

January Housing Improvement Board Meeting

24 February 2022, 18:00- 20:00

Zoom

Attendees:

Board Members

Martin Wheatley (chair)

Ishia Beckford (resident)

Les Parry (resident)

Eloise Shepherd (London Councils)

Councillor Darren Rodwell (Leader of LB Barking & Dagenham, Local Government Association)

Phil Brookes (DLUHC Improvement & Assurance Panel)

In attendance

Councillor Hamida Ali (Leader of LB Croydon)

Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice (Cabinet Member for Homes)

Councillor Lynne Hale (Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and Shadow Cabinet Member for Homes)

David Padfield (Interim Corporate Director for Housing, LBC)

Yvonne Aryeetey (Executive Officer, LBC)

Velvet Dibley (Senior Strategy Officer, LBC)

Apologies

Yaw Boateng (resident, and Chair of Tenant & Leaseholder Panel)

Fahad Eisa (Resident)

Meeting started with a welcome from Chair MW and thanked officers for providing papers for the meeting. Chair advised the Board that this is the last board meeting before Cabinet makes a decision on the Housing Improvement Plan (HIP) on 21st March and also the last meeting before the elections.

- The board will need to advise Cabinet of its views on the HIP before 21st March.
- The Chair and tenant Board member will speak to the HIP paper at Cabinet
- Ahead of Cabinet meeting Chair hopes to send a letter/report highlighting the Board's views on the HIP report by 11 March 2022.
- **Action-** Chair will send first draft for comments to the board and to Cabinet Member and shadow Cabinet Member of Homes.

Previous meeting minutes agreed.

18:00- 18:30		Actions from Previous Meeting
	DP	Council announced the appointment of Corporate Director Susmita Sen who will be replacing DP, start date has not been confirmed and will keep Board updated. DP has a meeting with Susmita on Monday 28 February which will be the first meeting of the hand over process
	DP	Updated Board on the February Data & Performance Slides The pack provided to the Board summaries results of the Door knocking exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 664 Residents participated in the door knocking exercises - Repairs continued to be the biggest concern and grass cutting - There seemed to be a lower satisfaction from BAME community in comparison to White Tenants. Racial disparity will be included in the breakdown of any future surveys carried out. - There is information on how residents want to be contacted, the results revealed how Croydon housing is far behind in comparison to other industries
		Questions from the Board on the February Data & Performance Slides
	PB	On the voids the graph showed the total number of properties which he assumed was accumulative and yet the 203 figure presented today is the first time the board has seen this number on the graph which compared to the most recent months when the number of voids was 30/40. Not sure what the graph is saying of the number of voids are 203?
	DP	The graph shows the number of properties let within any one month
	PB	The 4903 overdue repairs are these jobs at properties or multiple jobs?
	DP	These relate to jobs overdue and it does include multiple jobs in a property.
	PB	The two hour /1 day emergency service are the services that normally suffer, are we confident with the figures reported?

