member of Housing, Councillor Anthony Okereke. She stated that the Digital Listening Campaign (DLC) provided an opportunity to test out alternative formats to the Local Housing Panels and to engage with the under-reached and under-represented residents including younger residents, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) residents and residents in Temporary Accommodation.

The Tenancy Services Support Manager explained the New Style Formal Estate Walkabouts as an engagement approach that employs both face-to-face and digital channels like Zoom.

Lastly, she stated that the Housing Champions engagement approach fits in with the Housing Strategy Strand 3 (support for people with specific needs) and Strand 5 (building a resilient and vibrant community). The Tenancy Services Support Manager revealed that there would be three levels of engagement in Champion Roles namely; Broadcaster (to attend induction training and share information with friends, family and neighbours), Active Engager (to take a lead in areas of local interest e.g. estate walkabouts, local meetings and community gardens or tenants / residents association, etc) and Ultimo (to represent tenant and leaseholder views, help with engagement and “task and finish” groups to co-design services, etc).

In response to questions from the Panel, the Assistant Director for Housing and the Tenancy Services Support Manager stated that the new engagement approach has made it possible to reach diverse groups. They informed the Panel that the Leaseholder Working Group had a good membership and active participation.

The Panel

Resolved -

That the update on new structure of Housing Panels and Resident Engagement be noted.

6 Cabinet Member Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing updated the Panel on the 5-year Housing and Homelessness Strategy. He revealed an in-depth consultation platform has been created which will be complemented by a variety of events covering the principles in the strategy. He explained that feedback from the consultation will be analysed and used to strengthen the Housing and Homelessness Strategy as well as inform new initiatives.

The Cabinet Member for Housing informed the Panel about how successful the Leaseholder Working Group has been and stated that over the next few years there will be significant investment going into the Council's estates. He stated that the Repairs Task Group which was setup keeps a keen eye on repairs and added that customer service was also being looked at. The Cabinet Member for Housing expressed his thanks to the team and applauded them for their dedication.

The Panel

Resolved -

That the Cabinet Member Update be noted.

7 Commissioning of Future Reports

The Panel noted the work items that were scheduled to be presented to the meeting of the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel taking place on 6th September 2021.

The Panel

Resolved -

That the commissioned future reports be noted.

The meeting closed at 9:21pm.