

ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH
HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2021 AT 7:00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Members:

Councillor Clive Mardner (Chair), Councillor Pat Slattery and Councillor Spencer Drury.

Tenant Representatives

Johnson Oyedeji

Officers

Senior Assistant Director of Repairs and Investment, Head of Strategic Asset Management and Scrutiny Officer.

Others in attendance

Gilles Cabon (Chief Executive Officer of Greenwich Inclusion Project (GRIP))

The Chair made introductions and advised the attendees of the relevant procedures of the meeting.

Item

No.

1 Apologies for Absence.

Apologies received from Cllr Mick Hayes, Cllr Leo Fletcher, Cllr Bill Freeman, Cllr Anthony Okereke, Cllr Dominic Mbang and the Director of Housing and Safer Communities.

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 Minutes.

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 6th September 2021 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

5 Reports from organisations that provide support and advice to vulnerable Groups.

The Chief Executive of GRIP introduced the report. He stated that their mission is to create a racially just and inclusive society in Greenwich, where racial diversity is valued and people live free from prejudice, discrimination, harassment and hate crime because of their race or religion. He added that their main areas of work were community-based hate crime support and education, strategic race equality support and resettlement support (Greenwich Sanctuary Project).

The Chief Executive of Grip stated that the community-based hate crime support service involved supporting victims of hate crime with advice and support, contacting police and others on their behalf and attending meetings to present a complaint. He revealed that between the year 2020 to 2021 90 people had been given advice, support and advocacy.

The Chief Executive of Grip stated that strategic race equality support involved attending various strategic partnerships to articulate concerns expressed by racial minority communities and supporting direct consultation with racial minority communities. He stated that they also comment on strategic plans and proposals.

The Chief Executive of Grip stated that for resettlement support community volunteers provide a range of support to families settled in Greenwich under the UN Vulnerable Persons Programme.

In response to a question from the Panel, the Chief Executive of GRIP stated that dedicated English language lessons are an important aspect of the work they do. He emphasized the need to prioritise English language lessons as part of steps to creating inclusivity. He advised that generic English language classes were not effective and that there was a need to provide English language lessons specific to the needs of refugees and individuals who have no English language background.

Responding to a question, the Chief Executive of GRIP stated that they have a good relationship with the police and landlords. He however added that there is an element of frustration due to the lack of response from police and landlords on issues relating to hate crime. He suggested that frontline staff needed to be educated to improve their sensitivity to hate crime.

In response to a question from the Panel the Chief Executive of GRIP stated that the Syrian families were predominantly living within Charlton, Woolwich Common and Eltham West. He added that with the Syrian community integration would be easier due to large number being children. He added that children were easier to integrate. In relation to the Afghanistan families, he advised that it was too early to tell although the Borough has already begun to provide accommodation for the Afghanistan families. He further explained that to the best of his knowledge the borough has agreed to provide accommodation for eight Afghanistan families with two already in the borough being provided support by the nil recourse team, another two also in the borough but waiting to have their status approved as being part of the eight and the remaining four in hotels.

Responding to a question from the Panel, the Chief Executive of GRIP stated that over the course of the last twenty months they have recruited sixty volunteers and at any one time there are a minimum of thirty-five active volunteers. He added that the current available pool of volunteers was forty-five. He further explained that each family had at least one volunteer working with them on English language and two volunteers on befriending activities.

The Panel

Resolved -

That the report from organisations (GRIP) that provide support and advice to vulnerable groups be noted.

6 Stock Condition Survey Report

The Senior Assistant Director for Repairs and Investment summarised the report. He stated that the stock condition survey happened in 2017 and that despite being four years old the document was very valid.

In response to a question from the panel, the Senior Assistant Director for Repairs and Investment and Head of Strategic Asset Management stated the data used for the stock condition survey is from a live document. They explained that the data changes regularly partly due a property reaching a certain age or when it is manually updated. They further explained that due to the live nature of the system new properties are being added whereas old properties which have been worked on are being taken off making it difficult to track changes based on the raw data alone.

The Panel

Requested to receive improvement figure from the previous financial year.

**Action: Head of Strategic Asset
Management**

The Panel

Resolved -

That the Stock Condition Survey (SCS) carried out in 2017 and the outcomes be noted.

7 Housing Contracts Variation Report

The Senior Assistant Director for Repairs and Investments introduced the report and explained that the report contained contract variations from the last twelve months.

In response to a question from the Panel, the Head of Strategic Asset Management stated that before any work relating to kitchen and bathroom is done there is a need for an intrusive asbestos survey. He added that majority of the variation relating to kitchens and bathrooms was for asbestos and others for heat detectors.

In response to a question from the Panel, the Head of Strategic Asset Management stated that they are trying to get many things done inhouse although some things will have to be outsourced.

The Panel

Resolved -

That the contract variations that have taken place over the past 12 months for Housing and Safer Communities be noted.

8 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 25th November 2021.

The Panel

Resolved -

That the commissioned future reports be noted.

The meeting closed at 9:00pm.

ITEM NO: 4