	<p>DP</p> <p>IB</p> <p>DP</p> <p>IB</p> <p>DP</p> <p>DR</p> <p>DP</p> <p>DR</p>	<p>A fair amount of work has been carried out to validate the data and the data is an accurate reflection of what is going on. Contractors are taking the urgent / emergency jobs seriously and prioritising these.</p> <p>How many of the voids are lettable cannot be repaired? Vast majority should be lettable, we have committed to bring majority of these back in use this year. There are some that are not economical to repair and will need to bring to disposable, not anticipating many to be disposed of and one of the properties was approved for disposal the previous week</p> <p>Properties that will be disposed of, will the council reconsider rebuilding or will the land be left If it was a developing site, the Council could look at developing this and for two long time voids next to each other, would probably sell this as a development opportunity for someone else but an assessment will need to be carried out first.</p> <p>Knowing that he spoke to members earlier the previous week, it was interesting DP was confident the numbers are accurate, given the numbers are provided by a contractor who has given the Council Notice and residents are complaining about its service. How can David be sure the data is robust?</p> <p>The data shows the contractor are not performing on majority of stuff, on the left hand side of the graph shows a small number of jobs AXIS is carrying out and on the right hand side of the graph where a large number of jobs they are not performing well.</p> <p>We do have a firm advising the Council on the market called Echelon and they do some work with Axis and other contractors to assess the information. Had a workshop with members where they discussed this information and there was a disparity between what the information is saying and people lived experience.</p> <p>However the transactional satisfaction survey where council staff call residents to get feedback on the service provided, the results where positive.</p> <p>If you look at the graph where 50% of jobs deemed to be urgent within the urgent timeframe that may not be accurate.</p> <p>Advised to change terminology 'making noise' as this is individual's lived experience. Concerned there is no real process for members to articulate their concerns based on the residents lived experience as residents will contact their MP and Members which may cause duplication in casework. There is still a long way to go on improving the system.</p>
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	<p>MW</p> <p>DP</p> <p>PB</p> <p>DP</p> <p>LP</p>	<p>Has the housing service tested to destruction whether the initial triage when jobs are put into categories is valid, and are categorised correctly</p> <p>In terms of tested to destruction the answer is 'no'. The contact centre is run by Axis. The problem we have discovered is where contact centre staff have been putting jobs in the wrong category and urgent jobs are being categorised as routine checks. The other area of concern is some of the appointments dates residents are being given are very long appointment dates outside the required timeframe.</p> <p>Who decides which category a job should be put into, is it Axis or Council</p> <p>Contractually there are guidance on what should go in which category. The contact centre is run by Axis who make decisions within the guidelines of the contract</p> <p>Casting back to January when the experience of triaging or categorising the jobs, whether it was through my account, telephone or face-face, the repair raised by tenant isn't physically decided by an Axis scheduler which category it should be, it is decided by a computer package with an Algorithm. What is urgent and concern to the tenant isn't to that package which is not acceptable, some clarity is needed on how the jobs are categorised.</p> <p>Regarding Voids let's not lose sight of the council's target on turn around on voids which is 20 days. This has been rising pre-pandemic, and has never been tackled. The Voids steering group that has been set up does not have a tenant representation even though the tenant & Leasehold Panel put a report forward to the leader and chief executive which has not been actioned upon apart from the appointment of Corporate Director of Housing.</p> <p>If the performance on void process is correct and hitting the 10 day turnaround on voids, is that void property after they hit their target up to lettable standard because the only way you find out if that work has been completed is through inspection and that inspection regime is lacking.</p> <p>LP's opinion is that the void process may not be with repairs and it's with Housing Allocations as no one has ever paid attention to this process or how staff provide properties to individual residents. This area requires scrutiny.</p> <p>On the HRA outturn, apart from that income what the board should be aware of is that there is an amount of money in arrears, former tenant is in excess of £5.1m and not shown on the budget as income coming in and former tenants arrears at £4.6m. The information on the true financial position of the HRA budget is lacking.</p>
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	DP	<p>Reckons the voids report shared by LP will be a good reference point. Happy to meet with the Board to pick up concerns on HRA Budget</p> <p>Action DP to provide breakdown of what type of repairs were carried out on the 251 settlement</p>
18:30- 18:50	<p>DR</p> <p>ES / DR</p> <p>MW</p> <p>LP</p> <p>DR</p> <p>DP</p>	<p>Governance work-stream Elly Shepherd, Councillor Darren Rodwell</p> <p>Darren and Elly met with different political streams of the council administration/opposition, with one member who works for an MP w. Are yet to speak to scrutiny as it is very clear the governance process is not in the place where it can be scrutinised correctly.</p> <p>The overall summary from the discussions held, there is a genuine desire from all political framework is to get this to work in a way that is conducive to all residents/tenants lives.</p> <p>It is recognised some of the internal process have changed and it is clear residents will have to wait to see the grass roots of recovery, in a way people want to them, as the systems in the council are not where they should be. It is going to take officer time and positions to take this forward.</p> <p>Good news to hear that there is a new experienced Corporate Director joining soon. Whilst there is a little way to go, London Councils are happy to assist the Council as there is a general desire for putting residents at the heart of everything it does.</p> <p>Spoke the attached slides on governance work stream</p> <p>Thanked ES/DR for their presentation and suggested for the slides to be incorporated within the board's report to Cabinet.</p> <p>Is there a local authority in London where backbench Councillors are engaged with Cabinet members management and interfaced with them</p> <p>Yes they are, most councils do. The Councillors are elected members and their job is to act as representative of tenants. The Councillor is there to ensure the officer is following the policy.</p> <p>Welcomes the presentation and will look at incorporating the governance within the Housing Plan</p>
18:50- 19:15		<p>Capacity and capability of the housing service David Padfield</p> <p>David presented the attached Housing workforce capacity & capability responding to the questions raised by the board.</p>

	LP	Does the 90 vacancies include management and front line staff, the increase in management has an effect on the HRA when was the board going to be informed of this change
	DP	The vacancies do include both management and frontline staff. In terms of costs there will additional costs to the HRA and General fund budget. The additional General Fund will be covered by savings and additional HRA costs will be absorbed within the existing budget. There will be consultation on some of the changes that will be made on staffing, priority will be on the Homes side of business as this has savings target associated to it. Does not anticipate resident engagement on this and on the temporary management changes. Changes on the front line service will require consultation with the residents.
19:15- 20:00	<p>DP</p> <p>MW</p> <p>ES</p> <p>IB</p> <p>PB</p> <p>LP</p>	<p>Review of the Housing Improvement Plan</p> <p>Thanked the board for their invaluable comments received at the previous board meeting on the HIP. The plan came after Regina Road, a lot of consultation on the plan has been carried out and had a document which the Council was working on and starting to deliver. Submitted the plan to the non-statutory review and the councillors commission and the non-statutory was highly critical of the plan.</p> <p>Took the plan away, reviewed it and made some changes and then brought it to the last board meeting and again the board was quiet critical of the plan.</p> <p>Went away and reformatted the plan and Housing Improvement Plan today is the latest version.</p> <p>Chair appreciated the amount of work officers have put in and taking into consideration board members feedback.</p> <p>Chair invited members to comment on the updated version and to indicate whether they do or not support the plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felt the dates were helpful but the vision didn't have weight and the plan should start with a vision and for this reason it's difficult to back the revised version. • The plan needs to be an easy read. • Big improvement on the plan, document is too long and should be an internal doc, not an easy read and needs to be able to communicate to residents and tenants, confused about the short term/long term in the appendix as this could be key part to the presentation. The scope is good, big improvement, work in progress and supports the plan. • Not enough tenancy involvement in the work streams only reference to tenants/residents involvement in some of them. Bear in mind the

		<p>He can pick up the comments around resident engagement and makes sure it is combined in everything we are doing. Publish a clear statement on the website that is clear for residents to read.</p> <p>DR Wonders outside of this visions and knows the Council has a strong resident framework, why don't residents present what they would like to see and call it a resident charter for members to sign off, and this will ensure that anyone who comes in adheres to the charter</p> <p>LP More than a year ago Tenants & Leasehold Panel submitted a resident charter and it was not responded too. We should have a housing vision service designed by the tenants</p> <p>IB One of things often missed is the time voluntary given up by the tenant and leaseholder panel who are speaking to residents and tenants which takes a lot of time. Sometimes it appears as though they are moaning residents and not individuals who want to make improvements for everybody in Croydon, fully empathise with officers but want to make it right for residents who are living in these situations and circumstances. Majority of residents are in social housing who are not able to relocate, often the Council is not inspecting the work the contractors have carried out.</p> <p>MW Would relay this message to the Cabinet meeting on 21 March and stresses this has to be rooted in changing the experience of residents and not bureaucracy</p> <p>Thanked fellow board members and officers for the work carried out</p> <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further comments about the HIP to be submitted by Wednesday 2 March to VD • Chair will draft report / letter to cabinet which sets out the boards views and will seek suggestions from the panel before final submission to cabinet.
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